

The Semantic Field of Landscape Scenery in the Poetry of Nguyen Lam Thang

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Article History	Abstract	
Original Research Article	<i>This article investigates and analyzes the semantic field of landscape scenery in the poetry collection “Love Refrains” by Nguyen Lam Thang under the lens of semantics and stylistics. The investigation of 54 poems reveals that the semantic field of landscape scenery is present with a rich vocabulary system, clearly stratified into fundamental sub-fields: natural space, water bodies, coastal/transitional areas, topography, agricultural spaces, and cultural placenames. These units not only operate as a multi-dimensional spatial coordinate system but also serve as a vital artistic code enabling the poet to emotionalize nature and objectify moods, thereby delicately expressing the inner world (love, longing, the sense of time, and homeland memories). The study also highlights prominent features in Nguyen Lam Thang's artistic style, namely the harmonization between everyday rustic rural traits and local cultural depth, coupled with the creative mindset of forging novel word combinations on the foundation of familiar vocabulary.</i> Keywords: Semantic field, landscape scenery, artistic space, poetic style, Nguyen Lam Thang, Love Refrains.	
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1. Introduction

In modern semantics, a semantic field is a collection of words that share uniform semantic features, jointly denoting a specific domain of objective reality (such as nature, time, humanity, emotions, etc.). Words within the same field do not exist in isolation but are closely linked by shared and distinctive semantic features. Consequently, the investigation of semantic fields transcends the boundaries of traditional lexicology, emerging as a powerful approach in stylistics and pragmatics to decipher how humans categorize, perceive, and reflect the world.

Upon entering the realm of literature and art, semantic field theory assumes a distinct appearance and aesthetic mission. In narrative or lyrical works, the system of semantic fields not only mirrors the panorama of living reality but also serves as an artistic code revealing the author's worldview, artistic thinking, and personal style. Through the selection, organization, and structuring of semantic fields (such as those denoting space, time, mood, or landscape scenery), the author molds a unique figurative space. Therein, language carries high expressive weight, awakening strata of emotions and guiding readers to penetrate the subterranean currents of the work's ideology.

As one of the persistent and accomplished figures in contemporary children's poetry, Nguyen Lam Thang has constructed an artistic world brimming with colors, sounds, and vitality. Within this space, vocabulary denoting landscape scenery occupies a significant proportion, bearing strong marks of the author's stylistic fingerprint. Investigating "The semantic field of landscape scenery in the poetry of Nguyen Lam Thang" not only helps sketch the appearance of nature and living space through the poet's lens but also contributes to affirming his artistic talent in using language to nurture the souls and imaginations of young readers. This article focuses on analyzing the structure, semantic characteristics, and expressive value of this semantic field, thereby highlighting the aesthetic value and profound humanistic sentiment in Nguyen Lam Thang's poetry.

2. Content

2.1. Statistical results of the semantic field of landscape scenery in the poetry of Nguyen Lam Thang

An investigation of 54 poems in Nguyen Lam Thang's poetry collection Love Refrains reveals that the semantic

field of landscape scenery is present with a rich and diverse vocabulary system, constituting a stable artistic spatial

framework. These units are classified into fundamental sub-fields based on denotative semantic features.

Table 1: Sub-fields within the semantic field of landscape scenery

Sub-fields	Typical words and phrases
Scenery associated with natural space	sky (<i>trời, đất trời, bầu trời, khoảng trời</i>), moon (<i>trăng, vầng trăng, giọt trăng</i>), heavenly threads (<i>tơ trời</i>), etc.
Scenery associated with water bodies	rivers (<i>sông, dòng sông, sông Hương, dòng Vu Gia</i>), seas (<i>biển</i>), lakes (<i>hồ, Hồ Tây</i>), river water (<i>nước sông, mặt hồ</i>), streams, rills, and waterfalls (<i>suối, khe, ghềnh thác</i>), etc.
Scenery associated with transitional spaces between water and land	banks, shores, and coastal/water-adjacent areas (<i>bờ, bãi, bãi bờ, bến, bến mơ, cồn, cồn Hén</i>), etc.
Scenery associated with topographical forms	mountains and hills (<i>núi, núi non, núi đồi, nương đồi, non thiêng</i>), slopes (<i>dốc, dốc Mẹ Bồng Con, dốc Bồng Con</i>), highlands (<i>cao nguyên</i>), and ravines (<i>triền khe</i>), etc.
Scenery associated with human labor/agricultural activities	fields and farmlands (<i>ruộng, ruộng đồng, đồng ruộng, cánh đồng, đồng xa, nương rẫy</i>), etc.
Scenery associated with natural physical objects	stones and rocks (<i>đá, tượng đá, hòn sỏi, Thạch Bàn</i>), and specific natural landmarks (<i>Giếng Ngọc</i>), etc.

2.2. The artistic efficacy of utilizing the semantic field of landscape scenery

2.2.1. The role of the semantic field of landscape scenery in constructing artistic space

In the poetry of Nguyen Lam Thang, the vocabulary belonging to the semantic field of landscape scenery (such as *sông* [river], *bến* [wharf/landing place], *bờ* [bank/shore], *biển* [sea], *hồ* [lake], *núi* [mountain], *đồi* [hill], *ruộng* [rice field], *đồng* [field], *dốc* [slope], *cồn* [islet/dune], *bãi* [flat sandy shore/bank], etc.) does not merely serve to denote external reality or sketch a static picture of nature. On the plane of poetics, this semantic field plays a core function in creating artistic space, transforming objective landscapes into internalized spaces and symbols.

First, establishing multi-dimensional spatial coordinates and directing viewpoints. The lexical units operate as a coordinate system defining scale, height, and direction. The correspondence among word groups allows the poet to flexibly shift perspectives: from the height of mountains and hills (*núi, đồi*), the expansive surfaces of fields and farmlands (*ruộng, đồng*), to the continuous flow of rivers and streams (*sông, suối*). Within the textual structure, these words calibrate vision from panoramic to detailed, connecting the spatial reality with the subject's stream of recollection.

Second, the mechanism of emotionalizing scenery and objectifying moods. Scenery in Nguyen Lam Thang's poetry is frequently placed in combinatory relationships

with elements denoting the spiritual world, dissolving the boundary between nature and humanity. Sadness, loneliness, or nostalgia are not expressed directly but are projected into the shapes and states of nature. This is clearly demonstrated through distinctive personified combinations in the poem Moonlit River:

“Flowing through the heart of the city green with a contemplative stream feelings lingering in the lapping waves the river is leaner than autumn leaves” (*Nguyen Lam Thang*, “Moonlit River”)

From a geographical entity, the river assumes the appearance of a lean subject burdened with deep contemplation. The movement of the vocabulary further expands the emotional amplitude:

“the river surges green with regret stretching the yearning ever longer”

The physical attribute of the current (*stretching... longer*) synchronizes with the elongation of longing psychological states. By the final stanza, the boundary between scenery and humanity completely merges:

“Flowing through the heart of the city flowing through the curve of your lips the river turns into the moon since when tossing waves of love into my heart.”

Scenery no longer merely sets the foundation; it has become the very language of love. Conversely, in the separated

space of The Season of Rice Flower Blossoms, nature is psychologized to reflect isolation and desolation:

“You are now as quiet as a deserted river the wild evening riverbank with reeds feeling pitiful and sorrowful”

A deserted river, a wild evening riverbank, or the “*pitiful and sorrowful*” state of *reeds* serve as consummate touches to exteriorize the innermost feelings of the lyrical subject.

Third, the intertwining of realistic space and symbolic space (cultural dimensions). The presence of the system of proper geographical names (*Kim Long, Huong River, West Lake, Con Son, Quy Nhon*) combined with conventionalized spaces (*dreamy wharf, deserted river*) creates a unique fusion between reality and memory. Geographical names do not merely circumscribe geographical coordinates; they transform into cultural spaces imbued with experiential imprints. For instance, in the poem *Kim Long*:

“You and I and green Kim Long... my poetry harvested from both banks of grass and flowers calling spring back to moor at Kim Long wharf.”

Here, *Kim Long* along with the imagery of *grass, flowers*, and *wharf* transcends the boundaries of ordinary placenames to become a space of love and emotional anchorage.

Depending on the context of use, the units within the semantic field of landscape scenery can retain the physical traces of labor life—as seen in Remembering the Fields with *đường cày* (plow furrow), *cánh đồng* (field), *gốc rạ* (stubble), *ruộng hạn* (drought-stricken field)—or transform into shimmering, melancholic symbols of the soul. Consequently, this semantic field affirms its role as one of the paramount artistic codes shaping the poetic style of Nguyen Lam Thang.

2.2.2. The role of the semantic field of landscape scenery in expressing the inner world

In Love Refrains, the semantic field of landscape scenery operates as an artistic code playing a core role in objectifying and expressing the inner world of the lyrical subject. Instead of portraying emotions through purely expressive vocabulary, the poet utilizes lexical units belonging to the realm of nature as a medium to refract moods.

First, expressing love and emotional vibrations. Scenery helps expand emotional space, blending personal vibrations into the overarching scale of the external world. Affirming love, the poet writes:

“Love is not the wind!

that is the heaven and earth of emotions”

(“Love Refrains”)

The opposition between the “wind” (transitory) and “heaven and earth” (immense) transforms love into a vast spiritual space. Furthermore, spatial elements such as water bodies evoke the boundary between closeness and distance, bringing the inner current closer to human bodies and emotions, as seen in the subtle spatial shift in Moonlit River

“Flowing through the heart of the city flowing through the curve of your lips” (“Moonlit River”)

Second, depicting longing, separation, and the sense of time. The system of words denoting landscape integrates psychological dimensions to become tangible signs of fading, loss, and profound sorrow. In the separated space of The Season of Rice Flower Blossoms, nature is psychologized to directly reflect inner feelings:

“You are now as quiet as a deserted river the wild evening riverbank with reeds feeling pitiful and sorrowful”

(“The Season of Rice Flower Blossoms”)

Or the coexistence between the harsh progression of time and withering nature:

“Time passing only adds years to human age choked rice flower blossoms fall into the painful river”

(“The Season of Rice Flower Blossoms”)

The imagery of *a deserted river, a wild evening riverbank*, and *falling rice flowers* not only positions external coordinates but also becomes the material shell for agony and disillusionment before the flow of time.

Third, preserving homeland memories and profound roots. When turning toward the homeland, the stratum of words denoting labor space and agricultural landscapes acts as a cultural “archive,” nurturing character and soul. Memories are awakened through both olfactory senses and the material traces on the land:

“Each year of my life is fragrant with the scent of stubble my patterns of thought like plow furrows”

(“Remembering the Fields”)

Notably, the miraculous transformation of the simplest details from the fields into poetry affirms the flesh-and-blood bond between humanity and the homeland:

“Stubble and black mud now turn into letters past memories are the flesh and blood of my own self”

(“Remembering the Fields”)

It is precisely the mechanism of multi-dimensional interaction between landscape nouns and personified

modifiers/predicates that has enabled this semantic field to transcend the limits of ordinary description, transforming into a flexible inner language capable of carrying the most delicate nuances of love, longing, and origins.

2.2.3. The role of the semantic field of landscape scenery in expressing the artistic style of Nguyen Lam Thang

Through the system of investigation, it can be seen that the semantic field of landscape scenery acts as the core "material" shaping the prominent features in the linguistic style and artistic mindset of the poet Nguyen Lam Thang. This style is concentratedly manifested through the following dimensions.

First, everyday rusticity and a flesh-and-blood attachment to village space. The poet thoroughly exploits the stratum of vocabulary denoting rural landscapes, topography, and rustic folk architecture: from agricultural spaces (*fields, farmlands, swiddens, plow furrows, stubble*), plant elements associated with daily life (*Malabar spinach, young guava, mango shoots, ambarella shoots, tamarind leaves, cassava, yam, banana, rice, stubble*), to familiar village architectural images (*thatched roofs, wattle fences*). This characteristic is clearly demonstrated through realistic strokes in *The Memory Bus*:

"The bus passes by the village school classroom leaning thatched roofs, pierced wattle fences stained with buffalo dung [...] during recess sharing bodhi fruits"

("The Memory Bus")

The utilization of seemingly rustic landscape details, which carry little formal solemnity, has constructed a specific, realistic village space where small spatial elements possess the capacity to awaken the deepest strata of memory.

Second, local imprint and cultural depth. Alongside rustic landscape vocabulary, the presence of a system of specific geographical names (*Kim Long, Huong River, Con Hen, Vu Gia, Con Son*) creates a distinct direction for spatial individualization. Scenery does not stop at a generic appearance of nature but carries a definite "address," bound to specific lands, histories, and cultural experiences. This combination helps the semantic field of landscape scenery retain the profound soul of the native land while expanding the reader's associative amplitude.

Third, the capacity to create novel word combinations based on familiar landscape vocabulary. An important stylistic hallmark of Nguyen Lam Thang is the flexible mechanism of meaning-transfer through the establishment of unexpected combinatory relationships between landscape nouns (*river, wind, sunlight, rain*) and modifiers or predicates bearing personification or mood-expressing traits: *lean river, worldly wind, wandering wind, orphaned*

sunlight, choked rice flowers, aching river, sweat rain. For instance, the image: "orphaned sunlight" ("The Season of Rice Flower Blossoms")

Has transferred the semantic feature of a natural phenomenon when placed beside a word denoting human condition (*orphaned*), creating the impression of a solitary, helpless light. Or in the case of: "the worldly wind does not stand still"

The natural meteorological phenomenon has been elevated into a metaphorical image for the fluctuating and turbulent movements of life.

Thus, the stylistic value in Nguyen Lam Thang's poetry does not stem from the abuse of rare words or elaborate imagery but is forged precisely from the art of exploiting common landscape vocabulary and the capability to organize and transform semantic combinatory relations. The fusion of rustic landscape diction, cultural placenames, and the mindset of emotionalizing nature has crafted a stylistic imprint that is both intimate and imbued with deep contemplative profoundness.

3. Conclusion

The investigation and analysis of the semantic field of landscape scenery in Nguyen Lam Thang's poetry collection *Love Refrains* under the lens of semantics and stylistics reveal a rich vocabulary system imbued with individual creative marks and profound aesthetic value. Structurally, this semantic field is constituted by clearly stratified sub-fields: ranging from universal natural space, water bodies, coastal/transitional areas, topographical forms, and agricultural spaces to the system of culturally significant geographical names, operating as a multi-dimensional coordinate system that calibrates vision from panoramic to detailed. Regarding expressive value, scenery has transcended the limits of external denotation to become a sharp artistic code; through the mechanism of emotionalizing nature and flexible combination with personified elements, the poet has successfully objectified complex psychological states, thereby constructing an internalized space, delicately conveying the nuances of love, longing, the sense of fading time, and preserving homeland memories. The exploitation of this vocabulary stratum vividly outlines the unique artistic style of Nguyen Lam Thang, which is the harmonization between the everyday rusticity of the village and local cultural depth, particularly the creative mindset of forging novel word combinations on the foundation of familiar vocabulary such as *orphaned sunlight, worldly wind, or lean river*. Through the lens of the semantic field, this article has contributed to deciphering the mechanism of constructing the artistic world in *Love Refrains*, thereby affirming the poet's

mastery of language and fervent affection for nature, the homeland, and human life.

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