

**RECONSIDERING POE'S READERSHIP: A COMPARATIVE  
STUDY OF TWO TRANSLATIONS OF *THE FALL OF THE  
HOUSE OF USHER***

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**Abstract:** This investigation compares two translations from English into Portuguese of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. The *corpus* comprises a translation/adaptation for young readers, translated by Claudia Ortiz (2005), and a translation for a general audience (i.e. experienced readers), published by Oscar Mendes (1981). We investigate textual aspects such as lexical choices, omissions, and explicitations in order to compare and contrast source and target texts. Guided by this analysis, we discuss the possibility of enlarging Poe's readership. This discussion is grounded

on the Skopos Theory (Vermeer and Reiss, 2002) and the Interpretive Community Theory (Fish, 1990). The comparison of the translations indicates that the adaptation seems to respect the intended audience's reading experiences and to be consistent with socio-discursive practices, other than translation, which usually take children and youngsters as primary audience.

**Keywords:** Edgar Allan Poe, adaptation, Translation Studies, Skopos Theory, interpretive communities.

### Entering the house of Usher

It was just after his death that Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) had his work significantly recognized, especially in Europe, due to his influence on symbolist poetry and its most famous representatives, namely Baudelaire (1821-1867), Rimbaud (1854-1891) and Mallarmé (1842-1898). Considered a precursor of modern psychological literature, of detective stories and science fiction, Poe's oeuvre has been continuously revived in compilations, translations and adaptations of his short stories and poems, more than a century after his succumbing to alcoholism and poverty. The importance and influence of his short stories echoed with efforts to spread his work to a larger number of readers, of diverse sorts of audiences; Poe's work has consequently become a classic reference of the so-called universal literature. Thereby, this ever growing interest has demanded translations which focus on a multitude of different interpretive communities, such as youngsters.

According to Ceccantini, "for every well-done adaptation of a classical work there will be a number of new readers who make for the *source*-texts" (1997: 7)<sup>1</sup>. Usually called "children's adaptations" or "graded readers", translations which have so specific audiences depend on a number of considerations and

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decisions concerning both the form and the content of the source text and their implications on translation choices that may satisfy/respect their audience's reading repertoire. Therefore, these choices and considerations should take into account the audience in order to adapt the source text and succeed in *retextualizing* (Costa, 1992) it into the linguistic universe of its intended readers. It is known that adaptations are salient to the process of enriching young readers' literary reading experiences. Notwithstanding their popularity, social locus and translation specifics, adaptations are still underinvestigated in the scope of translation studies. This might reinforce the view that adaptations are minor texts, unelaborated summaries (for remarkable exceptions see Ceccantini, 1997; Monteiro, 2001; Amorim, 2003; Prado, 2007). This is the gap this paper attempts to address by reflecting upon the challenging process of adapting a literary piece of work to an audience of young readers.

Nowadays, there is a huge demand for adaptations by the publishing market, and knowing how to adapt properly is a valuable professional asset for translators. In order to deepen our understanding of what Ceccantini (1997) calls "well-done adaptation", our study aims at providing a descriptive overview of what makes an (efficient) adaptation. To accomplish this goal, we analyze the translation decisions deployed by two translators to achieve the main objective of any literary translation, that is, to keep the audience's attention and entice readers into the work of a given author. To do so, we highlight and describe the underlying elements which are involved in the interaction between target texts and audiences, by comparing and contrasting a translation to experienced readers and an adaptation to young, inexperienced ones. The analysis of some translation choices made (especially in the adaptation) enables us to outline the target readership, to review the interaction between Poe's work and a young readership, and to address sociohistorical issues underlying such choices.

## Theoretical framework

In a famous remark by Haroldo de Campos (Brazilian poet and translator), it has been noted that translation is, rather than reproduction, a process of *transcreation*. That is to say, translation is far from being recognized as the mere job of ‘rewriting’ a text in a language other than the one in which it was originally written; for the sake of the artistic integrity of a poem, for example, a word-to-word translation strategy would just prove inefficient. Costa (1992: 43) points that “the problem of equivalence proper is certainly central to any translation; however, a no less crucial aspect of the translation process is the construction of the new text.” Therefore, the initiative of *transcreating* a literary composition involves creatively ‘adapting’ its attributes in a subjectively-relevant matter so that the final text reaches the intellectual and emotional level supposedly imprinted on the source text. Departing from such an unorthodox point of view, many are the arguments that have sought to systematize and methodologically constrain this concept of transcreation.

First, it is worth recalling the much debated-upon and jostled-about issue of ‘fidelity’ in translation. It has been reported that any translated text, in spite of being taken as an autonomous entity, is closely related to its source. In accounts given by Aubert (1993), we learn that every linguistic expression consists of a score of elements that cannot be handled separately. Within the production of a message, we find a communicative intent (on the behalf of the writer/speaker – what they want to communicate), and a receptive intent (the assumptions this writer/speaker makes about the reader/listener) intertwined with the expressional possibilities made available in the language to the utterance producer. The actual ‘text’ conceived in a particular circumstance is nothing but one actualization among countless other paraphrases of the same message. In addition,

No caso específico da tradução interlingual, acrescenta-se a essa configuração uma dimensão nova. O ato tradutório toma como ponto de partida uma mensagem efetiva, isto é, a mensagem derivada do texto original tal como decodificada pelo receptor-tradutor e a transforma em nova mensagem pretendida. (Aubert,1993: 74)

The 'original' material, being involved in the act of translation, brings to the event a whole new cluster of communicative and receptive intents. With that in mind, we may agree that fidelity in translation does not lie in the relation between source text and translator alone. In other words, there must be "fidelity towards the final readers' expectations, necessities and abilities" (Aubert, 1993: 75). Simply put, fidelity is defined as an *attempt* to fulfill the expectations, needs and reading skills the translator assumes the audience to have.

In the special instantiation of adaptation, fidelity becomes a more 'delicate' issue. As a matter of fact, the translator's commitment to the elements derived from the source text becomes more malleable, in view of the fact that the target audience's limitations and expectations are imperative. Yet, according to Costa (1992), adaptations differ from translations for a very subjective reason. Whereas a translation seeks a closer relation with its source, an adaptation is seen as "a text inspired but not governed by a source text" (Costa, 1992: 42). Nevertheless, the boundaries between translation and adaptation remain unclear. *In what concerns an adaptation, the 'original' pressures that often act upon the translation process end up 'weakened'. As a consequence, there seems to be no way of exactly knowing to what extent these pressures could or should be weakened.* As regards this matter, Monteiro propounds that

A recriação de uma obra literária a partir de outra existente pode se servir apenas de uns poucos elementos da original e fazer algo totalmente novo, diferente e até conflitante com

ela. Nesse caso, a obra original é apenas um pretexto para a manifestação de outra autoria. (2001: 139)

Another concept that appears to allow this conceptualization of adaptation as a freer form of translation is what Vermeer (1994) calls ‘the skopos’. The author points that every element of a verbal activity with a communicative effect – bluntly put, ‘communication’ – is a process. Processes are described here as phenomena that are temporarily and culturally conditioned, and, as a consequence, are continually changing. As far as this research is concerned, processes may include (at least) an original author, an original text, a source language, a translator (and mediator of an adaptation), a target text, a target language, and a prospective reader. Because each of them is individuals determined spatially and temporally, we are led to believe that they entail an extreme condition of subjectivity. From an observer’s point of view, Vermeer states that

Every phenomenon (that is, every process) ‘has’, to someone, form (matter) and content (substance), and it is assigned a sense by someone. By observing the development of a process, we cannot ‘objectively’ determine if and how its form, content and/or sense vary. This determination is specific to each situation, and, thus, primarily individual and subjective (1994: 8)<sup>2</sup>

In this vein, Vermeer concludes that communication is itself founded on a principle of momentary cooperation. He claims that

Therefore, there is equivalence between two phenomena (for example, the content of words), if and insofar someone (producer, receptor, observer) supposes that two (or more) individuals recognize, implicitly or explicitly and without any objection, a similarity between these phenomena. (1994: 9)<sup>3</sup>

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Therefore, the communicative result of a text comes true as long as this verbal activity is taken as an individual phenomenon and is aimed at a particular goal, that is, a particular *skopos*. To put it another way, there must be an authentic concern on the part of the writer/speaker over the 'whom-to' and 'what-for' of their textual actions. "As of this *skopos*, it [the text] is assigned a sense, that is, the actions seek to achieve a goal" (Vermeer, 1994: 14). In other words, for a text to be made socially valid, its producer has to take into account the expectations and limitations that rule its reception. All in all, there likely is no such thing as 'the' translation of a text. In other words, every recreation of a source text – whether a translation or adaptation – is the result of a 'temporary cooperation' between producer and audience regarding a given linguistic phenomenon. As a result, it does not seem appropriate to discuss the matter of equivalence, strictly speaking, between a source text and its translation(s); it is rather a sufficient similarity (*similitud*) between them, assumed by the translator/mediator and conditioned by the *skopos*, which determines their effectiveness.

Although provided with an apparently countless number of choices due to an opaque notion of equivalence, especially in the case of an adaptation, the event of translation is restricted by what Fish (1980) claims to be the *interpretive community*. This concept refers to a specific readership, whose respective socio-cultural characteristics are responsible (at a certain historical and social context) for the legitimate meanings of a text. Didactically speaking, all individuals (for example, authors, translators, readers) that take part in a (literary) 'community' are institutionalized and play an accorded role in it.

Dynamically constituted, this community has its internal rules of what is acceptable (or not) being continuously negotiated by its members, at the several socio-historical moments through which they develop. As defined by Arrojo (1986), interpretive community is a particular point of this community at which – as far as the translator is concerned – all individuals share the same rules and

strategies for performing some sort of interaction (in this case, reading). After all, an interpretive community may be described as

O ponto de intersecção a partir do qual se constrói uma certa estabilidade significativa, a partir do momento em que os indivíduos que ali se agrupam compartilham regras e estratégias de leitura que emolduram a aceitabilidade interpretativa e que permitem a comunicabilidade, o intercâmbio e a coincidência de interpretações. (Arrojo, 1986: 75)

It is the interpretive community that allows the translator/mediator to assign an allegedly proper sense to the target text in a given context; and it is its socially-shared conventions that constrain its interpretation by its members and its production by an author.

### **Usher and his houses: the corpus**

In this paper, we compare a translation and an adaptation of a short story, and then contrast the choices taken by the translators regarding the source text. Although there are many translations of Poe's works, produced by different translators and published by a multitude of publishing houses, the same is not true for adaptations. It was relatively difficult to find a proper adaptation of any Poe's short stories, especially because there are many comic books being released and a number of adaptations for children being prepared, which are not our focus of interest. Therefore, we had to give directions to our search by the adaptation found.

Thus, these are the texts we selected and believed to be the most suitable translations for our purposes: 1) *The fall of the house of Usher* (Poe, 1990), as the source text; and 2) *A queda da casa de Usher* (translation by Ortiz, 2005), and *A queda do solar dos Usher* (translation by Mendes, 1981), both as target texts. *A queda da casa de Usher*, by Cláudia Ortiz, is a recent adaptation of *The*

*fall of the house of Usher*, released within a book with several adaptations of Poe's short stories. This publication is directed towards youngsters. *A queda do solar dos Usher*, by Oscar Mendes, is a widely accepted translation, taken here as an example of an adequate translation of Poe's short story; this is testified by the fact that it has been republished by different publishing houses over the years.

### Refurbishing the house of Usher: analysis

Any analysis of a translation and adaptation of Poe's work must turn its attention to the fact that Poe, as a storyteller and poet, did not write in any language other than English, and did not write particularly to youngsters. The enterprise of 'retelling' his stories – both to a special readership and to a non-English-speaking readership – is, as Costa (1992) puts it, a process of *retextualization*. The translator/mediator of a Poe's text will inevitably face multiple instantiations where choices of widening or narrowing the 'original' semantic scope have to be made in a way that fits the target audience (see, for example, Poe, 2000, adapted by Wharry; Poe, 2009, adapted by Rollason) as well as with the possibilities available in the target language. Concerned especially with adaptations, Monteiro observes that

O máximo que se pode fazer é selecionar elementos da obra original, desprezando outros (com extremo cuidado para não trair o conjunto), e procurar uma linguagem que, para outros leitores, tenham um efeito semelhante ao que em sua origem a obra recriada poderia ter sobre os leitores para quem se dirigia. (2001: 139)

We begin our analysis by commenting on the manipulation of the psychological sphere of *The fall of the house of Usher* in both translations by Mendes and by Ortiz. The story is told in first

person, and it seems that a descriptive foreground often fails to be a predominant factor in this work by Poe. Thus, movements of meditation and mental digression are pervasive in Poe's original narrative of *the house of Usher*, and they manage to occasionally keep the narrator away from the 'diegetic' layer of the story. This phenomenon may be read in the following extract:

[1] nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps, annihilate its capacity for sorrow impression; and acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn. (Poe, 1990: 199)

In his translation of the short story, Mendes conserves the stream of consciousness that interferes with the narrator's state of mind from time to time. The following excerpt illustrates the translator's concern to maintain a proximity to the source text. The lexical choices are brought about mostly with formal equivalents, and even the syntactic arrangements and the punctuation do not markedly differ from those of the text in English:

[2] e eu não podia apreender as idéias sombrias que se acumulavam em mim ao meditar nisso. Fui forçado a recair na conclusão insatisfatória de que, se há, sem dúvida, combinações de objetos muito naturais que têm o poder de assim influenciar-nos, a análise desse poder, contudo, permanece entre as considerações além de nossa argúcia. Era possível, refleti, que um mero arranjo diferente dos detalhes da

paisagem, dos pormenores do quadro, fosse suficiente para modificar ou talvez aniquilar sua capacidade de produzir tristes impressões; e, demorando-me nesta idéia, dirigi o cavalo para a margem escarpada de um pantanal negro e lúgubre. (by Mendes, 1981: 47)

On the other hand, the young readers of Ortiz's translation do not access the narrator's escapes to a psychological universe. In most of the passages, the mental digressions are either reduced to shorter descriptive instantiations or are not included at all. Besides, the simplification of Poe's short story also consists of reductions regarding syntactic aspects of the text. As an example of this, we have the translation in Ortiz's text of the above quoted excerpt:

[3] *e eu não podia lutar contra os pensamentos tenebrosos que se amontoavam em minha cabeça, enquanto refletia sobre isso. Conduzi meu cavalo até a alta margem do lago sombrio e negro, espelho imóvel* [our italics]. (2005: 15)

Taking into consideration the contrast between the profoundly psychological disposition in Poe's short story and the target readership of the adaptation, the shortening of particular passages in Ortiz's text seems a reasonable decision. As a matter of fact, omitting part of the narrator's mental universe not only shortens the tale, but also constrains the plot only to its descriptive layer. Upon comparing the adaptation of Ortiz to the more literal translation of Mendes, whose main concern seems to be fidelity to the source text, Ortiz's translation decision does not entail significant losses as for the record of events itself. Prado (2007) explains this attitude by stating that adaptations of form aim at the reader's interest and at their special conditions for interpreting what is real in the narrative; in this way these adaptations will be able to fulfill their readership's receptiveness. Therefore, with regards to books for children and youngsters,

Transforma-se o texto de modo que haja personagens que promovam a identificação; intensificação da ação, aventura e suspense; e enredo linear, sem muitas interrupções para longas descrições, *flash-backs*, introdução de conceitos ou ensinamentos. (Prado, 2007: 29)

The interpretive communities at issue here can be defined by their different expectations. While Mendes clearly deals with a readership interested in an identity with the form of Poe's tale, Ortiz's adaptation seeks to reach an audience whose interest focuses chiefly on the plot, on the description of events and actions. Not surprisingly, rather than a relation of fidelity with the source text, the adaptation shows a relation of proximity to it. The story of *a casa de Usher* by Ortiz flows through superficial descriptions, having the young reader to perceive the abstract universe of the story less in the mental digressions of the narrator than in the actions of the characters. Oliveira (2007) argues that these adaptations do not lead to an impoverishment of the text for young audiences. As a matter of fact, according to this author, "in the process of reflection on the characters' actions, children face issues about what they believe to be 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or wrong', [...] starting, thus, the process of construction of moral values" (Oliveira, 2007: 110).

Maybe assuming that a young readership might be made of inexperienced readers, the translation by Ortiz tends to deploy shorter sentences than those found in the source text and in the translation by Mendes. They are frequently simplified by either a more careful punctuation or a rearrangement of their elements in more direct and straightforward sequences. With regards to this fact, we agree with Prado's view that

A tentativa de superação da assimetria [entre o texto de partida e o leitor pretendido] faz-se através da aproximação do texto escrito em relação ao discurso infantil, com o predomínio de frases curtas, discurso direto, voz ativa e estrutura sintática simples, de poucas orações subordinadas, privilegiando a ordem direta. (2007: 29)

Another point we would like to address is the fact that, in the translation by Ortiz, the direct transference across languages of peculiar words to *the house of Usher* is rejected, and different solutions are given in order to either recall their meaning or remove any references to its purport. On the other hand, in Mendes's, the solutions regarding the lexical correspondence are still based on mostly quasi-literal translations. The first example reported is about the two occurrences of 'opium' and their contexts, which Mendes rigorously conserves in his target text:

[4] with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveler upon *opium*—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil [our italics]. (Poe, 1999: 199)

[5] com extrema depressão de alma que só posso comparar, com propriedade, a qualquer sensação terrena, lembrando os instantes após o sonho de *ópio*. Para quem dele desperta, a amarga recaída na vida cotidiana, o tombar do véu [our italics]. (by Mendes, 1981: 47)

[6] His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation—that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of *opium*, during the period of his most intense excitement [our italics]. (Poe, 1999: 202)

[7] Sua voz variava, rapidamente, de uma indecisão trêmula (quando a energia animal parecia inteiramente ausente) àquela espécie de concisão enérgica, aquela abrupta, pesada, pausada e cavernosa enunciação, àquela pronúncia car-

regada, equilibrada e de modulação guturalmente perfeita que se pode observar no ébrio contumaz ou no irremediável fumador de *ópio* durante os períodos de sua mais intensa excitação [our italics]. (by Mendes, 1981: 50)

In Ortiz's, these excerpts are shortened, with the word 'opium' not being translated and its meaning being recreated by other terms:

[8] e experimentei um abatimento, um mal-estar, uma espécie de perturbação dos sentidos. (2005: 15)

[9] A voz passava rapidamente de uma hesitação trêmula para uma espécie de firmeza enérgica, fato que se pode observar, sobretudo, nos *bêbados* e nos *desvairados* [our italics]. (2005: 19)

The omission of words that are supposedly crucial to the morbid mood in Poe's short story (like 'opium' and 'cataleptical') raises a fairly debatable question about the adequacy of some adaptations to such a specific readership. In Mendes's *solar dos Usher*, the mere linguistic transposition of terms in the target text (for example, the occurrences of 'ópio', and later on, 'hipocondríaco' and 'cataleptico') brings about no serious complications related to semantic and contextual affairs. Nevertheless, in the case of Ortiz's, it may be observed that some attitudes attempting to address a particular subject are on the basis of a special concern over the topics, ideas, and problems introduced to the young readership. Prado (2007) reminds us that any decisions on what can, and what cannot, be said to children must be made by taking into consideration their (little) experience and knowledge. She argues that topics such as death, prostitution, sex, drugs, and violence could create subjects that are too unfamiliar or complex for a very young reader. In other words, skopos (Vermeer, 1994) and interpretive community (Fish, 1990) of an adaptation shape and constrain the translator's decisions in

what concerns the specifics not of the source text but of those at whom the target text is aimed. Adapting literary texts, thus, entails specific choices and strategies in order to respect the linguistic repertoire and world experience of the audience.

We could, thus, propound that the occurrences of 'opium' had not been included in the adaptation just because the mediator wanted to avoid subjects occasionally seen as alien or even unacceptable by a whole interpretive community. In the social, pedagogical, and cultural contexts where the adaptation could be placed, the effacement of controversial words (and topics) would be perfectly understandable. However, the occurrence of other words equally controversial (such as 'bêbado' and 'desvairado') in the target text, although resulting in semantic deviation, indicates that this interpretive community could be defined with a less intolerant character. We observe that, after all, the alleged inadequacy of 'opium' in the adaptation is not only suggested by its interpretive community, but also seems to determine what can, and what cannot, be said to this community grounded on its participants reading experiences and world knowledge.

Other words that get an interesting treatment in Ortiz's and which are reproduced in the target text by Mendes are 'hypochondriac' and 'cataleptical'. In Poe's short story, we read the following:

[10] and frequent although transient affections of a partially *cataleptical* character, were the unusual diagnosis [our italics]. (1990: 203)

[11] I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the *hypochondriac* [our italics]. (1990: 207)

[12] The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly *cataleptical* character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face [our italics]. (1990: 208)

[13] and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the *hypochondriac*, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read [our italics]. (1990: 209)

The passages quoted above are translated by Mendes as follows, respectively:

[14] e crises freqüentes, embora transitórias, de caráter parcialmente *cataléptico* eram os insólitos sintomas [our italics]. (1981: 51)

[15] Não podia deixar de pensar no estranho ritual dessa obra e na sua provável influência sobre o *hipocondríaco* [our italics]. (1981: 53)

[16] A doença que assim levava ao túmulo a senhora, na plenitude de sua mocidade, havia deixado, como sempre acontece em todas as moléstias de caráter estritamente *cataléptico* a ironia duma fraca coloração no seio e na face [our italics]. (1981: 54)

[17] e abriguei a vaga esperança de que a excitação que no momento agitava o *hipocondríaco* pudesse achar alívio (pois a história das desordens mentais está cheia de anomalias semelhantes) mesmo no exagero das loucuras que eu iria ler [our italics]. (1981: 55)

Whereas, the readers of the translation by Ortiz get the same passages as follows:

[18] e crises freqüentes, ainda que passageiras, *durante as quais seu corpo ficava com a aparência e a temperatura de*

*uma pessoa morta*, compunham os principais sintomas [our italics]. (2005: 20)

[19] Imaginei que o estranho ritual contido nesse livro tivesse exercido algum tipo de influencia sobre meu *infeliz* amigo. (2005: 21)

[20] O mal que levou ao t mulo Lady Madeline, na plenitude de sua juventude, tinha deixado uma leve colora o sobre o seio e o rosto da *defunta*. (2005: 22)

[21] Entreguei-me a vaga esperan a de que a agita o que atormentava meu *amigo* encontrasse al vio no exagero das loucuras que eu iria ler para ele. (2005: 25)

We point here to a contrast between the different solutions given in order to semantically recall these words in the adaptation. In his *solar dos Usher*, Mendes shows that (linguistically speaking) the mere reproduction of these terms is not likely to pose a problem; and he manages to perform the literal translation of both ‘hypochondriac’ and ‘cataleptical’ into viable possibilities in the target language. In Ortiz’s text, on the other hand, the adaptations of the words are far more didactical. Although a direct transference of the words does not take place in the target text, an effort is made to preserve the meaning of ‘catal ptico’ in the story by making use of a descriptive definition. In *a casa de Usher*, the longer fragment “durante as quais seu corpo ficava com a apar ncia e a temperatura de uma pessoa morta” may function here as a (legitimate) translation of the original ‘cataleptical’. Even though the young reader does not access the word directly, they can gather its part in Poe’s narrative.

Now regarding the occurrences of ‘hypochondriac’ in *the house of Usher*, its adaptation only hints at its meaning by an evasive synonym – “infeliz” –, and this attitude proves to be consistent with the

translation of the original ‘eater of opium’ into ‘bêbados e desvairados’ in the target text. On the whole, we are led to believe that these words rarely take part in children’s cognitive universe by means of other cultural, social, and pedagogical instantiations. These acts of helping the reading to move on more smoothly may thus be based on the potential difficulties encountered on the part of this very interpretive community in accessing and inferring their meaning.

A third aspect that we point out is the solutions concerning references to external literary works made by the narrator of *the house of Usher*. Mendes’s text continues consistent with his decision of a literal translation; however, in Ortiz’s, the adaptation evokes much less specific elements, and the interpretation of the entire passage ends up fairly narrowed:

[22] We pored together over such works as the Ververt et Chartreuse of Gresset; the Belphegor of Machiavelli; the Heaven and Hell of Swedenborg; the Subterranean Voyage of Nicholas Klimm by Holberg; the Chiromancy of Robert Flud, of Jean D’Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; the Journey into the Blue Distance of Tieck; and the City of the Sun of Campanella. One favourite volume was a small octavo edition of the Directorium Inquisitorium, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Satyrus and Aegipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. (Poe, 1990: 207)

[23] Analisávamos juntos obras tais como Vertvert et Chartreuse, de Gresset; o Belphegor, de Maquiavel; o Céu e o Inferno, de Swedenborg; a Viagem Subterranea de Nicolau Klimm, de Holdberg; a Quiromancia de Robert Flud, de Jean d’Indaginé e de La Chambre; a Viagem no Azul, de Tieck; e a Cidade do Sol, de Campanella. Um volume favorito era uma pequena edição, in octavo, do Directorium Inquisitorium, do dominicano Eymeric de Gironne; e havia passagens de Pomponius Mela, a respeito dos velhos sátiros

africanos e dos egipãs, sobre as quais ficava Usher a sonhar durante horas. (by Mendes, 1981: 53)

[24] Analisamos obras de magia, feitiçaria e de superstições religiosas. O volume preferido de Usher era um manual de ritos fúnebres de uma antiga seita pagã [our italics]. (by Ortiz, 2005: 21)

The introduction of such references may be based on the supposition that the reader is required a fairly broad general knowledge so that they can tell the relation between them and the narrative. Mendes does not prevent his intended interpretive community from fully accessing this universe. All the references, one by one, are included in his *solar dos Usher*, either with their 'original' names or with the accepted translation of their titles. Not surprisingly, the young readers of Ortiz's text are definitely not expected (or even required) to recognize these words, since their expectations, interests and experience are reputed to have a narrower extent. Indeed, subjects that do not take continuous part in the reality of young readers risk not being clearly understood. About this attitude in adaptations, it is recommended that

Tal restrição [of particular topics] é necessária quando da apresentação de uma obra para o público infantil, uma vez que leva em consideração a capacidade restrita que tem esse público de compreender tais temas. Suas vivências são limitadas pelo pouco tempo de experiência que possuem. (Prado, 2007: 74)

Yet, we emphasize that decisions like the ones examined above often result in a blurred reading of the target text. This fact is made clear when we analyze the decision of not including, in the adaptation by Ortiz, the poem "The Haunted Palace" (1990: 205-206) that Poe includes in his short story. Mendes

gives an effective solution to this issue in his target text when he introduces the verses adapted by Milton Amado, with the title of “O Palácio Assombrado” (1981: 52-53). The poem is alleged to be of a predicative value in the narrative, since its lines are an allegory of the short story itself, of the condition of the house of Usher, and of its eventual fall. We tend to admit that *The Haunted Palace* is not indispensable when it comes to the understanding of Poe’s story, and because of its complexity, omitting the poem seems to be a reasonable decision here. However, the sophistication of the poem alone is not enough to explain why it was not included at all in the adaptation. It is worth referring here to Formiga’s claim, which argues that

É importante usar a adaptação como um suporte para incitar o prazer da leitura, criando novas maneiras de ler, mas não o fazendo de forma a tomar a criança como leitora incapaz, quando se lhe oferece uma adaptação com recortes de efeitos desastrosos, com excesso de cortes ou de algumas interpretações que comprometem o texto, minimizando o seu valor estético e reforçando apenas o seu caráter ‘politicamente correto’. (2007: 5)

In fact, Mendes’s text proves that the poem too can be adapted – we dare say it could even be simplified. In this case, the adaptation of Poe’s story would not be restricted only to the particular limitations of the interpretive community, and another possibility of approaching the text could be made available to the target readership.

### **Leaving the house of Usher**

Departing from the analysis of an ‘original’ short story by Poe – *The Fall of the house of Usher* –, and two translations into Portuguese, one by Mendes and another by Ortiz, we verify that notions

of skopos and interpretive community are closely connected with the event of translation and adaptation. These concepts appear to be imperative when the analysis focus not only on the results of the translation but also on the attitudes of adaptation to a particular readership. First and foremost, we report that the target texts examined here are occasional *retextualizations* among an unlimited number of other possible *retextualizations* of the same source text. The differences (and similarities) between *A queda do solar dos Usher* (translation by Mendes) and *A queda da casa de Usher* (translation by Ortiz) function as evidence that the translator/mediator plays an important role in connecting some of the communicative intents of the “original Poe” with the final receptive intent of the target texts.

It is the decisions made in the target texts – whether they involve mere reproduction, widening, or narrowing – that reveal the translator's behavior towards their readers. The decisions made by Mendes, for example, may be said to aim at a rather permissive readership that is able to apprehend Poe's short story in its totality, with the language being the only obstacle to an effective reception. Nevertheless, when the translator is concerned about a special audience (youngsters in the case of the adaptation by Ortiz), such decisions go beyond the linguistic universe and reach further spheres of other cultural, social, pedagogical, moral implications. In other words, while the direct translation seeks to preserve the very wonders, oddities, multiple significations, and intricacies peculiar to the original text, the adaptation follows a more constrained path, attaching importance to the straightforward description of events and actions. By doing this, the translator/mediator attempts to make contributions – to the extent they suppose these contributions to be effective – to the interpretive community that regulates the target readership. After all,

Ao adaptar, o novo autor trabalha com uma série de fenômenos, como as variedades lingüísticas, culturais e temporais,

que constituirão um outro texto, resultado de uma relação entre o texto de partida e o instituído pelo adaptador. Há uma aproximação entre os dois textos, nunca uma identificação, dado os interlocutores serem diferentes. [...] Dessa forma, a ela [the adaptation] se constitui uma outra forma de ler, além de assumir um papel social, proporcionando o acesso inicial do leitor a obras difíceis de serem lidas e compreendidas em determinada época de sua vida. (Formiga, 2006: 3)

Therefore, the adaptations in Ortiz's translation seek to reach a very specific readership by simplifying the difficulty of the reading, simplifying Poe's literary complex universe, and narrowing the multiple significations and other intricacies which the literal work originally evokes. Turning Poe's short story into an accessible and introductory text for this target readership, the adaptation allows an initial interaction between young readers and this literary work that is part of the cultural heritage of humankind. The adaptation also functions as an instrument of captivating and enlightening readers, of redefining and affecting a presumed interpretive community, and of enlarging such a particular audience's socio-discursive experiences.

### Notes

\* The authors' names are in alphabetical order.

1. The translations into English of work originally published in other languages rather than English and Portuguese are ours. The originals are provided in end-notes.

2. Todo fenômeno (es decir, todo proceso) 'tiene', ára alguien, forma (materia) y contenido (sustância), y le es atribuido um sentido por alguien. Al observar el desarrollo de um proceso, no se puede determinar 'objetivamente' se y cómo varía em su forma, su contenido y/o su sentido. Tal determinación es específica de cada situación y, por tanto, esencialmente individual e subjetiva.

3. Por tanto, existe equivalencia entre dos fenómenos (por ejemplo, el contenido de las palabras), se y em la medida em que alguien (productor, receptor, observador) supone que dos (o más) individuos admitem tácita o explícitamente y sin protestas uma similitud entre estos fenómenos.

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