

# The novel *Fantasy paradise* by Nguyen Tri from the view of Ecological Criticism

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**Abstract:** *The novel Fantasy paradise describes deforestation, illegal logging, gold mining, forest encroachment, etc. and all of these actions leave significant damage for the ecological environment in particular and the existence of humanity in general. From the perspective of Ecocriticism, Nguyen Tri's Fantasy paradise clearly demonstrates the writer's ecological ideology with environmental issues and ecological risks. The author condemned acts of destruction of nature, warning about the power and fury of nature. Since then, the author has raised his voice advocating environmental reconstruction to make amends with nature.*

**Keywords:** *Ecological Criticism, Fantasy paradise, Nguyen Tri*

## 1. Introduction

Nguyen Tri was born in 1956 in Binh Dinh, originally from Quang Binh, currently living and working in Long Thanh, Dong Nai. He began focusing on writing in 2008, and has so far published 13 literary works and received many literary awards. In 2015, he was admitted to the Vietnam Writers Association.

Before entering the literary path, he experienced many different professions: wine maker, butcher, gold prospector, gem miner, incense miner, English teacher,... Nguyen Tri's literary pages are all written from his life. There, the characters often have a fate at the bottom or on the margins of society. Those are the brothers and sisters who struggled in the streets and then received bitter and bitter results. Or poor people have to mine gold despite the dangers that can strike at any time. Most of the characters in Nguyen Tri's short stories originate from real-life prototypes. However, Nguyen Tri gave the characters in his novel a new, brighter life.

The work *Fantasy paradise* is one of Nguyen Tri's highly appreciated works. The novel's content revolves around the issues of gold mining, illegal logging, searching for agarwood, etc. of people who dream of changing their lives, despite the dangers. From the perspective of Ecological Criticism, Nguyen Tri's *Fantasy paradise* clearly demonstrates the writer's ecological ideology with environmental issues and ecological risks. The author condemned acts of destruction of nature, warning about the power and fury of nature. Since then, the author has raised

his voice advocating environmental reconstruction to make amends with nature.

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Ecological literature and Ecological Criticism

Ecological literature is a way of identifying literary works created in the context of an increasingly deteriorating ecological environment, with an increasingly strong sense of anxiety and social responsibility towards this problem. The ideological nucleus of ecological literature is ecological holism: "Ecological literature takes ecological holism or the concept of ecological holism as a guideline to examine the relationship between nature and human. Ecological literature also demonstrates ecological responsibility, ecological ideals, criticizes the dark side of civilization, reflects ecological risks, spiritual risks, ideological risks and the social origin of those risks". The authors of ecological literature were aware very early of the importance of harmonious behavior between humans and nature. Since then, their works have made modern readers re-cognize the relationship between humans and nature.

Ecocriticism is literary criticism that studies the relationship between literature and nature from the ideological orientation of ecologicalism, especially ecological holism through the exploration of ecological aesthetics and its artistic expression in the work. The innovation and also the central point of this critical trend is the transition from "anthropocentrism" to "ecocentrism" ideology.

### 2.2. The novel *Fantasy paradise* by Nguyen Tri from the view of Ecological Criticism

### 2.2.1. *The natural destruction*

In the work *Fantasy paradise*, it is not difficult for us to encounter scenes of terrible destruction of nature, from cutting down vast forests to find agarwood to digging up hundreds of hectares of land to exploit gold causing significant damage to the natural environment. There are times when deforestation has become a movement of the entire population in a commune or district. People destroy forests and burn primary forests to clear land for cultivation. Author Nguyen Tri's writing is sometimes a transformation into a character in the work, coexisting and acting together to cause destruction to the ecological environment, sometimes standing separately from the characters to condemn and protest the destruction of nature by the characters in the novel. Thanks to that incarnation, Nguyen Tri seems to become a victim protesting against deforestation, and sometimes is the culprit contributing to deforestation.

People at that time, with ignorance and avarice, were materialistic and always sought to exploit forest resources for personal gain. First, if someone finds agarwood and changes their life, there will immediately be a lot of people going into the forest to find agarwood, leading to mass deforestation and destruction of the natural environment. Nguyen Tri clearly portrayed the current situation of the country in the years when the country had just been unified, the whole nation was still struggling to develop the economy, relieve hunger, and escape poverty, so deforestation for private purposes still occurs on a large scale, causing damage to the environment and forest area, causing damage to the environment and forest area. More specifically, the situation of reclamation, opening land to grow rubber and coffee, and establishing new economic zones is also mentioned in the novel *Fantasy paradise*. Because the management work of the authorities during this period was not yet focused, the forest area shrank significantly in the years 1975-1979, causing loss of national resources and serious harm to economic development of the country.

The destruction of nature not only includes the problem of deforestation for farming, but also the phenomenon of cutting down trees to build houses, firewood, and household utensils, collectively known as "loggers", which also exists in the novel *Fantasy paradise*. Part of the above sad story is due to people's lack of understanding, so during this period a lot of the country's forest areas were destroyed or

desertified. Nguyen Tri always focuses on reflecting that painful issue in his novels. Nguyen Tri both condemns and depicts the phenomena of ecological destruction, while also recording the stains of humans on the natural environment during this period, making the more the reader learns, the more painful they become. Feeling sorry for the ecological environment, the forests in the past difficult period of the country, plowed by war bombs during the two Patriotic Wars, are now being hurt by their own children. Readers will see the space of the ecological environment destroyed by humans, by ignorance and most of all, by the heartlessness of the human heart.

### 2.2.2. *Illegal gold mining and its impact on the ecological environment*

The heaviest damage to the ecological environment in *Fantasy paradise* is probably due to illegal gold mining. Although the authorities were involved, the amount of gold was so large that people, despite everything, plunged into a spiral of gold digging and debauchery, only to use up all the gold they had dug. But they returned to the poverty of the past, some even had to exchange it with death like the character Lam in the work. There are people who change their lives in one day but a few days later are as poor as in the beginning, that is the cycle of poverty in the novel. The novel *Fantasy paradise* serves as a warning to everyone about the damage to the ecological environment due to indifference to nature and all things.

When there is a newly formed gold field, only about one or two groups come to exploit it, but when people know that the gold field has a lot of gold, they will bring their families and children to this place. That situation will lead to pollution of the natural environment. The novel depicts in detail the effects humans have had on the environment from the time the gold mine was mined until it was completed, which are the worst crimes that humans have treated nature. The natural environment is destroyed, nature is destroyed, trees are cut down for gold mining, streams are blocked to pan for gold, these are human actions that have destroyed the environment ecological.

In this novel, we also encounter scenes of ecological destruction, the dense appearance of people rushing in a spiral of searching for gold: "Very quickly, the land that was originally deserted now it is desolate, as if it had just gone through a devastating battle of carpet bombing during the

war. People flocked into neighboring lands, into the forests. The landowner had to give up in front of the large number of people like grass ants. The forest owner also had his hands tied. Gun? Cannons - if there were any - could not do anything to human beings”.

### 2.2.3. *Nature gets angry and punishes humans*

In the novel *Fantasy paradise*, people rush into exploiting forests without mercy and without mercy. They destroy everything in their path, from animals to plants that cannot survive under their hands. Then the punishment of mother nature is inevitable: “Tomorrow is always a rainy, windy and sick day. There is not a single hero who has not been punished by the jungle to the point of collapse in soul and body... Even with debts...”. Perhaps for that reason, in Vietnamese folklore there is a saying “The first destroys the mountains and forests, the second stabs the river” is the reason. People cannot live well while destroying forests, or they will be punished by the forest itself because they do not respect the ecological environment.

In the novel, there is mention of the Ben Ty stream gold field, this place is also the grave for the vile ambitions of people, they have come and some have left with empty hands, some have to die forever stay under this golden land. That is the punishment of the green forest, the punishment of mother nature for those who callously sow disasters on this peaceful land. People who have robbed nature of something will have to return many times what they have taken away, that is the law of nature, of the forest god, the mountain god and mother nature.

The green forest has punished them in many ways, but in general, those who intentionally destroy the green forest do not have a good ending, is that the law of nature, or does it include Nguyen Tri’s condemnation of ecological environment, or thinking more carefully, we see that it is the author Nguyen Tri’s remorse and remorse for the debt that humans have taken away from the ecological environment. The fact that Nguyen Tri once made a living from forestry, destroyed forests and then lost everything, looking back at his own past actions gave Nguyen Tri an objective view on destruction of the ecological environment. A thorough understanding of every detail of the incident helped Nguyen Tri successfully portray the issue of resentment between ecology and humans.

### 3. Conclusion

The novel *Fantasy paradise* by Nguyen Tri is a confession by Nguyen Tri himself to the ecological environment, and at the same time it is also a warning from nature itself against human destruction. With a detailed and realistic depiction, Nguyen Tri has introduced to the literary world a novel written on a novel topic and associated with environmental and ecological issues. At the same time, the work is also a memoir recounting writer Nguyen Tri’s past full of experiences, but also full of regret and pain towards the natural environment. But one thing is certain: the novel gives readers a true perspective on how humans behave with nature and how nature punishes human sins.

By studying and understanding Nguyen Tri’s novel *Fantasy paradise* from the perspective of Ecological Criticism, we can affirm that studying literature from an ecological perspective is a necessary and must-do job for those who Literary research today, represents the response of literary science to the cry for help from the ecological environment.

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