



International Journal Of
**Recent Scientific
Research**

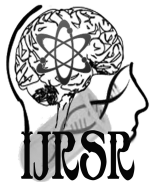
ISSN: 0976-3031
Volume: 6(12) December -2015

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RECENT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (IJRSR)
<http://www.recentscientific.com/> recentscientific@gmail.com



ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

International Journal of Recent Scientific Research
Vol. 6, Issue, 12, pp. 7872-7875, December, 2015

**International Journal
of Recent Scientific
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 16th September, 2015

Received in revised form 24th October, 2015

Accepted 23rd November, 2015

Published online 28st December, 2015

Key words:

Luxun, Namcao, Vietnam, Literature, Comparative

ABSTRACT

Against today's backdrop of globalization, study in cross-cultural communication as well as the relations and interactions has, among literatures of nations, been of immense importance. Since the days of yore in Vietnam, our literature has been under profound influence of Chinese literature. Over periods of time, Vietnamese people step by step absorb Chinese literature, thus enrich their spiritual and cultural life. Lu Xun is the first name among China's modern writers to get known in Vietnam; also the only modern author whose works have been subject to be taught in Vietnam's general education school to date. From beginning to end of 20th century, Lu Xun remains an icon to be esteemed and honored by Vietnamese people. While scope of readers to Lu Xun's works becomes larger with every passing day in Vietnam, there are more and more extensive researches on this man of letters. The Vietnamese feel deep affection for Lu Xun not only because he pillars the bridge to approach China's modern literature, which experiences modernisation in very nearly parallel and resemblance with that of Vietnam; but also for his close intimacy with the people. Authors of this article, who have spent 20 years teaching and studying in Lu Xun, whose lives span two centuries of 20th and 21st and witness changes over the millennium eve, wish, upon going over his writings, to give a retrospect of how Lu Xun gained popularity in Vietnam, in attempt to highlight the role of the author in the process of reformation and modernisation of literature, thence reaffirm an eternal icon of letters whose profile "against the literature sky of this century"

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INTRODUCTION

Content of Research

Absorption of Lu Xun via translation works in Vietnam

Translation plays the first bridge for cultural exchange among nations. Translated compositions help develop the closeness among foreign literature cultures and create a space for their interaction. Translating a literary work is not merely a decryption of language, which means the conversion from one language to another in aim of transmitting the ideological and artistic values of the original work, but indefinitely a "recreation". The translator should be a reader, a receiver, and at the same time the creator. Such roles call for extensive bilingual expertise, intimate knowledge of temporal context, culture and society of two nations, plus the demand and preference of the target-language readers. Lu Xun's compositions achieve popularity among Vietnamese readers, firstly thanks to translations of researcher - translator Dang Thai Mai (1902 – 1984).

It is a common knowledge that Vietnam's and China's literature modernisation have nearly simultaneous occurrence. The year of 1919, when hit the May Fourth Movement marked the beginning of China's modern literature. However, such a long period of over 20 years of China's literature modernisation, in early time of 20th century, lost from Vietnam's knowing. The reason for this comes from the cultural subjugation of French colonists upon "New Books" movement in early 20th century, which entailed a severe censorship; and Vietnam intellectuals' conscience of nation's literature modernisation. Late 19th century saw an old and musty China fading out its position as an ideal "model", against a fresh and modern West "model". As a result, new achievements of China's literature, which ought to have favourably impacted on Vietnam's modernising literature, was not paid due attention. It is said by Vu Ngoc Phan a researcher that, he published his translation of Lu Xun's Kong Yi Ji on France – Vietnam Journal in 1931 without any idea of who Lu Xun was. Rendering the author's compositions from a French version that was published in Paris in 1930 under the name "China's short stories collection", in other words, getting knowledge of such compositions indirectly via another language, he failed to transcribe the name Lousin into Lu Xun,

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and mis-transcribed the work's name into *Kong Shi Qi*. Precisely speaking, decades of 1930 and 1940 observed some Vietnamese's viewpoints on China's "New Literature" as introduced by Le Du, Nguyen Tien Lang, Phan Khoi through *Nam phong tạp chí* ('*South Wind Journal*'), *Phi no tan van* (*Women's News*), *Long Duong tạp chí* (*Indochina Review*), so on. However, these articles provided rather preliminary understandings of advantages of Vernacular Literature against classical literature and a glimpse into some representatives such as Guo Moruo, Lao She, Mao Dun, Ding Ling, etc, and Lu Xun with A Q zhengzhuàn (*The True Story of Ah Q*). The cultural gap between two nations and the dearth of information about China's modern literature had persisted until 1942, when researcher Dang Thai Mai started to introduce Lu Xun's writings. That is why we call Lu Xun the pillar of cultural bridge, and Mai the pioneer in translation and introduction of Lu Xun to Vietnam.

As stated by Mai, thanks to a friend whose name he even does not know, in 1926 he once got the idea of "China has a Lu Xun". But ten years later, when Lu Xun passed away, he started to "find" and "found". Besides the rewording of Lu Xun's poet "Human with time" on "Foreign famous literatures" column of *Thanh Nghi Journal*, he also honorably introduced Lu Xun – "a progressive artwork creator". After the first translation, he gradually transliterated Lu Xun's works of variety forms, such as *The Shadow's Farewell*; *the Pass-by* (prose poem); *Kong Yi Ji*; *the True Story of Ah Q* (short story); *why I wrote The True Story of Ah Q*; *Dog, cat, rat* (miscellanea), and the like. In 1944, a 220-page book named *Lu Xun - Life and Art* (Mai, 1994b) came out thereupon, as a tribute and understanding of a Vietnamese researcher toward his confidante.

Lu Xun should be of the foremost position among China's writers to be introduced to Vietnam, as said by Mai, because Lu Xun is the ultimate representative: "He is not merely a personage, he is a wholly era" (Mai, 1994a). Following Dang Thai Mai, numerous translators and researchers steadily produced translations and critiques thus provided somewhat comprehensive insights into an era literary phenomenon. It's no exaggeration to say that the period from 1950 to 1970 witnessed a soaring upsurge of translation and publication of foreign fictions in Vietnam. Particularly, quite a few of Lu Xun's compositions, prominently short stories and miscellanea, were presented. To name, *A Lonely Man* introduced by Gian Chi in 1952 (Chi, 1952); translation of *Lu Xun's Short Stories* and *Lu Xun's Miscellanea Collection* by Phan Khoi in 1955; translation of full set of *The Outcry*, *Wandering*, *Old Tales Retold* by Truong Chinh in 1961 (Chinh, 1961); 150 Lu Xun's articles selected, translated, and published in three books by Truong Chinh in 1963 (Chinh, 1963); Lu Xun's Collection introduced by Gian Chi in 1966 (Chi, 1966).

Truong Chinh and Phan Khoi emerged as two prominent names among translators, who had completely different styles of translation. Phan Khoi (1887 – 1959) profoundly shared viewpoint on translation with Lu Xun. He reckoned a translation to follow closely the original and not to add or cut details or reverse the order of clauses, so as to ensure the complete transmission of the sense, reflection and thinking of the source language people. He hardly accepted the

"Vietnamisation" of words in order for understandability and readability. Literal translation, which seeks for the absolute closeness with the source text, re-uses Chinese words and preserves Chinese wording style, cannot help encumbering the perception among contemporary Vietnamese readers. On the other hand, Truong Chinh produced translations with a more flexible "free" approach. Sharing opinion with Dang Thai Mai, whom Truong Chinh once said inspired him to "read Lu Xun, then translate Lu Xun", he gave prominence to the translation style that "strives for a closeness at a certain extent" as long as "preserves the soul words of Lu Xun", "penetrates the writer's intention", and at the same time "selects words to insure fluency" (Chinh, 1966) "How can you bring out a nice translation just persistently seeking for an absolute closeness?" he said, "Shaky sentences in target language derived from such closeness with the source text are the evidence of formalism". Thus, Truong Chinh advocates "not being bound by the source text, ultimately respecting the writer's intention yet extremely oneself wording style", just "penetrating the sense of source text, and using well-chosen words to portray that sense", "following modern wording in correct grammar. Sometimes additions and omissions are necessary for clarification and in avoidance of wordiness. If the case maybe, not words but the senses are rendered". It is such "flexible", "ceasing and soft" translation style that sometimes, unavoidably, prompts some mistake to Truong Chinh's works, such as in accurate details, sense omission or inverse interpretation. However, with the use of customary expression and understandable words that match the standard of readers, his translations have met with wide acceptance and application. So far, *Lu Xun's Short Stories* translated by Truong Chinh in 1961 has been published repeatedly (in 2000 and 2004). Many stories collected therein have been regularly reselected and reissued.

What we have seen is prior to 1970s, those Lu Xun's compositions translated into Vietnamese were majorly of two genres: short stories and miscellanea. The most translated and published writings were predominantly from two collections: *The Outcry* and *Wandering*. This is understandable in the context of Vietnamese readers' demand and reception, amid the contemporary social conditions: when the peoples were raising highly the spirit of revolution. Ideological contents of Lu Xun's compositions such as: thorough spirit of anti feudatory morality; critiques of the 1911 Revolution as a halfway solution; censure on the ignorance and dullwittedness of farmers, on the feebleness and cowardice of intellectuals; and so on, receive a mighty attention of Vietnam community. The typical characters that Lu Xun developed in his writings were also matching the preference and faculty of reception of Vietnamese readers, lots of whom then were passionate and even grew infatuation to the characters. Lu Xun's works of miscellanea, which played a sharp weapon for revolution in literature battlefield, were of enormous value drastically influencing on contemporary young Vietnamese patriots.

In the wake of 1975, upon the unification of the country, the name of Lu Xun still met with wide reception in Vietnam society. The author's works of other genres (poetry, researches) began to draw attention of translators. In 1999, all of 75 poems composed from 1900 – the time before Lu Xun studied in Japan – to 1935 were translated with many meticulous explanatory notes by a Sinologist Phan Van Cac. To ensure the

readability, the translator added notes in which he summarized the settings and meaning of each poem. The poem collection was published by Lao Dong Publishing House – Centre for East-West Cultures and Languages in 2002 (Cac, 2002). The prose poetry collection Wild Grass caught the eyes of such translators as Dien Chau, Pham Thi Hao, and Tran Dinh Su. Especially, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* by Lu Xun first met with Vietnamese readers in 2002 thanks Luong Duy Tam and Luong Duy Thu.

Vietnam's absorption of Lu Xun through researches

It is no exaggeration to say that rare are men of letters like Lu Xun who, after just over ten years of presence in literary circles, have up to 4 books translated and consulted in Vietnam. Particularly, his life, development of ideology as well as career was introduced comprehensively and systematically. Beside Dang Thai Mai's books, we have *Lu Xun, Commander of Chinese Cultural Revolution* (1958) by Le Xuan Vu; *Lu Xun, life, ideology and his legacies* (1960) by Professor Ly Ha Lin from Nankai University – Tianjin, who once had lecture at Vietnam National University, Hanoi; *Lu Xun* (1971) by Truong Chinh; and later *Lu Xun, a literature theoretician* (1977) by Phuong Luu. Nguyen Hien Le by himself published *China's modern literature* (1968) which dedicated ton of pages for Lu Xun.

Overall, Vietnam's prior-1986 researches on Lu Xun were nearly diverse. However, in this period, under the influence of official literature flow, study in Lu Xun's compositions prioritized *sociologic* aspect. As it was required to repel formalism, to the extent of socio-politics - a respect of exceptional importance to Vietnamese as well as Chinese literary life prior to 1980s, the research methodologies for Lu Xun's works years long fell in *traditional social historical methodology*. Research workers primarily focused on *contents reflecting reality*, or *through artwork demonstrating social aspects*. Nguyen Vu studied in "*Lu Xun, pioneer in the tireless struggle to develop Chinese communist literature*" (Vu, 1961). Van Ba inquired "*Intellectual characters in Lu Xun's writings*" (Ba, 1961b). Nguyen Nam explored "*Iconic meaning of Ah Q*" (Nam, 1964). Phuong Luu wrote "*Lu Xun, a chief critic*" (Luu, 1968). Truong Chinh delved into "*cultural revolution*" with "*Ah Q and Chinese Cultural Revolution*" (Chinh, 1979) and "*Lu Xun in Chinese Cultural Revolution*" (Chinh, 1981), etc. This period observed some articles about Lu Xun's *miscellanea* and poems, for instance: "Old tails retold" by Van Ba (Ba, 1961a); "Lu Xun a Poet" by Nam Tran. Still, the midpoint of researches is short stories, prominently *The Outcry* and *Wandering*. As above said, socio-historic contents of these works, including: war declared against feudalism; criticizing bourgeois revolution; farmers and farmers' revolution; destiny of women; tragedy of intellectuals; corruption of humans; characteristics of the dominant class; iconic meaning of characters; worldview for a composition, have met with citation of different depth subject to the scope of each research.

For literary compositions, there are many approaches to research. Inquiries in Lu Xun's writings through *traditional social historical methodology* have their own connotation and value, especially in Vietnam context during the first half of 20th century. Nevertheless, the traditional approach should result in "*rigidly framing*" a complicated literary phenomenon, then an incorrect and dull

acquisition of "the underlying sense" behind words. In other words, effort to apply the theoretical "frame" of *realism composition methodology* to research will very likely turn Lu Xun's works into "maps" that demonstrate the author's ideologies. Otherwise, convergence of Lu Xun's writings and *realisticrepresentation, generalization composition methodology* in reference to realism, whereas his compositions blended features of romanticism, symbolism and so on, would inevitably lead to lack of objectivity in research. To some senses, the intelligence in literature study is subject to the selection, renovation of aspect and research methodology. To find out new values in such seemingly old writings asks for the seeker to renovate his "reading manner". Since the appearance of Reception theory, which heightens the role of reader, research on literary works through the lens of modern poetics has posed numerous to-be-concerned problems. Quite a few researchers have conscience of applying this fresh viewpoint to reform their approach to Lu Xun's compositions. It can be said that the decade of 1980 saw a bulk of critic works upon foreign literature, especially Western literature, being introduced to Vietnam. These brought in fresh winds of theory and opened new ways for general literature study. For Lu Xun's works, researches that emphasize immanence and dissection of a composition were increasingly carried out. The application of new theories in research on Lu Xun came up with intelligent findings. This period obviously witnessed more comprehensive study in Lu Xun, compared with the previous time. With regards to contents, the realistic picture of Chinese society in Lu Xun's time – an old, musty and cannibal-natured society where lived dullwitted people, with complicated movements, the halfway 1911 Revolution, powerless rebellions, and muddled seekers in their struggle to "find a way out", etc., was the subject of various analysts. As well, his artistic achievements such as: character creation; writing styles of realism, romanticism, symbolism, and representationism; fascinating literary style which is described wry, ironic, lyrical and emotive, are thoroughly analysed and illuminated. In general, researches are carried out in unanimous consent to reaffirm the effort of writing reformation and positive contribution of Lu Xun as a trailblazer for Chinese modern literature.

In short, post-1986 years have been seen with many successes in research on Lu Xun. In addition to the on-going exploration into social contents, there are more and more inquiries into every aspect of his writing art. For reformation of research methodology, researchers have paid due attention to specific issues of *modern poetics* such as: layout and structure, creation of situations, lines of character, artistic chronotope, narrative art, and the like. Specifically, our preliminary investigation has found no less than 10 works (including articles, theses, and dissertations) concerning the art of character creation. Such inquiries are conducted not only aligning with the guideline of literary theory along such lines of character as protagonist, subordinate character, central character, functional character, ideological character, typologic character, but also following "open conceptions" of characters such as: malformed character, abnormal character, lonely character, mood character, herd character, etc. Among researches on Lu Xun's short stories on basis of modern poetics approach, *Lu Xun's Literary Style in Short Stories* by Le Huy Tieu (Literature MA thesis, 1988) and *Some Issues of Lu Xun's Poetics and Teaching about Lu Xun in General Schools* by Luong Duy Thu (1992) were of preeminent works. Upon the comparison to traditional narrative pieces, Le

Huy Tieu gave an analysis and evidence of “the new narration manner, which is beyond the ken of classical and even contemporary writers”(Tieu, 1988). Luong Duy Thu in his research cited a variety of aspect of Lu Xun’s short stories, at the same time stated that “Lu Xun’s literary style is both traditional and modern. Embodying Chinese style over 20th century, Lu Xun’s style is impregnated with Chinese spirit yet truly modern and compatible with the world’s contemporary movement”(Luong Duy Thu, 2002)

This period witnessed the prolongation of researches on Lu Xun’s legacies in comparison, which had been long-proposed, as recommended by experts of previous generation such as Dang Thai Mai, Truong Chinh, Nguyen Tuan, etc. To name, “Some comparison between Chi Pheo and Ah Q” (Chau, 1992) by Pham Tu Chau; “*The Miserables in Victor Hugo and Lu Xun’s compositions*” (Bao, 2002) by Tran Le Bao, and so on. This time was singularly seen with an expansion of research scope against the previous time. Some writings that had stayed beyond the reach of research have now come into sight. E.g. the prose poem collection *Wild Grass* - an assertive phenomenon at its time of birth - was translated and analysed on the symbolic meaning of its artistic figures (Su, 2004). The piece also drew attention of Nguyen Thi Mai Chanh, who questioned elements of surrealism and existentialism in it (Chanh, 2011). Beside setting off the narration model reformation through her essay Lu Xun’s narrative art in *The Outcry and Wandering* (2010), Chanh delved into *legend* and *mock* in *Old Tales Retold* (Chanh, 2012) - a collection of stories retold in quite a new fashion - and accordingly reasserted the diversity of Lu Xun’s composition style and his contribution in the development of Chinese literature.

The writer’s creation is consummated only when his composition is met with reception. That is why we claim a literary piece not static but unfixed, ever-moving and inconsistent to itself. Like a picture having existence only when being looked at, a piece of music getting meaning from who enjoys it, and the likes of art forms, a literary composition takes on a life of its own only after being met with reception. Nonetheless, all values being historic, in different periods of time with dissimilar ideologies and research trends, the receptor to a literary phenomenon will have singular profiles. While in China, reception of Lu Xun has experienced an incredibly complicated history (Once, he was worshiped, idolised, and even considered a “saint” as his compositions were given over-prominence; but then he was bitterly criticized “anti-bourgeois”), in Vietnam Lu Xun was given a consistent honour. Translations of his writings are restlessly growing in number and going into countless reprints. His short stories are being subject to school lectures. It is no overstatement that Lu Xun remains an irreplaceable icon of Chinese literature.

CONCLUSION

Literature reception is the prevailer among today literary trends. It plays the bridge for world’s cross-cultural communication, and a chain in worldwide spread of cultural values. Vietnam has been long seen with researches on the reception of Chinese literature in general and Lu Xun’s legacy in particular, still, it calls for many more ground-breaking and new studies. As far concerned, a literary piece is of no fixed

and closed existence, but an open and ever-moving entity, just like the conception of philosopher Balan - R. Ingarden: all literary pieces are under progress, they always call for supplementation and never reach textual ultimatum. Virtually every text is the ultimate output of writer’s artistic creation. However, it cannot become a complete literary work without a literary value, which could be only created upon the “encounter” between readers and texts.

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ISSN 0976-3031



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