

HERITAGE LANGUAGE IN NGUYỄN THỤY ĐAN'S *IN ILLO TEMPORE* (2024)

Tran Thi Minh^a

(Received: 12/06/2026; Revised: 20/07/2026; Accepted: 25/07/2026)

Abstract: This article analyzes the poetry collection *in illo tempore* (Thanh Niên Publishing House, 2024) by Nguyễn Thụy Đan as case study from the perspective of heritage language and cultural connection. It applies a qualitative approach combining close reading with intertextual analysis, grounded in heritage language theory, drawing on the poetry collection itself as the primary source together with several author interviews and secondary critical materials. The article identifies several features of the collection: a dense presence of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary, word forms bearing the imprint of early twentieth-century Vietnamese, echoes of the *Thơ Mới* [New Poetry] movement, and multilingual combination. These features suggest that the collection constitutes an intersection between classical East Asian poetry and modern verse. It can be read as a dual project of preservation: preserving both the communal memory of overseas Vietnamese and a layer of poetic language that is gradually receding into the past. *in illo tempore* is therefore not merely a poetry collection but may be regarded as a heritage of fossilized linguistic layers belonging to the diasporic community.

Keywords: heritage language; Vietnamese diasporic poetry; Sino-Vietnamese lexicon; *Thơ Mới*; multilingual poetics; Nguyễn Thụy Đan.

1. Introduction

Nguyễn Thụy Đan's poetry collection, *in illo tempore* (2024), presents a profound imprint of a heritage landscape. Turning its carefully composed pages, one encounters layers of culture, belief, and history preserved through distinctive vocabulary, punctuation, and verse forms.

^a Thang Long Institute of Cognition and Education Studies (TICES), Thang Long University, Hanoi, Vietnam.
Email: minhht@thanglong.edu.vn



Figure 1. Cover of *in illo tempore* (Nguyễn Thụy Đan, 2024)

It is the poetry of someone standing in-between, between East and West, between the antiquity of Sino-Nom heritage and the rhythm of modern life, between the condition of a Vietnamese American and the cultural roots of the homeland. Đan is a scholar of Sino-Nom studies and East Asian history, multilingual across Vietnamese, English, Chinese, and Latin script, and each of these linguistic layers leaves its trace in the poetry (Lê Lâm, 2025; Phan Đăng, 2025; Vũ Trụ Sách, 2024).

The Latin title *in illo tempore* means “at that time” or “in those days” that is the opening formula spoken by the priest before each Gospel reading in the Traditional Latin Mass. According to Nguyễn Thụy Đan, this title does not merely designate a past event but a historical moment that continues to unfold and resonate for the listener in the present (Phan Đăng, 2025). The title carries a profound sense of time and also constitutes the collection’s core poetic stance: every moment in life can become a span of time, an eternal *in illo tempore*, and poetry is the act of re-enacting such moments. It represents a mechanism of communion originating in the context of the Catholic Mass, describing how the faithful recall the death of Jesus and the martyrs. By seeing themselves reflected in that sacrifice, individuals empty themselves of ego to receive the other (Vũ Trụ Sách, 2024). Through this mechanism, the believer or worshipper may live in communion with God, the saints, and the community. Yet Đan’s connection extends beyond faith to history, art, and those living in exile, a declaration of poetry as resistance against the erasure wrought by time. The collection may thus be read as a dual project of preservation: preserving personal and

communal memory, while simultaneously preserving a layer of Vietnamese language that is gradually receding into the past.

Since its publication, *in illo tempore* has attracted notable critical attention, primarily focusing on its thematic and philosophical dimensions. Lư Hương (2024) emphasizes the collection's intersection of classical and contemporary aesthetics, reading it as an existential reflection on time, death, and spiritual refuge. More recently, Nguyễn Vũ Hiệp (2025) provides a profound reading of the text as an intertextual Mass, exploring how the poet utilizes multilingualism and the theological mechanism of communion to navigate the eternal separation inherent in the diasporic condition.

While these essays offer invaluable insights into the collection's themes of exile and its theological undertones, particularly regarding the meaning of the title and the concept of an eternal present, this requires a more systematic linguistic and formal analysis. How does the text physically enact this communion and preservation on the page? Building upon the thematic foundations laid by these critics, the present study shifts the focus toward the poet's linguistic strategies. Rather than displaying linguistic fossilization as an involuntary outcome of diasporic isolation, *in illo tempore* demonstrates a deliberate, scholarly revival of heritage language. This article explores how these linguistic layers, operating as a conscious metaphorical extension of fossilization are selectively preserved and reactivated, transforming the poetic space into a living archive of the Vietnamese diasporic experience with the research question: How does *in illo tempore* deliberately reactivate heritage language forms to create a conscious metaphorical extension of linguistic fossilization?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Center-periphery theory in historical dialectology

According to Andersen (1988), the distinction between the center (or focal area) and the periphery is one of the foundational principles of historical dialectology, reflecting not only geographic distribution but also the structure of communication networks and community language attitudes.

The center is characterized by dense inter-community communication networks and functions as the source and disseminator of linguistic innovation.

These are open communities. Andersen cites Roman Jakobson's observation that dialects serving broad communicative functions, oriented toward the role of a common standard language, tend toward simplification of their phonological systems and morphological structures compared with local dialects.

The periphery, by contrast, has sparser, more internally oriented communication networks and exhibits an endocentric attitude; these are closed communities. Owing to the lack of continuous contact and blending with innovations from the center, peripheral communities tend to faithfully preserve complex linguistic structures, including morphological irregularities and detailed phonological rules that the center has shed in the course of simplification.

2.2. Heritage language and the concept of fossilization

The term heritage language first appeared in educational research on the acquisition of languages other than English and French among bilingual schoolchildren in Canada during the 1970s (Cummins, 1983), before becoming more widely used in the United States in the late 1990s to refer to minority languages (Cummins, 2005). Rothman (2009) offers a highly operational definition, identifying heritage language as a language spoken at home or otherwise accessible to a child but which does not hold a dominant status in the wider society; it is acquired through the same natural mechanisms as a first language in a monolingual context, but owing to differences in the quantity and quality of linguistic input, together with the growing influence of the majority language, its development may outwardly resemble arrested development or attrition in the adult bilingual speaker.

Many researchers (Montrul, 2016) distinguish two core concepts: incomplete acquisition, referring to deficits in certain linguistic domains arising during the very process of acquiring the family language; and attrition, referring to the decline of heritage-language competence after it has already been acquired (Montrul, 2016). Montrul (2012) describes a functional shift over time: the first (heritage) language is initially dominant but gradually becomes secondary once the environmental language is formally supported through education, while the heritage language receives no corresponding academic reinforcement.

Over the course of its existence and development, a heritage language becomes a variant of the standard language: new dialect formation and the

phenomenon of fossilization occur (Tran Thi Minh, 2019). The *Heritage Language Variation and Change in Toronto* project (Nagy, 2011) asks whether variation in minority languages is governed by the same factors as variation in majority languages. Because the heritage language input speakers receive is already deficient, heritage language varieties do not necessarily coincide with the variety spoken in the country of origin (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). It is important to note that the term 'fossilization' originally emerged in second-language acquisition research (Selinker, 1972) to describe the involuntary cessation of an individual learner's interlanguage development. Heritage-language scholars (e.g., Larsson & Johannessen, 2015) have since used the same term likely by analogy rather than direct theoretical borrowing, to describe an individual heritage speaker's incomplete first-language development, a usage that in this article is further extended, via Andersen's (1988) relic-area concept, to characterize community-level linguistic retention: a region isolated from the influence of an innovating center, thereby preserving archaic linguistic forms that have been lost or altered elsewhere. The mechanism underlying this phenomenon can be described as a process of incomplete diffusion: waves of linguistic innovation radiate outward from the center in a wave-like pattern but fail to reach, or reach only partially, the peripheral area. As a result, linguistic forms current at the moment before the innovating wave arrived become fixed at the periphery, while the center continues to change. In addition, heritage language or more precisely, the linguistic practice of heritage language speakers is also marked by code-mixing and code-switching, observable in the simultaneous use of multiple languages.

However, when applying these socio-linguistic concepts to a literary text, a crucial distinction must be made between involuntary community-level attrition and the deliberate artistic choices of a multilingual author.

3. Research methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing close reading and intertextual analysis to examine the preservation and conscious reactivation of heritage language in Nguyễn Thụy Đan's *in illo tempore* (2024).

3.1. Data collection and selection

The primary data source is the poetry collection *in illo tempore*, which comprises 21 poems. For this article, a purposeful sample of representative poems, including *khi rời nam-định*, *tự-khúc vào đông*, *ai giang-nam*, and the title poem *in illo tempore*, was selected for detailed analysis. The selection criteria focused on poems that most distinctly exhibit diasporic themes, classical verse forms (such as *song thất lục bát*), and unconventional typographical features (e.g., the absence of capitalization, the use of periods for breath pauses, and hyphenation).

To support the textual analysis without overriding the text's inherent ambiguity, the study utilizes published interviews with the author (Lê Lâm, 2025; Phan Đăng, 2025) as supplementary materials. These sources are used exclusively to contextualize the poet's deliberate scholarly choices rather than as conclusive evidence of the poems' definitive meanings.

3.2. Analytical procedures

The analysis was conducted in three successive phases: *First*, to substantiate the claim regarding the "dense concentration" of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary, a basic quantitative survey of the selected poems was performed to identify the frequency of hyphenated Sino-Vietnamese compounds (e.g., *tịch-mịch*, *tự-hủy*, *vô-biên*). This shifts the lexical observation from a subjective impression to quantifiable textual evidence.

Second, a close reading of the original Vietnamese text was conducted to analyze structural and typographical choices, specifically, the rejection of sentence-initial capitalization and the refunctioning of the period. These features were then typologically compared against the modernist poetic strategies of E. E. Cummings and Charles Olson to highlight formal parallels and shared aesthetic sensibilities, illustrating a structural resonance rather than claiming documented direct influence.

Third, an intertextual comparison was performed between *in illo tempore* and the critical anthology *Thi nhân Việt Nam* (Hoài Thanh & Hoài Chân, 1942/2025). This comparison focused on identifying shared thematic preoccupations, such as existential desolation, nostalgia for vanished heritage, and Catholic imagery, to

demonstrate how Nguyễn Thụy Đan's contemporary diasporic work engages with and reimagines the legacy of the *Thơ Mới* movement.

3.3. Translation protocol

Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of the Vietnamese poems cited in this article were completed by the author of this paper. The translation process prioritized literal fidelity and the preservation of the original's fragmented syntax and idiosyncratic punctuation (such as the internal periods and lowercase letters) over conventional English fluency, aiming to faithfully reproduce the visual and rhythmic experience of the source text.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1. The lexical layer: Deliberate archaism and the metaphor of fossilization

The analysis reveals a striking statistical phenomenon: the author consistently applies early-twentieth-century hyphenation rules exclusively to Sino-Vietnamese compounds, physically binding the syllables together on the page. In a survey of 18 representative poems across the collection, over 150 distinct hyphenated Sino-Vietnamese words were identified, averaging approximately 8 to 10 such compounds per poem.

Rather than being deployed randomly, this fossilized morphology is systematically categorized into distinct semantic fields that serve the collection's overarching themes. Table 1 below categorizes these hyphenated compounds to illustrate how the poet selectively reactivates this archaic lexicon:

Table 1. Typology and semantic categorization of hyphenated Sino-Vietnamese compounds in *in illo tempore*

Semantic Category	Characteristic of the Lexicon	Examples from the Text	Poetic Function in the Collection
1. Existential & Metaphysical Concepts (Khái niệm Hiện sinh & Siêu hình)	Philosophical terms dealing with time, space, and existence, strongly echoing the <i>Thơ Mới</i> movement.	tịch-mịch [solitary silence], vô-biên [boundless], hư-không [nothingness], hiện-hữu [existence], dĩ-vãng [the past], phù-thế [transient world], vĩnh-quyết [eternal parting].	To establish a vast, timeless, and beginningless spatial/temporal dimension for the isolated self.

Semantic Category	Characteristic of the Lexicon	Examples from the Text	Poetic Function in the Collection
2. Religious & Eschatological Imagery (Hình ảnh Tôn giáo & Cõi âm)	Liturgical and theological vocabulary blending Catholic concepts with East Asian eschatology.	phục-sinh [resurrection], hiển-linh [epiphany], tuyên-tín [profession of faith], mộ-huyệt [tomb], thiên-đàng [heaven], ma-cảnh [ghostly realm].	To construct the "intertextual Mass" mechanism (Nguyễn, 2025), framing the poetic space as a site of confession and spiritual communion.
3. Diasporic Melancholy & Desolation (Nỗi buồn Lưu vong & Điêu tàn)	Words denoting sorrow, displacement, and the decay of heritage.	luân-lạc [adrift/displaced], tự-hủy [self-destruction], tuyệt-vọng [despair], điêu-tàn [ruined], bi-hoan [sorrow and joy], tang-thương [upheaval].	To articulate the chronic trauma of the diasporic experience and the inevitability of historical erasure.
4. Deliberate Neologisms & Modern Allusions (Tư tưởng kết mới & Điển tích hiện đại)	Newly minted compounds wrapping Western cultural concepts in classical Sino-Vietnamese morphology.	tuần-tình-khúc [Liebestod / love-death song], huyền-trưởng-khúc [fantasia], cải-tâm-hồn [soul-conversion].	To prove that the heritage language here is not passively eroding, but is actively expanding to generate cross-cultural meanings.

This tabulated evidence clearly demonstrates that the heavy reliance on Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary is a structural methodology rather than a mere stylistic flourish. By grouping these terms, we can see that the poet is constructing an entire conceptual apparatus, from metaphysics to modern allusions, using a linguistic form (the hyphenated compound) that effectively "died out" in mainstream Vietnamese typography decades ago.

Reading *in illo tempore*, one immediately recognizes that the author does not write in the Vietnamese of today's press or social media. Đan employs a scholarly register of Vietnamese with a dense concentration of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary colored by the Thơ Mới movement, such as: *tịch-mịch* [solitary silence], *hoài-bão* [aspiration], *viễn-mạo* [distant visage], *tự-hủy* [self-destruction], *vô-biên* [boundless], and *bi-hoan* [sorrow and joy].

To accurately analyze this lexical layer, a clear boundary must be drawn between two distinct linguistic phenomena. First is the everyday heritage language of ordinary speakers in the overseas community, which often exhibits involuntary incomplete acquisition or attrition due to reduced input (Montrul, 2016). Second is the natural, community-level preservation of language, such as the diasporic press in Australia retaining vocabulary from the Republic of Vietnam predating their departure (Đào Mục Đích, 2012; Thái Duy Bảo, 2007) which represents a genuine case of sociological fossilization. Third, and entirely distinct from the previous two, is the deliberate, scholarly archaism found in Nguyễn Thụy Đan's poetry.

As a multilingual scholar of Sino-Nom and East Asian history, Đan's use of archaic vocabulary is not an involuntary outcome of interrupted transmission or linguistic stagnation. Rather, his poetics must be understood as a conscious revival that mimics, cites, or performs fossilization. Therefore, in this article, the concept of "fossilization" is extended as a critical metaphor rather than a biological or sociological diagnosis. The poet is not trapped in an arrested language; he actively generates new language from classical morphology. The most compelling evidence of this generative capacity appears in the title poem, *in illo tempore*, where the author mints an entirely new Sino-Vietnamese compound, "*tuần-tình-khúc*" (a blazing song of love-death), to render the concept of *Liebestod* from Richard Wagner's Western opera. As Nguyễn Vũ Hiệp (2025) astutely observes in his analysis of the collection, by wrapping a Western cultural concept in an ancient Sino-Vietnamese lexical shell, the poet successfully creates a "modern allusion". A linguistic layer capable of coining such precise, hybridized terminology to bridge East and West is actively expanding its expressive boundaries, not suffering from passive fossilization.

If the Vietnamese community in the homeland is regarded as the center, where language evolves across generations, the overseas community occupies a diasporic periphery. In this model, the gap between the "fossilized" branch overseas and the evolving branch in the homeland becomes the measure of the depth of the preserved linguistic sediment (Andersen, 1988; Larsson & Johannessen, 2015).

However, applied to the highly stylized case of *in illo tempore*, the "symbolic point of arrest" proposed here must be explicitly argued as a conscious

metaphorical extension established by the poet, rather than the actual historical event of his family's migration. By deliberately anchoring his poetic language in the early to mid-twentieth century, the period when Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary still occupied a central role in intellectual life, the resonances of *Thơ Mới* were taking shape, and Catholic influence left a marked imprint on poetry—the author creates an artificial, symbolic point of separation. The collection does not preserve the contemporary Vietnamese of the overseas community in general, but selectively reactivates a specific, historically situated linguistic slice to serve as a poetic sanctuary against the erasure of time.

4.2. Traces of “*Thơ Mới*”

The *Thơ Mới* movement (1932-1945) marks a significant shift toward individualist verse in modern Vietnamese poetry (Hoài Thanh & Hoài Chân, 1942/2025). While themes of existential desolation, nostalgia for vanished heritage, and an obsession with death are arguably generic features of lyric modernism across cultures, *in illo tempore* shares a distinct, culturally specific sensibility with the *Thơ Mới* era. This shared sensibility is most powerfully evidenced not merely by thematic parallels, but by the specific Sino-Vietnamese lexical register the poet actively reactivates.

Rather than quoting extensively from the poets of the 1930s, a close reading of *in illo tempore* reveals how the text directly channels this historical resonance through its language. In the poem *khi rời nam-định* [upon leaving Nam Định] (p. 43), the speaker bids farewell to his native city using terms steeped in classical elegy: *vĩnh-quyết* [eternal parting] and *con mê-sảng* [delirious moments]. Similarly, the sense of vast, isolating space-reminiscent of Huy Cận's spatial melancholy—is recreated in *tự-khúc vào đông (ii)* [self-composed verse entering winter (ii)] (pp. 20-21) through vocabulary like *vô-biên* [boundless] and *viễn-ly* [distant departure].

Furthermore, the integration of Catholic imagery into poetry, a hallmark of Hàn Mặc Tử's work during the *Thơ Mới* period, is distinctly echoed here. However, Nguyễn Thụy Đan pushes this further by directly employing Latin liturgical titles (*de profundis*, *ad matutinas*) and constructing a space of fragmented confession, such as in *giờ nguyện* [the hour of prayer] (p. 25): “linh-hồn nào chẳng buồn hầu chết” [what soul does not grieve, nearly unto death?].

Thus, the connection to Thơ Mới is not merely thematic; it is a deliberate lexical and atmospheric reactivation of a specific literary heritage.

4.3. Poetic features

Three of the most distinctive formal features of Nguyễn Thụy Đan's (2024) work, immediately apparent to the reader, are: the absence of sentence-initial capitalization and the use of hyphens within compound words.

The hyphen in compound words (*tịch-mịch*, *hoài-bảo*, *vô-biên*, *tự-hủy*, *bi-hoan*) may be regarded as a clear imprint of early twentieth-century Quốc Ngữ orthography, a period in which scholars used the hyphen to join Sino-Vietnamese syllables, reflecting an awareness that these were multi-component units (Phụng Nghi, 2013). This practice was widespread in the early decades of the twentieth century and traces of it can still be found in numerous published materials of the period, for example in *Khoa học tập chí* (1923, p. 4), as illustrated in Figure 2.

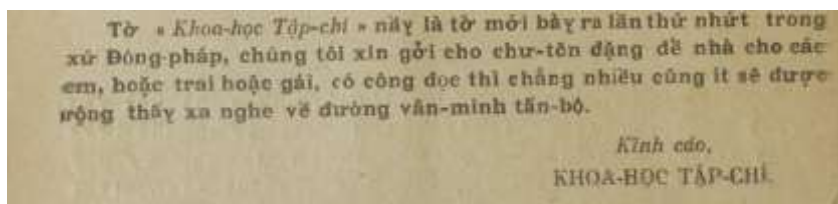


Figure 2. Excerpt from *Khoa học tập chí* (1923, p. 4), illustrating hyphenated compound usage

The hyphen also evokes the semiotics of the typewritten manuscript. Poetically, the hyphen slows down reading: the reader is compelled to pause, to perceive each constituent element, and to feel the weight of each semantic fragment (Kuperman & Deutsch, 2020). This can become a means by which the reader comes to savor the text slowly. *Tự-hủy* differs from *tự hủy* in that it forces the reader to perceive both *tự* [self] and *hủy* [destroy/destruction] as two distinct entities being fused together.

Another distinctive feature of this collection is that Đan almost entirely dispenses with the conventional comma, replacing it with the period as a marker of rhythmic pause within the line:

tôi thường ngồi nhẵn. chờ cơn hấp hối

[I often sit worn smooth. waiting for the death-throes]

của những đêm tàn. hun hút vắng đông

[of fading nights. the dawn receding into the distance]

trong đầu. bần bật ý-niệm ngày giờ

[in my head. the notion of time gone utterly mute]

chuyện phù-thế. cùng một màu xa băng.

[the affairs of this fleeting world. all the same hue of distant ice.]

(Nguyễn Thụy Đan, 2024, p. 15)

In the manifesto *Projective Verse*, published in 1950, Charles Olson proposed an entirely different poetics intended to replace the traditional system of closed verse, which treats the metrical foot as the structural foundation of the poem (Gillott, 2018). In order to free poetry from these entrenched patterns, Olson constructed a principle intimately tied to the workings of the human body, establishing two fundamental constituent units grounded in human physiology: the syllable, guided by the head through the ear, and the line, shaped by the heart through the breath (Gillott, 2018).

On this principle, the structure of the poetic line is not bound to a fixed syllable count or predetermined metrical measures but arises directly “*from the breath of the poet at the moment he writes*” (Gillott, 2018, p. 3). A necessary consequence of this view is that the logical conventions imposed on grammatical syntax must be broken in order to release the poem’s energy (Gillott, 2018). Accordingly, punctuation no longer serves to mark grammatical or logical boundaries in the conventional sense. Instead, punctuation is refunctioned, especially through the spatial precision afforded by the typewriter, to become the poet’s stave and bar-line, tasked with precisely recording each breath, each pause, and each natural inflection of the voice (Gillott, 2018).

The absence of sentence-initial capitalization likewise appears to echo a stylistic stance associated with the American poet E. E. Cummings (Poetry Foundation, n.d.). For Cummings, the rejection of capitalization was not an error or an impulsive act of unconventionality but a visual device carrying profound artistic intent: a form of deliberate distortion meant to awaken the reader, compelling them to break free of habitual reading patterns and to perceive experience anew, with fresh eyes. It was also a means of stripping away the familiar surface of language. By breaking the rigid conventions of capitalization

and grammar, Cummings released energies otherwise locked within ordinary linguistic usage, breathing new life into vocabulary that might otherwise seem inert. Moreover, Cummings regarded the poem not merely as sound but as a visual object on the page. The rejection of capital letters helped produce a distinctive, minimal, and precise visual appearance for the text. This stylistic consistency extended even to the title of his celebrated Harvard lecture series, published entirely in lowercase as *i: six nonlectures*.

A striking affinity in thinking can thus be observed between E. E. Cummings and Nguyễn Thụy Đan. Although Nguyễn Thụy Đan employs the absence of capitalization to evoke the resonance of ancient Catholic prayer and an unbroken flow of consciousness, both poets deploy the device as a weapon against the standardization of modern language. For both, breaking the conventions of capitalization and syntax is a means of distorting the textual surface, forcing the reader to step outside the safety of logical grammar and confront the raw energy of poetry directly.

Alongside such micro-level techniques as the period, the hyphen, and the absence of capitalization, *in illo tempore* is also noteworthy at the macro level for its deployment of the classical *song thất lục bát* [double-seven six-eight] verse form within a modern poetic context. As the author himself confirms, the use of this classical form is not intended as a journey back into the past or as an exercise in writing archaic verse, but rather as a means of using its antique resonance to compose thoroughly modern poetry and to convey the preoccupations of the present era (conversation with Phan Đăng, 2025). Several poems employing this classical form include *khi rời nam-định*, *văn-ca của những vì sao*, and *đổi-ca chờ sáng*. One can observe how the traditional rhythm of *song thất lục bát* comes to embrace strikingly Western imagery such as “the solemn bell of Notre Dame Cathedral”, “the statue of Christ, hands and feet nailed”, alongside a thoroughly modern sense of despair. This encounter between the classical and the modern shows that the author has made the classical verse form not a frozen heritage but a living poetic language that is at work and in direct dialogue with contemporary reality.

This typographical erasure of the ego extends beyond the poetic lines to the physical layout of the book itself, most notably in its idiosyncratic page numbering. Instead of standard numeric pagination, the collection employs a

symmetrical header design: even pages on the left are marked with "- illo" (extracting from the eternal *in illo tempore*), while odd pages on the right are marked with "- n.t.đ" (the author's uncapitalized initials). As Nguyễn Vũ Hiệp (2025) perceptively notes, the collection operates as an "intertextual Mass" that enacts a mechanism of communion. By visually placing his own lowercase initials ("n.t.đ") directly across from the sacred time of God ("illo") on every spread, the poet physically enacts this communion on the page. The personal, finite self is stripped of its capitalization and placed in an endless, visual dialogue with the eternal past, thereby transforming the book from a mere medium of reading into a performative visual object.

In addition, the collection employs a multilingual system comprising Latin titles and headings (*de profundis*, *ad matutinas*, *in illo tempore*) and fragments of English interspersed throughout (the winner takes it all, kiss-and-ride, stardust), marking the author's multilingual experience and also aligning with the natural development of heritage language within its broader context.

5. Conclusion

Situating *in illo tempore* within the landscape of contemporary Vietnamese poetry, the collection can be seen to occupy a position that is at once rooted in the tradition of overseas Vietnamese poetry, in dialogue with poetry from Vietnam, and genuinely international, not in the sense of merely incorporating a few English words, but in the sense of genuinely reading and engaging in dialogue with currents of modern poetry.

This may be regarded as a literary work written in a minority language (Vietnamese, within the American context) yet carrying a cultural heritage far richer than most readers would perceive. *in illo tempore* is a minority text in geographic terms, but a heritage text in terms of cultural depth. What makes the collection distinctive is not its innovation with verse flowing without capitalization, periods functioning as breath, but its conscious preservation: preserving a layer of the Vietnamese language, an echo of *Thơ Mới*, an emotional geography of exile, a classical poetic form clothed in modern dress. Yet unlike a museum in the static sense, *in illo tempore* is a living museum: the heritage language here continues to work, continues to generate new meaning, continues to engage in dialogue with the present. And perhaps that is the best

definition of a truly successful poetry collection: not a text sealed within the past, but a doorway between that time and this time, between *in illo tempore* and *in hoc tempore*.

References

- Andersen, H. (1988). Center and periphery: Adoption, diffusion, and spread. In J. Fisiak (Ed.), *Historical dialectology* (pp. 39-83). Mouton de Gruyter.
- Cummins, J. (1983). *Heritage language education: A literature review*. Ministry of Education.
- Cummins, J. (2005). A proposal for action: Strategies for recognizing heritage language competence as a learning resource within the mainstream classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(4), 585-592.
- Đào Mục Đích (2012). *Characteristics of phonetics and lexis of the Vietnamese language in Australia* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Queensland.
- Gillott, B. C. (2018). Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" and the inscription of the breath. *Humanities*, 7(4), Article 108. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h7040108>
- Hoài Thanh & Hoài Chân. (2025). *Thi nhân Việt Nam* [Vietnamese poets]. Hồng Đức Publishing House. (Original work published 1942)
- Khoa học tập chí*. (1923). <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9908718/f8.item>
- Kuperman, V., & Deutsch, A. (2020). Morphological and visual cues in compound word reading: Eye-tracking evidence from Hebrew. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 73(12), 2177-2187.
- Larsson, I., & Johannessen, J. (2015). Incomplete acquisition and verb placement in Heritage Scandinavian. In B. R. Page và M. T. Putnam (Eds.), *Moribund Germanic heritage languages in North America: Theoretical perspectives and empirical findings*. Brill Academic.
- Lê Lâm (2025). Nguyễn Thụy Đan, nhà nghiên cứu Hán Nôm và lịch sử Đông Á: "Học thuật phải tinh tế, nhưng không bắt cận nhân tình" [Nguyễn Thụy Đan, scholar of Sino-Nom studies and East Asian history: "Scholarship must be refined, yet not detached from human feeling"]. *Tatler Asia*.
- Montrul, S. (2012). Is the heritage language like a second language? In *EUROSLA Yearbook* (Vol. 12, pp. 1-29). John Benjamins.

- Montrul, S. (2016). *The acquisition of heritage languages*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lưu Hương. (2024). 'In illo tempore' - *Vẻ đẹp nguyên thủy của thi ca* ['In illo tempore' - *The primitive beauty of poetry*]. <https://vietnamnet.vn/in-illo-tempore-ve-dep-nguyen-thuy-cua-thi-ca-2328389.html#> (published 05/10/2024)
- Nagy, N. (2011). A multilingual corpus to explore geographic variation. *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata*, 43(1-2), 65-84.
- Nguyễn Thụy Đan (2024). *in illo tempore*. Thanh Niên Publishing House.
- Nguyễn Vũ Hiệp (2025). *in illo tempore - Một thánh lễ liên văn bản* [in illo tempore – An intertextual Mass]. *Tia Sáng*, 5. <https://tiasang.com.vn/in-illo-tempore-mot-thanh-le-lien-van-ban-4966605.html>
- Phan Đăng (2025). *Nguyễn Thụy Đan: Người hiện đại mang âm hưởng cổ thi* [Nguyễn Thụy Đan: A modern person with the resonance of classical poetry] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZC5QACtEfyw> (published 16/02/2025)
- Phụng Nghi (2013). *Cái gạch nối* [The hyphen]. <https://voer.edu.vn/m/cai-gach-noi-trong-chu-viet/ea274d1a>
- Poetry Foundation. (n.d.). *E. E. Cummings*. Retrieved July 10, 2026, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/e-e-cummings>
- Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage languages: In the “wild” and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(5), 368-395.
- Rothman, J. (2009). Understanding the nature and outcomes of early bilingualism: Romance languages as heritage languages. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 13(2), 155-163.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 209-231.
- Thái Duy Bảo (2007). Mixed language: Mixed identities? The mechanisms of ethnic retention and cultural reproduction in later-generation Vietnamese immigrants in Australia. In S. Seet (Ed.), *Redesigning pedagogy: Culture, knowledge and understanding conference* (pp. 1-23). National Institute of Education, Singapore.

Tran Thi Minh (2019). *Vietnamese as heritage language: Written performance of Vietnamese-German adolescents* [Doctoral dissertation, Hamburg University]. <https://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de/bitstream/ediss/9312/1/Dissertation%20von%20Thi%20Minh%20Tran.pdf>

Vũ Trụ Sách. (2024). *in illo tempore - Nguyễn Thụy Đan - Vẻ đẹp nguyên thủy của thi ca | Giới thiệu sách [in illo tempore - Nguyễn Thụy Đan - The primal beauty of poetry | Book introduction]* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pokOEcup8TM>