

DISPLACEMENT AND SOLASTALGIA IN MEKONG DELTA NARRATIVES: A STUDY OF NGUYỄN NGỌC TƯ'S SHORT STORIES

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Abstract

Situated in southern Vietnam, the Mekong Delta is both a vital ecological region and one of the world's most climate-vulnerable landscapes. This study examines how climate change produces intertwined experiences of displacement and solastalgia in literary narratives, focusing on selected short stories by Nguyễn Ngọc Tư. Through close reading and narrative analysis, informed by ecocritical narratology and place studies, the research explores how her fiction portrays the Delta not merely as a backdrop but as a fragile and shifting "place" that shapes human livelihoods, memory, and emotional life. The findings indicate that displacement in Nguyễn's work extends beyond physical migration to include cultural and existential estrangement, while solastalgia registers the grief of witnessing a homeland's gradual deterioration. Together, these concepts illuminate the Mekong Delta as a chronotope of both loss and resilience, where ecological collapse manifests as external dislocation and internal sorrow. By highlighting these dynamics, the research contributes to Vietnamese ecocritical scholarship and the health humanities, underscoring the importance of literature in articulating the psychological dimensions of climate vulnerability and pointing to the need for adaptation strategies that integrate ecological care with cultural and emotional well-being.

Keywords: Nguyễn Ngọc Tư, Mekong Delta, displacement, solastalgia

Introduction

Located adjacent to the western edge of Vietnam's Southeast region, the Mekong Delta is ecologically significant due to an unique interplay of environmental, historical, and cultural factors that have shaped its landscape, biodiversity, and human-environment relationship. Environmentally, the Delta supports exceptional aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity, including over 1,100 fish species and 20,000 plant

species, making it one of the world's most productive and diverse deltas. In addition, its history is marked by large-scale hydraulic engineering and agrarian colonization, especially for rice production, which has made it the “rice bowl” of Southeast Asia and key economic region for Viet Nam. However, its ecological health depends on sediment flows from the Mekong river. Recent decades have seen dramatic changes due to dam construction, sand mining, and water infrastructure, leading to sediment starvation, land subsidence, and increased vulnerability to sea level rise and salinization (Kondolf et al., 2022). Local communities have developed adaptive strategies to cope with flooding and climate change, but rapid urbanization, policy shifts, and economic pressure have disrupted traditional practices and increased vulnerability.

The Mekong Delta's rise in Vietnamese ecological literature can be traced to the 1950s and 1960s, with early works by authors like Sơn Nam, Đoàn Giỏi, Nguyễn Quang Sáng, Trang Thế Hy... who depicted the region as a frontier of human conquest over nature. Sơn Nam's *Hương rừng Cà Mau* (Scent of the Ca Mau Forest, 1962) portrays the Delta as a wild, untamed space where settlers “open up” the land, reflecting a historical narrative of migration and colonization in southern Viet Nam (Bùi, 2018). In Đoàn Giỏi's *Đất rừng phương Nam* (Southern Forest Land), the protagonist's thought after capturing a crocodile serves as a “manifesto” of this era's human-centric myth: “O fierce and treacherous Nature, beware! There is no power within you that humankind cannot subdue!” (Đoàn Giỏi, 2024). However, the Delta became truly central post-1975, following national reunification, as writers responded to peace-time environmental concerns. The period marked a paradigm shift from anthropocentrism – viewing humans as conquerors of nature – to ecocentrism, emphasizing harmony and critique of exploitation. By the 2000s, amid global awareness of climate change, the authors such as Nguyễn Ngọc Tư, Phan Thị Vàng Anh, Võ Diêu Thanh, Khải Đơn... This timing aligns with Vietnam's integration into global environmental discourses, influenced by Western ecocriticism from the 1970s onward, as adapted in local critiques.

Nguyễn Ngọc Tư, who was born in Ca Mau province (Viet Nam), is one of the leading contemporary Vietnamese writers renowned for poignant depictions of life in the Mekong Delta. Growing up in the southern region's riverine landscape, Nguyễn's works – primarily short stories and novels – often explore themes of environmental degradation, human displacement, and emotional resilience amid social change. Therefore, her debut works, when they emerged in the literary scene around 2005, attracted the attention of ecological criticism scholars. Research on her literature spans the first through the third waves of ecological criticism. In the first wave, studies such as *Nature in Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's Short stories from the Perspective of Ecological criticism* (Trần, 2014), *The Riverine space in Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's short stories* (Thuy Khê, 2006) explore how her narratives depict the Mekong Delta as a contested landscape between human ambition and the natural world. Studies in the second wave of ecocriticism portray the Mekong Delta as both a wounded and resilient landscape, where human–nature relations are imagined through the lens of spiritual ecocriticism and ecofeminist thought. This period marks a turn from purely rural, harmony-centered depictions toward more complex engagements with urban ecologies, environmental justice, linking environmental degradation to issues of gender, power, and cultural

identity. In the third wave of ecocriticism, scholars increasingly draw on concepts such as slow violence (Nixon, 2011) and eco-ambiguity (Heise, 2016) to situate Vietnamese literature within global discussions of the Anthropocene. While existing research on Nguyễn Ngọc Tư has explored how her narratives capture environmental degradation and cultural memory in the Mekong Delta, most studies remain anchored either in symbolic readings of landscape or in socio-cultural critiques such as gender and ecology. What remains underdeveloped is a sustained examination of place as both a literary construct and a lived experience shaped by ecological crisis.

The Mekong Delta, as one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in the world, provides a crucial site for place studies in ecocriticism. Here, rising threats from climate change are not only transforming livelihoods and disrupting settlement patterns but also reshaping the ways people relate emotionally and imaginatively to their environment. While global ecocriticism has begun to examine how climate change generates psychological conditions such as solastalgia and eco-anxiety, this perspective has not been systematically applied to Vietnamese literary contexts, nor to Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's short stories that vividly capture the Delta's precarious ecology. This study therefore seeks to fill that gap by analyzing displacement and solastalgia as intertwined experiences of ecological crisis in the Mekong Delta, as represented in Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's fiction. By approaching her work through the lens of place studies and the health humanities, the research highlights how literature mediates the psychological burden of climate change on human communities. In doing so, it not only advances Vietnamese ecocritical scholarship but also contributes to broader interdisciplinary dialogues on the links between place, environment, and mental well-being in climate-vulnerable regions.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design rooted in literary analysis. The primary method is close reading of selected short stories by Nguyễn Ngọc Tư, focusing on textual strategies through which displacement and solastalgia are represented. Narrative elements such as setting, temporality, voice, and character experience are examined to uncover how ecological crises are embedded in literary form. In addition, the research adopts an ecocritical narratology perspective, which emphasizes how narratives mediate the relationship between humans and their environment. This approach allows for the tracing of connections between ecological degradation, place-based identity, and psychological responses. The study also draws on place studies, a subfield that foregrounds how environments function not only as backdrops but as agents in shaping human experience.

The analysis is informed by qualitative, interpretive methods. Rather than measuring environmental or psychological change quantitatively, the study seeks to identify recurring motifs, narrative patterns, and symbolic structures that convey the psychological and social impacts of climate change. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of the lived and imagined experiences of displacement and solastalgia, as mediated through literature.

Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism, as a field, has long emphasized the importance of place as a foundation for understanding human connections to the environment. Early ecocritical thought, particularly in the Global North, placed immense value on the idea of a “sense of place”. Influenced by writers like Henry David Thoreau and Wendell Berry, this perspective argued that a strong, intimate, and long-term connection to a specific local environment was the cornerstone of a sound environmental ethic. This viewpoint, which Ursula K. Heise terms an “ethic of proximity”, assumes that genuine care for the environment arises from direct, sensory experience and a deep familiarity with one’s immediate surroundings (Heise, 2008). However, beginning in the late 20th century, scholars began to critique this localised focus for its significant limitations. The concept of “displacement” emerged as a powerful analytical tool to challenge the often-privileged and exclusionary nature of the “ethic of proximity”. As Rob Nixon criticizes in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, traditional environmentalism often fails to account for the legacies of colonialism, neocolonial exploitation, and the displacement of Indigenous peoples, whose connection to place was violently severed. While acknowledging that global environmental issues like climate change affect the entire planet, he highlights that their impacts manifest differently in specific areas, often resulting in delayed forms of degradation that are “dispersed across time and space” and not immediately apparent (Nixon, 2011). Nixon challenges the conventional Western environmental perspective, which prioritizes immediate sensory experiences, arguing that to understand transnational and planetary environmental degradation, it is essential to connect issues of power and perspective. To achieve this, he highlights “the temporalities of place” (2011: 18), allowing for an understanding of place in relation to both temporal and geographical dislocation. This occurs when locations are affected by global forces, resulting in the inhabitants losing their land rights and being denied access to environmental resources. Thus, displacement should not be viewed solely as the movement of people; instead, it represents a complex interplay of global and local relationships that render a place uninhabitable.

Transitioning to displacement, ecocriticism increasingly addresses how environmental changes force mobility and loss, disrupting the sense of place. Displacement here refers not only to physical relocation but also to cultural, emotional, and epistemological upheavals. In *Ecocriticism and the Sense of Place*, Lenka Filipova discusses concepts such as solastalgia, anthropocene anxiety, and climate grief, as examples of how ecological loss produces grief even without literal movement (Filipova, 2022). This insight widens ecocriticism’s concerns to include the mental health and emotional well-being of communities facing climate crises, linking environmental change with gender, care work, and social justice in ways that resonate with ecofeminist thought.

Results and Discussion

1. Displacement as Narrative of Uprootedness in the Mekong Delta

In Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's short stories, displacement emerges as a multi-layered phenomenon where ecological crisis, political history, and economic modernization intersect to uproot individuals, families, and entire communities. Her narratives reveal that losing one's land in the Mekong Delta is rarely a single event; rather, it is a continuum of dislocations stretching across generations. At its core, displacement in these texts unfolds in both material and existential dimensions: people are forced to abandon ancestral homes, livelihoods collapse under floods or salinization, and memories themselves become unstable as familiar landscapes vanish. The stories transform the Mekong Delta into what can be called a chronotope of loss, where space and time intertwine to narrate uprootedness, eroded traditions, and fractured identities.

Endless field, one of Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's most famous stories, dramatizes displacement through the lives of a single-dad family drifting across river networks with their flock of ducks. After his wife left for another man, the father, Út Vũ – devastated by grief – abandoned life on land and chose a drifting existence on the rivers with his two children. However, their displacement becomes inevitable as they drift on boats after their homes and fields are destroyed by alum-contaminated soil and unyielding droughts. The writer portrays salinity intrusion in the Mekong Delta with a sense of tragedy, depicting people whose “bodies festered with scabies, kids scratched themselves until their skin bled. [...] In the afternoon when people returned from the fields, they would bathe in pond water that tasted like alum, then rinse themselves with exactly two buckets of water” (Nguyễn, 2019). In this story, place is no longer the solid ground of memory or identity but a shifting terrain shaped by ecological collapse and economic pressures. The Mekong Delta, shaped by rivers that both sustain and erode, embodies a contested sense of place, where lives cling to fragile ecologies increasingly threatened by upstream dams, urbanization, and the slow violence of climate change. Nguyễn Ngọc Tư wrote:

“The fields became cities. The fields changed the taste of the water from refreshing to cringingly salty. The fields were now devoid of humans, the wild rice stalks pining for the human feet that used to wade in the mud but now wandered the cities to make a living. It was those fields that rejected the rice plants (and indirectly the ducks). The soil beneath our feet shrunk slowly” (Nguyễn, 2019: 95).

The narrative structure itself reinforces this sense of fragmentation. Told in disjointed episodes rather than linear progression, the story mirrors the family's drifting existence – moving from one riverbank to another, herding ducks, scavenging resources, never settling. This mobility is not liberating but imposed, a survival strategy in a landscape that no longer anchors life. For Điền and Nương, growing up without schools, neighbors, or lasting ties, displacement unravels more than homes or fields: it erodes villages, disperses families, and hollows out the bonds between people and place, so much so that Nương admits, “I often miss people” finding companionship only in the ducklings. The father, once broken by betrayal, speaks less as floods rise and livelihoods shrink. His silence contrasts with the ceaseless movement around him: drifting boats, migrating laborers, rising and receding waters. The children, following his

lead, inhabit a world where words diminish alongside land and home, where relationships thin out under the weight of dislocation. Place, in *The Endless field*, no longer binds people together but disperses them – physically across landscapes, socially across communities, and narratively across fragmented episodes.

If *Endless field* dramatizes displacement through forced mobility on water, *Thổ Sầu* intensifies this theme by layering environmental degradation, historical violence, and economic marginalization upon the Mekong Delta's rural landscapes. The story is set in a small riverside village, its very name – *Thổ Sầu* (literally “sorrow soil”), capturing the paradox of land that both sustains and burdens its inhabitants. The opening descriptions of thin rice paddies, withered gardens, and trees with exposed roots establish a landscape marked by exhaustion. Such imagery makes visible a place where survival depends on precarious livelihoods: rat-hunting during the dry season, frog-spearing when floods arrive, or small-scale handicrafts sold to passing tourists (Nguyễn, 2023). Rather than offering security, the land enforces cycles of scarcity that trap families in immobility. In this sense, displacement does not always mean leaving; it can also mean being left behind in spaces that no longer provide continuity or belonging. The narrator, *Đậu*, serves as a central figure embodying the internal conflict of displacement, caught between dutifulness to his father and the pull of urban opportunities. As a young man tied to the land by family graves and paternal stubbornness, *Đậu*'s refusal to leave with his friend *Huệ* highlights a generational divide: the older generation clings to *Thổ Sầu* despite its decline, while youth like *Huệ* seek escape through migration.

In *Thổ Sầu*, the tourists play a crucial role in critiquing displacement through the lens of “poverty porn”, where urban visitors consume the village's melancholy as entertainment, commodifying suffering without alleviating it. Described as “ecstatic” amid mud and rain, snapping photos of patched quilts and leaky roofs, these characters embody a form of voyeurism that exploits rural hardship for emotional gratification. *Thổ Sầu* becomes a “spectacle” for outsiders seeking “primitive sadness”, disrupting local identities by turning everyday struggles into tourist attractions. This dynamic suggests a reverse displacement for the visitors themselves-alienated from urban anonymity, they seek authenticity in rural decay, only to return home with superficial insights, like boasting of “escaping poverty” through brief immersion. In the Mekong Delta, this reflects growing ecotourism trends, where development promises prosperity but often exacerbates inequality, displacing cultural integrity for economic gain.

Another short story, *The Splendid Sky Smoke* (*Khói trời lộng lẫy*), reframes displacement from mere movement to a condition of living-on after place has been altered beyond recognition. The narrator – called *Di*, also nicknamed *Trầu*, arrives with her son *Phiên* on an islet the locals simply call *xóm Cồn*. The islet functions as a refuge and a sentence at once: “the islet, lying in the middle of the river, is by itself a place of exile”, a space where people who cannot return (because of scandal, debt, violence, or shame) remake a provisional life amid water, weeds, and wind-blown huts. The story's most revealing device is the narrator's second life as a field worker for the “Institute of Natural and Human Heritage”. Hired after an interview that reduces her labor to “listening to nature speak,” she is told to “go find what is about to be lost – there's a lot

out there.” This institutional imperative converts vanishing lifeworlds into “samples”: scraps of sound (a flag snapping in the wind, a ladle clinking in iced coffee), snatches of image (children bathing in canals, a wedding arch made of palm fronds). The archive promises to “keep the world,” yet the narrator recognizes the paradox: the more that gets stored, the more it testifies to disappearance outside. In a dreamlike scene, a museum motto reads, “Nothing lasts forever, keep this world,” and she steps into a corridor of rooms where each door opens onto loss. The episodic structure – numbered vignettes that shuttle between the islet, the Institute, and long river errands, mirrors that archival logic: memory is kept because place is slipping away. Displacement is thus institutional as well as ecological; landscapes become files, and communities become exhibits of what modernization will erase.

Nguyễn Ngọc Tư’s stories together reveal displacement as less a single rupture than an everyday condition of the Mekong Delta, where ecology, history, and modernity interlock to erode belonging. What makes these narratives distinctive is not simply their depiction of uprooted lives but their insistence that “staying” can be as displacing as leaving. Families who cling to ancestral soil find themselves inhabiting places that are no longer fertile or recognizable; those who migrate discover new forms of loss when ties dissolve behind them. This dual movement destabilizes conventional oppositions between home and exile, or stability and mobility, showing instead that displacement in fragile environments often means living in between – caught in provisional arrangements that resist permanence.

From a broader theoretical standpoint, such portrayals align with what cultural geographers describe as “precarious emplacement,” where place is understood not as a fixed territory but as a relational and shifting construct. Filipova’s argument about the contested nature of place helps illuminate why rivers, fields, or islets in these stories function simultaneously as refuge and exile, sustenance and threat. Yet Nguyễn pushes this idea further: by embedding ecological collapse within social and political histories, she suggests that displacement in the Delta is cumulative – layers of collectivization, salinity, and tourism stack upon one another, making belonging itself unstable. In this sense, her fiction contributes to the global discourse on climate migration while grounding it in specifically Vietnamese experiences of environmental and cultural precarity.

2. Solastalgia and the Poetics of Environmental Grief

While the physical, social, and institutional dimensions of displacement illustrate the external forces that unmoor communities, it is equally important to consider the inner, psychological weight of this process. Being unhomed is not only a logistical or economic challenge; it is also an emotional rupture. This is where the concept of solastalgia becomes central. First introduced by philosopher Glenn Albrecht, solastalgia names the distress that arises when one’s home environment changes for the worse while one is still living there (Albrecht, 2005). In other words, it is the affective response to environmental displacement: the grief and anxiety felt when landscapes that once

provided comfort and belonging instead generate unease and loss. Etymologically, the term merges the Latin *sōlācium* (solace) with the Greek *-algia* (pain or grief). Albrecht used it to describe a paradoxical form of homesickness experienced without leaving home. Unlike nostalgia – defined by longing for a home that exists in another time or place, solastalgia is tied to the present, to the lived reality of inhabiting a place that has become unfamiliar, degraded, or hostile (Galway et al., 2019). This distinction matters, especially in regions like the Mekong Delta, where staying often feels as destabilizing as leaving. Here, residents do not always migrate; they remain on ancestral land, yet the encroaching salinity, floods, or urban projects slowly erode the sense of stability that “home” once guaranteed.

Understanding solastalgia is therefore essential for a fuller account of displacement. While displacement describes the external condition of being uprooted, solastalgia points to the interior experience of estrangement and grief that follows environmental change. Together, the two concepts illuminate both the visible and invisible dimensions of the climate crisis in the Mekong Delta: homes lost to rising seas, but also identities fraying in the shadow of vanishing landscapes. Reading Nguyễn Ngọc Tư’s fiction through this lens bridges ecocritical theory with the lived realities of rural communities, showing how environmental change reshapes not only where people live but also how they feel, remember, and belong.

In *Endless field*, solastalgia deepens the displacement theme by shifting focus from physical uprooting to emotional desolation within a changing homeland. Nường embodies solastalgia most vividly. Her recurring hallucinations (imagining herself “sitting in a field nine years ago” while eating) collapse present deprivation into past abundance (Nguyễn, 2019). This is not simple longing but a psychic fracture: she remains tied to the same rivers and fields, yet those places no longer resemble the home of her memory. The alum-tainted water, described as “cringingly salty”, invades her body and spirit, leaving her skin sticky and her mind unsettled. Her confession, “I often miss people”, conveys more than loneliness; it signals the erosion of community life, where the ducks she tends to become her only companions. Solastalgia here is communal as much as individual, it hollows out both human bonds and the more-than-human ties that once made the Delta livable.

For characters in *The Splendid Sky Smoke*, the loss of ecological integrity is not just physical but emotional: their dreams, silences, and attempts to hold onto fragments of beauty show how solastalgia erodes identity and belonging even before people leave. For Di, solastalgia unfolds as a chronic ache rooted in the islet’s physical erosion, which strips away the solace she once derived from its isolation. Her arrival in Cồn village marks a deliberate exile, but the land’s degradation – driven by relentless sand extraction, turns this refuge into a site of ongoing loss. As the river widens through mining, Di observes the “earth of the islet being swallowed chunk by chunk, waves crashing and shattering the leafy banks, the soil collapsing and carrying away the *bàn* trees that gave the islet its name” (Nguyễn, 2022a). These images evoke the notion of psychoterratic illness, where a “sick landscape” (Albrecht, 2005) reflects inner turmoil and fosters feelings of injustice and helplessness. Di’s powerlessness intensifies as the *xáng* machines “roar and howl, manically, barbarically, as they plunge their nozzles into

the river's body, sucking its marrow, exposing its ravaged innards" (Nguyễn, 2022a), symbolizing an invasive force that desecrates her home. Unlike her Institute work, where she captures vanishing elements in controlled "samples," the islet's changes are uncontrollable, leaving her in a state of anticipatory grief – knowing the land "will do this until the final shores collapse". This suggests that solastalgia in this short story deepens the story's portrayal of the Delta as a space of provisional existence, where environmental transformation inflicts emotional wounds that archiving cannot heal. Di's distress highlights the human cost of modernization's "slow violence," urging a recognition of place-bound grief in vulnerable ecosystems.

The short story *Land* (Đất) is set against the turbulent backdrop of Vietnam's land reform campaigns (1953–1956), when ancestral holdings were confiscated, redistributed, or degraded under shifting political and economic regimes. This setting matters: land served as both a source of livelihood and a tie to family and memory. When these lands were taken or lost their fertility, people often stayed, facing the confusion of living in places that no longer felt like home. This captures solastalgia: the pain of staying in a familiar place as it changes beyond recognition, weakening comfort and sense of self. In "Land," solastalgia emerges not from migration but from the family's entrapment in a shrinking rural enclave amid encroaching cityscapes. The narrative weaves dreams, memories, and daily observations to show how characters grapple with this loss, using retrospective narration as a coping mechanism. This backward gaze highlights solastalgia's emotional toll: a mix of anxiety, isolation, and yearning for a pre-urbanized world.

The story's unnamed narrator and her family embody solastalgia through their reactions to the land's transformation. The plot centers on a small patch of family land—once part of vast fields—now encircled by high-rises, limiting sunlight to just five hours a day and flooding nights with artificial light. This urbanization isn't abstract; it's visceral, altering daily rhythms and evoking a deep sense of violation. The grandmother, a resilient matriarch, guards the eastern corner of the land, complaining about the skyscrapers' shadows: "They took all our morning sun... If they can't steal the land, they steal the sunlight, just as vicious" (Nguyễn, 2022b). Her actions, like watching for intruders from the "Heaven" building, show a defiant attachment to the land as heritage, yet her memories of past reforms amplify the grief: without land, "we're nothing at all". Meanwhile, the narrator, who cares for her epileptic brother Hai, experiences solastalgia most intensely through dreams and flashbacks. She feels like "we're on the back side, on the edge of the light". This light pollution—a hallmark of urbanization—disrupts natural cycles, evoking isolation akin to childhood frustration with unreachable festival lights across the river. Brother Hai's tragic death, charging into a bulldozer to protect the narrator, crystallizes the family's despair. Piecing his remains together on the scarred earth, the narrator realizes she's bound forever: "I knew I'd never leave this piece of land" (Nguyễn, 2022b). Yet, in a solastalgic twist, staying means enduring constant change, leading to identity loss: "Without a name, we're nothing, no one, and have nothing at all". "Land" portrays solastalgia not as passive sorrow but as active resistance through memory. The characters' flashbacks aren't mere nostalgia; they're a protest against the "quarrelsome" sun and glowing nights that erase rural identity. By

emphasizing land as lifeblood, Nguyễn Ngọc Tư humanizes the Mekong Delta's real struggles, showing how urbanization inflicts invisible wounds – turning home into a stranger's territory.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's short stories illuminate the Mekong Delta as a site where ecological degradation, displacement, and solastalgia converge. By employing close reading and ecocritical narratology, the research reveals that climate change reshapes both the material and emotional landscapes of the Delta: disrupting livelihoods, severing ties to place, and fostering psychological distress. In this sense, displacement and solastalgia emerge as mutually reinforcing conditions that define the lived experience of environmental crisis. The significance of this research lies in its integration of place studies with ecocriticism, offering new insights into how Vietnamese literature mediates the psychological burdens of ecological change. While previous studies have emphasized symbolic landscapes or socio-cultural critiques, this project highlights the value of attending to the affective and mental health dimensions embedded in narrative form.

Nonetheless, the study also points to future directions. Further research could compare the Mekong Delta's literary representations with other climate-vulnerable regions, trace how different genres (film, oral storytelling, visual arts) register ecological grief, or investigate how community narratives intersect with state and global discourses on climate adaptation. Such extensions would enrich not only the field of Vietnamese ecocriticism but also the broader environmental humanities, where the links between climate change, place, and mental well-being remain urgent and understudied.

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