

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

PhD Candidate: **Do Thanh Hai**

Dissertation Title: ***The Art of Storytelling in Television Drama***

Major: Film and Television Theory and History;

Code: 9 21 02 31

Supervisor: **Prof., Dr. Tran Thanh Hiep**

Institution: Hanoi Academy of Theatre and Cinema

CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Research Objectives and Scope

Research Objectives:

- This study aims to apply theories of cinematic storytelling, along with other relevant theoretical frameworks, to the study of television drama narration, thereby identifying its methods and characteristics.

- It also seeks to derive practical lessons for the creation and production of Vietnamese television dramas, in order to meet the growing demand for diversity in themes, content, artistic expression, and national cultural values, while promoting positive social messages and satisfying domestic audiences.

Research Objects:

The study focuses on two fundamental narrative elements, plot and character, as well as the storytelling methods employed in television drama, including:

- Types of plots in cinematic storytelling and their application in television drama;
- Character construction, character groups, and conflicts within television storytelling;
- Common storytelling modes in television drama, particularly complex, multi-strand narration involving multiple plots and characters;
- Audience engagement through narrative elements such as plot, character, conflict, and other storytelling devices.

2. Research Methods:

- Application of theories of cinematic and television storytelling, along with interdisciplinary frameworks such as film reception theory, cognitive theory, and character engagement theory, among others;
- The study employs methods of analysis, synthesis, and comparative analysis between cinematic storytelling and serialized television storytelling; comparison between literary characters and film characters to evaluate and demonstrate the use of plot in constructing narratives and characters in television drama;
- Specific research procedures including data collection, literature review, film viewing, film analysis, synthesis, and generalization.

3. Main Findings and Conclusions:

From a theoretical perspective, contemporary television drama storytelling can be characterized as complex narration, involving multiple interwoven plots and characters.

From a practical perspective, analyses of selected case studies also confirm that contemporary television drama employs complex narrative structures.

Complex television storytelling flexibly and effectively utilizes a wide range of narrative devices, including:

Aristotelian plot structures, deus ex machina, plot voucher, cliffhanger, red herring, unreliable narrator, and plot twist, in order to evoke surprise, curiosity, suspense, and dramatic intensity.

Such storytelling features multiple major and minor characters intertwined with diverse forms of conflict that drive narrative progression:

- Internal conflict (within characters)
- External conflict (between characters or between characters and obstacles).

Characters function as agents of narrative development, generating and resolving tensions that propel the story forward.

A crucial factor in audience engagement lies in narrative comprehension. Through techniques such as delay, gaps, and repetition, complex storytelling activates viewers' cognitive schemas and interpretive frameworks, shaping their inferences and hypotheses, stimulating curiosity, and fulfilling audience expectations.

Complex television storytelling connects viewers through three levels: recognition, alignment, and allegiance, forming a structure of empathy, which generates diverse emotional responses.

Contemporary television drama is also marked by the prominence of compelling anti-heroes, who foster empathy and sustain audience loyalty through complex emotional engagement.

Vietnamese television drama has undergone significant development in line with global trends. However, certain limitations in storytelling practices remain.

It is hoped that in the near future, Vietnamese television drama will continue to improve in both content and form, delivering higher-quality narratives to audiences.

Hanoi, March 25, 2026

Supervisor

PhD Candidate

Prof., Dr. Tran Thanh Hiep

Do Thanh Hai