

Tu Cham A and the Vietnamese Translator's Ethical Choice

Dan Nguyen Anh

Abstract: In the first half of the 20th century when Vietnam's literature was undergoing modernization, there was an introduction of a phenomenon of Tu Cham A. The phenomenon brought many social influences and conversely, contributed to the establishment and development of *quoc ngu* (Vietnam national language) literature. Translations of Tu Cham A (1889-1937) can be seen as literary issues and also as an ethical matter, which put the local translator into ethical backgrounds, ethical conditions, and ethical dilemmas to make their own choices — ethical choices. In light of the theory of Ethical Literary Criticism, this paper aims to provide a new approach to the Tu Cham A study in Vietnam.

Key words: Ethical choice; modernization; Tu Cham A; translation; Vietnam

Author: **Dan Nguyen Anh** teaches at the Literature Department, University of Education, Hue University (Hue 530000, Vietnam), and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Chinese Language and Literature, Central China Normal University. His main research interests are Japanese literature, Vietnamese literature, and comparative literature (Email: nguyenanhdanhuce@gmail.com).

标题: 徐枕亚与越南译者的伦理选择

内容摘要: 20 世纪上半叶, 越南文学在现代化进程中出现了“徐枕亚现象”。这一现象不仅带来许多社会影响, 也反过来为越南语文学的建立和发展作出了积极贡献。对中国鸳鸯蝴蝶派作家徐枕亚(1889-1937)作品的引进和翻译, 不仅可以视作文学问题, 也因越南译者的伦理背景、伦理条件及伦理选择过程中的伦理两难而成为一个伦理问题。在文学伦理学批评理论启发下, 本文旨在为越南的徐枕亚研究提供新的视角和方法。

关键词: 伦理选择; 现代化; 徐枕亚; 翻译; 越南

作者简介: 阮英民, 越南顺化大学教育学院文学系教师, 华中师范大学文学院比较文学与世界文学专业博士研究生, 主要从事日本文学、越南文学和比较文学研究。

Tu Cham A (Xu Zhenya, 徐枕亚, 1889-1937), who is regarded as the founder of the “School of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly (鸳鸯蝴蝶派小说),” appeared in

Vietnam nearly one century ago in the context that Vietnamese literature was in the process of modernization. Translations of overseas literature in general, translations of Tu Cham A in particular, played a significant role in the first half of the 20th century. Transformations of society, culture, and economy; the establishment of new social classes as well as the development of Vietnamese publishing industry, newspaper, and magazine are some major causes for the “phenomenon of Tu Cham A” in Vietnam. The phenomenon existed and evolved with the Vietnamese literary modernization process that brought many necessary bases to construct *quoc ngu* (Vietnam National Language) prose and had a great impact on Vietnamese readers. The Tu Cham A phenomenon was not only a literary phenomenon but also an ethical one, which brought relevant ethical matters into light for Vietnamese writers, translators and readers. In light of Ethical Literary Criticism, it can be seen that they had to face complicated ethical choices that were put in ethical backgrounds, ethical conditions, and ethical dilemmas.

“Ethical Distance” and Misreadings of Tu Cham A

Nie Zhenzhao, in his book *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*, claims that “the whole history of human civilization is a constantly repetitive procedure of natural selection and ethical selection” (6), so the human life is an ethical existence that unceasingly requires choice makings. Not all published literary works are immediately translated to other languages. Therefore, the cases of Tu Cham A’s *Jade Pear Soul* (《玉梨魂》), *Tears of Snow* (《雪鴻淚史》), and his other works in the early 20th century are no exception. The first novel by Tu introduced to Vietnam was *Tears of Snow*, which was published in the local magazine *Nam Phong* (《南風雜誌》), Vol. 77, October 1923). It took more than 10 years for Tu Cham A to first appear in Vietnam since his debut in China, *Jade Pear Soul* (1912). However, *Tears of Snow* did not instantly ignite a “Tu Cham A fever.” After the translations of *Jade Pear Soul* (by two translators: Nhung Tong and Ngo Van Trien) in the 1930s the craze for Mandarin Duck and Butterfly writings began to heat up.

In 1912, Xu Zhenya published *Jade Pear Soul* in China and began to serialize *Tears of Snow* in *Fiction Newspaper* (《小說叢報》) in 1914. However, Vietnamese translators and publishers retraced Xu’s steps by firstly translating *Tears of Snow* (launched in *Nam Phong* in 1923) and then rendering *Jade Pear Soul* (published by Van Quyen and Long Quang printing houses in 1928)¹. Nguyen Thu Hien explains the reason for this reversion in her article “Translations of the 20th

1 The first Vietnamese translation of *Jade Pear Soul* rebranded the title as *Under Flower* (“Dưới hoa” in Vietnamese).

Century Chinese Literature in Vietnam from the Historical Literary Perspective” in three aspects: 1) *Tears of Snow* “deeply contains some traditional factors of classical Chinese literature in tune with the translator’s reception aesthetics”; 2) the novel has “renovations of the literary genre (by incorporating the forms of letter and dairy into the fiction)” and 3) the combination of the two above reasons induces *Tears of Snow* “fully appropriate to Vietnamese intellectual readers’ imagination and conception about Chinese New Literature” (Web). Except for the last point, there are some flaws in her explanations. If *Tears of Snow* embodies classical elements, *Jade Pear Soul* is not a different case, so both are compatible with the reader’s “reception aesthetics.” Besides, *Jade Pear Soul*, actually, has no “renovations of the literary genre” but some new contents in the fiction. Moreover, Nguyen emphasizes that the cause for a massive Vietnamese reception of Tu Cham A’s *Tears of Snow* was “sympathy.” In fact, the publishing quantity of *Jade Pear Soul* was calculated differently in Vietnam, China, Singapore, and Hong Kong¹ and the so-called “massive Vietnamese readership” is unjustifiable. Nguyen also states that: “It is worth-noting that in the history of the 20th century Chinese literature, Xu Zhenya’s renown is often attached to *Jade Pear Soul*, whereas his reputation is often connected to *Tears of Snow* in Vietnam” (Web). However, this statement is not accurate because there is no literary survey to describe Vietnamese readers’ taste on the two novels.

It can be maintained that what caused the reversed Vietnamese translations of Tu Cham A is the Vietnamese translator’s ethical choice. As a result, the order of the translations might be interpreted by five points: 1) the random choice of M.K (Doan Tu Thuat, also called Mai Nhac), one of the translators at *Nam Phong* magazine, 2) the translator’s individual interest, 3) the translator’s ability², 4) the contingency of literary spread³ (for some random reasons the Vietnamese translator read *Tears of Snow* first and then tried to look for *Jade Pear Soul*), and 5) the local translators’ time gap in interpreting Xu Zhenya.

1 “*Jade Pear Soul* was reprinted a dozen times for hundreds of thousands of copies and sold as far as in Singapore and Hong Kong” (qtd. in Li 75-76).

2 The literary form of *Jade Pear Soul* is more difficult to translate into Vietnamese than that of *Tears of Snow*, considering the Vietnamese *quoc ngu* literature had not matured then.

3 Nguyen Nam in his article “Women Killed Themselves — Fault of the Novel? (A View on Women and Literature and Society of Vietnam in the Early 20th Century)” stresses: “Tu Cham A’s two novels were translated into Vietnamese in a reversed order: from *Tears of Snow* to *Jade Pear Soul*. The main reason was, maybe, because of random introduction of his novels into Vietnam in the early 20th century. After the serialization of *Tears of Snow* was completed in *Nam Phong*, Mai Khe wrote an “Afterword” to explain that only through reading the foreword of *Tears of Snow* had he discovered the novel was a sequel to *Jade Pear Soul* and by reading *Jade Pear Soul* he learnt He Mengxia’s final life.”

It should be noted that Vietnamese translators' choice of *Tears of Snow* over *Jade Pear Soul* despite their original publication order in China is not uncommon. However, there is a gap of more than ten years between the translations that is an "ethical distance" (倫理距離) in the case of Xu translations. Fortunately, the gap gave Vietnamese translators enough time to evaluate the Chinese writer and, also gave them an opportunity to implement their ethical choices. Actually, "ethical distances" mainly shows the gap of time but it should be placed into another notable background as ethical situations (倫理環境) or ethical contexts (倫理語境). Literature is a product of human history and in certain historical periods, there are some specific ethical situations. Therefore, it is necessary to explore a literary writing from ethical situations and ethical contexts. Tu Cham A's debut in Vietnam took place under a particular period of Vietnamese history while the local society model had been changed seriously because of French colonialists. From 1897, French began to exploit their colonies in three Indochinese countries, including Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. After the World War I (1914-1918), they carried out the second exploitation on a massive scale. Due to newly imported capitalist productive modality, Vietnamese economy had changed very fast: broke out economic relationships of rural areas, established new cities, set up new economic centers and new settlements. Terms of culture, French government fully executed enslaved cultural policies as well as prevented the local people from getting in touch with foreign cultures. Under strict control of colonial governments, Vietnamese literature was divided into two main streams: the public literature (also called the legal literature) and the patriotic — revolutionary literature (also called non-public literature or illegal literature). The former would not fight against the government so it had spaces to develop, whereas, the latter focused on how to demonstrate the patriotic ideas and would like to escape the contemporary colonial society, hence, the writer ought to create their works secretly. Tu Cham A's translations, in fact, did not impact the plan of French in Vietnam. Thus, many of Tu's works got introduced into the country at that time. Moreover, French's colonial exploitation strongly influenced the partition of Vietnamese class. Especially, some new classes were introduced, such as the middle-class, the lower middle-class and the worker class. Intelligentsia became the new object of literary activities both in receiving literature and creating literature. Followed by the new public of literature, the old literature (or the medieval literature) gradually lost their traditional readers because the audience paid more attention to the new literature, which was influenced or translated from foreign literatures, especially French literature. New literary readers were associated with capitalist ideology's debut in the local country. As a result, by means of co-

lonial programs and capitalist ideology, Vietnamese culture, society, economy, and particularly, ethical situations had been transformed into a new form of ideology. It showed a new situation of ethics created and which tried to occupy the highest position of the feudal ethical system in the past. Tu Cham A's novels came to Vietnam while the feudal ethical ideas still did not collapse but the new ethical context just appeared. Fortunately, some contents of "anti-feudalism (反封建)" of Tu's writings were quite conformable with the conflict of the old ethical system and the new one in Vietnam. It is prominent that there are some resemblances between Chinese culture and Vietnamese culture, the two countries had a deep relationship of culture and, therefore, there were some shared aspects of the ethical mode. These "ethical keys" of Tu Cham A's novels were as same as the ethical background of Vietnamese readers, consequently, it drew their attention almost immediately. It can be said that the Vietnamese translator's "ethical distance" were both distance of time (about ten years) and the space including cultural and literary exchanges between China and Vietnam; reception tastes among the local translator and the reader community; historical, social, and economic backgrounds; the Vietnamese literary progress itself and, especially, Vietnamese translators themselves. The gap and ethical situations made the Vietnamese translator have their own evaluation and consideration about Xu and his writings, finally, they chose one of the Chinese author's novel, *Tears of Snow*, to release in *Nam Phong* in 1923.

Additionally, in company with the "ethical distance," the ethical situations had a co-existence of the misreading of Tu Cham A in Vietnam. Nie Zhenzhao uses "misreading (誤讀)" as a basic concept of Ethical Literary Criticism. He indicates many misreading instances in the history of world literature, such as the misreading of the conception of literature and literary text, the misreading of aesthetics concept...etc. Similarly, in translations of Tu Cham A also existed the misreading phenomenon.

First of all, under Chinese "New Literature (新文學)" perspective, the Vietnamese translator misunderstood about the case of Tu Cham A. In China, the writer was listed in "popular literature (通俗文學)" and was criticised as a character of "old literature (舊文學)." Conversely, while introducing Tu Cham A in the Vietnamese *Nam Phong* magazine, the introducer said that *Tears of Snow* is a very new novel, which appeared about 15 years ago, so should be read thoroughly. The character of the story is a new intellectual of this period, so it is more worth reading (Doan 421). As a response to this introduction, Nguyen Thu Hien indicates her view as: "We particularly focus on the two words 'very new' because if they are

translated into Chinese¹, they will become equivalent to the concept of 'new literature' or will suggest an imagination of the 'new literature'." (Web) In practice, the researcher ignores Doan Hiep's interpretation after "very new" word, "which appeared about 15 years ago," meaning what Doan Hiep called "very new" was only to manifest about the time, it really does not contain "new literature" implication as Nguyen admitted. The freshness of Tu Cham A only viewed as he is a foreign author and this is the first time his work was translated into Vietnamese. Despite of Nguyen's misreading of Tu Cham A, there is also a fact that: Vietnamese translators took Tu Cham A as a representative of modern Chinese literature. However, their choice led to another interesting fact that they ignored Lu Xun (鲁迅) who is one of the representative writers of May the Fourth literature (五四文學). In contrast to Xu, Lu Xun was not introduced until October 1942, volume 23 of the Vietnamese *Thanh Nghi* magazine by Dang Thai Mai. It indicates that Lu Xun's first landmark in Vietnam was 20 years later than Tu Cham A mostly due to the Vietnamese translator's ethical choice. Besides, it is worth noting that, Xu created a record phenomenon of print in the early Republic of China (1912-1949) and his positive market effects facilitated him to enter the Vietnamese society.

Furthermore, on account of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly writings in general and Xu Zhenya's fame in particular, there was a common misreading of the authorship printed with "Tu Cham A." Nguyen Nam shows that:

Two Knights Destroy Evil (《雙俠破奸》) and *My Husband* (《余之夫》) were published together under the name 'Tu Cham A', but the actual names for these two were *Record of Two Knights Destroy Evil* (《雙俠破奸記》) or *Strange Case of Three Lives* (《三命奇案》), a detective novel by Zhuang Binghai (莊病骸) or Zhuang Yumei (莊禹梅) (1885-1970) which were first published by the Private Library (民立圖書館) of Shanghai in 1919. *Madam Confederate Rose* (《芙蓉娘》) was actually a work by Wu Qiyuan (吳綺緣) (1899-1948), further revised by Xu Zhenya. *Tears of Yun Lan* (《芸蘭淚史》) was a work of Yu Xuelun (喻血輪) (1892-1967) [...] All the above findings show that some Chinese novels, such as Zhuang Binghai, Yu Qiyuan, and Yu Xuelun, are translated into Vietnamese with their names concealed by the forefather of the School of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly, Tu Cham A. (Web)

These are deliberate mistakes which were sourced from two sides of the transla-

1 Nguyen Thu Hien translates this sentence into Chinese as “《雪鴻淚史》是一部很新的小說。”

tor and the publisher/editors (the magazine, the printing house, and the publishing house). The former changed the author's real name, i.e., it showed that the translator's ethical choice betrayed the truth or was unethical. The consequence of their ethical choice caused the publisher and the reader to be in misapprehension. The latter would still recognize the true writer of the work but they overlooked and intentionally labeled these books to Tu Cham A. (Moreover, there was still a capacity of complicity among the two sides to give the audience a misreading). Commercial profits may be the main reason for their action because the publishers and the translators had a lot of income from making a deal either of mistake or of not reading Tu Cham A. The misreading is more for the profits than for Tu's fame. Nonetheless, the misunderstanding not only gives problems to the reader but also brings barriers in the research of Tu Cham A. For example, it is not easy to identify Tu Cham A's original text and the authorship. In 2010, Nguyen Nam made a list of Xu's novels and short stories labeled "by Tu Cham A" (translated and published from 1923 to 1931) as a noticeable part of his essay "Women Killed Themselves — Fault of the Novel? (A View on Women and Literature and Society of Vietnam in the Early 20th Century)." The Vietnamese researcher showed 23 works of Tu Cham A in total. In 2013, Yan Bao "made the list of translations published in book form" from 1922 until 1954 in his research "The Influence of Chinese Fiction on Vietnamese Literature." "The list, which comprises 316 translations (not counting re-issues), includes only the original work that had been identified." (170) Chinese scholars mentioned Xu Zhenya as the "most famous representative" of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly school and at least three of his works were translated into Vietnamese (Nos. 277, 291 and 294). (Yan 173) Based on the Yan Bao's list, Xu Zhenya's three translated novels are *Tears of Snow*, *Jade Pear Soul* and *My Concubine* (《余之妻》)¹. In the same year of 2013, Nguyen Thu Hien, another Vietnamese researcher, provided a new list that reduced the number of Tu's Vietnamese versions to 10 in total. Below is a comparative chart of the three sources mentioned above:

No.	Year of Print	Title in Chinese	Title in Vietnamese	Translator	Publisher
1	1919	Ziyou jian 自由鑑 (?)	Đa tình hận	Phan Manh Danh	(?)
	1924	Ziyou jian 自由鑑 (?)	<i>Giương tự do</i>	Dong Chau	Nam Phong, vol. 87

1 Yan Bao mistook the title “余之妻” (*My Wife*, or *Vợ tôi* in Vietnamese) as “My Concubine” (“Vợ lẽ của tôi” in Vietnamese).

2	1923	Xuehong leishi 雪鴻淚史	<i>Tuyết hồng lệ sử</i>	M.K/Doan Hiep	Nam Phong, vol. 77-84
	1928	Xuehong leishi 雪鴻淚史	<i>Tuyết hồng lệ sử</i>	M.N. Doan Tu Thuat	Hanoi: Dong Van/Quang Long
	1930	Xuehong leishi 雪鴻淚史	<i>Tuyết hồng lệ sử</i>	M.N. Doan Tu Thuat	(Reprint) Hanoi: Nam Ky
	1932*	Xuehong leishi 雪鴻淚史	<i>Tuyết hồng lệ sử</i>	Nguyen Quang Sanh	(?)
3	1925	Pianpian taohua 片片桃花 (?)	<i>Hoa đào trước gió</i>	Nguyen Khac Hanh	Hanoi: Bui Xuan Hoc
4	1925	Unidentifiable	Đồng Chu liệt quốc. Liêu trai chí dị. Hồn hoa	Tran Tuan Khai, Nguyen Phan Lang	Thanh Nien Li- brary
	1934	Unidentifiable	<i>Hồn hoa</i>	Tran Tuan Khai	Tin Duc Library
5	1927	Yu zhi fu 余之夫	<i>Chồng tôi</i>	Nguyen Do Muc	Hanoi: Tan Dan
	1927	Yu zhi fu 余之夫	<i>Chồng tôi</i>	Tung Van Nguyen Don Phuc	Nam Phong, vol. 119-30
6	1927	Yu zhi fu, Shuangxia pojian 余之夫, 雙俠破奸	<i>Chồng tôi, Hai chàng nghĩa hiệp</i>	Nguyen Do Muc, Nghiem Xuan Lam	Hanoi: Tan Dan
7	1927	Yu zhi qi 余之妻	<i>Vợ tôi</i>	Nguyen Do Muc	Hanoi: Tan Dan
	1939*	Yu zhi qi 余之妻	<i>Vợ lẽ của tôi*</i>	Nguyen Nam Thong	(?)
8	1927	Yunlan leishi 芸蘭淚史	<i>Giọt lệ phòng văn</i>	Lam Kieu	Hanoi: Hung Phu Publisher
	1930	Yunlan leishi 芸蘭淚史	<i>Giọt lệ phòng văn</i>	Lam Kieu	(Reprint) Dong Tay Publisher
9	1927	Qinghai fengbo 情海風波	<i>Bể tình nổi sóng — Trung Hoa luân lý tiểu thuyết</i>	Nguyen Tu Sieu	Hanoi: Nhat Nam
	1928	Qinghai fengbo 情海風波	<i>Bể tình nổi sóng — Trung Hoa luân lý tiểu thuyết</i>	Nguyen Tu Sieu	(Reprint) Hanoi: Nhat Nam
	1929	Qinghai fengbo 情海風波	<i>Bể tình nổi sóng — Trung Hoa luân lý tiểu thuyết</i>	Nguyen Tu Sieu	(Reprint) Hanoi: Nhat Nam
10	1928	Unidentifiable	<i>Hai vợ</i>	Ky Vien	Hanoi: Tan Dan
11	1928	Furong niang 芙蓉娘	<i>Bóng hiệp hồn hoa — Hiếu liệt tiểu thuyết</i>	Nguyen Tu Sieu	Hanoi: Nhat Nam
12	1928	Yu Li Hun 玉梨魂	<i>Dưới hoa</i>	Nhuong Tong	Hanoi: Dong Van/ Quang Long
	1930	Yu Li Hun 玉梨魂	<i>Ngọc lê hồn</i>	Ngo Van Trien	Hanoi: Tan Dan
	2016	Yu Li Hun 玉梨魂	<i>Ngọc lê hồn</i>	Nhuong Tong, Du- ong Minh	Literature Publish- ing House

13	1928	Liyun leishi 梨筠淚史 (?)	<i>Giấc mộng nàng Lê</i>	Truc Khe	Hanoi: Nhat Nam
	1929	Liyun leishi 梨筠淚史 (?)	<i>Giấc mộng nàng Lê: Ái tình, hiệp tình tiểu thuyết</i>	Truc Khe	(Reprint) Hanoi: Nhat Nam
14	1929 (?)	Unidentifiable	<i>Nhân duyên mộng</i>	Nguyen Tu Sieu	Hanoi: Nhat Nam
15	1929 (?)	Unidentifiable	<i>Người trong gương</i>	Nguyen Tu Sieu	Hanoi: Nhat Nam
16	1931	Unidentifiable	<i>Đồng xương vô định</i>	Mai Khe	Women Times, 29/7-2/8/1931

Notes: (?) = Unidentifiable; * = Yan Bao's mistake

In the above table, there are 16 translated works claimed to be originally written by Tu Cham A, but 5 among them (Nos. 4, 10, 14, 15, and 16) are untitled and the original titles of 3 are unidentifiable (Nos. 1, 3, and 13). Vietnamese title of Tu's work was translated into the local language and are not similar to the cases of *Ziyou jian* and *Yu Li Hun*. Some publishers also combine singletons for publication like works no. 4 and no. 6. The former printed *Spirit of Flower* (Chinese title unidentifiable), *Dongzhou lieguo* (《東周列國》) and *Liaozhai zhiyi* (《聊齋誌異》) together, while the latter was combined with *Yu zhi fu* and *Shuangxia pojian* into one version. The identification of Tu's original writings later became a bottleneck because of the unclear titles in Chinese and some other reasons (as analyzed above).

Choosing Tu Cham A: the Vietnamese Translator's Ethical Dilemma

In the first half of the 20th century while selecting Xu Zhenya's novels (for Vietnamese translation), the local translator was trapped in what Nie Zhenzhao calls "ethical dilemma" (倫理困境)¹. Literary translation was actively involved in the modernization while Vietnamese literature was ready to exchange with other cultures and literatures, especially French. In this period, the literary translation was associated with the propagation and spread of *quoc ngu* (Latin language-based system). We should notice that using *quoc ngu* to translate foreign writings is destructive to *chu Nom* (字喃)², which is a symbol for nationalism and traditional culture of Vietnam just like Chinese character (漢字) for Chinese culture.

1 An ethical dilemma is an inextricable, insolvable or insoluble condition or situation which impacts to people's ethical choices.

2 Chữ Nôm (字喃) also called "Chữ Nam" (字南) or "Quốc âm" (國音) literally "Southern characters" or "Characters of Vietnamese" is a pictographic writing system that created by based on Chinese characters.

Since the Roman alphabet was far better suited for rendering Vietnamese than the previous *chu nom* system, it quickly replaced the latter. Hundreds of Chinese novels were rendered into Vietnamese in *quoc ngu* for the first time and published from the turn of the century (through the 1930s). There is thus a poignant irony in the fact that the new script based on the Roman alphabet was decidedly more effective for translating Chinese novels into Vietnamese than the old script modeled on the sinographs. (Emanuel 1102-3)

In fact, while taking *quoc ngu* as a translative instrument, the translator is faced with ethical choices. This is a battle between the old and the new cultures, development and stagnancy, Western and Eastern civilizations, and individually, between contemporary translators and their predecessors. The incessantly inextricable struggle that was formed by various ethical positions, conditions, identities inside the local translators created the ethical dilemma. They were hard to escape the ethical plight. If they embrace the new it shows that from a specific point of view they gave up on their own cultural roots. However, if they support the old ones then they will be lagging behind in time. At last we see that the Vietnamese translator's ethical choice was to enter into the era with a new ethical approach: taking advantage of *quoc ngu* to strengthen the country and nation. Their ethical choice was placed in modernist demands where many patriotic revolutions, including Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc (東京義塾), Dong Du (東遊) and Duy Tan (維新), were expected in the movements.

One of the common points of innovative movement of Vietnam in the first half of the 20th century was appealing people to renounce the bookishness learning-style, which was influenced by the Chinese traditional academic style of teaching *quoc ngu* — by means of adopting the new script to improve intellectual standards of the people and simultaneously serving the revolutionary goals. Although the existence of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was short, merely for 11 months from March 1907 to November 1907 but the movement brought many outstanding effects to renovation achievements of Vietnam in the early 20th century. Some advanced characters of the organization like Phan Boi Chau, Luong Van Can, Nguyen Quyen... hoped to remove the traditional learning method. Their aim was to introduce some new ideals from China, for instance — Liang Qichao (梁啟超), Kang Youwei (康有為), and Japan as Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉) which expanded *quoc ngu* and developed the press, etc. One of the most essential activities of the organization

was translations. One of the first books translated into Vietnamese was the Chinese book “New Book (新書).” Nguyen Don Phuc, one of the translators of Tu Cham A, was a member of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, owing to the working period in translation part of the organization, became a keen writer of *Nam Phong* magazine as well as translated the Chinese author’s *My Husband* into the local language. Additionally, expanding *quoc ngu* to enhance cultural and intellectual level of people was an important purpose of Duy Tan movement which was initiated by Phan Chau Trinh from 1906 to 1908. This result of the Vietnamese translator’s ethical choice can be viewed as an answer to the modernist’s appeal at that time. French colonials would like to apply *quoc ngu* to rule Vietnam, nevertheless, Vietnamese people make corrupt use of French policies to build their own local culture. It is displayed that the new ethical condition, which based on the new script development, was widely supported by the colonialist even though their aim was very different. For this reason, this situation also led to another ethical issue: French authority hoped to use *quoc ngu* as an administrative instrument to Vietnamese, however, the local translator or even Vietnamese intellectuals wished to utilize the new text system to strengthen their own country. By means of “public literature”¹ at that time, the Vietnamese intellectuals and writers were both spreading *quoc ngu* (as French government requested) and growing their own local culture. Fortunately, after making their ethical choice, they contributed to *quoc ngu* propagation and prose literature as well as the literary modernization of Vietnam in the first half of the 20th century.

Along with the translator’s ethical choice some local researchers would like to explain “Why there was a reversion in the order of Xu’s publication?” This is a question which local scholars such as Nguyen Nam and Nguyen Thi Hien focused on, but they ignored the other part of the question: Why did the translator choose Tu Cham A? Additionally, while analyzing Doan Hiep’s preface they skipped the ethical comment that might be the most remarkable reason to induce the reviewer to make an introduction of Xu’s *Tears of Snow*: “*Tears of Snow* is a very new novel which appeared about 15 years ago and the protagonist of the story is a new intellectual of this period, so it is a novel worth reading. Although some characters are not really moral but the writing is good and the story is very interesting. The people in the story are very similar [to Vietnamese people], the narrative is also very new;

1 Because of a colonized country, Vietnamese literature in the early 20th century to August 1945 Revolution existed in two literary parts: “public literature” and “non-public literature.” The former was a legal literature that had permission of French colonist government. In contrast, the latter was harshly censored by the official, as a result, the non-public literature must circulate secretly.

seeing good sentences, they are being praised; seeing the unethical ones, they admonish themselves. Therefore, it is a valuable novel" (Doan 421). The critic believed that what made it "a valuable novel" are some characteristics that belong to the ethical realm. Therefore, the most important factor that made the local translator choose Tu Cham A is the ethical reason and below are possible causes:

1) Xu Zhenya publishing phenomenon in China and some other Chinese communities (such as Singapore and Hong Kong) would be the most remarkable reason. Particularly, at the era Vietnamese publisher and the press were attempting to satisfy some necessary changes in the social life in the 1920s.

2) Fascination of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly fiction and Xu Zhenya novel was appropriate to the translator's aesthetic reception as well as responded to some new appeared classes' reading taste — especially the lower middle class (small trader, small shopkeeper, craftsman, official, intelligentsia, pupil, student... etc.) in some big cities including Hanoi, Nam Dinh, Hai Phong...

3) Vietnamese translators found out some new aspects in the content that Xu Zhenya expressed in his novels including the matter of feudal ethical behaviour, the ideal of age, love freedom, marriage issue, revolutionary spirit... etc.

Nguyen Nam asserts: "The intellectual and moral conflicts between the East/Old and the West/New described in his novel are very similar to some issues in the contemporary Vietnamese society. In other words, the translator may sympathize with the social problems mentioned by Tu Cham A in his various writings. Therefore, they attempt to spread what makes them favourable and create some social effects and aesthetic interests among the reader" (Web). The translator's idea met the new aspect inside Tu Cham A's fictions and afterwards they wished to let through the Chinese novelist's writings to represent their thought on changing the society. It cannot be denied that in 1920s, there were some resemblances between Shanghai, where the School of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly was founded, and Vietnam. Moreover, there was a similar "writer-journalist model" between Xu Zhenya and his Vietnamese translators i.e. a meeting point between Xu's characters and Vietnamese receptioners. These elements were a very important catalysis for Vietnamese translator collecting Xu Zhenya's fiction to render into *quoc ngu* versions.

Nhuong Tong, for instance, had some similar meeting places with others while taking *Jade Pear Soul* to be his translation: "Tu Cham A was a journalist, Nhuong Tong was also a journalist, Mengxia embraced revolutionary dream and Nhuong Tong was really a revolutionist" (Tu 7). Despite Nhuong Tong being a writer and a revolutionist, he met the Chinese company: "Cultivated in traditional culture, Xu Zhenya on the one hand had the temperament of a typical man of letters, who was

gifted at creating verses, observant and sentimental, and on the other hand, as a member of the South Society (南社) having feelings for modern revolutions and a sense of mission in the social transformation” (Qian 78). Xu Zhenya’s revolutionary and changed social spirit reflected him as a member of South Society in reality and in *Jade Pear Soul*. He also let his protagonist He Mengxia (何夢霞) come back to China from Japan to take part in Wuchang Uprising (武昌起義). Meanwhile, Nhung Tong also had feelings for modern revolutions which further made him a revolutionist. Also because of which he went to prison on Con Dao Island¹. Although they possessed two different ethical identities but there was a rise of emotions amongst them called “people of a kind fall into the same group (同聲相應, 同氣相求).” Nhung Tong being a Vietnamese translator, a pressman, a writer, a revolutionist and especially a citizen of a colonized country saw the models of “love and revolution” in *Jade Pear Soul* and then further on translating it into *quoc ngu*. “It might be the most dazzling radiance of Classical Chinese in China. More importantly it was a story of ‘love and revolution’ — therefore, it was highly relevant to many confusions and hopes of the contemporary young men and women. It turned from the private narrative to the grand narrative and the national revolution has greatly expanded to the narrative space of love fiction since the late Qing Dynasty” (Li 140). In 1928, when the Vietnamese version (namely *Under Flower*) of *Jade Pear Soul* was published, Nhung Tong was only 25 years old and in 1927 he and his comrades founded the Vietnam Nationalist Party (越南國民黨) in Hanoi². As a young man Nhung Tong was a bit different from “contemporary young men and women” of China: he put his “hopes” more than “confusions” to Tu Cham A’s novel. Actually, Nhung Tong was not only rendering the Chinese fiction but also commenting it by his footnotes. These footnotes partly showed his view on *Jade Pear Soul* in general and contemporary Vietnamese society in particular.

4) Tu Cham A’s writings were a “social fight” tool for Vietnamese people and for women & feminism: “Translating Tu Cham A was an opportunity for the Viet-

1 Con Dao Islands (Côn Đảo) are an archipelago in the Southeast region of Vietnam, located in Baria-Vungtau Province. In the period of French domination (1884-1945), a horrible prison system was built in the island to detain Vietnamese patriots or Communists who fought against the colonial rule.

2 From 1926, Nhung Tong joined in Nam Dong Printing House which dedicatedly prints books to propaganda patriotism. In 1929, according to Vietnam Nationalist Party’s plan, Nhung Tong came to Hue City to have a meeting with Phan Boi Chau, who is a great revolutionary leader. Unfortunately, when he came back to the North, he was arrested by French officials and was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment, banished to Con Dao Island until 1936 when he has released.

namese translator's to express the 'social fight' and show their ideas about social issues, notably women and feminism" (Web).

Nguyen Nam's above statement is similar to that of the author of *History of Modern Chinese Literature*: "*Jade Pear Soul* is popular with the readers mainly because it mentions the freedom of marriage [...] *Jade Pear Soul* employs the tragic love story of Bai Liying, Jun Qian and He Mengxia to reflect the youth's desires for the freedom of love and awakening of personal consciousness after the 1911 Revolution. To a certain level it revealed and criticized the feudal ethics system which was harmful to the youth's love and also had a certain significance in fighting against the feudal ethics system" (Zhu 39). By reading the Chinese novel the younger generation could be impacted by the changes happening in their neighbouring countries and start their own social activism. Although Xu Zhenya's attitude to protest the feudal system was a "certain level" and could not have a strong stand, Vietnamese translators at least discovered the necessary tool to subvert the feudal ethics mode in Vietnamese society at that era. Consequently, Vietnamese translators and Mandarin Duck and Butterfly writings have a same aim as Ray Chow manifests: "But through them we see a very different kind of subversion — a subversion that works by perverse dimensions, exaggeration, repetition; a subversion that is melodramatic, not tragic, in nature" (6). The natural subversion became a "social fight" tool for both the Vietnamese translators and the readers in the first half of the 20th century.

5) From the perspective of written language, Xu Zhenya's Chinese written fictions were suitable for Vietnamese translators who were descended from *Han hoc* or *Nho hoc* (Sinology, 漢學). Doan Tu Thuat (also called Mai Nhac, 1886-1928), who translated *Tears of Snow* into Vietnamese, was born into a family with *Han hoc* tradition. He learned Chinese in his childhood. Nguyen Do Muc (1882-1951) grew up in a traditional sinology family, his father was Nguyen Dinh Duong, who acquired high positions in the feudal government system through national exams. Nguyen Do Muc also went through the competition and gained the title of "Xiucai" (秀才) — an honorable traditional academic title — in 1909. In 1927 the writer also translated *My Husband* and *My Wife* into *quoc ngu*. Nguyen Don Phuc (also called Tung Van) (?-1954) learned Chinese very early and obtained the "Xiucai" title in 1906. He translated *My Husband* and released it in *Nam Phong* in 1927. Nhuong Tong (also called Hoang Pham Tran, 1904-1949) was descended from a *Nho hoc* family. He studied Chinese when he was a little boy and is also translator of *Jade Pear Soul* (titled *Under Flower* in Vietnamese version). Despite Truc Khe (real name Ngo Van Trien, 1901-1947) did not come from a sinology family, however,

at the age of six he began to learn Chinese with a village scholar. He translated *Jade Pear Soul* after two years in comparison with Nhuong Tong. His translation got the same title as the Chinese version. By inheriting the tradition of the Chinese learning style, the local translator had a necessary language tool: Chinese. Actually, Vietnamese translators had a deep interaction with the Chinese culture and literature which could be seen in their personal origins. Due to this connection, they had sympathetic feelings with the Chinese writing and it impelled to the collecting of Xu Zhenya fiction into a translation object.

6) From reception aesthetics perspective, Xu Zhenya's deep root in Chinese classical literature as well as the Vietnamese translators' profound connection to the literature brought the favourable condition amongst the local translator's literary reception activity.

7) The appearance of new classes at the same time shaped up the new readers class, especially the young lady in some big cities who were a prominent element to the literary consumption. Besides, the development of printing technology and the press was a huge motivation to translators. From this side the translator and the press played a vital part in using *quốc ngữ* to compose literature but it was a difficult issue and hence, translations took its pioneer role.

At the same time it should be remembered that there were as yet not many works composed in *quốc ngữ*. The press initially launched through the efforts of the French which played a vital role during the period of transition. Numerous translations from the French and the Chinese first appeared in newspapers. This also meant that Vietnamese journalists generally assumed the role of translators while the newspapers became the forum of the new Vietnamese literature. (Yan 170-1)

The translator's ethical choice had the active support of the press and other printing tools that gave a consumed environment to literary books which satisfied the newly established bourgeoisie's material and spiritual demands. As a comparison, the relationship between Vietnamese translators and the publishing industry was fairly the same as the interactions between the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly fiction and the printing industry in China in the early Republic period. "The interaction between the School of Mandarin Duck, Butterfly and early Chinese publishing industry fully implied budding of early Chinese culture and creative industry and provided experiences and enlightenments such as paying attention to content providing, actively adjusting the model of content publishing, mining creativity adapting to needs of

mental and psychosocial of people” (Li 8:169). The bourgeoisie’s needs of enjoying literature kept growing and more literary books including translations were published. Fortunately, the Vietnamese translator noticed Tu Cham A and the local printing and the press industry together created the Tu Cham A fever.

8) Last but not least, translations of Xu Zhenya in general and translations of overseas literature in private were a response to the appeal of translation, the spread of *quoc ngu*, and the *quoc ngu* literary development. Phan Khoi, a *Han hoc* scholar and renowned translator, once claimed: “As for translations, in my opinion, if we can translate something, we should do it despite the type of books because there are not many books in our own language. For this reason, we should translate contemporary works, Chinese classics (both historical and literary), Buddhist sutras and Taoist canons into Vietnamese” (Web). Therefore, translations of Tu Cham A provided a great contribution to the development of the Latinized Vietnamese as the national language of Vietnam¹.

Conclusion

Xu Zhenya was rendered into Vietnamese in the context of 1920s when the local literature was in the process of modernization. One of the effective activities of the process was translation. The translator’s ethical choice played a significant role in building and spreading the *quoc ngu* literary prose of Vietnam on the one hand and Vietnamese literature on the other. At the time of the Tu Cham A fever in Vietnam, there was a “suicidal phenomenon” mainly amongst women due to the impact of his novels (Nguyen Nam). This is one of the most evident social influences of the Chinese writer in Vietnam. After nearly one century in 2016, the Literature Publishing House reprinted *Jade Pear Soul* in a new edition based on Nhung Tong’s and Duong Minh’s translations. Apart from commercial purposes the action might be a reasonable evaluation of Tu Cham A and his *Jade Pear Soul*. Undoubtedly, Vietnam in the early 21st century was not the same as the period of Xu’s first appearance in the country. This is the internet and high-tech era which basically changed countenance of literature. Tu Cham A appears timeless to different generations of Vietnamese readers who have various ethical conditions and make differing ethical

1 *Quoc ngu* characters (chữ quốc ngữ) was initiated by Western missionaries in the 16th century. French priest Alexandre de Rhodes was regarded as the greatest contributor to the construction of *quoc ngu* for his dictionary *Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum* compiled in 1651. In 1869, French colonist government forced Vietnamese people using *quoc ngu* to replace Chinese characters in administrative documents in South Vietnam, and from 1910 on, the policy was expanded to the North.

choices. No matter what fate Xu Zhenya and his novels have, Vietnamese translators have made their ethical choices and the rest is up to the readers who in turn will constantly perform their own ethical choices.

【 Works Cited 】

- Chow, Rey. "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Female Melancholy as Fiction and Commodity." *Selected Papers in Asian Studies: Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies* 1. 21 (1985): 1-12.
- Doan, Hiep. "Novel: Tears of Snow." *Nam Phong*. November 1923: 421-8.
- Li, Bin. "The School of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly's Creative Push on Early Chinese Publishing Industry." *Asian Social Science* 8.12 (2012): 164-70.
- Li, Qingguo. *Xueshu bianqian yu jindai wenxue de Zhongguo xiangxiang (Chinese Imagination of Academic Transition and Modern Literature)*. Guangzhou: Sun Yat-sen U P, 2013.
- Li, Zonggang. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shilun (A History of Chinese Modern Literature)*. Ji'nan: Shandong People's Publishing House, 2014.
- Nguyen, Nam. "Women Killed Themselves — Fault of the Novel? (A View on Women and Literature and Society of Vietnam in the Early 20th Century)." *Khoavanhoc-ngonngu.edu.vn*. Social Sciences and Humanities, Hochiminh National University, 2010. Web. 20 April 2017.
- Nguyen, Thu Hien. "Translation of the 20th Century Literature of China in Vietnam from the Historical Literary Perspective." *Nguvan.hnue.edu.vn*. Faculty of Philology, Hanoi National University of Education. 03.06.2016. Web. 24 May 2017.
- Nie, Zhenzhao. *Wenxue lunlun xue piping daolun (Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism)*. Beijing: Peking U P, 2014.
- Pastreich, Emanuel. "The Reception of Chinese Literature in Vietnam." *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair. New York: Columbia U P, 2001. 1096-104.
- Qian, Liqun. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shilun (A History of Modern Chinese Literature)*. Nanning: Guangxi Normal U P, 2011.
- Thuy, Toan. "The Writer and Journalist Phan Khoi with Translation." *Vnca.cand.com*. Cong An Nhan Dan Newspaper, 10.4.2012. Web. 26 May 2017.
- Tu, Cham A. *Jade Pear Soul*. Trans. Nhung Tong and Duong Minh. Hanoi: Literature Publishing House, 2016.
- Yan, Bao. "The Influence of Chinese Fiction on Vietnamese Literature." *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17th-20th Centuries)*. Ed. Claudine Salmon. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013. 163-95.
- Zhu, Defa, ed. *Xiandai Zhongguo wenxueshi jingpian (A History of Modern Chinese Literature (1900-2000))*. Jinan: Shandong Education Publishing House, 2013.

责任编辑：陈敏