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**GRADUATION THESIS
TO SUCCESSFULLY TRANSLATE ENGLISH POEMS
INTO VIETNAMESE**

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Translation, since its inception, has always played a vital role in scientific and cultural exchange activities, bringing peoples of different cultures closer together. Each people, each country has its own culture and knowledge passed on from generations to generations and throughout history, the culture and knowledge of each one has been vastly enriched and broadened through translation activities. Translation opens up new horizon of knowledge to people by enabling us to access the immense ocean of knowledge of mankind. Vietnamese patriots and revolutionists in the Dong Kinh movement in early XX century expressed their view on the importance of translation as a booster to the progress of Vietnam and the spirit of its people through those verse lines:

> "Chữ Tàu dịch lấy chữ ta
> Chữ Tây cũng phải dịch ra chữ mình
> …..
> Sách các nước, sách China
> Chữ nào chữ ấy dịch ra tỏ tường
> Nông công cổ trăm đường cũng thế
> Hiệp quần nhau thì dễ toan lo
> Á Âu chung lại một lò
> Đúc nên tư cách mới cho làm người.
> Một người đọc, muôn người đều biết
> Trí ta khôn, muôn việc đều hay,
> Lời nguyền nắm được vào tay
> Có cơ tiến hoá có ngày văn minh"

> (Đăng cổ tùng báo, as cited in Thuý Toàn, 1999)

Of translation activities, literary translation, according to Thuý Toàn (1999), plays an especially important role as it helps one people gain better understanding of others than any other type of translation. A number of works constituting the Vietnamese literature are translated versions of Chinese, Russian, French, English literary works and obviously they not only have enriched Vietnamese literature but also have helped boost the creation of the domestic literature. (Thuý Toàn, 1999).

Poetry is a form of literature, thus it is also a target pursued by many translators who want to bring the world's poetic quintessence to Vietnamese readers. Millions of Vietnamese readers have been enchanted by beautiful, passionate lyric poems of the great Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin through the translated versions of Thuý Toàn; many have enjoyed French poet La Fontaine's *Fables* translated by Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh, etc. Those are excellent poetic works, translated many times by many translators, but there are still a lot valuable, beautiful poems yet to be translated. Besides, although we have seen a lot of Chinese, Russian and French poems translated into Vietnamese, the number of English poems translated seems rather modest (Cao Xuân Hạo, as cited in Doãn Diễm, 2004).

English poetry still appears to be unfamiliar with the majority of Vietnamese people, including English language learners. However, many people wish to understand more about it and even translate it. Against this backdrop, this research is carried out in order to present an approach to translating English poems into Vietnamese. Another reason why I chose this topic for my thesis is that although English language majors of the English Department, Hanoi University of Foreign Studies, have carried out many researches on translation, no one has ever dealt with the issue of poetry translation. Meanwhile, literary translation in general and poetry translation in particular cannot be dispensed from the society and still plays a vital role in Vietnamese literature. Besides, the translation of poetry does benefit translators themselves, as translation will help

translators to acquire much more profound understanding than that can be afforded by the most scrupulous analysis; and the translation of great writers' works will help translators to realize their creative potential. "The act of translating can evoke in us creative powers we might not otherwise know we had. We can make a contribution to literature while enlarging our own artistic accomplishment" (Kessler, 2000, p. 3). For all those reasons, it is worth to do a research on this subject. This study is carried out with a hope to find something out of the terra incognita to contribute to the collection of researches that have been done. It is done on the basis of my studying English and Vietnamese poetry, prosody, the work of many poetry translators and previous studies about the field. The guideline given in this thesis, of course, is just a suggestion, not a rule.

1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

This thesis is written in order to give general guidelines to translating poems from English to Vietnamese. However, I have to emphasize here that despite being an English major who have studied English for many years and a poetry lover myself, I cannot claim that this study is a guideline to veteran professional translators of poetry. In fact, I owe a lot to their work and studies on which I have done my research. This thesis can only be a guideline to poetry translation for such people as English language learners who have a good command of English and now want to try translating poems from English to Vietnamese, yet find themselves knowing little about poetry in general and poetry translation in particular. Besides, for those who do not intend to translate poems but have a wish to understand more about English and Vietnamese poetry in order to appreciate poems written in these languages better, this study is hoped to be a useful source. In short, this thesis is aimed at:

1) providing would-be translators of poetry with basic knowledge about poetry in general, English and Vietnamese poetry in particular

2) offering an approach to translating an English poem into Vietnamese

1.3 METHODOLOGY

To achieve the aims above, the study has been carried out with data collected mainly from books, articles, dictionaries, encyclopedias and online documents. After being collected, the data regarding English and Vietnamese poetry was compiled to suit the specific areas related to the study; similarities between English and Vietnamese poetry as well as peculiarities of each one were also drawn. The information obtained from articles was mostly about opinions of writers, poets, and veteran translators about translation, which was seriously taken into account. Online documents offer studies by some international translators on the field of translation and poetry translation, which became good orientation of the study. Besides, the approach offered in the study is based on the thesis writer's own experience of poetry translation, together with useful knowledge drawn from the previous studies on the field. Apart from that, more information or data needed for the study has been gathered by other methods such as informal discussions with some university majors of English and professional translators.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This thesis only provides a general guideline to translating English poems into Vietnamese. It neither studies the translation of poems from Vietnamese to English, nor goes into such detail as how each English poetic form should be translated. Besides, due to time constraints, although there are many verse forms in English poetry, this thesis can only present major ones, which are considered the most representative of English poetry, with the hope to give those who are not familiar with English poetry a general idea about it – the first thing they should know before translating any English poem. Similarly, only basic

knowledge about Vietnamese poetry is presented, such as basic concepts and main Vietnamese verse forms, which aims at providing would-be translators of English poetry with necessary knowledge to be able to write poems on their own.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis has four chapters. Chapter one, which is the introduction to the whole thesis, is divided into six sections namely *Background to the study, Aims of the study, Methodology, Scope of the study, Organization of the thesis,* and *Definition of terms.* The *Background to the study* mentions the roles of translation in general, literary translation and poetry translation in particular in the development of the world and states the reasons why this topic was chosen for the study. The *Aims of the study* lists all the aims that the study has to achieve. The *Methodology* describes methods with which the study was carried out. The *Scope of the Study* clarifies the areas and subjects which were studied. The *Organization of the thesis* gives the outline of the main parts of the thesis paper and the *Definition of terms* explains important terms of poetry.

Chapter two is *Literature review*, which has five main sections namely *Introduction, Literary translation, Poetry translation, Previous studies on poetry translation* and *Remaining issue.* The *Introduction* outlines the main parts in chapter two, the *Literary translation* and *Poetry translation* review different viewpoints toward translation activities in literature in general and poetry in particular, as well as some facts about these activities in Vietnam. The *Previous studies on poetry translation* reviews several studies on the field of poetry translation, and the *Remaining issue* identifies what has not been resolved in this particular field to be dealt with in the thesis.

Chapter three is the main part of this thesis, which presents the study on translating English poems into Vietnamese. The first section of the chapter titled *What are required of a translator to translate poetry successfully?* aims at

identifying the necessary qualities that a poetry translator must possess in order to fulfill his job well. The second section of the chapter presents basic knowledge about English and Vietnamese poetry, which the translator must master before translating any poem. The third section presents all the steps to take to translate an English poem into Vietnamese successfully, and the last section of the chapter offers criteria to evaluate a translated version of a poem.

Chapter four - *Suggestions and Conclusion* - summarizes the important points of the study and gives suggestions for further studies.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms listed in this section are only a few major poetic terms which are discussed or repeated many times throughout the thesis. They can be understood differently in different contexts, so this section is aimed at clarifying how they should be comprehended in the area of poetry or this thesis in particular. They will also be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. The other poetic terms will be listed in the *Glossary of poetic terms* in the appendix.

English poetry: According to Wikipedia, *English poetry* can mean poetry written in England or poetry composed in the English language. The term *English poetry* used in this thesis is more inclined towards the second meaning.

Foot: A measurable, patterned unit of poetic rhythm usually consisting of one stressed syllable and one or more unstressed syllables.

Form: Form, as a general idea, is the design of a thing as a whole, the configuration of all its parts. In literature, it is the generic term for the organizing principle of a literary work. Particularly, in poetry, according to Nguyen Phan Thinh (2004), "if you were to listen to a poem read aloud in a language unknown

to you, or if you saw the poem printed in that foreign language, whatever in the poem you could see or hear would be the form of it."

Meter: The measure of stressed and unstressed syllables in lines of poetry. When stresses occur at regular intervals, the poetry is said to have regular meter.

Rhyme: The occurrence of the same stressed vowel sounds in two words, such as in *spring – sing, dies – eyes, day – gray*. This is known as perfect rhyme and assumes that the accented vowel sounds involved are preceded by different consonant sounds. Rhyme variations are *Feminine rhyme*, *Internal rhyme*, *Near rhyme*, and *Masculine rhyme*.

Rhyme scheme: A pattern of rhyme throughout a stanza or poem.

Stanza: A sequence of lines that form a metrical, tonal, or intellectual unit. It can also be defined as unit of a poem often repeated in the same form throughout a poem; a unit of poetic lines ("verse paragraph")

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I review literary translation in general and poetry translation a in particular in terms of opinions around these subjects. Besides, previous articles and studies on the specific issue of poetry translation are also taken into account to identify what has been studied and what has not been resolved.

2.2 LITERARY TRANSLATION

There are hundreds of languages in the world, correspondingly hundreds of cultures on earth. Translation breaks language barriers to bring people of different cultures closer together. The great German polymath Johann Wolfgang Goethe, as cited in Thuý Toàn (1999), once said that in spite of the discontentment over it, translation activity had been and would always be the worthiest cause uniting the whole universe. In this great cause, literary translation plays a distinctive role. It not only brings valuable literary works of one culture to others, thus broadens people's minds, it is also, in many cases the catalyst to help other cultures' literature to develop. According to Thuý Toàn (1999), at the dawn of a country's literature, translated literature plays a significant, sometimes dominant role in the dosmestic literature. This can be clearly seen when we look at the history of literature of many countries including influential ones. In the same book of 1999, Thuý Toàn cited some examples to illutrates this. At the beginning of French literature, for instance, French writers' works were closely related to the ancient Greek and Roman literature, which can be either considered adaptations or translated versions of the ancient works. Similarly, in the 18th century, Russia saw a boom of translated literary works by Russian writers, which were at the time considered the examples for literary creation of the

country. In Germany, the German translated version of the Bible by clergyman Luytte did have a great impact on the new development of German literature.

In Vietnam, translated literary works, most of which were of French and Chinese literature, dominated the new Vietnamese literature in the early 20th century. Almost all writers then took part in the constellation of translators and they translated almost all literary genres including memoir, poetry, fiction, autobiography, dramma, etc. Distinguished translators of Chinese literature were Phan Kế Bính, Nguyễn Đỗ Mục, Nguyễn Hữu Tiến, Nguyễn Chánh Sắc whose translated works include *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by Luo Guanzhong, *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en, *Water Margin* by Shi Nai'an, etc. Outstanding translators of French literature were Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh and Phạm Quỳnh with translations of the *Fables* of La Fontaine, *Les Misérables (Les Contemplations)* of Victor Hugo, the *Three Musketeers* of Alexandre Dumas, etc. In order to translate foreign literary works Vietnamese writers had to borrow or create new words, new ways of saying, which enriched the Vietnamese language and diversifed Vietnamese literary genres. Vietnamese writers began to write short stories, fictions and drammas in which we can find traces of many foreign writers. In addition, translated works also opened the minds of Vietnamese people by bringing new thoughts such as practical thinking like that of Molière's characters or free romantic affection in fictions like *Romance of the West Chamber* by Wang Shifu. It was these new thoughts that made good preparation for the birth of the new Vietnamese literature.

2.3 POETRY TRANSLATION

2.3.1 What is poetry?

All over the world, since the very early moment in history of human being (about 3000 BC, according to Microsoft Encarta), poetry has been written and eagerly

read or listened to by all kinds of people, from farmers, soldiers, scientists, lawyers, doctors to philosophers, kings and queens. Poetry in all ages has been regarded as important and a special form of literature because it is "something central to each man's existence, something having unique values to the fully realized life, something that he is better off for having and spiritually impoverished without" (Perrine, 1973, p. 3). But what is poetry? It is difficult to give a definition or formula of poetry that satisfies all admirers of this art because, according to Perrine, man has always been more successful at appreciating poetry than at defining it.

Let us have a look at some of numerous definitions and descriptions that people have attached to this art:

"Poetry, form of literature, spoken or written, that emphasizes rhythm, other intricate patterns of sound and imagery, and the many possible ways that words can suggest meaning." (*Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2005*)

"**Poetry** (from Ancient Greek: *ποιέω/ποιῶ* (poiéo/poió) = I create / I make / I do / I cause) is traditionally a written art form in which human language is used for its aesthetic qualities in addition to, or instead of, its notional and semantic content." (*Wikipedia*)

"Thơ là hình thức sáng tác văn học phản ánh cuộc sống, thể hiện những tâm trạng, những cảm xúc mạnh mẽ bằng ngôn ngữ hàm súc, giàu hình ảnh và nhất là có nhịp điệu" (Lê Bá Hán, Trần Đình Sử & Nguyễn Khắc Phi, 2000). (Poetry is a literary genre that reflects life, expresses intense feelings and emotions through the language that is concise, full of images and especially, rhythmical)

Renowned writers and poets also gave their own definitions of and viewpoints towards poetry. All of the below quotes were collected from the website Thinkexist.com:

"Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words." (Robert Frost, Famous American Poet 1874-1963)

"Poetry is boned with ideas, nerved and blooded with emotions, all held together by the delicate, tough skin of words." (Paul Engle, 1908-1991)

"Poetry is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal which the reader recognizes as his own." (Salvatore Quasimodo, Italian Poet, 1901-1968)

"Poetry is the music of the soul, and, above all, of great and feeling souls." (Voltaire, French Philosopher and Writer, one of the greatest of all French authors, 1694-1778)

"Poetry is thoughts that breathe, and words that burn." (Thomas Gray, English Poet, 1716-1771)

"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (William Wordsworth, major English romantic poet, 1770-1850*)*

Although people hold different views about poetry, all have agreed on one point: poetry is more intense than other writing – more intense with feeling and more intense in its concentration of meaning (Bergeman & Epstein, 1983). "It is the most condense and concentrated form of literature, saying most in the fewest number of words" (Perrine, 1973, p. 9) and that is what makes it different from other literature. Poetry may state facts but it focuses more on the experience and emotion. It depicts what the poet has observed, imagined and felt and conveys all of this to readers so that they could feel the same, discover the same thing, and undergo the same experience as the poet. Poetry can be described as a multidimensional language as in Perrine (1973). According to Perrine, poetry

must involve not only the poet's intellect but also his senses, emotions and imagination.

2.3.2 Poetry translation

Poetry translation is considered the most diffcult genre to translate, given the difficulty in rendering both the form, content and aesthetic values in the target language. While literary translation, as stated by Newmark (as cited in Dastjerdi, 2004), is "the most testing type of translation", Dastjerdi (2004) concluded that "translation of poetry is the acid test showing the challenging nature of the task". There are also people who believe it is impossible to translate poems. American poet Robert Frost (as cited in Dudek, 2003) famously remarked "Poetry is what lost in translation". W.S. Merwin (as cited in Kessler, 2000) when making a remark at a meeting of the American Literary Translators Association in the early 1980's in New Orleans said that: "Some people think that translating poetry must be difficult, but we know that it's impossble". Of course there are proponents and opponents of this viewpoint and the debates over whether poetry is translatable or untranslatable have not seemed to cease.

In contrast to some critics' argument that poetry "loses" in translation or is "untranslatable", there are others with the opposite viewpoint "that it can be preserved, illustrated and illuminated if a good job is done, because poetry is in large part found again and re-painted by the translator" (Dastjerdi, 2004). Obviously, "many of the original poetical touches of color cannot be transposed and they must be arranged; yet these new arrangements may be even more luminous than the original". (Dastjerdi, 2004). In his study namely "Translation of poetry: *Sa`di's Oneness of Mankind Revisited*" (2004), Dastjerdi came to a conclusion in favour of the above-mentioned viewpoint. Similarly, Lisa Katz (2003) in her study titled "In favor of difference: Views on translation" argued that "something is gained, rather than lost in translated poetry".

The debates over whether poetry is translatable or untranslatable have not seemed to cease but there is a fact that people all over the world still want to access world literature, including poetry, and for most of them, the only way is through reading translated poems. In fact, whether there are readers of translated poetry or not, there are people who translate poem as a personal want. Vietnamese poet Bằng Việt, for instance, once said that he translated poetry as if it was his internal demand. Therefore, throughout history of world literature, translated poetry has been existed and will always do despite criticism or dissatisfaction over it.

2.4 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON POETRY TRANSLATION

In this section, I would like to review some of the studies on poetry translation. Each study approaches the issue in a different way, view it from different angle, yet all of them are good sources that may provide useful theoretical or empirical knowledge for translators of poetry and researchers on poetry translation.

In his writing of "Methods in Translating Poetry" (n.d.), Hariyanto noted some methods employed when translating poetry studied by previous researchers such as Andre Lafevere, Suryawinata and Newmark. The methods he listed were: phonemic translation, literal translation, metrical translation, verse-to-prose translation, rhymed translation, free verse translation, interpretation, communicative and semantic translation. For each method, he gave a brief description and commented or presented other researchers' comments on its advantage and disadvantage. *Phonemic translation* is said to be the method that attempts to recreate the sounds of the poem from the source language in the target language and at the same time tries to convey its meaning as well. This method is believed to result in an awkward translation that sometimes leaves out parts of the original meaning. *Literal translation* is described as a word-for-word translation which cannot transfer the original meaning and worse still, will break

the structure of the poem. The *metrical translation method* is considered even worse than the two previous ones in sense that, as it tries to facsimile the meter of the poem into the target language, it will result in an inappropriate translation in terms of structure and meaning because each language has its own stressing and pronunciation system. Meanwhile, the *verse-to-prose translation method*'s outstanding weakness is believed to be the loss of the original poem's beauty. Nearly similar to metrical translation, rhymed translation emphasizes rhyme transfer into the translation in the target language, which may be physically appropriate but is likely to be semantically inappropriate. The method that is considered to be able to get the equivalents in the target language with a sound literary value is *free verse translation*; however, in this method, the rhyme and meter tend to be overlooked. The *interpretation method* includes two types, i.e. verse and imitation. The former is like free verse translation and the latter, except for retaining the title, topic and starting point of the original poem, is a completely different poem. Sugeng Hariyanto also cited the opinion of Lafavere that points out the cause of the problems of those methods, i.e. emphasis on one or several of the poetic components in the translation process and concluded that all of those methods fail to provide translators with an effective tool to fulfill their tasks. The two last methods, the communicative and semantic translation, are considered by Suryawinata as the only methods that fulfill the two main aims of translation: accuracy and economy (Newmark, 1988). The former tries to convey the exact meaning of the original in such a way that the readers may not find difficulties in understanding the message of the translated text, or in other words, the translator using this method can freely transfer the foreign elements in the source text into the culture of the target language when necessary. The latter attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original by trying to preserve the aesthetic values and expressive component of the original poem, such as peculiar choice of words, figurative language, metaphors, sounds, etc. It can be clearly seen that, in this study Hariyanto simply brought up poetry translation methods that had been studied; he did not suggest any method of his

own. However, this writing is quite informative, which provides a theoretical background in terms of the temporary poetry translation methods (both theoretical and practical), and is a good source of reference for translators who want to study or perform poetry translation.

Different from Hariyanto, Dastjerdi (2004) took a more detailed study on poetry translation with a specific case of the poem "Oneness of Mankind", one considered a masterpiece of Persian poet Sa'di. In this study he presented several translations of the poem with meticulous analysis to expose problematic issues to be dealt with in the translation of poetry. The types of translation that poets used when translating this poem are prose translation and verse translation. The problem of the prose translation by Rehatsek (1964), as pointed out by Dastjerdi, is that although it faithfully conveys the meaning of the original text into the target language, it fails to create aesthetic effect because while Sa'di's art "is to put the most manifest truths into the most memorable words", Rehatsek's translated version "has just considered the first part of this reality, i.e. putting the simplest truths into the simplest words" (Dastjerdi, 2004). Besides, the translator is unable to show the sense of religiosity, an outstanding character of Sa`di's poetry.

When analyzing the verse translations of four translators N. Sharp, A. J. Arberry, M. Aryanpoor and himself, H. Vahid Dastjerdi, Dastjerdi broke them into lines for scrutiny to show the strength and weakness of each translated line in four translated versions and in the end, offered a new version incorporating all the missing points of the versions discussed earlier for further critical analysis.

> "Adam's sons stem from the same holy trunk,
> With the first sacred clot they've become drunk.
> When Father Time afflicts a fellow with pain,
> Others will restlessly start to complain.

You heedless of other humans' distress,

Deserve never to don Adam's dress."

Besides, in the conclusion section, with the offered new translated version of Sa'di's masterpiece, he was able to give the answer to the problem stated in the introduction paragraph regarding the translatability of poetry. According to Dastjerdi, although it is assumed that poetry translation seems an unlikely challenge and only possible with partial semantic and stylistic loss in rare cases, it is by no means completely impossible. He concluded that "a skilled translator with a poetic taste can achieve this end with the necessary literary features and devices of the source text kept intact." (Dastjerdi, 2004, p. 6)

Hariyanto's another study on poetry translation is titled "Step in Translating Poetry" (n.d.). According to Hariyanto, the translation process should be divided into two main stages, i.e. reading and writing, which in turn can be divided into smaller steps. Hyriyanto believes the two main stages are basic consideration when translating poem, while the actual procedure may differ from one translator to another. He then proposed a technique used by Robert Bly with an example of the poem *Berjaga Padamukah Lampu-Lampu Ini, Cintaku* by Gunawan Muhamad to illustrate Bly's points. In the first stage, according to Bly (as cited in Hariyanto, n.d.), the translator is to set down with the literal translation of the poem without having to worry about anything, even if what he is making is "dumpy and prosaic". Next is the second stage that requires the translator to apply all his knowledge about literature in general and poetry in particular to dig up the real meaning of the original poem. In this stage the translator may want to get help from his friends or native speakers of the source language in order to grasp the exact meaning the poet wants to express. Then the translator should come back to the literal version to compare its meaning with the original meaning that has just been acquired from the second stage. This is when he spots where the literal version lost the original meaning of the poem and has to redo

the literal version to get it in to good target language construction. Hariyanto also noted that awkward and "good" here doesn't always mean "standard" and the result may still seem awkward. The ensuing step the translator has to take is to refresh the result ("the awkward version") so that it will have the natural "living" language spoken by the people of the target language, i.e. if the language in the original poem is formal, the language in the translated version should also be formal, and if the source language in the poem is informal, the translation should stay informal. In the next stage, the translator, in Hariyanto's words, "utilize his ears". He should try to listen to the complicated feelings the original poem is carrying with the sounds, in other words, try to realize the poem's mood. If the mood of the original poem is happy, the mood of the translated version should also be happy. "This is the stage where the translator needs his ears to balance each sounds and rhythm, his settled mind to scale the poetic structure" (Hariyanto, n.d.) and to be able to do this, the translator has to have written poems himself. In other words, he must be a poet who is used to writing from moods in order to produce a good poem in the target language. In the next step, Hariyanto believes it is essential that the translator pay attention to sounds – rhythm of the original poem should be kept in the translated version. So as to do this, Hariyanto cited what he called "a simple method to get the rhythm" - a suggestion of Bly (in Frawley, 1953: 81): "memorize the original poem, then say it to yourself, to friends, to the air." The next step to be taken is to ask a native speaker of the source language capable of literary matters to go over the translation to fix any inappropriateness if any, and in the last step the translator should go over the translation himself several times to appreciate it in the target language. In conclusion, this study of Hariyanto is a very thorough one in terms of steps to be taken when translating poetry. Although it only deals with a specific case of translating a poem from Indonesian into English, it can serve as a good source of reference and set of hints for other translators to translate other poems into other languages.

2.5 REMAINING ISSUE

Clearly, the above mentioned studies are just a few among a large number of studies related to the issue of poetry translation, each of which focuses on one aspect of the issue or views it from a different angle. Nevertheless, none of these above studies were written by Vietnamese authors and none of them deal with the particular case of English – Vietnamese poetry translation. All the articles about poetry translation in Vietnam that I was able to access (through internet searching and printed documents in libraries) are only about the opinions of some Vietnamese poets and translators regarding one aspect of poetry translation in general, such as, what is considered to be a good translation, or what is required of a translator to produce a good translation, etc. The matter of translating an English poem into Vietnamese has not been tackled. This is what to be resolved in the next chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE: THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section is the central part of the thesis, which presents major work of the study on translating poems from English to Vietnamese. First, it is necessary to identify the essential qualities that the translator must possess in order to translate poetry successfully. For the translator who wants to translate poems from English to Vietnamese, the knowledge about English and Vietnamese poetry is the prerequisite for the success of his work; therefore the second part is dedicated to presenting basic knowledge about English and Vietnamese poetry. The knowledge presented there is only a small part of this very broad subject as the subject of English or Vietnamese poetry alone can cover a book of at least five hundred pages and it is impossible to present it all due to time constraints and the scope of the study. However, I have tried to condense it to bring up only the most crucial part, without which the translator could not fulfill his or her job well. The third part concerns the specific steps to be taken to translate poems from English to Vietnamese and the last part discusses criteria to decide if a translation is a successful one.

3.2 WHAT ARE REQUIRED OF A TRANSLATOR TO TRANSLATE POETRY SUCCESSFULLY?

So as to successfully translate poetry, a translator must meet those requirements:

First, he must be very fluent in the source and target language. The source language is the language the poem was written in, and the target language is the language the poem is going to be translated into, here it is supposed to be the translator's mother tongue – the language the translator is best at. Fluency in the source language is the first and foremost criterion that the translator must meet

before discussing other criteria. It helps the translator to thoroughly understand all what is written in the poem, both the denotative and connotative meanings of the words. It would be better if the translator's command of the source language is so good that he is able to "sense" the source language as well as he understands his mother tongue. The more fluent he is at the source language, the more likely he is to be able to avoid misinterpretation. Not less important, fluency in the target language is the fundamental caveat to translate poetry, as bringing a poem from one language, one culture into another is literally writing a new poem. The translator cannot write a poem if his mother tongue is bad, his vocabulary is poor and his use of words is awkward. Fluency in his mother tongue helps the translator find good equivalents in the target language to render good translation.

Second, he must have good knowledge about literature in general and poetry in particular with all its figurative devices. He must be able to distinguish metaphor from metonymy, hyperbole from understatement, for example, as these are the devices that poets usually use when composing their poems. This enables the translator to figure out the real message the poet wants to convey by his use of figurative language, his handling of words with denotative and connotative meanings and other devices such rhythm, rhyme, meter, etc. to enhance the meaning of his poem. Besides, he must have a broad knowledge about different forms of poetry of both the source and target language and the peculiarities of each kind. The knowledge about poetry of the source language facilitates his understanding of the poem, and the knowledge about poetry of the target language lends him a helping hand in transform the original poem into a poem in the target language, not just simply a text that contains the same information.

Third, he must have a capability of understanding and appreciating literature in general and poetry in particular, which is different from just knowing all the linguistic devices. The capability of understanding and appreciating poetry

enables him to see and be stirred by the beauty of a poem. This is very important, for how could a translator convey the beauty of a poem into the target language when he fails to realize it? This capability also plays a vital role in determining whether or not the translator could produce a *true* poem with all the values that can stir the reader's soul and emotions just as they have moved the translator himself. This is what makes literary translation, particularly, poetry translation different from other kinds of translation. Its result is not only a translated version containing the same information as the original text, but must also be a work of art of the same value. Not to mention the poet's idiom being preserved and recognized in the translated version, the achievement of this criterion alone can be very difficult, a translator without a poet's mind and soul can hardly accomplish it. In other words, the translator must be a poet in order to render good poetry translation.

Beside the above criteria as significant ones, there are many other criteria to be met, which are not less important if the translator wants to produce great translation, one of which is the passion for his work. It is passion that makes a responsible translator, who is careful with his work, never compromises his honour by translating hastily, carelessly or giving up too easily. Passion helps the translator overcome every hurdle and empowers him to fulfill even the most daunting task. A passionate translator is also the one who always strives for perfection, therefore always offers the best translation he is able to produce.

3.3 ENGLISH POETRY V.S VIETNAMESE POETRY

English and Vietnamese languages and cultures are very different from each other, so the differences seem to outweigh the similarities between English and Vietnamese poetry. However, as both cultures are part of this intermingled world culture, English poetry and Vietnamese poetry cannot help sharing significant similarities.

The outstanding similarity between English poetry and Vietnamese poetry is that both have closed and open form poems. Most poetry in the past was all written following certain kinds of pattern. English poetry has the ballad, the sonnet, the terza rima, the villanelle, etc and Vietnamese poetry has *Lục Bát, Song Thất Lục Bát, Thất Ngôn Bát Cú, Tứ tuyệt,* etc. which have different rules of their own. These are called close form poetry. Not until 1950 did the concept of open form (or free verse) appear, which developed by American poet Charles Olsen (Microsoft Encarta) and this special "free" form immediately welcomed by poets all over the world. Poets find in this new form an opportunity to express their ideas and emotions freely without being bound by strict rules as in the closed form. A free verse poem is not necessarily to be rhymed and can lack a regular metrical unity. Free to use white space for emphasis, able to shorten or lengthen lines as the sense seems to require, the poet lets the poem discover its shape as it goes along, moving as water flows downhill, adjusting to its terrain, engulfing obstacles. Free verse, however, is not free of shape, and indeed "one may say it dispenses with outward formal devices to give full range to internal structures" (Bergman & Epstein, 1983, p. 240). It is the job of the reader to pay strict attention to what joins the parts of a free verse poem and gives it a sense of unity.

Besides, another similarity between English and Vietnamese poetry is the use of figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, personification, allegory, hyperbole, understatement, etc. and other elements to create the "musical quality" for the poem, like rhymth and rhyme. Of course, all of these devices are only employed when the poet feels the need to use them to achieve his or her purpose.

The following sections offer broader knowledge about English and Vietnamese poetry. As free verse has been discussed, it will not be included in these sections.

3.3.1 ENGLISH POETRY

English poetry includes both traditional English (verse) forms and forms imported from other countries which became the integral part of English poetry.

A. Meter and Rhythm

a) Rhythm

As we know, in English every word of more than one syllable has one of its syllables accented or stressed, i.e. one syllable is pronounced more loudly or more emphatically than the others, which are pronounced lightly or even slurred over. For example, in words like *yes*terday, to*day*, to*mo*rrow, the accented syllables are *yes-, day-, mo-* respectively. Also, in a line, strong words (such as nouns, main verbs) of one syllable will be stressed, and light words (like *a, the, to*) will be unstressed. For instance, take this line:

> 1. *Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired*

If we read the line in a natural manner, we will find that the syllables we cannot help pronouncing more loudly or emphatically are: *-ceed, sports, mirth-, band, -spired;* and we will see that they come at regular intervals in the line, for it is every second syllable that is accented. To see this clearly, all we need to do is simply put an accent mark over each accented syllable:

> *Succéeding spórts the mírthful bánd inspíred*

It is the fall of the accent in every second syllable that gives the line a regular **rhythm** or **beat.**

b) Meter

In Bergman & Epstein (1983), **meter** is defined as the measuring of stresses in a line of verse, determining their number and placement; the unit of meter is called

a *foot*. A ***metrical foot*** usually consists of a stressed syllable and one or two unstressed syllables that precede or follow it. In other words, each accented syllable marks one *foot.* Occasionally, there may be no unaccented syllables in a **foot** and very rarely there may be three (Perrine, 1973).

To have a better grasp of ***meter***, let us return to the example above to see how many ***feet*** it has got. Using vertical lines to mark off the ***feet,*** we will see it clearer:

Succée | ding spórts | the mírth | ful bánd | inspíred

In the above sentence, we can see clearly that each foot consists of two syllables: the first unaccented and the second accented. As there are ten syllables in the line, and five of them are accented, we say that the line is made up of five feet.

The number of feet in a line determines how the line is named. This is the agreed upon principle of English poetry which can be found in all guiding books on poetry. For instance, Bergman & Epstein (1983) defines: "A line with a single foot is called *monometer*. A line with two feet is called *dimeter*; with three, *trimeter*; with four, *tetrameter*; with five, *pentameter*; with six, *hexameter*; with seven, *heptameter*; and with eight feet, *octometer*." (p. 193)

Although there are six kinds of meter, only four of them namely iambic, trochaic, anapestic, and dactylic are considered basic meters; the two other meters called spondaic and monosyllabic meter are not basic meters because no poems are written in spondees or monosyllabic feet (Perrine, 1973). Here is the detailed description of these meters (Perrine, 1973, p. 184):

Example	Name of foot	Name of meter	
to-*dáy*	Iamb	Iambic	Duple meters
dái-ly	Trochee	Trochaic	
in-ter-*véne*	Anapest	Anapestic	Triple meters
yés-ter-day	Dactyl	Dactylic	
dáy-bréak	Spondee	Spondaic	
dáy	Monosyllabic foot		

In Iambic meter, each foot has two syllables and the second syllable is accented. In Trochaic meter, each foot also has two syllables but the first syllable is accented. In Anapestic meter, each foot has three syllables, with the third syllable accented. In Dactylic meter, the first of the three syllables in each foot is accented. In a spondee foot, the accent is thought of as being distributed equally or almost equally over the two syllables and is sometimes referred to as a hovering accent. Because iambic and trochaic meters have two-syllable feet, they are called duple meters; as anapestic and dactylic meters have three-syllabic feet, they are called triple meters (Perrine, 1973).

Therefore, the line in the example above is undoubtedly in iambic meter as each foot in it has two syllables with the second syllable accented.

Succée | ding spórts | the mírth | ful bánd | inspíred

Examples of lines in trochaic, anapestic and dactylic meters are presented below:

2. All delights of summer weather

Áll de | líghts of | súmmer | weáther

There are four two-syllable feet in this line, with the first syllable of each foot accented. Therefore this line is also called Trochaic tetrameter.

3. There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far

There are mái | dens in Scót | land more lóve | ly by fár

Because there are four three-syllable feet in the above line, with the third syllable of each foot accented, it is said to be written in Anapestic meter.

4. Touch her not scornfully
   Think of her mournfully

Tóuch her not | scórnfully
Thínk of her | móurnfully

As there are two three-syllable feet in each line, with the third syllable of each foot accented, the above lines are said to be written in Datylic dimeter.

Reading those above lines, we have a feeling that some lines have swifter pace than the others. It is entirely due to the position of accented syllable in a line. The first example, which is a line written in iambic meter, moves in slow and stately manner; the second example, the line written in trochaic meter trips along in a light, dancing way. The third line, written in anapestic meter, gives a sense of speed because we have to pronounce three syllables in the same time as two. Nguyễn Phan Thịnh (2004) interestingly compared these three meters as: "If Iambic meter is like walking and Trochaic is like trotting, Anapestic meter is like galloping" (p. 72). The last example of two verse lines are written in Dactylic meter, which is considered the most rapid and lively of English meters.

However, according to Perrine (1973), we should avoid the notion that there is a correspondence between certain meters and certain emotions. Though some meters are swift, some are slow, they are, by no means regarded as indicating certain types of emotions. There are no "happy" meter and no "melancholy" ones, but the poet can use meters together with other elements of a poem to produce a certain emotion. For instance, as explained in Perrine (1973), if he chooses a swift, lilting meter for a serious subject, the meter will probably act to keep the reader from feeling any really deep emotion. But if he chooses a more dignified meter, it will intensify the emotion.

B. Classification of English poetry

There are many ways of classifying English poetry. Basing on the persona – *the speaker of the poem* – we have narrative poetry, lyric poetry and dramatic poetry as major types. Basing on structure or form of the poem, we can classify English poetry into two main categories namely closed form poetry and open form poetry. In the closed form category we have the ballad, the couplet (traditional English forms), the sonnet, terza rima (Italian forms), the ballade, villanelle (French forms), Haiku, Tanka (Oriental forms), etc. Besides, there are a lot more verse forms present in English poetry such as the ode, the limerick, shaped verses, etc. However, due to time constraints, this thesis can only present the most significant types of English poetry, i.e. narrative poetry, lyric poetry, dramatic poetry and major verse forms such as the ballad, the coupet, the sonnet, terza rima and the villanelle in this section.

a) Narrative Poetry: *The Poet as Storyteller*

"Narrative poetry is poetry that tells a story" (Wikipedia). It is also considered the oldest genre of poetry. According to Bergman and Epstein (1983), the earliest known poem - *The Epic of Gilgameshi* - a tale about the adventures of a king, was composed in Sumer around five thousand years ago. The authors also noted

that recounting the adventures of great heroes and their relations with gods and demons is the characteristic of the very first narrative or storyteling poems in general; and often they would record a nation's origins and history.

The ballad is perhaps the most popular form of narrative poetry and "the broadsheet ballad is associated with England from the introduction of printing to the invention of the first newspapers" (Wikipedia).

Excellent examples of narrative poetry are: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (greatest Greek epics, also called *primary epics*), Dante's *Divine Comedy*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Book of the Dutchess*, Georffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, William Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*, etc.

Narrative poems are usually long but here is a very short one:

Madonna (With Child Missing)
Daniel Mark Epstein (1948--)

Shouts from the street, spotlights crossfire

at a third story window. The woman

stares through smoked glass at a crowd

and firemen in glazed slickers—

flames climbing the stairs behind her two at a time.

She lifts up the window sash with one hand,

kisses the infant and rolls it out trusting the air,

the soft knock of skull on stone in her heart.

b) Lyric Poetry: *The Solitary Singer*

Lyric poetry is a portrayal of the poet's own feelings, states of mind and perceptions rather than describing characters or actions; it is of a more personal nature (Wikipedia).

Bergman and Epstein (1983) wrote:

> The *lyric* is generally considered the most intense and personal form of poetry – indeed, of all literature. The word *lyric* comes from the Greek word for the lyre, a stringed instrument similar to a guitar and suitable for the accompaniment of a solitary singer. Like the concert of an impassioned singer, the lyric poem is a private, often visionary act of intelligence and emotion that becomes public through the music of language.

Below are an example of lyric poetry – a love poem:

He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven
William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939)

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,

Enwrought with golden and silver light,

The blue and the dim and the dark cloths

Of night and light and the half-light,

I would spread the cloths under your feet:

But I, being poor, have only my dreams;

I have spread my dreams under your feet;

Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

c) Dramatic Poetry: *The Poet as Actor*

"Dramatic poetry is poetry that presents the voice of an imaginary character (or characters) speaking directly, without any additional narration by the author" (Nguyễn Phan Thịnh, 2004, p. 64). According to T. S. Eliot, as cited in Nguyễn Phan Thịnh (2004, p. 64), "a dramatic poem does not consist of what the poet would say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character". To put it simple, in a dramatic poem the poet imagines himself to be another person and speak in the latter's voice, either speaking on his own, or addressing someone else. An old poet might speak in the voice of a young girl or a poor poet in a millionaire's

voice. This adoption of another's voice, according to Bergman and Epstein (1983) "is the poet's effort to break out of his or her own consciousness and reach into the world of another" (p. 79).

The following poem belongs to one of the most dramatic kinds of dramatic poetry – the *posthumous monologue* – the poem spoken by the dead.

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner
Randall Jarrell (1914 – 1965)

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,

And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.

Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,

I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.

When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

ENGLISH VERSE FORMS

Most of the knowledge about English verse forms in this section is obtained from Bergman & Epstein (1983)

a) The Ballad

The ballad is considered one of the most popular literary forms. In a ballad, there are four-line stanzas, also called *quatrains*, in which the second and fourth lines must rhyme. Although there are many variant scansions, the first and third lines of a ballad usually have four feet, and the other two lines have three feet. The ballad is an excellent form for narrative poetry. Here is an example:

Incident
Countee Cullen (1903 – 1946)

Once riding in old Baltimore,
    Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltimorean
    Keep looking straight at me.
Now I was eight and very small,
    And he was no whit bigger
And so I smiled, but he poked out
    His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."
I saw the whole of Baltimore
    From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
    That's all that I remember.

b) The Couplet

A couplet is any two consecutive lines which usually rhyme and have the same meter. In English, the couplet has had enormous influence, especially the *heroic couplet* – or *closed couplet*, which is written in iambic pentameter, the second line of which is end-stopped. Usually, couplets on the same subjects are gathered into *verse paragraphs* (long poetic passages like paragraphs in prose). Sometimes, three successive rhymed lines, called *triplet*, were also permitted in the verse paragraph.

The heroic couplet enjoyed widespread popularity in the 18th century in England as poets of the time felt that it possessed the grace, dignity and flexibility they admired in the classical meters of Virgil and Homer. Although Chaucer was the first to employ the heroic couplet, John Dryden is considered an early champion of it.

To the Memory of Mr. Oldham
John Dryden (1631 – 1700)

Farewell, too little, and too lately known,

Whom I began to think and call my own;

For sure our souls were near allied, and thine

Cast in the same poetic mold with mine.

One common note on either lyre did strike,

And knaves and fools we both abhorred alike.

To the same goal did both our studies drive;

The last set out the soonest did arrive.

Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,

While his young friend performed and won the race.

O early ripe! To thy abundant store

What could advancing age have added more?

It might (what nature never gives the young)

Have taught the numbers of thy native tongue.

But satire needs not those, and wit will shine

Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line:

A noble error, and but seldom made,

When poets are by too much force betrayed.

Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their prime,

Still showed a quickness; and maturing time

But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of rhyme.

Once more, hail and farewell; farewell, thou young,

But ah too short, Marcellus of our tongue;

Thy brows with ivy, and with laurels bound;

But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around.

c) The Sonnet

The sonnet is considered to have the most universal appeal of all forms. In the poetry of Europe and America, the *sonnet* is the fixed form that has attracted for

the longest time the largest number of noteworthy practitioners. Originally an Italian form (*sonnetto*: little songs), the sonnet owes much of its prestige to Petrarch (1304 – 1374), who wrote in it his love for the unattainable Laura. Since its arrival in England in the middle of the sixteen century, the sonnet has found consistent favour.

There are two types of sonnet, the Italian sonnet (also called Petrarchan sonnet) and the English sonnet (also called Shakespearean sonnet). The Italian sonnet is a fourteen-line poem divided into two stanzas; the opening stanza has eight lines (the *octave*) and the concluding one has six lines (the *sestet*). It employs a rhyme scheme of *abba abba cdc cdc[1]*.

This is an example of the Italian sonnet:

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer
John Keats (1795 – 1821)

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
    And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
    Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
    That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
    Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watchers of the skies
    When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
    He stared at the Pacific – and all his men
Looked at each other with a mild surmise –

---

[1] Each rhyme ending is designated by a letter, starting with *a*

Silent, upon a peak in Darian.

The English sonnet has a different rhyme scheme, worked out by English poets soon after they imported the sonnet in the sixteen century. This rhyme scheme of *abab cdcd efef gg* is easier for them to follow than Petrarch's, which calls for a greater number of rhyming words than English can readily provide.

That Time of Year Thou Mayst in Me Behold
William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold

When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang

Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,

Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day

As after sunset fadeth in the west,

Which by and by black night doth take away,

Death's second self that seals up all in rest.

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire;

That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,

As the deathbed whereon it must expire,

Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,

To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

d) Terza Rima

Another attractive form that England imported from Italy is the *terza rima*. Terza rima is made up of three-line stanas or *tercets*, in which the inner rhyme of one tercet becomes the outer rhyme of the subsequent tercet. In schematic terms, terza rima is rhymed *aba bcb cdc…* When composing poems in terza rima, most

English poets use occasional near rhymes and assonace instead of exact rhyme as English is considered to have not so many rhymed words as Italian. One reason why poets are drawn to this verse form is the possibility of an unbroken change of language, and a poem in terza rima can continue forever without being forced to a close by the rhyme scheme. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is an exellent example of this form; however, it is too long to cite here. Below is a shorter terza rima poem:

The Death of Vitellozzo Vitelli
Irving Feldman (1928 -)

Vitelli rides west to Fano, the morning sun

Has spread his shadow before him, his head is cast

Upon the road beyond the horse, and now in vain

He works his spurs and whip. For all his speed, his past

Like a heavy wind has thrown his death far before

Him, and not till midday shall he fill the waste

Of light he has made with the goldness of his spur

And the greeness of his cape. Then shall he stand

At last by the bridge at Fano and know no more

His way than the farmer at noon who looks from his land

To his heart and knows not where next to turn his plow;

Or lovers who have stayed abed and reach a hand

And yet have turned away, even as they do so,

To move their legs and sigh, wearied of their embrace

--Yet nothing else seems worth their while. His road shall go

Before him, having broken itself in two ways:

One goes to Borgia in Fano, and one toward Rome.

But his shadow hurries from his feet to his face.

e) Villanelle

This French form, which contains five tercets and a concluding quatrain, has attracted much attention since it was imported to England. What makes the villanelle special is that the first and third lines become the closing refrain of alternate tercets and reappear as the concluding two lines of the poem. It is the echoing and reechoing of the refrains that gives the villanelle a plaintive, delicate beauty that some poets find irresistible. However, since it has only two rhyme endings, the poem written in villanelle can easily become monotonous if not handled by a skilled poet. In spite of the difficulties arising when composing a villanelle, there are a lot of excellent ones, like the poem below:

> **The Waking**
> *Theodore Roethke (1908 – 1963)*
>
> I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
> I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
> I learn by going where I have to go.
>
> We think by feeling. What is there to know?
> I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
> I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
>
> Of those so close beside me, whichare you?
> God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,
> And learn by going where I have to go.
> Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?

The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do

To you and me; so take the lively air,

And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.

What falls away is always. And is near.

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

I learn by going where I have to go.

3.3.2 VIETNAMESE POETRY

The term *Vietnamese poetry* refers to poetry composed in traditional Vietnamese patterns, i.e. patterns invented by the Vietnamese, and poetry imported from foreign countries, for instance, China, France, etc., which became integral part of Vietnamese literature. The compilation of knowledge about Vietnamese poetry below is based on data obtained from various sources including the book titled *Văn chương và người thưởng thức* (2000) by Ngô Văn Phú, Nguyễn Vũ Văn's series about modern Vietnamese poetry techniques namely *Kỹ thuật thơ Việt Nam hiện đại và tiêu chuẩn đánh giá một bài thơ* (1999, 2000), the article titled *Thi luật* on the online Non Sông Magazine and several other sources.

Before having a close look at major Vietnamese poetic forms, it is essential to get acquainted with some basic concepts in Vietnamese poetry.

A. Tone

In the Vietnamese languages, there are six tones, i.e. *không, huyền, sắc, hỏi, ngã, nặng,* divided into two groups namely *bằng* and *trắc.* Group *bằng* (represented

by the letter *B*) include tone *không* and *huyền*, group *trắc* (represented by the letter *T*) include *sắc, hỏi, ngã, nặng.* Vietnamese closed form poetry has to follow very strict rules about tone, though sometimes there is also variation.

B. Rhyme

The importance of rhyme in Vietnamese poetry is like the importance of rhythm in English poetry. Of course, a Vietnamese poem in free verse is not necessarily rhymed, as an English free verse poem does not necessarily to have a certain kind of meter or rhythm, but rhyme is still considered by the Vietnamese as a significant factor that produces smoothness and euphony for a poem, even in free verse.

In principle, words that rhyme must be in the same tone group. They must have tone *bằng* altogether (e.g. *hai, hài*) or tone *trắc* altogether (e.g. *hải, hãi, hái, hại*). Therefore, *hai* does not rhyme with *hãi*.

Exact rhyme: exact rhyme occurs when words have the same vowels/ dipthongs and ending consonants (if any), like *tình, mình, khinh, linh*; *ta, cha, bà; mưa, trưa, xưa*

Partial rhyme (or near rhyme): if words are similar in sound, we say they rhyme with each other. Partial rhyme has two subtypes:

<u>Subtype 1</u>: words that have similar vowels/ dipthongs and same ending consonants. Vowels/ dipthongs in each group below (nearly) rhyme with each other:

1/ a, ă, â, o, ơ, ô, u, ư, oa, ua, ưa (e.g. *tha, mo, lu, thư, thoa, qùa, cua, thưa*; *lạ, thổ, thụ, thóa, qụa, thủa, thửa, lựa*)

2/ i, e, ê, oe, ue, uê, uy (e.g. *thi, me, ve, que, quy; thí, lẹ, thế, nhuệ*)

3/ ai, ay, ây, oi, ôi, ơi, oai, ui, ưi, ươi, uôi (e.g. *thai, chay, khoai, mòi, thôi, lơi, thui, người, nguôi; thái, cậy, mọi, đổi, củi, ngửi, lưới, đuối*)

4/ i, uy, uya

5/ ia, uya

6/ i, e, ê, iê, uyê (e.g. *tin, men, lên, thiên, thuyền; tịt, lét, tết, khiết, khuyết, tuyệt, tiếc, tích*)

7/ a (+consonant), o (+consonant), ô (+consonant), u (+consonant), ư (+consonant), ươ (+consonant) (e.g. *chang, trong, nung, lưng, chương, chuông; trọng, chúng, thượng, chuộng, nướng; nóc, được*)

8/ oa (+consonant), uâ (+consonant), uô (+consonant) (e.g. *loan, luân; thoát, khoác, luật, thuốc; loang, khuôn, chuông, khuân, khuâng*)

9/ ao, âu (e.g. *sao, sâu*)

10/ eo, oeo, êu, iêu, yêu, iu

Subtype 2: words that have vowels following the above rules and consonants similar as follows:

1/ c, ch, t, p (e. g. *lắc, trách, tát, chập*)

2/ n, nh, m (e.g. *than, cành, chàm; cận, thánh, cám*)

3/ n, ng (e.g. *than, thong, không, thằng; cận, thắng, cống*)

Near rhyme is used more often in open form poetry (or free verse) than in closed form poetry.

C. Rhyme scheme

1) Internal rhyme (Yêu vận): the last word of the upper line rhymes with a word within the lower line, as in the *Lục Bát* form, in which the last words of six-word lines rhyme with the sixth words of eight-word lines.

For example:

<div align="center">

Trăm năm trong cõi người **ta**

Chữ tài chữ mệnh khéo **là** ghét nhau

Trải qua một cuộc bể *dâu*

Những điều trông thấy mà *đau* đớn lòng

Nguyễn Du

</div>

2) End rhyme (Cước vận): the last words of lines rhyme

a. "Consecutive" rhyme (liên vận): the last words of two consecutive lines rhyme, or we can say two consecutive lines rhyme.

<div align="center">

Bữa nay lạnh mặt trời đi ngủ sớm,

Anh nhớ em, em hỡi! Anh nhớ **em**.

Không gì buồn bằng những buổi chiều **êm**,

Mà ánh sáng đều hòa cùng bóng *tối*.

Gió lướt thướt kéo mình qua cỏ *rối*;

Vài miếng đêm u uất lẩn trong **cành**;

Mây theo chim về dãy núi xa **xanh**

Từng đoàn lớp nhịp nhàng và lặng *lẽ*.

Không gian xám tưởng sắp tan thành *lệ*.

</div>

b. <u>"Symmetrical" rhyme (cách vận)</u>: in a four-line stanza, the last words of the first and third lines, of the second and fourth lines rhyme.

> Bến My Lăng nằm không thuyền đợi **khách**,
>
> Rượu hết rồi, ông lái chẳng buông *câu*.
>
> Trăng thì đầy, rơi vàng trên mặt **sách**,
>
> Ông lái buồn để khách đến mơn *râu*.
>
> **Yến Lan**

Usually, it will be enough if only the last words of the second and fourth lines rhyme.

> Sao anh không về chơi thôn Vĩ
>
> Nhìn nắng hàng cau nắng mới **lên**.
>
> Vườn ai mướt quá xanh như ngọc,
>
> Lá chúc che ngang mặt chữ **điền**.
>
> **Hàn Mạc Tử**

c. <u>"Embracing" rhyme (vần ôm)</u>: in a four-line stanza, the last words of the first and fourth lines, of the second and third lines rhyme. Words that have *bằng* tone "embrace" words that have *trắc* tone or vice versa.

> Em không nghe rừng **thu**,
>
> Lá thu kêu xào *xạc*,
>
> Con nai vàng ngơ *ngác*
>
> Đạp trên lá vàng **khô**?
>
> **Lưu Trọng Lư**

However, it would aslo be fine if only two last words of the first and the fourth, or the second and the third rhyme, as in:

> Nắng Sài Gòn anh đi mà chợt mát
> Bởi vì em mặc áo lụa Hà **Đông**
> Anh vẫn yêu màu áo ấy vô **cùng**
> Thơ của anh vẫn còn nguyên lụa trắng
>
> **Nguyên Sa**

d. "Three-word" rhyme (vần ba tiếng): in a four-line stanza, the last words of the first, second and fourth lines rhyme.

> Rặng liễu đìu hiu đứng chịu **tang**,
> Tóc buồn buông xuống lệ ngàn **hàng**.
> Đây mùa thu tới, mùa thu tới!
> Với áo mơ phai dệt lá **vàng**.
>
> **Xuân Diệu**

VIETNAMESE VERSE FORMS

1) Lục Bát

Lục Bát is an original poetic form that was completely invented by the Vietnamese people and imbuded with the Vietnamese's soul and identity. With its light rhythm, its grace and simplicity, it has become the form of many folk songs and lullabies. Many poems written in this form are the quintessence of Vietnamese poetry. *Truyện Kiều* of the great Vietnamese poet Nguyễn Du is considered the masterpiece of its kind.

As it is named (six – eight), a *lục bát* poem contains couplets of a six-word and an eight-word line. It usually begins with a six-word line and ends with an eight-

word line, but a poet can also use a six-word line to end his or her poem to creat a sense of something pending, though this case is rare. The number of lines in a *Lục Bát* poem is not limited.

Bằng - trắc rule: the last word of each line must have *bằng* tone. The first, third and fith words of each line can have any tone but the second, fourth and eighth words must follow the rule below:

2	4	6	
B	T	B	
2	**4**	**6**	**8**
B	T	B	B

In eight-word lines, the tones of the sixth and eighth words must alternate. If the sixth words have a level tone (*không dấu*), the eighth words must have *huyền* tone and vice versa.

Rhyme scheme: the last words of six-word lines rhyme with the sixth words of eight-word lines, whose last words rhyme with the last word of the following six-word lines.

<div align="center">

Thôn đoài ngồi nhớ thôn **Đông**

Một người chín nhớ mười **mong** một *người*

Gió mưa là bệnh của *trời*

Tương tư là bệnh của *tôi* yêu nàng.

Nguyễn Bính

</div>

Variation:

1. The second word of a six-word line may have *trắc* tone, then the line's rhythm must be 3/3.

Mai **cốt** cách, tuyết tinh thần

Mỗi người một vẻ mười phân vẹn mười

Nguyễn Du

2. The last word of a six-word line may rhyme with the fourth word of the following eight-word line. Then the second and sixth words of that eight-word line will have *trắc* tone. The rhymth of the eight-word line will be 4/4.

"Cưới vợ thì cưới liền **tay**

Chớ để lâu **ngày**, lắm kẻ dèm pha"

(folk song)

2) Song Thất Lục Bát

Like *Lục Bát, Song Thất Lục Bát* is also a form invented by the Vietnamese, and only used by the Vietnamese. It is suitable for lamentation due to the effect its special rhythm produces. That is why excellent example of this verse forms are lamentation poems such as the translated version *Chinh phụ ngâm* by Đoàn Thị Điểm, *Cung oán ngâm khúc* of Nguyễn Gia Thiều, *Ai tư vãn* of queen Lê Ngọc Hân. *Song Thất Lục Bát* is not used much by modern poets because of the antique impression it creates. However it is still an asset of Vietnamese poetry.

A poem written in *Song Thất Lục Bát* form has unlimited number of lines, in which there are quatrains of two seven-word lines, a six-word and an eight-word line (*lục bát* couplet).

Bằng - trắc rule: the *bằng - trắc* rule for the *lục bát* couplet is like in the *Lục Bát* form, two seven-word lines is as follows:

3	5	7
T	B	T

3	5	7
B	T	B

<u>Rhyme scheme:</u> the last word of the upper seven-word line rhymes with the fifth word of the lower seven-word one, whose last word rhymes with the last word of the following six-word line. The last word of that six-word line rhymes with the sixth word of the following eight-word line, whose last word rhymes with the fifth word of the following seven-word lines, so on.

<u>Variation:</u> the last word of the eight-word line may rhyme with the third word of the following seven-word line. Then, this third word of the seven-word line must have *bằng* tone.

<div style="text-align:center">

Thuở trời đất nổi cơn gió BỤI

Khách má hồng nhiều NỖI truân CHUYÊN

Xanh kia thăm thẳm từng TRÊN

Nào ai gây dựng cho NÊN nỗi NÀY(*)[2]

Trống Trường Thành lung LAY(*) bóng NGUYỆT

Khói Cam Tuyền mờ MỊT khúc MÂY

Chín tầng gươm báu trao TAY

Nửa đêm truyền hịch đợi NGÀY xuất **CHINH[3]**

Nước thanh **BÌNH**(*) ba trăm năm CŨ

Áo nhung trao quan VŨ từ ĐÂY

Sứ trời sớm giục đường MÂY

Phép công là trọng, niềm TÂY xá GÌ(*)

......

</div>

<div style="text-align:center">

Đoàn Thị Điểm

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[2] (*) indicates rhyming words linking two quatrains
[3] Bold words indicate variation

3) Thất Ngôn Bát Cú

Thất Ngôn Bát Cú is a Chinese verse form but took root in Vietnam very long time ago. This verse form and other *Đường luật* forms[4] in general are considered difficult due to very strict rules about *bằng - trắc*, rhyme scheme, and *đối* rule (parallel and antithesis) that they have to follow. Therefore, in the past only well-educated people composed poems in this form.

A *Thất Ngôn Bát Cú* poem consists of eight seven-word lines.

<u>*Bằng - trắc* rule</u>: the last words of the first, second, fourth, sixth and eighth lines must have the same tone; they can have either *bằng* or *trắc* tone, but generally *bằng* tone is preferred. If the last words of those lines have *bằng* tone, the last words of the third, fifth and seventh lines will have *trắc* tone and vice versa.

Besides, although the first, third and fifth words of each line can have any tone, the second, fourth and sixth words have to follow *bằng- trắc* rule as follows:

B	T	B
T	B	T
T	B	T
B	T	B
B	T	B
T	B	T
T	B	T
B	T	B

<u>Rhyme scheme:</u> the last words of the first, second, fourth, sixth and eighth lines must rhyme.

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[4] verse forms invented in the Tang dynasty in China that follow stricter rules and enjoyed more popularity than other forms of the same period

***Đối* rule (rule of contrast and parallelism):** This is the most complicated of all rules binding a *Thất Ngôn Bát Cú* poem. Two lines *đối* in terms of words when words of one line are of the same parts of speech with the corresponding ones of the other, but of contradictory tones, i.e. if one word has *bằng* tone, the corresponding word in the other line must have *trắc* tone and vice versa. Two lines *đối* in terms of idea when the ideas of those lines are parallel or contrast to each other. In a *Thất Ngôn Bát Cú* poem, the third and fourth lines must *đối*, and so do the fifth and sixth lines.

However, as this rule is too rigid, which prevents poets of expressing their ideas, very few poets follow it completely although they know the rule very well.

This is an excellent example of this form:

> **Qua Đèo Ngang**
> *Bà Huyện Thanh Quan*
>
> Bước tới đèo Ngang bóng xế **tà**,
> Cỏ cây chen lá, đá chen **hoa**.
> Lom khom dưới núi tiều vài chú,
> Lác đác bên sông chợ mấy **nhà**.
> Nhớ nước đau lòng con quốc quốc,
> Thương nhà mỏi miệng cái gia **gia**.
> Dừng chân đứng lại trời non nước,
> Một mảnh tình riêng ta với **ta**.

4) Other poetry forms

Besides the above mentioned forms, there are many other closed forms in Vietnamese poetry such as *tứ tuyệt, thơ bốn chữ, thơ năm chữ, thơ sáu chữ, thơ bảy chữ, thơ tám chữ,* which can be literally translated into English as *quatrain,*

four-word, five-word, six-word, seven-word, eight-word forms. Apart from the quatrain, the names given to the other forms are not really accurate, as a four-word poem does not only have four words but each of its line has four words; however those are the names that have been officially called by the Vietnamese to address these forms.

The *quatrain* has to follow rules similar to the rules binding the *Thất Ngôn Bát Cú* form, but the other forms, which appeared in the twentieth century, do not have strict binding rules. Usually, they have a certain rhyme scheme, whether it is "consecutive" rhyme, "symetrical" rhyme, "embracing" rhyme or "three-word" rhyme, but this is not compulsory. Poets are free to express their ideas and emotions, as long as they make sure that the rhythm, rhyme and intonation (all the music qualities) of their poems are appropriate and help to enhance the poem's meaning. The verse forms that have the same number of words per line like four-word, five-word, six-word forms, etc. also have variants, in which the number of words per line may increase or decrease, and the number of lines in a stanza is also not limited.

Below is an example of eight-word poetry, written with "consecutive" rhyme scheme:

> Em cứ hẹn nhưng em đừng đến **nhé**,
> Tôi sẽ trách -- cố nhiên -- nhưng rất **nhẹ**;
> Nếu trót đi, em hãy gắng quay <u>**về**</u>,
> Tình mất vui lúc đã vẹn câu <u>**thề**</u>
> Đời chỉ đẹp những khi còn dang **dở**.
> Thơ viết đừng xong, thuyền trôi chớ **đỗ**,
> Cho nghìn sau... lơ lửng... với nghìn xưa...
> **Hồ Dzếnh**

And here is a variant of eight-word form poetry:

Hãy biến cuộc đời thành những tối tân hôn (9 words)

Nếu em sợ thời gian dài vô tận

Tháng sáu trời mưa, em có nghe mưa xuống (9 words)

Trời không mưa em có lạy trời mưa ?

Anh vẫn xin mưa phong tỏa đường về

Anh vẫn cầu mưa mặc dầu mây ảm đạm (9 words)

Nguyên Sa

3.4 AN APPROACH TO TRANSLATING AN ENGLISH POEM INTO VIETNAMESE

Requirements for translators:

- Have a very good command of English, fluent in Vietnamese

- Have a good knowledge of poetry in general, English and Vietnamese poetry in particular, especially in terms of rules and verse forms.

- Be capable of understanding and appreciating literature, especially poetry, and have good verbal skills.

Steps to translate a poem from English to Vietnamese:

There are a number of ways to translate a poem, and the process can be different from one translator to another, but basically there are two main stages, i.e. reading and writing. Below is an approach among many other options, which presents all the necessary steps to be taken to translate a poem from English to Vietnamese, from the reading to the writing stage. The poem *She dwelt among the untrodden ways* by William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850), a defining member

of the English Romantic Movement, was chosen to illustrate for the whole process.

> She dwelt among the untrodden ways
>   Beside the springs of Dove,
> A Maid whom there were none to praise
>   And very few to love:
>
> A violet by a mossy stone
>   Half hidden from the eye!
> --Fair as a star, when only one
>   Is shining in the sky.
>
> She lived unknown, and few could know
>   When Lucy ceased to be;
> But she is in her grave, and, oh,
>   The difference to me!

Step one: Reading and analyzing a poem:

Many readers who have no trouble understanding and enjoying prose find poetry very difficult. This is to be expected. At first glance, a poem usually will make some sense and give some pleasure, but it may not yield everything at once. A good poem, as Perrine (1973) wrote, is like a Beethoven symphony, which will not yield its full meaning on a single hearing. Poetry is not to be skimmed over like the daily news, but to be read slowly, carefully, attentively and of course, more than once.

So, how to set about reading an English poem? Here are a few suggestions. To begin with, read the poem once straight through with no particular expectation; read open-mindedly. Let yourself experience whatever you find, without

worrying just yet about the large general and important ideas the poem contains. Do not dwell on any difficult word or passage – just push on. The first time of reading gives us a view of the poem as a whole, with all its parts connected.

On the second reading, read for the exact meanings of all the words; if there are words, concepts, anything you do not understand, look them up in dictionaries, encyclopedias and other reference sources. This time, dwell on any difficult parts as long as you need to. Read for the third or fourth times if necessary, as many times as you want until everything is understood. If there is something you could not figure out however hard you try, ask others who can help, even native speakers of English if possible. To aid us in understanding the poem, we may ask ourselves a number of questions about it, like, "what is the central purpose of the poem?", "what/ who is being talked about in the poem?", "are there any figurative devices used and what are they?", "what is the tone of the poet?", etc.

It is a good idea to read the poem aloud, for poetry is written to be heard and its meanings are conveyed through sounds as well as through print (Perrine, 1973). To do this, we will have to use our knowledge about poetry in terms of rhythm, meters, rhyme, etc. in order to read correctly and more important, better understand the poem, as all the musical qualities of a poem contribute to its meaning and beauty. How you read a poem is very important as it is key to understanding the poem. So as to read it correctly, first scan it, and describe its form or pattern. An important test of your reading will be how you handle the end of a line. Clearly you should pause when there is a punctuation, and the length of the pause depends on the kind of that punctuation: you pause longer at a stop than at a comma. However, how should you handle the end of a line when there is no punctuation there? A big but frequent mistake of many readers is to treat each line as if it were a complete thought, whether grammatically complete or not, and drop their voices at the end of it. In fact, we should treat it as a slight pause but should not lower our voices. For example, in line 9 of the poem *She*

dwelt among the untrodden ways, we should hold onto the word *know* longer than if it occurred elsewhere in the line, but we should not lower our voices on it because it is part of the clause that follows in the next line.

To test your understanding of the poem, try to paraphrase it, i.e. transform it into prose. We can do it mentally, orally or by writing, but doing it orally and by writing is better as all the ideas will be clearer. In paraphrasing, we put into words what we understand about what the poem says. Our thoughts will only become clear when we are able to verbalize them, therefore, this activity tests whether or not we have understood the poem well. As long as we are not yet able to state clearly what the poem is about, we have not fully comprehend it, and more reading is needed.

Take the poem *She dwelt among the untrodden ways* for illustration: the poem was written in simple and musical language; all the words are simple and easy to understand, yet the poem still has a magic charm. Its pattern is also simple: the poem has three stanzas of four lines each with every second line rhyming; the lines being of four and three Iambic feet alternately; its rhyme scheme is *abab*. Take the first stanza for example:

She dwélt | amóng | the untród | den wáys, [5]

Besíde | the spríng | of Dóve;

A máid | whom thére | were nóne | to práise,

And vé | ry féw | to lóve.

According to this pattern, we know that this poem is a ballad. The speaker of the poem is the poet himself expressing his grief toward a beautiful girl who lived

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[5] "the untrod" is pronounced as two syllables, as "the" and "un" are slurred into one syllable.

and died in a solitary place, so this is certainly a lyric poem. The figurative device used is metaphor: Wordsworth compared Lucy to a half-hidden violet and a lonely shining star, which shows her solitude, beauty and soul as well as the admiration and pity of the poet toward her. We feel a sense of mystery and loneliness due to the use of words like "she", "maid" (unknown girl), "untrodden" (unknown place), phrases like "there were none to praise", "ver few to love", "only one", "lived unknown", "few could know". The tone of the poet is gentle throughout the poem, mixed with admiration of the girl's beauty, his pity for her solitary life and his sadness when she died. The use of exclaimation marks, one at the end of the sixth and twelfth lines, indicates the poet's regret at her unknown beauty and his sense of loss respectively.

The poem can be paraphrased as follows: "Lucy was a beautiful country girl who lived in an isolated, untouched, and beautiful place near the springs of Dove. She was like a modest violet half-hidden under a moss-covered stone, and a lonely bright star in the night sky. Very few people know her so very few people praise her beauty or love her. She lived and died unknown, but the poet was aware of her death and it caused a deep personal grief to him."

In short, after reading and analyzing the poem and thoroughly understand it, what we should have now is the perception that the poem was written to express the poet's sympathy for a poor girl who had lived and died almost unknown in a solitary place. As that was an isolated, untouched place, although the girl was beautiful, hardly no one had ever praised or loved her. We find in the poem the poet's admiration toward the girl's beauty through his use of metaphor, comparing the girl to a violet and a star, and his grief and sense of loss when she died. The translator should convey all of these elements into the translated version.

Step two: Literally translate each line into Vietnamese

For experienced translators of poetry, this step may be unescessary, but for beginning readers, it not only helps them understand the poem better, avoid leaving out information, but also makes it easier for them to try different verse forms and experience with the use of words. Apply this step to the poem of illustration, we have this result:

Nàng sống giữa những con đường hoang vắng

Bên cạnh những dòng suối có tên là Bồ Câu

Một thiếu nữ không ai ca ngợi

Và rất ít người yêu thương.

Một bông hoa tím cạnh một phiến đá rêu

Bị che khuất tầm mắt!

- Đẹp như một vì sao, khi chỉ có một ngôi

chiếu sáng trên bầu trời

Nàng sống không ai biết, và cũng chẳng mấy ai biết

Khi Lucy qua đời

Nhưng nàng đang ở dưới mồ, và, ôi,

Một sự khác biệt đối với tôi!

Step three: Consider the forms into which the poem should be translated into

There are two main verse forms that the translator can choose to translate the poem into – closed form and open form (or free verse). People who do not know much about poetry usually think that it is easier to write a poem in opem form than in closed form as there are no binding rules in terms of rhyme sheme, number of words per line and number of lines per stanza or poem. It is not totally true. In fact, composing a good poem in open form requires skills and talents, and all poets who can write good poems in open form certainly know how to compose them in closed form. For a beginning translator of poetry, however, it is

advisable to choose a closed form, which has a certain rhyme scheme to follow. One of the easiest forms may be the eight-word form, which does not have a very strict rhyme scheme rule and, as there are 8 words in a line, it is easier to express ideas in it than in other forms that have fewer words per line. Of course, the translator can choose any form he thinks appropriate and can try several forms before setting down with one that seems the most appropriate. For the poem above, on the first attempt, the first two lines were translated into verse in eight-word form:

> *Em sống giữa những nẻo đường hoang vắng*
> *Bên những dòng suối tên gọi Bồ Câu*

It seems that this poem can fit perfectly into the eight-word form. Now we have to determine what rhyme scheme to use. As the first two lines do not rhyme, we can now only choose between the "symmetrical" rhyme and the "embracing" rhyme. After several attempts, it seems difficult to put into verse the third and fourth lines in this place. But there is one thing to remember: we do not have to translate line by line, rather we just only need to convey all the information of the original poem into the translated version and make sure that the latter still has its logic. So, we can move to other lines to spot whether there is a word that rhymes with one of the last two words of the first two sentences. As the result of this step, we have the first stanza of the translated version:

> *Em sống giữa những nẻo đường hoang vắng*
> *Bên những dòng suối tên gọi Bồ Câu*
> *Bông hoa tím biếc khuất bởi đá rêu*
> *Nhưng vẫn đẹp như một vì sao sáng.*

After the first try, the result is a stanza of four eight-word lines with the "embracing" rhyme scheme. The first stanza seems not very good but it suggests that the rest of the poem could be composed in this way. Besides, the original

poem is a ballad of three four-line stanzas, with the rhyme scheme of *abab*. It is really similar to the Vietnamese eight-word form with the "symmetrical" rhyme scheme – another reason to apply the eight-word form for the whole poem. Now we just move on.

Step four: Translate the whole poem in the chosen form:

The result of this step is a poem with three stanzas of four lines; each line contains eight words, with the "embracing" rhyme scheme:

> *Em sống giữa những nẻo đường hoang vắng*
> *Bên những dòng suối tên gọi Bồ Câu*
> *Bông hoa tím biếc khuất bởi đá rêu*
> *Nhưng vẫn đẹp như một vì sao sáng.*
>
> *Nhưng hỡi ôi giữa chốn quạnh hiu này,*
> *Có ai biết đến em mà ca ngợi!*
> *Có ai trao em tình yêu dịu vợi,*
> *Để cùng em hạnh phúc tháng ngày.*
>
> *Lu-xi sống không ai biết ai hay*
> *Khi em mất cũng nào ai hay biết*
> *Nhưng giờ đây khi em nằm dưới huyệt*
> *Tôi nhận ra mất mát của đời tôi!*

Step five: Editing

As cited in Lê Huy Hoà & Nguyễn Văn Bình (2002), many great poets like Horace, Boileau, etc. emphasized for many times the importance of editing poems after composing. In order to have a good poem, it is necessary for the author to review, revise and polish his work not just once, but tens of times. This

process requires a lot of effort and patience but really essential. A well-made poem, according to Bergman and Epstein (1983) should have the following qualities:

1) Overall effectiveness: the poem should be like an integrated organism whose every feature contributes to the health and success of the body as a whole.

2) Economy: the poem should not have any redundant words, which are used just to fill the meter. The presence of every word is significant and the poem must have the concentration of expression and feelings.

3) Naturalness: the language of the poem should be natural – that is, obey the laws of common word order and diction, and avoid rhythms and sounds that are difficult or ugly to pronounce.

4) Tone: Poetry is the language of emotion so the poem should effectively conveys emotion to the reader. It should make the reader feel the emotion that the poet wishes to convey rather than just understand it.

For translating a poem is actually writing another poem in the target language, we should pay attention to the above qualities when producing the translated version. In the case of the translation of the poem *She dwelt among the untrodden ways* after the first attempt, we notice something that needs change: First, the word *những* in the second line is not really needed; worse still, it makes a mistake of unnecessary repetition. Second, although the fourth line can depict the girl's beauty as a star, it fails to express her loneliness. After editing we have this result:

> *Em sống giữa những nẻo đường hoang vắng*
> *Bên dòng suối nhỏ tên gọi Bồ Câu*
> *Như bông hoa tím khuất bởi đá rêu*

Như sao sáng cô đơn trên trời rộng.

Nhưng hỡi ôi giữa chốn quạnh hiu này,
Có ai biết đến em mà ca ngợi!
Có ai trao em tình yêu dịu vợi,
Để cùng em hạnh phúc tháng ngày.

Lu-xi sống không ai biết ai hay
Khi em mất cũng nào ai hay biết
Nhưng giờ đây khi em nằm dưới huyệt
Tôi nhận ra mất mát của đời tôi!

Obviously, the revised version is better than the previous one. The fourth line not only shows the girl's beauty as shining star, it also expresses her loneliness. The third line was also modified a little to emphasize the comparison and make the verse lines sound more natural. Although metaphor, as a result, has been turned into simile as there is the word "như" at the beginning of the two lines, it does not badly affect the poem or reduce its aesthetic value. Furthermore, simile and metaphor are of the same category, so the figurative device that the author used is not totally lost in the translated version.

After editing on his own for several times, it is necessary for the translator to ask others to read his translated poem for feedback, especially ones who are good at English so that they can examine whether or not the translated version has succeeded in conveying faithfully all the values of the original poem, and to what degree it has achieved that aim.

3.5 WHAT CAN BE CONSIDERED A SUCCESSFUL TRANSLATION OF A POEM?

There are different viewpoints toward what is considered a successful translation of a poem. The famous American poet Robert Frost (as cited in Dudek, 2003) once stated that poetry lost in translation, therefore certainly no translation is successful. Others believe that there are two criteria to measure success in translation, i.e. *fidelity (the translation accurately renders the meaning of the source language)* and *transparency (the translation is natural in the target language)* (Referencsics.com). Vietnamese poets and translators have, for a long time, used the criteria of TÍN, ĐẠT, NHÃ for evaluating a translated version of a poem. Although the meaning of each of these criteria is still controversial, generally a poem that meets these criteria should be one which conveys the exact message of the original poem while being a true poem, i.e. has poetry in itself (Thuý Toàn, 1999 & Cao Xuân Hạo, 2006). The concept of "successful translation" used in this study is more inclined toward this point of view. Of course, it is ideal to keep all the elements of the original poem including its message, emotional and aesthetic values and even the poet's own style (or idiom) in its translated version; in other words, the only thing that the translator should change is the language. But in fact, there is hardly no such translation: the message, emotional and aesthetic values could be kept, but the writer's idiom will never be the same in another language. Nothing is perfect, and we should not fall into extreme - not because we cannot reach the absolute that we abandon the worthwhile endeavor. A translated version of a poem should, therefore, be considered successful when it is able to convey the message, emotional and aesthetic values of the original poem while being a good poem itself in the target language.

Take the translated version of the poem *She dwelt among the untrodden ways* above for example. It is, of course, far from being a great one, but in some extent, has succeeded in conveying the message, emotional and aesthetic values of the original poem. Therefore, it is also considered successful. The degree of success, however, is another matter.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 CONCLUSION

This study aims at finding a way to translating English poetry into Vietnamese. To achieve this goal, the study has been carried out through many stages: First, it highlights the role of translation in general, literary and poetry translation in particular in the development of the world, as well as in the personal development of translators themselves to make beginning translators aware of the importance of their work. Then it gives an overview of relevant literature on translation theories and practices, especially in the field of poetry translation. It is this available literature that serves as very useful theoretical background and helps the writer of the thesis a great deal in the orientation of the study, though it does not directly deals with the subject of English – Vietnamese poetry translation. As knowledge about English and Vietnamese poetry plays a decisive role in the translation of English poetry into Vietnamese, a large part of the study was used for presenting it.

The approach to translating English poetry offered in this study serves as a suggestion for beginning translators who want to try translating English poetry into Vietnamese but do not know how to do it. This approach can be summarized into the following points:

- Before translating poetry from English to Vietnamese, it is important to get to know basic knowledge about literature and poetry in general, English and Vietnamese poetry in particular. Without this knowledge, one will not be able to understand and appreciate an English poem, let alone translating it into Vietnamese. (It is already assumed here that one has very good command of English and Vietnamese)

- To increase the chance of success in poetry translation, translators are advised to choose only poems they especially like or feel strongly about to translate. Then read it many times to figure out the message conveyed in the poem, feel its beauty and realize all of its value.

- Then try to convey all of those values and both the explicit and implicit messages into the translated version. The degree of "faithfulness" of the translated version to the original one depends largely on the poet's talent and the original poem itself. Some poems are more difficult to be brought into another language than the others.

- The editing stage should never be ignored and it is important that the translator review revise and polish his or her work many times instead of looking back at it once.

The study also clarifies the word "successful translation" used in thesis and offers criteria upon which the decision about whether a translation of a poem is successful could be made.

Finally, it is hoped that the ideas and suggestions of this study will be useful for those who wish to carry out research in the field of poetry translation, particularly who are concerned with working between the two languages – English and Vietnamese.

The study, of course, still has limitation of its own. As the writer, I would appreciate readers' tolerance for its shortcomings.

4.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In the field of poetry translation, there are various aspects to do research on. Even in the narrow area of English – Vietnamese poetry translation, on which this

study has been carried out, there are still many topics for further studies. Here are a few suggestions:

- Difficulties when translating English poems into Vietnamese and how to tackle.

- A study on translating works of one particular author (for example Shakespeare)

- A study on the translation of a great work of poetry (for example *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Faust*, *Divine Comedy,* etc.)

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APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF POETRY FORMS

(all of the terms below were obtained from http://www.poetry-online.org/poetry-terms.htm)

ABC poem
An ABC poem has 5 lines that create a mood, picture, or feeling. Lines 1 through 4 are made up of words, phrases or clauses - and the first word of each line is in alphabetical order from the first word. Line 5 is one sentence, beginning with any letter.

Ballad
A poem that tells a story similar to a folk tale or legend and often has a repeated refrain.

Ballade
A type of poem, usually with three stanzas of seven, eight, or ten lines and a shorter final stanza of four or five lines. All stanzas end with the same one-line refrain.

Blank verse
Poetry that is written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Blank verse is often unobtrusive and the iambic pentameter form often resembles the rhythms of ordinary speech. Shakespeare wrote most of his plays in blank verse.

Canzone
A medieval Italian lyric poem, with five or six stanzas and a shorter concluding stanza (or envoy). The poet Patriarch was a master of the canzone.

Carpe diem
A Latin expression that means "seize the day." Carpe diem poems have the theme of living for today.

Couplet
A couplet has rhyming stanzas each made up of two lines. Shakespearean sonnets usually end in a couplet.

Elegy
A sad and thoughtful poem lamenting the death of a person. An example of this type of poem is Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

Epic
A long, serious poem that tells the story of a heroic figure. Two of the most famous epic poems are the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer and the epic poem of Hiawatha.

Epitaph
An epitaph is a commemorative inscription on a tomb or mortuary monument written in praise of a deceased person.

Epithalamium (or Epithalamion)
A wedding poem written in honour of a bride and bridegroom.
Free verse (also vers libre)
Poetry composed of either rhymed or unrhymed lines that have no set fixed metrical pattern or expectation.

Haiku
A Japanese poem composed of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Haiku reflects on some aspect of nature.

Idyll, or Idyl
Either a short poem depicting a peaceful, idealized country scene, or a long poem that tells a story about heroes of a bye gone age.
Poetry Forms

Limerick
A short sometimes bawdy, humorous poem of consisting of five anapaestic lines. Lines 1, 2, and 5 of a Limerick have seven to ten syllables and rhyme with one another. Lines 3 and 4 have five to seven syllables and also rhyme with each other. Need to find out more about Limericks ?
Poetry Forms

Lyric
A poem, such as a sonnet or an ode, that expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet. The term lyric is now generally referred to as the words to a song.

Narrative Poetry
Ballads, epics, and lays are different kinds of narrative poems.

Ode
John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is probably the most famous example of this type of poem which is long and serious in nature written to a set structure.

Pastoral
A poem that depicts rural life in a peaceful, idealized way for example of shepherds or country life.

Quatrain
A stanza or poem of four lines.
Lines 2 and 4 must rhyme.
Lines 1 and 3 may or may not rhyme.
Rhyming lines should have a similar number of syllables.

Tanka
A Japanese poem of five lines, the first and third composed of five syllables and the rest of seven.

Terza rima
A type of poetry consisting of 10 or 11 syllable lines arranged in three-line "tercets". The poet Dante is credited with inventing terza rima and it has been used by many English poets including Chaucer, Milton, Shelley, and Auden.
Poetry Forms

Sonnet
English (or Shakespearean) sonnets are lyric poems that are 14 lines long falling into three coordinate quatrains and a concluding couplet. Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnets are divided into two quatrains and a six-line sestet.