

THE INDIFFERENT LOOK IN ALBERT CAMUS'S *THE STRANGER* AND DUONG NGHIEM MAU'S *TUOI NUOC DOC*

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Abstract. French writer Albert Camus was first introduced to Vietnamese readers as an existentialist, whether he admits it or not. Duong Nghiem Mau and a number of writers of his time, living and composing in South Vietnam during the 60-70s of the twentieth century, were more or less influenced by Western thinkers, in which there was the existentialist thought of Albert Camus. Reading *Tuoi nuoc doc* by Duong Nghiem Mau, we find that there is an encounter with *The Stranger* by Albert Camus in terms of the protagonist's view of people and the times. The indifferent look dominates the entire art of building Meursault and Ngac characters in those two works. In this article, we examine the consciousness of the characters when realizing the absurdity of life, thereby giving them an “indifferent” view of the world.

Keywords: *The Stranger*, Albert Camus, *Tuoi nuoc doc*, Duong Nghiem Mau, indifference.

1. Introduction

The Stranger is one of the most famous works of French writer Albert Camus (1913 - 1960). Revolving around the main character Meursault were two points of view: first, seeing him as an emotionless, alien character; second, seeing him as the type of person who refuses to lie in order to live honestly. Maurice Nadeau has suggested that Meursault used a strange attitude to deal with the disappointments and absurdities of life. Noorbakhsh Hooti and Pouria Torkamaneh in their article *Albert Camus's The Stranger: Unreflective Feeling, Indefensible Indifference* argue that Meursault is not naive and honest, he “fund of feelings and emotions, but is a demonstration of unreflective and indifference” [1; p.4224]. Some Vietnamese researchers such as Lieu Truong, Tran Hinh have considered Meursault's indifference as an expression of “honesty”, based on Camus's own view of this character: “humans have the right not to lie” [2; p. 81].

Duong Nghiem Mau, whose real name is Phi Ich Nghiem, passed away in 2016, two years before his first novel, *Tuoi nuoc doc* was reprinted by the Publishing House of Writers Association. The novel and his four volumes of short stories were re-published in 2007, allowing readers to delve deeper into the world of painful and miserable existential experiences, where human beings are forced to choose to act or not to act and how to act in a particular historical situation: the country is at war. Aside from the views on Duong Nghiem Mau' *Tuoi nuoc doc* “...causing skepticism, encouraging negative behaviors to separate readers from the fight against American imperialism” [3; p. 343] of Tran Trong Dang Dan, there are also researchers who do not stand from the viewpoint of class when discussing this writer's work.

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Thuy Khue wrote about the character Ngac and his whole generation, the old generation of *Tuoi nuoc doc*: “Almost all of them are pushed by an uncertain fate that lasts until death. They are close to each other and alien to each other, alien to themselves” [4]. She affirmed the presence of existential philosophical thought in Duong Nghiem Mau’s works.

Discussing existentialism is not the focus of this article, as it is a complex issue and requires longer research work. Moreover, despite being regarded by Western critics as one of the great existentialist writers, Camus “always rejected the title for himself”. Here, we only consider the problem of human consciousness when realizing the meaninglessness of life, thereby giving them an indifferent view of the world. This is just a very small aspect of the category of absurdity, within existential philosophy. When we recognize this problem in the writings of two writers Albert Camus and Duong Nghiem Mau, we also realize that the cultural environment at school (existential philosophy has been taught at the university level of Southern Vietnam in the 60s of the twentieth century), contemporary social life was an important cause for those intersecting meetings. War has always contained in it all the absurdities, those absurdities raise the questions of why and how. The deeper people go to find answers to these questions, the more people feel pain, misery, and sometimes the inevitable confusion.

2. Content

Tuoi nuoc doc is not Duong Nghiem Mau's best work, but it has a special place in his writing career. This was the first work, “the main work of Duong Nghiem Mau that later on, other works such as *Mother's Fortune*, *Tangled Night*, *Strange Day* ... expanded the locations, backgrounds and ideologies, about specific cases” [5; p. 359]. *Tuoi nuoc doc* was published in 1966, the same year Duong Nghiem Mau enlisted and became a reporter for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. It can be understood that this work has the role of opening the path, laying the foundation to create a tattered inner portrait of a generation of Vietnamese youth on the journey of self-awareness and existence in the period when the country was at war and divided into two regions.

Duong Nghiem Mau (1936 - 2016) and a number of writers of his time, who lived and wrote in Southern Vietnam during the 60-70s of the twentieth century, were more or less influenced by Western ideologies. Reading his writing, we immediately recognize the overwhelming existential nature, imbued with every word. The nothingness covers everything, making the character always immersed in thoughts. As researcher Thuy Khue said, Duong Nghiem Mau's characters are “endoscopes”.

The nature of survival is the driving force, always posing big questions for young generations, especially the adult class during the war. Perhaps that is the reason why some Vietnamese writers, including Duong Nghiem Mau, meet the ideas of Western existentialists like Jean Paul Sartre or Albert Camus, who “always refuse that title for themselves” [6; p. 237].

Albert Camus is often ranked next to the name Jean Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) by critics, who is seen as the proponent of existentialism in France. The 1957 Nobel Prize for literature confirmed Camus's name in the world literature. In Vietnam, his work first came to Southern readers and immediately received much attention. Most important works of Camus have been translated into Vietnamese. There have been many researches on his work. His interest in writing was further confirmed when “Saigon Literature Magazine dedicated a special issue number to commemorate Albert Camus on his 50th birthday” [2; p. 27]. Following the historical flow, the reception of Camus in Vietnam continued to take place in the aspects: of translation, research, criticism, and composition.

The Stranger and *Tuoi nuoc doc* are both not the best works of Albert Camus and Duong Nghiem Mau; but both play an important role when viewed as the first compositions that paved

the way for later novels in the writers' careers. Both works use first-person narration, as the central character of the story. The two main characters are like "outsiders" in a life of "exile". Both works use first-person narration, with the role of the central character of the story. Both stories open with great indifference in the way that the central character of the series immediately takes himself out of that central position. "Mother died today. Or was it yesterday, I do not know" [7; p. 7]. Meursault's opening monologue immediately raises a series of questions surrounding the only correct fact: the character's mother is dead. The timing of the mother's death would not have mattered if the narrator did not ask "today" or "yesterday" and asserted himself that "I do not know." His ambiguity about the time of his mother's death stems from the message that the telegram from the hospice, where his mother lived, conveyed: "Mother died. Funeral tomorrow. Deep condolences". In just a few very short sentences opening the work, all three dimensions of time coexist: past yesterday (mother died), present today (mother dies/Meursault receives telegram), future tomorrow (funeral ceremony takes place). Telegram language does not allow lengthy interpretations. But that brevity is still required to provide the necessary and sufficient information. If you examine the content of the telegram, you will find three important pieces of information: the dead mother, the time of the funeral ceremony, and the sympathy and condolence to relatives of the deceased. Required but not enough because of the unspecified "tomorrow" time unit. What is "tomorrow"? The future can only be defined in terms of reference to the past and present. The telegram had no date, so Meursault did not know when his mother died. So, does indifference originate on Meursault's side? Probably not. Because, before his "I do not know" state was the indifference of the character who was not present, the person sending the telegram, accidentally blurring the time and pushing the receiver into a vague state. Meursault's concerns about the time when his mother died "yesterday" or "today" made him guilty of being indifferent, because he should have shown a dazed attitude about his mother's death: why did she die? How did she die?

Not as "shocking" as the way it opens with the news of the mother's death in *The Stranger*, *Tuoi nuoc doc* has a fairly classic opening with the description of an early morning in the winter of Hanoi so cold that "the sky is crumpled". In such cold weather, people would only go out early if there was a need to. Yet Ngac: "Went to the mailbox, reached into his stomach to take out the envelope, straightened it and put it in the gap" [8; p. 5]. Sending a letter to his uncle must have been important, but was it so important that he has to get out of the house so early in a cold winter? It seemed that was just an excuse for him to go to the street. If Meursault is ambiguous about the time of his mother's death, then Ngac is vague about action. After looking into the mailbox to be sure that the letter had fallen down, he "stood idly in front of the door looking across the street" and wondered: "Now where to go?". The random meeting with Hien did not raise Ngac's mood at all. A pair of lovers met, but it was as if two people were only acquainted. Then the space of early winter in Hanoi was torn apart by assassination and huddled in the bewildered fear of the people on the street. Just as coincidentally when meeting, the couple lost each other in the crowded market.

As we know, indifference is "a lack of interest, feeling or reaction towards somebody or something" [9; p. 660]. That is a common understanding. Here, in the novels of the two writers, we see indifference that encompasses the strange, the lost, and the different. A sense of indifference increases as we go deeper into the story through the narrative of the objective narrator, not participating in the character's inner progression to expose his feelings. In traditional novels, when the first-person narrator confesses "I," he can "be an accidental witness and be told to tell the story; maybe a participant in the story but only plays a peripheral, supporting role; or maybe he/she is the central figure of the story" [10; p. 303]. As the central character of the story, the narrator often has the opportunity to reveal his or her inner world. Meursault, on the contrary, did not reveal his inner spiritual world on the surface of the text.

From the moment he received the telegram to the moment he got to his mother's coffin, we haven't seen him show any sad feelings. Even when the gatekeeper offered to open the lid of the coffin for him to see his mother's face one last time, he even refused. In response to his stunned surprise, he simply replied, "I do not know." This is the answer that has become a constant to all questions about the absurdity of Meursault's life. In the entire work, up to twenty times Meursault has used these expressions when directly answering or questioning. He was ambiguous about everything around him, arising from the ambiguity of the time of his mother's death. He did not know why he did not want to see her mother's face one last time; did not understand why he was judged for mistreating his mother when he sent her to the hospice; did not know why he did not cry at her funeral and did not know how old she was; he did not know what caused him to shoot the Arabs dead on the beach; did not understand what was happening at his trial; in the end did not know why he was broken-hearted... That indifferent person was no longer indifferent after a series of ambiguities and doubts. The first and last time he expressed "nuanced" emotions were when he was sure of his miserable identity, "sure about himself, about everything ..., sure of his life, of his imminent death" [7; p. 134]; and only then did he realize that it seemed pointless to fret about everything in the world. It's like, "What the hell is important about being sentenced for murder but getting the death penalty for not crying at his mother's funeral?" [7; p. 135]. After a furious scream, he "thought of his mother" for the first time and "opened his heart to the world's indifference" [7; p. 136]. Was that a condemnation for others? It seems that Meursault was not indifferent, but on the contrary, it was the world around him that was unfamiliar and indifferent to his existence. And to get rid of that indifference, he had only one last chance left: the day he was publicly executed. The wish "to have so many spectators come to see the execution and curse, so that I do not feel alone, so that everything is complete" [7; p. 137] was so sarcastic! Meursault's journey seems to tell us one thing: "life is a gradual process to death [11, p. 30]".

The Stranger was published in 1942, when World War II was in the second stage when the fascists were expanding the war to the whole world, leading to the participation of most nations. Perhaps no one can stand outside this brutal war. In 1966, the year Duong Nghiem Mau introduced *Tuoi nuoc doc*, which was also the fiercest period of the Vietnam War, when the United States applied a military strategy to crush the liberation army of the South, using air force to attack the North and establish US influence over Southern Vietnam through the Republic of Vietnam regime. The ammunition that the United States used during this period of the local war was more than that in World War II. Thus, we can easily imagine human fate in two different historical contexts that have such similarities. War, wherever it is, has not reduced its severity. The first meeting of lovers Ngac and Hien was interrupted by a corpse lying on the street. When asked about the assassination, Ngac replied: "Do not know who and why" [8; p. 12]. The answer "I do not know" became famous for the Western absurd literature whose origin was the Jewish Czechoslovak writer, Franz Kafka. The Joseph K. character in *The Case*, on the morning of his 30th birthday, woke up in bed to find himself convicted. He did not know what he was guilty of and why he was sentenced, so much as a death sentence. After the journal of one year, from indifference to concern for the sentence hanging overhead, K. accepted the conviction. He died and still did not understand why he was stabbed to death. Continuing to the message of "do not know" were the absurd playwrights with the haunting image of the desperate waiting of a man named Godot by the vagrants of Vladimir and Estragon in a late afternoon, by a countryside road (*Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett). Who was Godot, they did not know; wait for what, they did not know. They just waited. Their time, in all three dimensions, was waiting. The "do not know" chorus began to ring and repeated in various variations in literary creations discussing the absurd. In the war, how many deaths there were for which one could not explain. War did not appear on the pages of *The Stranger*. In contrast,

war served as the foundation and background for the story in *Tuoi nuoc doc*. A generation of young people like Ngac, living in the North of Vietnam, every day witnessing “gunshots all over the country” and wondering about choosing the right direction for themselves. Ngac “did not want to go out nor want to be here”, perhaps that was why he lived confused and disoriented. For the same reason, he had indifference: indifferent to his girlfriend, indifferent to family love, indifferent to friends, indifferent to an assassination on the street, indifferent to people around him, “was cautious and minimized his life” to “be calm before private lives” [8; p.20].

Just considering the attitudes of both Meursault and Ngac in their own love relationships can clearly see their indifference to everything around them, because perhaps, when we love someone, we must find the common in our souls and the voice of our hearts. But, with Meursault, he reunited with Marie, his former colleague, after the day his mother died and their relationship began. Within a day he had an answer to Marie's question: “Do you love me?”. In the morning he thought “I do not seem to love her” [7; p.49]; but by the evening of that same day he thought “surely I do not love her”. But even without love, he maintained a relationship with Marie: going out, eating, and having sex. Because of not feeling love, Meursault felt that marrying Marie or not did matter. It certainly did not mean much to his life either. Similarly, in his love with Hien, Ngac expected to feel broken, and he never thought of marrying her and reuniting under one roof. They loved each other, but the two were still lonely entities with no connection at all. In Meursault's feelings for Marie, there was a sexual desire, while Ngac's feelings for Hien were vaguer and distant: no desire, not close, like a habit. Life without purpose made them feel that everything was unimportant, and transient. It seems that, living in the cruelty and irrationality of war, people have a common sense of the meaninglessness of life, and in order for life to be meaningful, they must find a reason for their life, especially, with the young generation. The common aspect in the love story of these two characters is their disconnection from their counterparts; but the difference is that Meursault was honest with himself when he decided what that feeling is, while Ngac was not.

Maurice Nadeau has called Camus the “guide of the conscience of the times” [12; p. 134], and the “tragic aura” surrounding the Nobel Prize-winning writer seems to continue to emit a light that attracts many readers of the next generations. Contemporary readers will find in the Camus novel a frustration about the times. Readers for generations to come can still find in his artistic creation the general sympathies of human identities, which will manifest in each age in a different form. What we *see* in the stranger's story is: faced with the absurdity that enveloped his life, “Meursault did not “exist”: he was only acting on the impulses he received. The death of his mother did not make him show any affection: he had nothing to say about that death. He became a murderer because of a beach, because of an Arab, because of the blazing sun, and because his gun was in his pocket. Because of a series of situations that happened which he did not seek or wish at all” [12; p. 135-136]. Meursault's indifference can be discerned when listing the sequence of events that happened to him and how he reacted to it. But what we *feel* is not the same. Just like when we see Sisyphus perform the punishment of rolling the rock to the top of the mountain, we think he is suffering. But since that illogical work may never end, instead of imagining his pained face while he does the hard and fruitless work, “We have to imagine Sisyphus is happy” [11; p. 181].

“Being” is one of the important themes of existentialism. According to Heidegger, “Being is transcending oneself in order to reach one's possibility... Self-transcendence is giving up the present self to a being which is hidden before one's eyes” [13; p. 357]. And he calls that hidden being “possibility”, from which a projection will arise. For each human identity, the projection is important. Because human existence is tied to time. Kierkegaard conceived of time as “three dimensions of living time ..., specifically the past as “thrown away” or fact, the future as

“projections” or properties, and the present as the “perversion” or indulgence in the average daily”. He emphasizes “the future dimension as possibility” [14; p. 234].

As such, Meursault reached out to the possibility; he had projections, and he throw himself forward, toward death. Looking back at his entire life story, we find that he had no plans, no worries or concerns. When he was told that his mother had died, he attended the funeral, his accidental meeting with Marie led to a relationship that did not know exactly what the name was, and only because he was so dazzling when the sun shone that he killed. He couldn't even explain why he shot another four shots at the body that had collapsed in front of him. Surprisingly random and irrational. Even when he appeared in court, he did not care about the defense attorney's argument, the accusation, and the final verdict. His indifference was pushed to the height of the trial and stopped when he received the death penalty. The first and only time he was not indifferent was then, when he knew he had to die. He accepted the “possibility” with a surge of emotion. But even then, the emotion he expressed was odd: “I opened my heart for the first time to the world's indifference. I realized it was too similar, too close to me, I felt too happy and still happy” [7; p. 136-137]. He had lived, had existed in his own way: only in the present dimension of time, as a way of “self-exile”, and then “indifferently” to death. And for him, the most important thing of all was that he existed with genuine feelings in his heart when he ignored the “look” of others.

Compared with Meursault, Duong Nghiem Mau's Ngac, while immersed in the indifferent present, was always searching for a future, meaning his own possibility. Ngac's indifference was not quite the same as Meursault's. Ngac represented the generation of people in “adolescents, who see the variables of life as a stranger who both wants to participate directly and wants to stand outside and look with indifferent eyes” [5; p. 359], they belong to “*Tuoi nuoc doc*”. Ngac and his peers lived among family, friends, and homeland, but like a black sheep. They, some pushed themselves on the sidelines, or were pushed aside of the time by circumstances. They had emptiness and nothingness in common. Perhaps life was boring without a direction that made those young souls dry and indifferent; they did not understand themselves and did not understand the people around them. They were powerless and surrendered to choices that they themselves did not know were right or wrong; good or evil. Of course, we cannot forget the circumstances that put those young people in such situations. In addition to the significant situation of the country at war, family circumstances also contributed significantly to the creation of “*Tuoi nuoc doc*” people. Having lost his mother early, his father left, Ngac lived with his grandfather and uncle's family. The awkwardness came from the fact that Ngac lived off his grandfather's upbringing but extremely despised him because of his immoral behaviors. The family was not a home, not a place where Ngac could return to find empathy, sharing and love. He went there just to eat and bury himself in his sleep as if to find oblivion. Then love was also nonchalant, pale, not enough to fire up desires in the heart of Ngac. Even when he was rubbed on his face by his half-brother with a hot iron, woke up in the hospital with a thickly bandaged face and could only see with one eye, Ngac was still as calm as if nothing happened. Was there anything unreasonable when in that situation, Ngac thought: “I will bring half of my face burned, my soul will be quiet and never think about Hung. But I want to see his face” [8; p. 88]. Ngac did not denounce the guilt of the person who injured him; even after that accident, he no longer held a grudge against Hung. This detail reminds us of Samuel Beckett, an Irish-born French writer and playwright who, after coming out of the hospital, came to the prison to visit the man who stabbed him seriously, a strange tramp. And it was the same wanderer's answer to why stabbing an unknown person on the streets of Paris that became a repeated chorus in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* masterpiece. “I do not know” is the embodiment of the irrational, unjustified actions not only of two hopeless wanderers waiting for Godot but also of many other human identities drifting in nothingness.

If Meursault had chosen for himself a way of being, a way of living right from the moment he appeared at the beginning of the story, Ngac seemed to start “living” after the accident of burning on one side. He decided to leave the house, where he “did not want to go back” and did not belong, where he saw himself as “unfamiliar”, like a guest. That accident marked his maturity, it was like a border separating the world of adolescence and adulthood, as a kind of “threshold”, beyond that “threshold” people will cross into another world: “I see that I have to change. I know I have grown up; I need to find myself a decision to prove myself” [8; p. 109-110]. Thus, Ngac had a projection, he threw himself forward in order to reach a certain possibility. Is this the moment when, in the words of Camus, “one must choose between contemplation and action. It is called the process of becoming a human” [11; p. 132].

The incident of being burned in the face divided Ngac's indifference into two phases: before the accident, he was alien to the world around him; after the accident, he realized the world was foreign to him. Before that, he was indifferent and did not care much about those around him; later, he found himself “strange in the crowd” because he felt their “special” look when they saw the burns on his face. His scarred face made Ngac ugly but at the same time made him look at those around him, recognize their feelings and express his feelings. The first time, he cried. Crying not only because of seeing that he had been discriminated against for a disgusting appearance, but also because he realized that he had not appreciated spiritual values for a long time, and had been skeptical and resentful of all of them. In a letter to his uncle, Ngac expressed: “Now I have left, out of a place I think is cramped but very peaceful, to start doing what I want, and of course I will always be in a state that I must suffer, the suffering I create” [8; p. 120]. Even though these plans of Ngac, as he himself wondered, still appeared nihilistic, but they marked his existence. “People cannot be without plans either near or far, or important or trivial; it is these plans that represent the manifestation of the projection”. Heidegger has “made sense to consider projections as the structure of human existence” [13; p. 359-360].

Thus, both Meursault and Ngac had been existing, “living” their time in both the present and future dimensions of time. However, the future of Meursault was not directly shared by himself. We could only see that future when he had finished his life journey. But when Ngac decided to fill the reality that he was living in, and at the same time accepted what he had created, he took responsibility for his life, no longer being indifferent to let it drift in uncertainty. He “defined himself”, in Sartre's words. When Sartre discussed being that precedes nature, he argued: “man is responsible for what it is. Thus, the first step of existentialism is to put people into taking over what they exist, and put on man all the responsibility for his or her existence” [15; p. 34]. Sartre also asserted that the responsibility is for everyone, not just the small individual. After all, Ngac was free to choose whom he would become. But, the journey to the destination of choice is not easy. Boredom, and bewilderment did not let go of him. He left his family, but the truth he sought was still far away. The darkness still surrounded, weighed heavily on his heart. Ngac's journey must have had many twists and turns; whereas Meursault had drawn a straight line to death, from the very beginning when he condemned himself by not crying at his mother's funeral.

Both Meursault and Ngac became murderers. Meursault shot and killed Arabs on the beach because of the blazing sun; Ngac shot and killed the disabled aunt because he could not have the heart to see her barely clinging to life. Meursault was arrested for murder but executed for not crying at his mother's funeral. Ngac was not arrested. After the burial for his aunt, he returned to Ms. Hue's home, had a fever and was in a coma for two days. By stream-of-consciousness technique, Duong Nghiem Mau exposed Ngac's mind in those constant deliriums. The page-long sentences seemed to be revealing Ngac's mind. Immersed in that flow, we realize how much he loved Hien, not like the indifference he showed on the outside. The pain of losing Hien further made him feel helpless before life. He had chosen to live differently; but how different,

he himself had not realized: “I search for me like a stranger and find nothing different from the contradictions in my mind” [8; p. 153]. He realized the meaninglessness of life, and at the same time realized the evasion of himself and his peers. Once accustomed to his wrinkled face, with the situation of losing a loved one, a relative, Ngac returned to his original indifference, of course on another level: “I feel indifference and sadness flooding back”. He had drifted away from his old life, but his new life was not enough to hold on to his life, making him worried and remained on the side-lines. After the indignation, because he did not even have the right to not cry if he did not want to cry, Meursault awaited his death with glee, happy because he hoped so many people would come to see him executed. Ngac had not been able to tear through the darkness that enveloped his life; he was neither dead nor “alive”; and probably continued to wear away in his meaningless life. The image of a child in Hue's abdomen and Ngac's self-questioning ended the work: “Then will he live like me, will he have to grow up like me?” [8; p. 201] and at the same time opened up many possibilities. Maybe Ngac continued to drift away meaninglessly and faded in his life; maybe, for his future son, he wanted an authentic life. He freely chose whom he would become.

3. Conclusion

The absurdity is what we must easily see in both the stories of Meursault's life in Albert Camus's *The Stranger* and Ngac in the *Tuoi nuoc doc* of Duong Nghiem Mau. Each story has its own absurd setting: Meursault is thrown into the judgment of the world for not crying at his mother's funeral; Ngac wandered with the journey to find the truth of life in the painful circumstances of contemporary history. Perhaps the same thing in common is the attitudes of those two characters. They have chosen an indifferent look to “aggress” with life. Meursault, from beginning to end, chose who he was; indifferent to life, existing in every existential moment; accepting to face the most absurd thing of his life which is death. Ngac, from the existential experiences in his seasoned life, perhaps it is also possible to break up with the “*Tuoi nuoc doc*” to enter a new choice for his adulthood, as the picture that ends the work suggested. Looking back on history, from the present point of view, we can also contemplate variations of that existential choice. Because, as a matter of course, when people are born and mature and enter life, they must face many choices. In the spirit of existentialism, we must decide who we are by how we live.

With the aim of studying the two main characters of the two works through their indifference to life, we do not discuss the right and wrong in their perception, but only want to confirm the existence of the Western existential ideologies in the artistic life in Southern Vietnam before 1975, in particular the case of Duong Nghiem Mau. He and many contemporary writers have found in this philosophy a land to be able to sow aspirations, reflections, and concerns about freedom and human status in the painful context of Southern Vietnam before 1975.

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