

# Transformation of French literature into Ho Bieu Chanh's work from the perspective of the polysystem theory

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## **Abstract:**

Around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the national language script was born and developed thanks to the merits of Western missionaries such as G.D. Amaral and A. Barbosa (Portugal); A.D. Rhodes (France). However, Catholic literature in Vietnam over the next 200 years was still mainly written in Nom, Chinese, or Latin. When the French tried to consolidate their rule in Vietnam, the Quoc Ngu script was made official throughout Vietnam in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to eliminate the influence of anti-French Confucianism in Vietnam. Among the writers of this period, Ho Bieu Chanh was the most successful. Commenting on Ho Bieu Chanh's position in Vietnamese literature, the book *Vietnamese Literature from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to 1945* by the Publishing House of the University of Pedagogy wrote: "Ho Bieu Chanh is a pioneer writer of modern fiction. Vietnam in the first steps before the period of prosperity (since 1932) and also a strong writer with many merits. Ho Bieu Chanh's novel has contributed significantly to the preparation for the formation of critical realism in Vietnamese literature in the following decade" [1]. This article studies Ho Bieu Chanh's work as a case of how Vietnamese intellectuals received creatively French literature in particular and Western culture in general. This research inspects Ho Bieu Chanh's works from the perspective of the polysystem theory to find out the acquisition of French literature as well as the author's creativity in comparison with the original ones. As a result, the contribution of Ho Bieu Chanh in modernizing Vietnamese literature and his success will be affirmed.

**Keywords:** French influence, Ho Bieu Chanh, modern Vietnamese literature, Vietnamese intellectuals the polysystem theory.

**Classification number:** 9.2

## **1. Introduction**

Ho Bieu Chanh (1885-1958), real name Ho Van Trung, self-Bieu Chanh, Thu Tien name; he was a famous writer in South Vietnam in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. When writing, he took the name Ho Bieu Chanh with the family name, and that name became an immortal pseudonym. He was born on October 1, 1885 in Binh Thanh village, Go Cong province (now in Thanh Nhat hamlet, Binh Xuan commune, Go Cong town, Tien Giang province). Born in a peasant family, he was taught Kanji from an early age. At the age of 13, he switched to studying the national language, passed the exam, and won a scholarship to My Tho High School. After that, he moved to Saigon to study at Chasseloup Laubat School. At the end of 1905, he passed the Diploma exam. Then, he took the exam

to become Surveillance Commissioner of the Lieutenant-Gouverneur de la Cochinchine; he worked as a scribe, and interpreter, and then was promoted to the governor of chef de province (1936). He also used to hold the position of district chief in many places. He retired in 1941. He was known as an honest mandarin who loved the people and loved the poor.

After retiring, he was invited by France to be an advisor with the title of Member of the Federation Council of Indochina and Deputy Director of Saigon city, and at the same time, director of newspapers that propagated French-Vietnamese harmony. After the French re-occupied the South in 1946, the Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina was established, and he worked as an advisor to the government of Nguyen Van Thinh. When

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Nguyen Van Thinh's government collapsed after a few months of existence, he retreated to his hometown in hiding and devoted the rest of his years to a literary career. He died on September 4, 1958 in Phu Nhuan, Gia Dinh at the age of 73. His tomb is currently located on Thong Nhat street, ward 11, Go Vap district, Ho Chi Minh city.

Ho Bieu Chanh has extraordinary creativity. He left more than 100 works of various genres, such as: 64 novels, 12 collections of short stories and stories, 12 comedies and plays, 5 collections of poems and stories, 8 volumes of memoirs, 28 volumes of reviews, review - critique. In addition, there are lectures and 2 translated works. Ho Bieu Chanh has a knack for writing autobiographical prose. His compositions mainly reflect the Southern life style from rural to urban areas in the early twentieth century with social changes caused by conflicts between traditional values and modern factors. The language in his compositions is simple, and bold in the South. He has made great contributions to the formation of the novel genre on its embryonic journey and has since made an important contribution to the modernization of Vietnamese literature. Having selectively absorbed the quintessence of Western literature, Ho Bieu Chanh has contributed to enlightening modern literature and innovating the novel genre. "Ho Bieu Chanh has selected Western literary novels rich in realism and humanity to adapt to his work... that is, fresh blood drops, giving the patient's body the same blood type, making the body of Vietnamese literature quickly healthy, gradually becoming strong and rosy... Acquiring the technique of constructing Western novels, Ho Bieu Chanh contributed to innovating the novel genre in terms of construction aspects. plot, plot, and layout of works. The thought-carrying carriage of the national language, which was previously still heavy and sluggish, has been gently pushed here, gliding across miles of new literature. That is the merit of the driver Ho Bieu Chanh [2].

Ho Bieu Chanh adapted novels by a number of foreign writers, mainly French writers. When adapting from a novel, he usually states the original novel he used. However, the writer does not borrow machinery but creatively adapts. He clearly stated the way he borrowed from his foreign stories: "When I read French novels or operas that I feel, I use that feeling as a topic, then adapt it more or less or use that to compose a work. It's completely Vietnamese. Although I'm adapting, it's

actually only taking the main idea, but sometimes I even reverse it to the main idea, making the plot completely contrary to psychology, far from the French story" [3]. That concept governs the writer's selection of events and character-building on the basis of foreign originals. In the following, we analyze in more detail the inheritance and creative points of Ho Bieu Chanh compared with the works that he himself confirmed to have relied on to adapt.

## 2. Polysystem theory

Polysystem theory was established by I.E. Zohar from many theses discussed in two seminars in Louvain in 1969 and 1970. After that, I.E. Zohar completed and developed in the next few years.

Polysystem theory begins with the assumption that culture can be viewed as a system. It is "relationships that can be assumed for a given set of observed and assumed things, making it possible to assume the behavior of different sets of social semiotics" [4]. It is through these relationships that the object becomes observable. Therefore, polysystem theory focuses on studying the object in relation to other objects rather than focusing on studying the object itself in isolation. The nature of each element can be realized through relationships with other elements, the value of the object is not internal to the object but can only be established when placed in relation to the object, that is, within a system.

Applied in literary studies, polysystem theory holds that a literary work is good not because of its intrinsic nature but because it is placed in relation to other objects in the cultural space. That particular context causes its features to emerge and become exemplary. When studying literature, researchers should not only evaluate literature at its peak, or focus only on a specific area of literature, but ignore other areas of literature that seem less important and make less contribution to the overall literature such as children's literature, thrillers or romances...

Systems are not static and independent, but have internal development and interaction between systems. I.E. Zohar defines contact as "a link between cultures by which a given culture A (source culture) has the potential to become a source of direct or indirect transmission to other B culture (target culture) [4]. Interference is when the transition is either voluntary or forced. When culture is considered as a polysystem acting on categories,

cross-cultural interference is in fact the transfer of items (conceived as “goods” to be “imported” into a target culture) from one system to another one which does not have available transmitted categories. According to I.E. Zohar, a true interference case is when an item does not simply appear, but must be transformed into generative patterns, which means dynamic elements in the native category. Contact is a fundamental condition of interference, but not all contact is interference because the latter requires rooting in the target culture.

When studying the process of interference from that point of view, I.E. Zohar found that when the category has completed the interference, it is no longer a matter of the source culture, but has become a matter of nature. The basic principle here is the separation of the transmitted elements from the source of export and their subsequent independence: as soon as the source of the export is no longer necessary for the establishment of the elements of the discussed category, it is a case of interference. Once the interference occurs, the source/origin issue is no longer relevant. For most members of a community, once moved into the category, the fate of an element succeeding or failing becomes an indigenous issue” [4].

From the theory of polysystem, we can see that Ho Bieu Chanh made a shift of categories from modern French novels to Vietnamese literature - contemporary literature which has cultural categories belong to medieval culture - into generative patterns - which mean dynamic elements in the native category, creating a true interference.

### 3. Ho Bieu Chanh localizes foreign titles, genres, and plots

The following table is a list of the names of 14 works that Ho Bieu Chanh adapted based on French and Russian literary works.

Table 1 shows that 12/14 works have the name of the original work adapted, 2/14 does not share the name of the original work, 13/14 works are adapted from works of French writers, 1/14 is adapted from *Crimes et Chaatiment*, by the Russian writer F.M. Dostoievski.

As can be seen, the first element to be changed is the title of the work. The titles of Ho Bieu Chanh’s works are boldly Vietnamese. These may be relatively stable phrases that Vietnamese people often use to express their petty human condition such as *Cay Dang Mui Doi* (Bitter Life), *Chut Phan Linh Dinh* (Floating Fate), *Ngon*

**Table 1. List of works that Ho Bieu Chanh adapted based on French and Russian literary works.**

No.	Ho Bieu Chanh's adapted work	Original works
1	<i>Ai Lam Duoc</i> , 1912	<i>Andre Cornelis</i> - P. Bourget
2	<i>Vay Moi Phai</i> (Poetic story), 1913	<i>Le Cid</i> - P. Corneille
3	<i>Chua tau Kim Quy</i> (Novel), 1913	<i>Le Comte de Monte Cristo</i> - A. Dumas
4	<i>Cay Dang Mui Doi</i> (Novel), 1923	<i>Sans Famille</i> - H. Malot
5	<i>Thay Thong Ngon</i> (Novel), 1926	<i>Les Amours d'Estève</i> - A. Theuriet
6	<i>Ngon Co Gio Dua</i> (Novel), 1926	<i>Les Miserables</i> - V. Hugo
7	<i>Chut Phan Linh Dinh</i> (Novel), 1928	<i>En Famille</i> - H. Malot
8	<i>Ke Lam Nguoi Chiu</i> (Novel), 1928	<i>Les Deux Gosses</i> - P. Decourcelle
9	<i>Vi Nghia Vi Tinh</i> (Novel), 1929	<i>Fanfan et Claudinet</i> - P. Decourcelle
10	<i>Cha Con Nghia Nang</i> (Novel), 1929	<i>Le Calvaire</i> - P. Decourcelle
11	<i>O Theo Thoi</i> , 1935	<i>Topaze</i> - M. Pagnol
12	<i>Ong Cu</i> , 1935	<i>L'artiste</i> (Ho Bieu Chanh did not mention the author's name)
13	<i>Doa Hoa Tan</i> , 1936	<i>Le Rosaire</i> (Ho Bieu Chanh did not mention the author's name)
14	<i>Nguoi That Chi</i> , 1938	<i>Crimes et Chaatiment</i> - F.M. Dostoievski

*Co Gio Dua* (Grass Naughty Wind), *Ke Lam Nguoi Chiu* (He Breaks, Other Pays), *O Theo Thoi* (Following The Wind)... or carry moral teachings such as *Cha Con Nghia Nang* (Parentship), *Vi Nghia Vi Tinh* (For the Sake of Love and Responsibility)...

There are also works that have been changed in terms of genres such as poetic stories. That’s right, 1913 was adapted from P. Corneille’s play *Le Cid*.

Along with the name of the work, the genre, many plots, although absorbed, still have significant changes (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison between the original and Ho Bieu Chanh's works.

No.	Original plot	Ho Bieu Chanh's plot
1	<p><b>Le Comte de Monte Cristo</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The story takes place in France, Italy, islands in the Mediterranean and the Levant in 1815-1838.</li> <li>- Pierre Picaud, a shoemaker, lives in Paris. Picaud was betrothed to a rich woman, but four jealous friends falsely accused him of spying for England. He was imprisoned for 7 years.</li> <li>- While in prison, a fellow inmate, Father Pharia, on his deathbed revealed to him a treasure hidden in Milan.</li> <li>- When Picaud was released in 1814, he got the treasure, changed his name to Monte Cristo and went to Paris and lived there for 10 years and successfully avenged the old friends who slandered those old friends. But after taking revenge on the last person who slandered him, he suddenly realized that revenge would not be good after the facts.</li> <li>- The count has in turn returned his gratitude to those who have helped and properly punished those evil minds who have harmed him.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kim Quy Ship's Lord</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The context of the story was built under Minh Mang's reign in the South.</li> <li>- Le Thu Nghia, a young farmer, beat Tan Than and broke his arm because he violated the morality of Le Thu Nghia's sister. To take revenge, Tan Than bribed the district officials to falsely accuse Nghia of following Christianity, so he was sentenced to life in prison.</li> <li>- During the examination, he befriended a guest and learned to speak Cantonese. Before he died, the guest revealed to him that he was the grandson of Mac Cuu's four generations. His father hid a lot of gold and silver on Kim Quy island, a small island in the south of Phu Quoc island.</li> <li>- When the medical examiner was on fire, Thu Nghia took advantage of the chaos to escape back to his hometown, only to learn that his parents and younger sister had died. He found a treasure, pretended to be a Cantonese customer, bought a merchant ship, and became the lord of the Kim Quy ship.</li> <li>- The Lord of the ship Kim Quy seeks to repay his brother-in-law, Kinh Chi, who suffered because of worrying about his parents and sister.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Sans Famille</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remi is a rich boy, was kidnapped by his uncle at the age of five or six months, and taken away in a public place, hoping that his sick brother will die after death, then the whole fortune of the brother will return all his part.</li> <li>- Remi was picked up by Barberin, a mason passing by, and brought home to raise, with the purpose that this rich child's parents would bring back the ransom.</li> <li>- But many years later, Barberin saw no one to redeem him and because of a professional accident, he fell into poverty, so he had to sell Remi to Vitali, a circus performer, despite the objections of his wife. She loves the little boy like her own son.</li> <li>- Since then, Remi lived a wandering life, many years later found her biological mother.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cay Dang Mui Doi</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Le Thi Thoi's husband (Ba Thoi) is Tran Van Huu, working far away and has a young wife.</li> <li>- At home, Ba Thoi picked up a small child of five or six months old and left it in the bushes, so he brought it home and raised it and named it OK.</li> <li>- When Dua was 9 years old, Huu returned. He sold it to the interpreter Tran Cao Dang.</li> <li>- Because of pressure from his superiors, Tran Cao Dang resigned from his position and was abused by his wife because he couldn't stand the miserable life, so he left home and roamed around the continent, teaching him Dan singing to make money.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Les Miserables</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jean Valjean for stealing a piece of bread for his sister's child, was sentenced to 19 years in prison with prison number 24601.</li> <li>- After being released from prison, he had to carry a golden passport, a sign that its bearer had committed a crime, so Jean was refused by the innkeeper and forced to sleep on the street. Bishop Myriel, a famous philanthropist, gave Jean Valjean a place of refuge. When everyone was asleep, Jean stole the Bishop's silverware and ran away, he was recaptured later but was saved by Mr. Myriel when he told the police that it was a gift he gave to Valjean. When parting, the old Bishop told Jean Valjean that he must become an honest person and do many good deeds for people.</li> <li>- Eight years after Valjean, now named Mr. Madeleine, became a wealthy factory owner and mayor of the small town where he lived, Valjean had to take on a false name to avoid detection by Inspector Javert is still actively searching for him. However, fate forced Valjean to reveal his identity when another man was mistaken for Jean Valjean and brought to court. At the same time, Valjean meets Fantine, a dying girl after being fired from his factory and forced to work as a prostitute to support his daughter Cosette, living with the wicked Thenardier family.</li> <li>- Before Fantine died, Valjean promised her to take good care of Cosette, he paid the innkeeper Thenardier to free Cosette and flee to Paris from Javert's pursuit. One of the revolutionaries was Marius Pontmercy, a student shunned by his family for his liberal views who fell in love with Cosette, now a very beautiful young woman.</li> <li>- Marius and Cosette get married. He also had the happiness of being with his beloved adopted daughter and son-in-law. He told them that he loved them very much, and then Valjean died.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ngon Co Gio Dua</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Le Van Do for stealing a pot of pork porridge for his brother's children and grandchildren was arrested and imprisoned for 20 years. During that time in exile, mother and grandchildren died of starvation.</li> <li>- Released from prison, he returned to his hometown. Because he had no money, he was chased away. Long way, hungry, Le Van Do lost in a temple and fainted. Master Chanh Tam abbot let him live. Taking advantage of everyone's sleep, That was stealing from the temple, wearing a jade suit, but the monk Chanh Tam did not report the fine, but told the pursuing soldiers that this was a gift he gave, and even gave it silver as a fee. Write a letter of recommendation There with Li Ki Phung in Can Duoc to look for a job. The monk also instructed Le Van Do to become an honest person.</li> <li>- Le Van Do changed his name to Tran Chanh Tam, went to Can Duoc area to find Li Ki Phung but he died. That made a career by reclaiming, and then became rich. He chivalrously helped the poor, provided food for the imperial army, so he was named Thien Ho by the court. The name Pham Ki, the prison guard the day before, searched for Le Van Do aggressively. Fate also forced Do to confess when another man was mistaken for Le Van Do and was arrested. The Mandarin Chief of Binh Duong province, named Tu Hai Yen, lead the army to capture Le Van Do. Li Anh Nguyet, daughter of Li Ki Nguyen, niece of Li Ki Phung, who was an ex-wife abandoned by Tu Hai Yen, drifted everywhere, at that time she was seriously ill and relied on Thien Ho's family, saw Tu Hai Yen arrest Thien Ho, upset till die. Before her death, Anh Nguyet relied on Thien Ho to raise her daughter, Thu Van, who was living with the innkeeper Do Cam - Thi Phi at that time.</li> <li>- Thien Ho kept his promise, went to redeem Thu Van from the Do Cam's house, raised Thu Van to grow up, and became a beautiful young woman. A scholar with great ambition is Vuong The Phung - the son of Vuong The Hung, a philanthropist - who fell in love with Thu Van.</li> <li>- Vuong The Phung and Thu Van got married. Le Van Do gave all his accumulated assets to Thu Van, lying that it was left by Thu Van's mother. Le Van Do is happy when two children are happy. Then he died.</li> </ul>

<p><b>4</b> <i>En Famille</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mr. Vunphran - owner of a jute factory in Morocco has an only son, Etmong Vupran Panhdavoan. Because his son did not want to do business, he sent to India to buy jute.</li> <li>- Here Etmong married an Indian girl named Mari Doretsan without his father's approval.</li> <li>- Mr. Vunphran got angry and sent his son away. Because the business failed, Etmong and his wife and daughter Perrine wandered around to earn a living by many occupations such as photography and sales. Then Etmong fell ill and died on the road.</li> <li>- A few months later, his wife, Mari, also died of illness and starvation.</li> <li>- Perrine lost her mother when she was 12 years old. Before she died, my mother told me: Go to Macorua, live a happy life.</li> <li>- Following her promise to her mother, the girl went through the deep forest to find him.</li> <li>- When she meets her grandfather - a wealthy businessman, Perrine learns that her grandfather and father have a deep conflict because her father married her mother - an Indian woman without his approval.</li> <li>- I apply to work as a worker in my grandfather's factory, become independent and support myself. Because she knows English, she was assigned the job of translating documents by him. Gradually, she was loved and trusted by him.</li> <li>- I have to deal with deceitful relatives, so blinded by money that I am ready to sell my conscience for a huge fortune.</li> <li>- At the end of the work, with intelligence and energy, Perrine won a well-deserved reward. I was recognized by my grandfather, handed over the inheritance and became a kind owner.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Chut Phan Linh Dinh</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mr. Le Hien Dat - former Council in Nha Man, Sa Dec province has an only son, Le Hien Vinh. When Le Hien Vinh went to Saigon to study, he became acquainted with Doan Thu Van, whose parents died early, and was living with his uncle.</li> <li>- Le Hien Vinh and Doan Thu Van love each other and have two little girls, Thu Ba and Thu Cuc. This marriage was also not approved by Mr. Le Hien Vinh, so he refused to face his son. Thu Ba is lost.</li> <li>- Having the opportunity, again encouraged by Thu Van, Le Hien Vinh decided to go to France to study medicine. On the way, the Hai Phong ship carrying 500 passengers including Le Hien Vinh was sunk by the Germans.</li> <li>- Not long after, Thu Van was also seriously ill. Knowing that she would not live long, Thu Van told her son about his grandfather and his paternal and maternal relatives.</li> <li>- Then the mother and daughter crossed a long distance and struggled to find Mr. Council's house in Nha Man.</li> <li>- Here, mother and daughter applied to make bricks in Mr. Council's brick kiln.</li> <li>- Due to a lack of food, Thu Van's illness is getting worse. Mr. Council went to the brick kiln to check it out and lovingly welcomed him back to his mansion.</li> <li>- Mr. Council assigned her the job of catching worms to take care of trees and reading newspapers to him every day, gradually being loved by him.</li> <li>- Thu Van was cured of the disease.</li> <li>- Once, seeing Mr. Council so sad about his descendants, Thu Cuc couldn't help telling him the truth that he was Le Hien Dat's son, and his grandson. Mr. Council is happy to welcome his children.</li> <li>- Le Hien Dat, after a period of wandering, has returned. Family members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b> <i>Le Calvaire</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is the novel told in first person perspective. The character who calls himself "I" has the holy name Jean-Francois-Marie-Mintie. He was born in Saint-Michelles-Hetres, a small town in the Orne region, into a family traditionally notary. His mother became ill and when he was 12 years old, the mother died.</li> <li>- After that, Jean-Francois-Marie-Mintie volunteered to join the army. He became acquainted with Lirat, a painter.</li> <li>- During a visit to Lirat's studio, he became acquainted with a beautiful woman named Juliette Roux.</li> <li>- Jean Mintie had literary ambitions and the potential to be a good writer, but was unable to overcome her sexual obsession. Impotent, humiliated, he tries to turn his suffering into an impulse to create.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Cha Con Nghia Nang</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The story is told from the third person about the life of the character Tran Van Suu - a gentle, hard-working farmer. He married Thi Luu and had three children: Ti, Quyen, and Sung. He loves his wife dearly and loves his children. However, his wife is a promiscuous woman.</li> <li>- One day Suu caught his wife cheating, while angry, unfortunately, he pushed his wife, tripped and died immediately.</li> <li>- Suu fled, people thought Suu jumped into the river to commit suicide. Ti and his brother went to live with their grandfather, Huong Thi Tao. Sung fell ill and died, Ti and Quyen went to work as hired laborers for the housekeeper of Ton, loved by her, Quyen became her daughter-in-law.</li> <li>- After ten years of hiding, Suu sneaked home to visit his children, told by his father-in-law that their two children's lives were stable and happy, Suu hurriedly left...</li> <li>- After that, the Suu was cleared of the sentence and the father and son reunited.</li> </ul>

Through the comparison table above, it can be seen that the writer has changed the details to suit the ethnic customs and habits, especially the Southern lifestyle. For example, if Jean Van Jean in V. Hugo's *Les Miserables* stole a piece of bread for his grandchildren, Le Van Do in *Ngon Co Gio Dua* stole a pot of pork porridge for his grandchildren. "Banh my" (bread) is a dish imported from the West, not a popular and easy dish for the poor, or even for common people in Vietnam at that time. Replacing the detail of "bread" with a pot of "pork porridge", Ho Bieu Chanh also shows the tragic fate of the poor. They are not even equal to a rich man's pig. After being released from prison, Jean Van Jean was allowed to stay in the church by a benevolent priest, while Le Van Do was

allowed to stay in the temple by a monk... The pagoda was a space closer to the Vietnamese people at that time. Christianity was even considered heresy. In the novel *En Famille*, little Perrine came to his house and was accepted as a worker in his grandfather's jute mill, in the novel *Little Destiny*, Thu Van's mother and daughter were accepted as brick workers in grandfather's brick kiln. This detail of change is also consistent with the characteristics of Vietnamese society - an agricultural country. Industry is not yet developed. These changes help Ho Bieu Chanh's work reflect Vietnamese life and society in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century more delicately and closer to Vietnamese readers.

#### 4. Creation in narrative techniques

Not only change the title of the work, events, and details in the plot, but writer Ho Bieu Chanh also has more creativity in narrative art compared to the original.

In the novel *Sans Famille*, H. Malot tells the story in the first person. The writer let the main character, the boy Remi, tell the story of his life. Here's Remi's voice-over about her adoptive mother, Barberin: "I am an abandoned child. But until I was eight years old, I still thought I had a mother like other children, because whenever I cried, a woman would come to hug and comfort me. I never go to sleep without her coming to caress me. In winter, when the wind sows snow on the white glass, she pulls my feet into her hands and lulls me. To this day I still remember her voice and lyrics. When I was watching grazing cows on green grass roads or in the wilderness, but suddenly met with heavy rain, she quickly ran to meet me, pulled the hem of my shirt to cover my head, and brought me home. When I had an argument with another child, she asked me to tell her story and then she found sweet words to comfort me and always told me it was right".

In his adapted work *Cay Dang Mui Doi*, Ho Bieu Chanh tells the story in the third person. The narrator standing outside narrates the story. In the first paragraph of the novel, the writer describes the body of the adoptive mother, Ba Thoi, and re-creates Duoc's feelings for his adoptive mother: "The yellow dog in the house suddenly ran straight to the yard, the boy looked after it and saw a tattooed woman walking in from the shore, he immediately shouted "mam back" and then ran out, holding hands happily led in. This woman was about thirty-four years old, her shirt was rolled up, her pants were pulled up to her knees, her skin was neither black nor white, her face was round, her eyebrows were full, her body was wet, and there was a stinging plant on her back, her head was covered with a white cloth shawl, in addition to wearing a coconut leaf hat, she walked in and reached the yard, glanced at the duck coop and asked the boy:

- Have you fed the pigs or not yet?
- Not yet! I just took a shower and then kicked me into the house.
- Do ducks come back enough or not?
- I locked myself but forgot to count

(*Cay Dang Mui Doi*)

Comparing Hector Malot and Ho Bieu Chanh in the way of character introduction, we see that there are two

different writing styles: Hector Malot tells, Ho Bieu Chanh left. Hector Malot writes in the first person in a romantic way, letting emotions interfere with the pen, and using his emotions to attract readers. Ho Bieu Chanh writes in the third person in a left-footed style, in favor of reality. He stood outside, describing, without revealing any of his private feelings. He lets readers find their own emotions when reading. Through the above passage, with just a few lines, Ho Bieu Chanh introduced the woman with all her physique, clothes, age, and the mother-daughter response, expressing the motherly love between Duoc and Ba Thoi. With only a concise expression in 10 words "the child shouted loudly, let go of the bucket, and ran out with joy", Ho Bieu Chanh lets readers feel the love of Duoc with his adoptive mother.

#### 5. Building characters with characteristics of Southern farmers

Ho Bieu Chanh's writings have a large number of readers because they are compatible with the moral tradition, as well as the tastes of popular readers, just as Nguyen Van Trung commented in *Luc Chau Hoc*: "The early years century, Ho Bieu Chanh knew how to find his own way for his novels by promoting traditional experiences, exploiting artistic inspirations suitable to the taste of popular and mass readers. Therefore, the audience reading Ho Bieu Chanh is more extensive than many writers with a high-pitched, flying and luxurious way of writing" [5]. Above all, his compositions show the spirit of democracy, of caring and protecting the poor as he once confided: "When I was a mandarin, I took care of the poor, so I gained a reputation for loving the people. In novels, we also try to keep our filial piety and always defend the poor and common people, so we gain the sympathy of the masses" [1].

##### 5.1. Name and way of addressing people with Southern nuances

The characters in Ho Bieu Chanh's novels are named after the naming of the Cochinchina people: thang Duoc, thang Ti, con Luu, con Lien, Le Van Do, Le Van Day... or call according to the family's order Ba Thoi (Third Thoi), Sau Li (Sixth Li), or according to position such as Ba Ho Sieu (Village's Notable Man Sieu), Com Mi Danh (Commis Danh), Huong Hao Hoi (Community Hao)... Ho Bieu Chanh also faithfully reflects the address of the people of Cochinchina, especially in the countryside, during the French colonial period. For the first time in the novel, the way friends and husband and wife call each other in the countryside and fields are included in the novel by Ho

Bieu Chanh as: may tao, minh, ma sap nho, ma no, cha thang sung, or a processed way to call the third person who is absent: thay, ong, ba, con, thang, o tren...

## 5.2. Southerners maintaining morals

Absorbing the modern form of European literature, Ho Bieu Chanh continued to uphold the tradition of “literature primarily conveying morals” of Vietnam. The purpose of the writer is to demonstrate justice, fight evil and bring a good life to honest people, and touch people’s hearts. The name Bieu Chanh expressed his aspiration. In the memoir *Doi Cua Toi Ve Van Nghe* (My Life on Art), Ho Bieu Chanh confessed: “Writing novels to inspire, to gradually lead the masses back to the righteous and clear path” [1].

Ho Bieu Chanh’s characters are straightforward, chivalrous, honest, love-hate pages. Favored by nature, they have a generous personality and do not depend on money. They were originally Vietnamese exiles, the baggage they brought with them when they went to open the land were national cultural values. They uphold justice and discipline, which are values distilled from Confucianism. Loving morality, especially Confucian ethics, is a characteristic of Southern culture. Choosing this ideological theme, Ho Bieu Chanh wants to preserve the core cultural values of the nation - the moral standards of his ancestors - in the process of exchanging and interacting with the cultures of other countries, especially during the period of “European rain and American wind”. He himself once affirmed: “For the past forty years, I have cherished the ambition to uphold Confucian morality. Without weak writing, not narrowly educated, I enthusiastically sow the seeds of Kong Manh’s benevolence in society, secretly hoping that it will sprout and produce fresh flowers and fruits for the community to enjoy. with compatriots” [1].

This type of character, the writer inherits from the Southern line of moral literature, whose main originator is the poet Nguyen Dinh Chieu. But the man who practices the religion in Nguyen Dinh Chieu’s poetry and literature has become a man who preserves morality before the strong attack on money in Ho Bieu Chanh’s compositions. Qualities such as filial piety, decency, virtue, respect, and contempt for talent... in the relationships between king and I, teacher and student, father and son, brotherhood, husband and wife... - fundamental qualities of national morality always appreciated by writers. These principles also have an encounter by many French writers whose work Ho Bieu Chanh has published.

Upholding morality, the writer does not uphold rigid ethics, but he values human love. In Ho Bieu Chanh’s works, the thought seed of Khong Manh has lost its holy color, becoming a way of life, a way of life, a people’s morality, and popular morality.

### 5.2.1. Upholding family ethics

The family is the cell of society. Keeping the house religion is keeping the deep roots of social morality. Therefore, many of Ho Bieu Chanh’s works promote family morality, not focusing on building great heroic character models capable of “ruling the country”, or “pacifying the world”. Therefore, he is called a writer who “takes morality as the root, takes the family as a model, takes loyalty as the essential thing in everything in life” [6]. The characters in Ho Bieu Chanh’s works are mostly ordinary people, but they are very faithful to preserving the family and clan morality: the elderly are an example for children, and children have respect and obedience to people. When children are old, children are filial to their parents, parents love their children dearly, brothers and sisters love and protect each other, and husband and wife are faithful...

The novel *Cha Con Nghia Nang*, as Ho Bieu Chanh reveals, is an adaptation from *Le Calvaire*, however, the author retains only very few details in the original Octave Mirbeau, perhaps the motif of a man being mistreated by a woman. People who are mistreated in *Cha Con Nghia Nang* is Tran Van Suu, and the bad guy is his wife - Thi Luu. The rest, Ho Bieu Chanh mainly focuses on clarifying the closeness of family members, rather than delving into the character’s psychological state. Huong Thi Tao felt ashamed because her daughter Thi Luu was a liar, and her son-in-law had to live in a foreign country. Loving the children suffering from helplessness, the family being separated, Huong Thi Tao has grey hair, a few teeth fall out, but still has to “work hard to take care of her grandchildren, when carrying Sung to feed him, when taking children with him. Quyen went to take a bath”, “there was a night when I was about to sleep, he turned on the lamp and sat alone, when he saw them, he was moved to tears” [7]. In order to reduce the disadvantage of his grandchildren, he had to make every effort. He is ready for his grandchildren to have a good life no matter how hard he is. He said to Ti: “If you are poor, you can bear it, but why can’t you wait for someone else’s grandchildren” [7]. All his efforts stem from blood relatives and also aim to save the honor of the family. Ti, son of Tran Van Suu, also wants to be sacrificed and take care of his grandfather and sister. It told him: “Oh,

okay. He took the money and then bought a cloth to sew for Quyen's son a shirt and a pair of pants to keep her busy, while the rest, he would buy and sell things" [7]. The words are very ordinary but contain "many mean meanings", which touched Huong Thi Tao.

The novel *Chua Tau Kim Quy* was adapted from the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Ho Bieu Chanh. However, he also modified many details to enhance family moral examples. For example, if Pierre Picaud, because he loved a beautiful and rich woman, was hated by his bad friends, falsely accused of being a spy, and then imprisoned, then the character Thu Nghia beat Tran Tan Than and broke his arm because he had offended him. violate his sister's chastity. That action caused him to be revenged by Tran Tan Than. He was falsely accused of being a Christian and he was sentenced to prison. During the time he was imprisoned, his parents and sister died... At times, he wanted to commit suicide because of pain and resentment. It was the moral man that helped him overcome despair. He always thinks of the responsibility of being filial to a son's parents and paying tribute to a servant's country: "There are times when Thu Nghia is so upset that he wants to give up eating to die, but he thinks of his destiny as a boy. burdened with filial piety, no matter how much calamity or tribulation, one must persevere and take care of the virtues of birth and success, and build the foundation of the kingdom." (*Chua Tau Kim Quy*). When adapting A. Dumas' work *The Count of Monte Cristo* into *Chua Tau Kim Quy*, Ho Bieu Chanh also omitted a lot of content related to Monte Cristo's revenge plans, instead of events and actions to help the poor and win hearts. Farmer Thu Nghia, even though he has suffered many injustices and bitterness, is only depressed and sad, but does not burn revenge during the whole time in prison like Dantes. When it was time to get out of prison, Dantes devised a very sharp revenge plan. Thu Nghia easily erases hatred and forgets hatred, only remembers the kindness of good people and takes care to repay it completely. Ho Bieu Chanh emphasized Le Thu Nghia's act of repaying gratitude rather than revenge, thereby promoting a life of gratitude, kindness, humanity, morality, etc., rather than emphasizing the inspiration of "revenge and revenge" in *The Count of Monte Cristo* by A. Dumas.

In *Chut Phan Linh Dinh*, to emphasize family affection, writer Ho Bieu Chanh shortened the details and events of Perrine's character overcoming harsh challenges on the

way back to his hometown. The character Thu Cuc also does not have to deal with greedy relatives like Perrine experienced in *En Famille* by H. Malot.

In the husband-wife relationship, Ho Bieu Chanh emphasizes fidelity. The character of Ba Thoi in *Cay Dang Mui Doi* is sad because her husband left to work far away, and heard that her husband had another wife in Can Duoc, but she "still loves and doesn't plan to marry another man, so she Returning to Le Van Tiet and his wife for nearly a year now, working day by day, lying in wait at night, silently begging for her husband to think about returning, so that the whole country can reunite, even though they are suffering, they are willing to wait for luck" [8]. This detail does not appear in the novel *En Famille* by H. Malot. Mr. Barberin did not commit adultery and did not have a concubine. Ms. Tu Chuyen in the *Chua Tau Kim Quy* is self-confident even though she doesn't know anything about the person she loves. Anh Nguyet in *Ngon Co Gio Dua* was abandoned by Tu Hai Yen, but still kept her virginity.

The behavior of Ba Thoi, Ms. Tu Chuyen, Anh Nguyet... all follow the principle of decency of feudalism. Their image is reminiscent of Kieu Nguyet Nga: "My body is still standing in the sky/I will worship the statue for the rest of my life" [9].

#### 5.2.2. Promote human morality and humanity in society

Not only respecting family morality, Ho Bieu Chanh also upholds the morality of humanity in the way people behave with people in society. *Nhan* (仁) is the morality of being human, loving people is not for your own benefit. *Nghia* (義) is the duty and responsibility of people in a collective, community, is the right thing, the right thing to do, the work for others, the common good. Humanity means loving people, it is the spirit of mutual love and mutual help of people in society. This Confucian doctrine has blended with the traditions of the Vietnamese nation: "Nhieu dieu phu lay gia guong/Nguoi trong mot nuoc thi thuong nhau cung"; "Bau oi thuong lay bi cung/Tuy rang khac giong nhung chung mot gian". This moral was once promoted by Nguyen Dinh Chieu through the images of Luc Van Tien, Hon Minh, and Tu Truc: "In the middle of the road, even if it is unfair, let it go" in the poetic story *Luc Van Tien*. Ho Bieu Chanh demonstrated this good morality by portraying the image of benevolent people, ready to sacrifice themselves to help people without any self-interest.



In the novel *Ngon Co Gio Dua* adapted from *The Miserables* by V. Hugo, Le Van Do was arrested for stealing a pot of bran porridge for his grandchildren. Released from prison, he returned home. Because he had no money, he was chased away. Far away, hungry, Le Van Do lost in a temple and fainted. Master Chanh Tam Abbot lets him live. Taking advantage when everyone was asleep, Do stole the temple's silver clothes, but the monk Chanh Tam didn't report the theft, but told the pursuing soldiers that this was a gift he gave, and even gave that silver as a fee. He wrote a letter of recommendation there with Li Ki Phung in Can Duoc to look for a job. The monk also instructed Le Van Do to become an honest person. Following the monk's teachings, Le Van Do changed his name to Tran Chanh Tam, went to Can Duoc area to settle down by reclaiming land, and then became rich. He chivalrously helped the poor, providing food for the imperial army, so he was named Thien Ho by the court. The name Pham Ky, the prison guard the day before, searched for Le Van Do aggressively. Fate also forced Do to confess when another man was mistaken for Le Van Do and was arrested. The inner struggle of selfishness - altruism in the character is described very honestly by the writer. Witnessing the scene of the trial of Tu Hoanh - who was mistakenly identified as Le Van Do, Le Van Do kept tormenting and wondering "in my mind, should this crazy person be punished unjustly, so that he can enjoy the riches and wealth that he has. No?" [10]. At first, Le Van Do intended to let him take the sentence for him, and I would ask where the parents, wife, and children of the sentenced person were to take home and raise them, justifying that it was harming one person to save thousands. But when he heard the judge's sentence of beheading, and then sent soldiers to escort him away, Le Van Do could not help but stood up and confessed: "Wait, the soldier led that person. It's a shame for people. it's me, not him" [10].

The chief officer of Binh Duong province, named Tu Hai Yen, led the army to capture Le Van Do. Li Anh Nguyet, daughter of Li Ki Nguyen, niece of Li Ki Phung, who was an ex-wife abandoned by Tu Hai Yen, drifted everywhere, at that time she was seriously ill and relied on Thien Ho's family to see Tu Hai Yen arrest Thien Ho, is upset to die. Before her death, Anh Nguyet relied on Thien Ho to raise her daughter, Thu Van, who was living with the innkeeper Do Cam - Thi Phi at that time. Thien Ho kept his promise, went to redeem Thu Van from Do Cam's house, raised Thu Van to grow up, and became a beautiful young woman. When Thu Van married Vuong The Phung, Le Van Do gave all his accumulated assets

to Thu Van, lying that it was left by Thu Van's mother. He is happy when his two children are happy. Le Van Do lived a benevolent, honest life, wholeheartedly for others. Le Van Do, it can be said, is the Vietnamese version of the character Jean Van Jean in V. Hugo's novel *Les Miserables*. It is clear that there is a close meeting in the policy of promoting benevolent people in the works of the two writers.

In *Chut Phan Linh Dinh* written based on the novel *En Famille* by Hector Malot, Thu Van made it through the journey from Hanoi to Saigon and then to Nha Man, and was acknowledged by her father-in-law because of the help of many benevolent hearts. The doctor gave Thu Van five injections of medicine to treat malaria and five tonic injections to improve her health. A kind woman allowed mother and daughter to stay overnight, made rice for food, offered tea, and offered cakes very thoughtfully. The uncle let him hitchhike. The kind granny let her live in the hut, and even taught how to make bricks for a living... Perrine's mother in Hector Malot's novel *En Famille* does not receive such sincere help, so she died of starvation, cold and sickness on the tattered carriage. This difference between the two novels comes from the different aims of the two writers. If Hector Malot mainly denounces the reality of European bourgeois society in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the main purpose of Ho Bieu Chanh's priority is to show humanity's compassion for each other.

In *Cay Dang Mui Doi*, although she was kidnapped by her stepmother and uncle and thrown on the street, she was fortunate to receive love from adoptive mothers and fathers like Ba Thoi and Dang. Ba Thoi, despite being ridiculed by people, still resolutely raised Duoc until he grew up with all his love. Master Dang, even though he had bad luck, was still worried about covering and taking care of baby Duoc, whom he has redeemed. When he was in prison, she took care of him from a loaf of bread to a pair of sausages so that he wouldn't be hungry. Baby's Fate is similar to the boy Remi in Hector Malot's novel *En Famille*. Kidnapped and abandoned by her evil uncle Jame Miligon when she was still in her cradle, Remi was fortunate to be taken care of, loved, taught, and cared for by good people like Barberin's mother, Vitali's grandmother, and Acanh's flower grower, etc.

Keeping good qualities, being grateful for someone a little, not forgetting, daring to do is the way of Southern people to behave towards their neighbors, to people in society in general. Those noble people became the central figure in Ho Bieu Chanh's compositions, portrayed by him

with immense inspiration and endless passion, creating a unique style for Ho Bieu Chanh's compositions. At the same time, this feature also makes Ho Bieu Chanh close to French humanitarian writers.

### 5.2.3. Criticism of the evil

Not only loving and promoting benevolent people, Ho Bieu Chanh also expressed his hatred of condemning evil. The balance of two attitudes of love - hate has made Ho Bieu Chanh's work unique compared to some writers. If Thach Lam is inclined to "love", Nguyen Cong Hoan is somewhat inclined to "hate". Nguyen Hong "feels sorry" while Vu Trong Phung "contempts silver and resentful". The balance of love and hate brings Ho Bieu Chanh closer to Nguyen Dinh Chieu, the man who "hates because he loves".

### 5.2.4. Condemn the money slaves

In every society, there are people who become evil for money, ready to harm others. In feudal times, Nguyen Binh Khiem once mocked this type of person: "The cutting board has fishy, butterflies come/Pot without honey, ants do not come" (*Thoi Doi*). Nguyen Du once condemned those who "do harm just for money" (*The Tale of Kieu*). In the feudal-bourgeois society, money has even more powerful destructive power, corrupting human morality. Ho Bieu Chanh condemns those who are corrupt for money with an attitude of hatred and hatred. In *Cay Dang Mui Doi*, for the purpose of appropriating his brother's estate, the younger brother colluded with his younger wife to kidnap the eldest wife's child in order to destroy the child. In the novel *Chua Tau Kim Quy*, District officials, because they were bribed by Tran Tan Than with fifty coins, sent soldiers to arrest Thu Nghia and then make a report to go to the province, causing Thu Nghia to be sentenced to life in prison by the provincial mandarin. He also presented to Tran Tan Than a plot to harm Tran Mung, Cam, and Quy. In *Cha Con Nghia Nang*, the chief executive officer of Sum received money from Huong Hao Hoi, so he tried to defend the perpetrators, causing the family of farmer Tran Van Suu to suffer, and the father and son to separate. Money has made those who are responsible for protecting and enforcing justice into conscientious objectors, pushing many people with low throats into misery.

Ho Bieu Chanh also built up honorable characters with contempt for talent, who did not hesitate to criticize and condemn money slaves. In *Chua Tau Kim Quy*, Thu Nghia frankly accused money: "Money is a very harmful

thing, also because it obstructs the righteous eye, it moves the righteous heart, it urges people's greed, so we are innocent and have to sin. into labor for 11 years" [11]. The judge also loudly scolded and accused the government: "I am very sad for the Mandarin because I am a father and mother, it is reasonable to maintain justice and integrity to govern the people so that it can be relied on, okay? Such greed of the people" [11].

In the end, those who are blind to money pay a heavy price. Their fate reflects the folk philosophy of sowing, and reaping the same, which is also the philosophy that Ho Bieu Chanh believes in and espouses.

### 5.2.5. Condemn the liar, the deceitful, the greedy, and the wicked

In his adaptations, Ho Bieu Chanh strongly condemns the false, deceitful, greedy and cruel people that are very common in the money society. He hates Tu Cam and his wife (*Ngon Co Gio Dua*). The unscrupulous innkeeper couple took advantage of the lonely situation of the innocent girl Li Anh Nguyet to deceive her, fabricating the story that her father borrowed money to stay at the boarding house, pushing her into poverty: having to be a housekeeper for her family. He and his wife, being deceived by Tu Hai Yen to have children, had to pledge their children and eventually died tragically in anger. In *Cay Dang Mui Doi*, people like Thi Sanh and Phan Duc Loi colluded with each other, secretly abducted their husband's stepchildren, and abducted their own grandsons to win their inheritance, also became the object of the writer's condemnation. In *Cha Con Nghia Nang*, the writer criticizes promiscuous women like Thi Luu, who defy marital morality, and blatant adultery, and push the family into tragedy. In order to be more objective and convincing, the writer lets the character Huong Thi Cao impeach her own promiscuous daughter: "Your wife's daughter was so miserable before, so God made her die like that. It's not that he behaves properly like other people, today, his son and daughter should be over, how happy he would be" [7].

As a writer who wholeheartedly worships and upholds morality, Ho Bieu Chanh has no tolerance for anyone who behaves contrary to the people's morality.

### 5.3. The space, customs, and activities typical of the Southern countryside

One of the most "Vietnameseised" elements in Ho Bieu Chanh's adaptations is the space, customs, and activities of the characters.

Reading Ho Bieu Chanh's novels, the reader feels like living in the land of Cochinchina, especially in rural areas in the early decades of the twentieth century. Even many critics consider Ho Bieu Chanh's novel to be an encyclopedia of Cochinchina society and customs. Through his novels, readers seem to return to see the lines of sutras, rivers with the sound of train whistles, fields, Melaleuca forests with birds chirping, and markets and activities in the countryside. Nam Ki with familiar places in Nam Ki such as: O Mon, Binh Thuy, Cang Long, Soc Trang, Tra Vinh, Cho Gao station, towns such as Xa Tai and Khanh Hoi markets. He skillfully put in his composition familiar places to the Southern people: "Whoever goes to Cho Lon street down to Go Cong, once he crosses the Bao Buoc boat, gets on the bus and runs out of My Loi market to the bend"... "The field, from Rach La to Ben Loi, is the breast milk of the people in Tan Hoa district, thanks to that, every year the family is full of food and warm clothes." (*Cay Dang Mui Doi*)...

This is an innovation of Ho Bieu Chanh compared to medieval compositions. Because earlier writers often took place names in China. On the contrary, Ho Bieu Chanh has built living spaces for the characters in his novels on familiar lands to readers. According to Binh Nguyen Loc, "for the first time, Vietnamese readers can see the image of the alum dog lying on the porch of the cottage, listening to imitation music in the deep fields in the afternoon, all familiar scenes. But why is it like new, more attractive than the weeping willow by the lake, the lotus has just faded, and the chrysanthemum has just bloomed" [12]. Speak like researcher Nguyen Van Y: "The uniqueness of Ho Bieu Chanh is that the author tells us an interesting story in a popular language" [12]. That is one of the factors that makes Ho Bieu Chanh's novels close to readers and loved by Southern readers.

The scene of life in the countryside with simple, sincere, rustic, blue-collar people also appear very vividly on each page. "The yellow dog in the house suddenly ran straight to the yard, the boy looked after it and saw a tattooed woman walking in from the shore, he immediately shouted "mam back" and then ran out, holding hands happily lead in. This woman was about thirty-four years old, her shirt was rolled up, her pants were pulled up to her knees, her skin was neither black nor white, her face was round, her eyebrows were full, her body was wet, and there was a stinging plant on her back. Her head was covered with a white cloth shawl, in addition to wearing a coconut leaf hat, she walked in and reached the yard, glanced at the duck coop and asked the boy:

- Have you fed the pigs or not yet?
- Not yet! I just took a shower and then kicked me into the house.
- Do ducks come back enough or not?
- I locked myself but forgot to count.

(*Cay Dang Mui Doi*)

Through the pen of Ho Bieu Chanh, the image of a farmer in the South appears unmistakably with any farmer anywhere. This is farmer Tran Van Suu in *Cha Con Nghia Nang*: "He was wearing a humiliating black shirt, a pair of ragged pants, a bandana over his head, and a smack of betel nut".

Life is difficult, material conditions are poor, and knowing "whether rice can be made with fish sauce", Southern farmers live a very idyllic life, not fussy, not even luxurious. That simplicity is reflected in the way they live, dress and even eat. Going on a long road trip, just a few handfuls of rice, a couple of fishes packed with them is enough for them to complete their trip, these are the details mentioned in the novel *Chua Tau Kim Quy*. Or when working in the fields away from home, their meals are frugal and simple. Ho Bieu Chanh cleverly put into the work the details of everyday life, this is Mr. Suu's lunch: "Having done a good job, he climbed ashore, sat down to think, and ate the rice packet. On one hand, he holds fish sauce, and on the other, he picks up cold rice. It's sunny on his head, and there's mud under his feet, but the rice looks delicious. After finishing the packet of rice, he walked back to the nearby puddle, scooped up water with his hands, drank, and then washed his face..." (*Cha Con Nghia Nang*).

Tran Huu Ta commented very accurately about this feature in Ho Bieu Chanh's works: "Whether it is in Italy, in France or in any foreign European land in the works by V. Hugo, A. Dumas, and A. Therie, but through Ho Bieu Chanh's subtle sensibility and his brilliant adaptability, *Cay Dang Mui Doi*, *Chua Tau Kim Quy*, and *Ngon Co Gio Dua* still has its own nuance. Readers still think that they will meet here in the southern lands, relive the atmosphere of this land with simple, honest, and good people who have sweated and blooded in the fields and canals in the Mekong delta" [13].

#### 5.4. Rustic language bold southern farmers

Ho Bieu Chanh's language is the language of the middle class and common people in Cochinchina, who

are quite close to his life. He used the dialects of Sai Gon Luc Tinh region to subtly describe the psychology, the characters, and the scenery here. According to one statistic, he used about 800 dialects of Cochinchina in his novels: nin khe, di lon ton, mat may tem lem, nhai nhoc nhach, dau co chom bom, la bai hai, dung ke ne, hoi don hoi ren... Many words are written in the “camp” way of the common people, which readers think they write wrong: xao xien (xao xuyen - fluttering), chinh chien (chinh chuyen - fidelity), phien ba do Hoi (phon hoa do Hoi - urban prosperity), Tan hoa (tien hoa - progress). The way to say drive is also used to abstain: Binh yen (Binh an - peace), bong huong (Hong - rose), cay don (dan is an instrumental tool). There are words that young people living in the South today may have forgotten because they are no longer used as: ong bac vat (ki su - engineer), co thay thuoc (vo bac si - wife of doctor), anh bam bu (nguoi mang hanh Li - a person who carry the luggage), ong mai chinh (dai dien hang buon - representative of a business branch), anh dung em (cuoi em - marry you)...

His literary style is rustic, popular, and natural. This feature makes many literary critics in the North, as well as Dong Ho - a writer in the South, consider that Ho Bieu Chanh's novels are not literary. For example, Duong Quang Ham, the author of the work *Viet Nam Van Hoc Su Yeu* (Vietnam literature and history) (1944), The textbooks of the Vietnamese Literature Program at the high school level before 1975 did not consider Ho Bieu Chanh as a writer.

In fact, the rustic style and words in Ho Bieu Chanh's novels are very suitable to describe the portraits and describe the psychology of each typical character as in real life and true to each situation, each class of people in the world ancient Southern society.

With typical Southern language, Ho Bieu Chanh brought to life the mood of the naive farmer Tran Van Suu in *Cha Con Nghia Nang* when he heard rumors that his wife was having an affair with Huong Hao Hoi: "... He rested his chin on his knee, drew a picture under the sand with his finger, and thought about housework. For the past few years, Huong Hao Hoi often visited my house, but I mean to see, whenever Huong Hao visits, my wife takes care of the betel nut and seems to be very welcoming. However, I did not see Huong Hao teasing or joking with his wife, I did not meet two sides to talk to each other, and my wife did not want to leave me. My wife's personality is chaotic, it often scolds me, but my husband and I live as usual. If my wife married Village chief Hoi, she would have left me, there's no reason why she loves

me anymore but she still lives with me. Communal chief Tam said that everyone knew that Village chief Hoi was getting married. Have they met or are they sure? Or they see that Village chief Hoi leaves the field for themselves to do, they are jealous, so they find things to say bad things."

The story that he was scolded by his wife Thi Luu when he questioned him, and then his bewilderment, half-belief, and suspicion was delicately described by Ho Bieu Chanh:

After a long time, Thi Luu in her room cried out:

- Sung's father, ah

- Like what?

- A little expressionless

Tran Van Suu scrambled to get up, went to lock the door, took the lamp and put it on the altar, and turned it off, then went into the room with a big smile on his face, because he had forgotten everything Communal chief Tam said.

The idyllic and rustic style has contributed to the unique attraction of Ho Bieu Chanh's novels.

## 6. Conclusions

Ho Bieu Chanh is a pioneer writer in the modernization of Vietnamese novels. He has made tireless efforts to cultivate to turn “the field of national language literature in the South, which is still wild in the South, into lush and prosperous”. To achieve that goal, at the beginning, Ho Bieu Chanh had done a very meaningful right thing to adapt the works of Western writers in the direction of “Vietnameseisation” and agrarianization. At the time when Ho Bieu Chanh wrote novels in Vietnamese prose, there was no other writer who was really interested in discovering the beauty of Southern farmers in everyday life like him. Thereby, the writer shows his love, sympathy, and respect for the farmers. He wrote about them with all the heart of a writer who is trying to bridge the gap between high-level intellectuals and the working poor, “the writer's heartbeat seems to have synchronized with the heartbeat of the writer's heart. He can be considered as a writer of southern farmers, of the desire to establish a compassionate ground for daily life” [14]. Ho Bieu Chanh's creations show the writer's sense of nationalism and democracy in the process of composing, just as Huynh Thi Lanh commented when determining Ho Bieu Chanh's position in Vietnamese prose works: Before the Western culture and confidence in the national culture,

Ho Bieu Chanh is often interested in the spiritual values that Vietnamese society requires and cares about the inner humanitarian and human values to suit the needs of the people. in accordance with the spirit and morality of Vietnam, not dependent on the “Western shell”. This leads to the phenomenon that Ho Bieu Chanh does not follow the original work but shows a strong sense of nationalization in the process of adapting” [15]. The interference of Ho Bieu Chanh’s works shows his deep knowledge of French literature, some aspects of habits and customs, Southern dialects, his appreciation with national values, the important role of Ho Bieu Chanh in the process of modernizing national literature and the modernization of Vietnamese prose.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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