

THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL
IMPLICATIONS AND EFFECTS OF
THE THREE ARMENIAN TRANSLATIONS
OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S *THE RAVEN*

By

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Three Armenian translation of Poe's The Raven, done by:

- Khachik Dashtents (1937, Soviet era)
- Vigen Babayan (1977, Soviet era)
- Samvel Mkrtchyan (2009, post-Soviet era)

(These three are not the only existing translations of the poem. There are more than four translations. These three were chosen because 1) the scopes and limitations of the capstone could not include all existing translations and 2) they are the most significant ones in terms of reflecting the cultural and historical phenomena of their respective time-periods.)

THE RAVEN

Poe's background and analysis of the poem's composition and intentions as basis for understanding the Armenian translations and their abundance
(Biography + *The Philosophy of Composition* by Poe)

ARMENIAN TRANSLATIONS

Comparative analysis of the socio-cultural and linguistic implications and impacts of the three translations

- The analytic of translation; deforming tendencies; the Retranslation Hypothesis; domesticating/foreignizing (Berman, 1985, Venuti, 1995)

Historical eras and political dissidence

- Overview of the effects of the Soviet Union on the Armenian culture and language (Bournoutian, 2006, Nikoghosyan, 2013)
- The three translations implicit intention as political dissidence (Tymoczko, 2006)

Dashtents and Babayan's translations abound in the **deforming tendencies** (Berman), which is an indication that they try to naturalize the translation to fit within the Armenian culture and the reader (Dashtents excludes certain stanzas with biblical references to avoid issues with the state, as religion was banned in the Soviet Union; Babayan merges stanzas together while using transliterations). Mkrtchyan's translation is the most similar to the original text and displays an experimental approach of using an English word in the Armenian translation.

These tendencies correspond to the **Retranslation Hypothesis**, as each consecutive (re)translation becomes more complete by resembling the original text.

Each of the three translations display political dissidence implicitly with different intensity:

- **Dashtents'** translation as a reaction to the purges of the Soviet Era;
- **Babayan's** translation as a reflection of his figure as an activist who wanted to eliminate the dominance of the Russian language from the Armenian educational system;
- **Mkrtchyan's translation as a** representation of the novel translation conventions of the post-Soviet Armenia.

Coming from different time-periods, each translation also reflects the subtle decrease of the Russian influence on the Armenian language and literature.

Ideas for Future Research

- Applying the Postcolonial theory within this research (Armenia as a former Russian colony and the implications it has had on the Armenian language and literature).
- A wider scope (researching all existing translations, both professional and amateur).