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Poe's "The Raven," Translated / "O Corvo" de Poe, Traduzido

Edgar Allan Poe is widely regarded as one of the most influential writers in the history of American literature. His works, which often feature elements of horror, mystery, and the macabre, have captivated readers for generations and continue to inspire writers to this day. Not only has Poe's work been incredibly influential in English-speaking countries, it has also been translated into many different languages across the world, including Portuguese. In both Portugal and Brazil, Poe's works have been translated into the language for their respective audiences. His stories and poems have been widely read and enjoyed in these countries, with many editions of his works published since the late 19th and early 20th century. The best translations of Poe's work into Portuguese have been praised for their accuracy and attention to detail, thanks in no small part to the hard work and care that few talented individuals have put into them. Many readers in Portugal and Brazil have found Poe's stories and poems to be just as captivating in their native language as they are in English, and gone as far as to have influenced some of the best fiction writers from those nations.

Some of the most widespread and famous translations of Poe works into Portuguese came from a few important individuals, them being Brazilian novelist and short-story writer Machado de Assis, Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Being from two different Portuguese speaking nations, the two writers each have their own interpretations of Poe's seminal poem "The Raven," with fairly different outcomes. It is important to clarify that Brazilian Portuguese and European

Portuguese are not entirely the same language, similar to how European Spanish can at times be quite different from the many variations that exist with Latin or South American Spanish. They aren't exactly two dialects of the same language, as they have their own quirks that have grown and changed over the years more due to geography and culture and the like. As an example, Brazilian Portuguese makes heavy use of gerunds in regards to verbs while European Portuguese typically does not (Middlebury).

Machado de Assis released his translation of the famous text in 1883 with the help of Rio de Janeiro-based publisher Livraria Garnier, containing “original touches by transforming the style and deliberately incorporating meter,” (Philippov 222). Compared to the original English version, de Assis drops the trochaic meter entirely with long and short syllable stresses, instead adapting the work to fit far more cleanly into Brazilian Portuguese. The words are adjusted, of course, however the spirit of the text is fully maintained. Renata Philippov, in her article detailing Poe's influence on de Assis, states that “Machado's version [of ‘The Raven’] is considered to be the first, if not one of the best, Portuguese translations ever made of Poe's poetry,” (222). The final lines of the poem, in English, describes the narrator's shadow floating on the floor, whose soul “Shall be lifted—nevermore,” (Poe 86). In Machado's translation this turns into: “D'aquellas linhas funerais que flutuam no chão,” which roughly translates to funeral lines that fluctuate above the ground, and “a minha alma que chora / Não sai mais, nunca, nunca mais”, which describes the narrator's soul crying, one that cannot escape, ever, ever again (1883, trans. Pedro Torres-Paraizo). Machado's exemplary description of the pain and torment the narrator suffers brings across the poetry of Poe in great form into Portuguese.

Poe and Machado, in their own respects, were both highly regarded as masters of the short story genre in the 19th century. Poe developed his own unique style of short-story writing,

creating sub-genres such as the detective story and emphasizing through his essays the “importance of brevity, the preconceived effect, the death of a beloved woman, and suggestion over statement,” (Philippov 223). Suggestion over statement would most likely correlate to the debate on aesthetics versus didacticism in Poe’s essay “The Poetic Principle.” Machado on the other hand, despite writing for nearly fifty years, did not publish any essays on his own compositional philosophy, as such one would have to glean from his own works to learn his particular style of writing. Machado, throughout his career, was incredibly selective in publishing his work, and since he did not face the same financial pressure Poe found himself in for much of his life, he only selected a handful of his hundreds of short stories to be published.

On the other end of the spectrum, Fernando Pessoa’s translation of “The Raven” takes the opposite approach. Published in literary and poetry journal *Athena*, in October of 1924, Pessoa takes a more literal approach to bringing over the text into Portuguese. Interestingly, Pessoa himself claims to not have been a fan of the poem, or many other of Poe’s works for that matter. As Carlotta Defenu details in her analysis of an in-progress manuscript of Pessoa’s translation of “The Raven,” she finds it hard to believe that he would care so little of Poe’s work and simultaneously translate so much of it. She states that, “considering the large number of sketches and plans dedicated to the translation of poems by Poe, it is hardly imaginable that Pessoa had such a low opinion of Poe’s poetry,” (Pessoa 173). Looking over the scanned images of Pessoa’s manuscript, at whatever state of progress it might have been in, there is an innumerable number of notes covering the now sand-colored and well-worn pages. His translations went through several revisions at the least, lending credence to the immense complexity of translation work. These efforts are not for the faint of heart, after all.

Critics have extensively studied Fernando Pessoa's translations of many Edgar Allan Poe's works, often focusing on comparing the source text to Pessoa's version. The manuscript features several auxiliary documents that demonstrate his thoughts on Poe's poetics and ideology. One of Pessoa's translations that has received particular attention is "The Raven," which is seen as an important example of Poe's poetics and modernist aesthetics. In Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition," he sought to debunk the idea of artistic inspiration as the foundation of Romantic literary ideology and instead presented a compositional process that he likened to a mathematical operation. To Carlotta Defenu, Pessoa's translation of "The Raven" demonstrates his own poetic conception of combining rhythmic effects and visual images, as evidenced by the poem's schematic construction of rhythmic and phonetic effects (171).

Pessoa had a fairly particular style of adaptation when bringing the English text across into Portuguese; his manuscript has fragmented lines with spaces in between scattered words on each line, looking as if he would do several passes and fill in what best fit. The rhyme and meter of Poe's original text is mimicked as closely as possible, or as much as the change in tongue would allow. This is in stark contrast to the Manchado translation, which takes a lot of creative liberties with the text in terms of imagery and symbolism. Pessoa's handwritten drafts even underline a lot of words that don't make it into the final published version, something Defenu notes might have expressed uncertainty at that moment in the translation process (178). Looking again towards the final two lines of "The Raven," Pessoa keeps close to Poe's intention. His translation reads, "E a minha alma dessa sombra que no chão há mais e mais / Libertar-se-á... nunca mais!" (1924). The last line where Poe writes "Shall be lifted—nevermore!" turns into "Shall free itself—never again!" (Pessoa, 1924, trans. Pedro Torres-Paraizo). This is a fairly minor

alteration that does not detract from the overall message and comfortably compares well to the original text.

Machado de Assis's translation of "The Raven" captures the essence of Poe's original work while transforming its style to fit more cleanly into Brazilian Portuguese. In contrast, Pessoa's approach is more literal, preserving the rhyme and meter of the original text as closely as possible. Despite their differences, both translations have been recognized for their contributions to the field of literary translation and for their role in introducing Poe's works to Portuguese-speaking audiences (Philippov 222; Defenu 171). The differences between Brazilian and European Portuguese highlight the complexities of literary translation, as translators must navigate the nuances of language and culture to convey the essence of the original work to a new audience. In addition to the impact of Poe's works on Portuguese-speaking audiences, his stories and poems have also inspired generations of writers across the world. His exploration of themes such as death, madness, and the unknown continues to captivate readers and influence contemporary horror and mystery genres. Poe's legacy serves as a reminder of the enduring power of poetry and literature to transcend time and place and connect us to our shared human experiences. These translations offer a window into the rich diversity of literary expression across languages and cultures. They truly demonstrate the artistry and skill required to convey the essence of a work from one language to another and remind us of the universal appeal of great literature.

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