PHILOSOPHY, LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION

ECHOES OF THE ABSENT: HAUNTOLOGY, NARRATOLOGY, AND THE SPECTRAL ART OF TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the relevance of Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology to literary criticism and translation studies, with a focus on Edgar Allan Poe's The Raven *and its French translations. It demonstrates how hauntology—emphasizing the spectral interplay between presence and absence, origin and trace, and meaning and deferral—reframes texts as sites of* revenance*: haunted spaces of fragmented meanings and deferred interpretations. By analyzing the challenges of translating* The Raven's *rhythmic complexity, phonetic resonance, and iconic refrain, "nevermore," this study highlights the text's spectral nature and resistance to closure. Additionally, the paper seeks to provide a new perspective on the dispersion of meaning in translation. It shows how French translations by Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and others exemplify Derrida's notion of dissemination, contributing to contemporary discussions in literary studies, translation theory, and philosophical criticism.*

Keywords: Jacques Derrida; Edgar Allan Poe; *The Raven*; hauntology; narratology; translation studies.

Introduction

Hauntology, a concept introduced by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx*, has been widely explored in literary criticism, narratology, and cultural studies. Several notable publications have examined its implications, including Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life* (2014), Colin Davis's *Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms* (2005), and Fredric Jameson's work on postmodernism and spectrality. However, despite these numerous engagements with hauntology, its intersection with translation studies remains largely unexplored. This paper

seeks to address this gap by investigating how hauntology informs the spectral nature of translated texts and the challenges posed by linguistic revenance.

Derrida's hauntology investigates a paradoxical ontology, which Charles Ramond de- scribes as "an ontology (that is, a science of being) of what 'haunts': specters, phantoms; thus, it is an ontology of that which exists without existing, of that which is always already a 'revenant,' never primary or substantial" (Ramond 2004, 43). Derrida aligns hauntology with *différance*—the deferred and differing difference perceivable only retrospectively—and *revenance*, the indefinite repetition of a return in progress. Together, these concepts unsettle traditional boundaries between being and non-being, appearance and disappearance, origin and trace, event and repetition. Derrida extends this line of inquiry to written works, especially through the spectral dimension of translation.

In the study of literature, hauntology emerges as a science of inquiry into the presences that permeate the literary space—from the ghostly figure of the author to the reader whose mind, in turn, haunts the text. It invites scrutiny of narrative structures in which the origins of voices dissolve, revealing traces of the unspoken, the unheard, the unthought, and the repressed. These gaps expose an undercurrent of reality that resists direct representation, creating a delicate interplay between presence and absence, articulation and erasure. Ultimately, hauntology rede- fines language not merely as a tool of communication but as a site where reality—fragmented, elusive, and multifaceted—is both constructed and obscured.

By examining Edgar Allan Poe's works, particularly *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* and *The Raven* alongside their French translations, this study demonstrates how Derridean hauntology reshapes literary criticism. Hauntology does not seek to define a text but rather to interrogate the philosophical question inherent in asking: What is a text? Is this an ontological inquiry into the nature of language and literary works as autonomous entities—independent of their creators—appearing as if they were living beings, marked by presence yet defined by an absence of origins? Or does it place us within the realm of pure phenomenology, where we are concerned with appearances and signs? By posing this question, hauntology implicitly recognizes that a text is more than a mere object. It occupies a liminal space, simultaneously material

and immaterial, imbued with a ghostly essence—haunted by elusive figures, voices, and traces that transcend its physical form.

Before proceeding further, let us take a step back. To fully grasp Derrida's concept of hauntology, it is essential to examine the composition of the word itself, as this reveals foundational insights into the idea. Derrida's neologisms not only give form to abstract ideas but also position language itself as an object of contemplation. Thus, we must return to the original language—French—and explore the semantic, phonetic, and graphic interplay of the term *hantologie* with other common French words, alongside Derrida's broader conceptual and linguistic innovations.

To begin, it is worth noting that hauntology is a paronomasia of ontology. The phonetic relationship between the two terms suggests resemblance rather than equivalence, implying that the concepts are not fully interchangeable. Hauntology, as Derrida frames it, is the study of non- being—a mode of being that, as he observes, "is not there," "like any ghost worthy of the name" (Derrida 1994, 124). It examines modes of existence that defy material laws, investigating signs of a presence that is unseen yet perceptible, while highlighting their spectral quality.

Hauntology is both an anagram and a homophone of anthology, differing by only a single written letter—a letter that is unpronounced and displaced, mobile like a revenant. Inaudible yet visible. Legible yet silent. This homophony arises from a strategic modification of French phonetic conventions, where the letter "H" is often silent. It transforms the aspirated "H" of the verb *hanter* (to haunt) and its derivatives, such as *la hantise* (haunting), into a mute "H." The "dead letter" thus becomes a ghost. In this way, language embodies the concept itself, suggesting that language shapes both what is and what is not. The word incarnates the idea of the thing, or, put differently, the idea transforms into a thing of language.

Semantically, hauntology also resonates with anthology. Just as an anthology gathers texts to create a whole distinct from the original works, hauntology examines traces of the past that inhabit two temporal dimensions and spaces: here and elsewhere, before and now. While an anthology collects excerpts and fragments from one or more works, hauntology involves the return of what no longer exists—a repetition of signs that reemerge persistently. As Derrida writes, "one can neither classify nor count the ghost; it is number itself,

it is numerous, innumerable as number" (Derrida 1994, 173). Hauntology reflects then on spectral manifestations that transcend any singular moment in time. They repeat. Even when the departed appear for the first time from beyond the grave, their arrival is already a return. This repetition not only recalls the past but disrupts the present, transforming it into a perforated space where the vanished reappears. The letter—such as the "H" in hauntology—becomes a site of spectrality, where absence inscribes itself within presence. Silence is thus spoken through the trace of writing.

This discussion of the letter leads us to another of Derrida's key concepts: *différance*, which—like hauntology—is a homophone, the phonetic twin of "difference." However, this phonetic resemblance is lost in English, where speakers often distinguish the two terms by pronouncing Derrida's neologism with a French accent. Unfortunately, this distinction obscures Derrida's original intent, as the homophony is meant to convey the idea of deferral—vocally, the difference is inaudible; it emerges belatedly. By specifying "*différance* with an 'a,'" Derrida draws attention to the gap between written and spoken forms. Similarly, in *hantologie*, the root must be spelled out to prevent it from being mistaken for *anthologie*. In both cases, Derrida emphasizes writing itself as a trace of something that exists outside silence yet does not fully break it.

By constructing *différance* from the present participle *différant*, Derrida activates the verb's polysemy, which means both "to differentiate" and "to defer," embedding it within the sense of an ongoing action. This term also alludes to the concept of *revenance*, borrowed from Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, where the French suffix *-ance* signals an ongoing return. The revenant, quite literally, has not simply "returned to" or "from" something or somewhere; it is in the process of returning—unfinished, unfolding in the present. As Derrida explains: "The present is what passes, the present comes to pass [se passe]; it lingers in this transitory passage (Weile), in the coming-and-going, between what goes and what comes, in the middle of what leaves and what arrives, at the articulation between what absents itself and what presents itself" (Derrida 1994, 29).

For Abraham and Torok, *revenance* primarily signifies the unconscious transmission of a family secret across generations (Abraham and Torok 1987). In literature, Roger Bozzetto redefines this concept to describe as one of the

effects of the fantastic: something returning form the past, an impossible and yet there, in plain sight (Bozzetto 2001).

From Derrida's philosophy to the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, and from psychoanalysis to literature, our disciplinary shifts—guided by the semantic implications of hauntology—lead us toward another field of application: literary criticism. This is not about limiting hauntology to the study of the fantastic; rather, it involves exploring the ghostly dimension of the text itself through Derrida's insights. We do not propose a new methodology. Instead, we aim to unite, within a single space, the uncertainties, doubts, open questions, and unresolved inquiries of literary criticism and theory—those elements that resist any definitive definition of literature.

Our approach adopts an interdisciplinary perspective on literary studies, employing narratology to examine categories such as author, scribe, narrator, and character—particularly when these entities resist fixed identities. This occurs when they take the form of strangers,

anonymous figures, shadows, or enigmatic presences perceived only faintly. The reader, in turn, confronts a "someone" or "something" that evades recognition, like a ghost whose invisible gaze lingers upon us.

This approach extends naturally to the study of translation, which, much like a revenant, is never truly primary. The hauntology of the text represents a form of literary analysis that is always forthcoming, marked by the sign of return. It assembles theoretical and critical insights around an open-ended question: What is the text? The goal is to keep this question open—to understand both how and why it resists closure.

Hauntology and Narratology

Who speaks? Someone is in the presence of something—or someone—that speaks, a presence whose voice emerges in the absence of any physical form. The critic facing a text finds themselves in a situation akin to encountering a ghost. In this study, we explore how and why this is so, embarking on a narratological inquiry that examines the text's narrative and scriptive figures.

We begin by returning to the origins of modern criticism in France, rooted in Marcel Proust's rejection of Sainte-Beuve's autobiographical approach. Proust proposed a concept of the author that defies any fixed or

positive knowledge. For Proust, the author is not merely the social figure—the lover, the friend, the sibling, the child. His deconstruction of the writer anticipates Roland Barthes's famous declaration of the "death of the author." It is also a philosophical gesture that opens a field of uncertainty rather than providing expected answers to the questions Proust poses: What is an author? Or, more precisely, who is writing when a work of literature is written? Who is this "I" that writes—a self that does not merge with the "I" that exists outside the act of writing and is known to others?

This is Proust's grand theory: the writer exists only within the time and space of writing. Why they write what they write remains unknown. Who writes when they write is a mystery. This "I" is an entity whose identity is obscured, even to itself. Like a ghost in psychoanalysis delivering the unsettling message of the departed to the unconscious of the living, the writer's deeper self eludes even their own awareness (Proust 2000).

By Way of Sainte-Beuve is one of the foundational works in the history of French literary criticism, known primarily for Marcel Proust's distinction between the social self and the deep self of the writer. This distinction is pivotal, as it introduces a new mode of criticism focused on the text itself, rejecting the notion that the author can be reduced to the sum of their social interactions.

Less frequently noted, however, is a striking phrase buried within the extensive pages devoted to this distinction. It appears as an answer to a question. When Proust attempts to give life and form to his deep self as a writer, using metaphor, he describes a young boy who observes, with quiet amusement, unexpected similarities between seemingly unrelated things. Yet, when asked to identify this being without relying on analogy—to say who he is—Proust admits that he does not know. Instead, he returns to the process of writing and reuses the metaphor. This acknowledgment of unknowing is worth exploring, particularly for the way it is passively accepted, creating a suspended moment in the reader's experience of Proust's text.

We describe this as a suspended moment because Proust's response functions like a parenthesis, casting the identity of the author's "deep self" into shadow. Proust creates a space of anticipation within the text—a place where mystery remains intact, urging the reader to confront the unknown embedded in the act of writing.

Proust acknowledges that he does not know and makes no effort to resolve the enigma. Yet he still poses the question, suggesting that it is worth asking for its own sake. In other words,

the mystery must persist for something essential about writing to become perceptible. But what, precisely? Perhaps it is the realization that the writer does not truly know who writes when they write. Proust, however, does not clarify whether this ignorance is something that *should not* or *cannot* be resolved, nor why this is the case. The reader is left to form their own hypotheses— or to follow Proust's lead in choosing not to know, releasing the ghostly image of the young boy he conjures.

We might conclude by asking, as Lacan does, whether the author must *not* know in order to continue writing—whether this lack of knowledge constitutes a kind of prohibition. According to Lacan, if Duras knew why she wrote, she would cease to write. This bold claim about *The Ravishing of Lol Stein* is one that Duras herself does not fully endorse. Like Proust, she leaves the question unresolved.

This suspension of certainty also deserves our attention. If we wait for such questions to be answered, we are likely to turn first to authors rather than critics. Yet if authors themselves do not know, it falls to us to listen. At the same time, we may listen closely to Lacan's reflections, questioning whether the author's ignorance about the "other" they become in the act of writing is essential to the process itself. What meaning, then, do we ascribe to literature? Is it a form of neurosis? A symptom? A defense mechanism? A mode of *living-with* that heals trauma through resilience?

Ultimately, we must conclude that the author is a dual entity: they produce a text that, in turn, produces them. And like us—readers who engage with the text, dwelling within and between its lines and margins—they, too, do not truly know who speaks. This uncertainty must be embraced and integrated into literary criticism as an absolute literary fact.

Implicitly, *The Death of the Author* complements and extends Proust's ideas by emphasizing the reader's inability to identify the author's voice within a literary work. From its opening lines, Barthes underscores the undecidability of writing's source. We may know the author's name; we may even recognize their signature. Yet the signature serves as both a mark of authorship and a mask, simultaneously revealing and concealing the face

behind it. Who is speaking? The answer remains elusive. Instead, we encounter a spectral presence—discernible yet intangible.

Barthes illustrates this complexity with Balzac's story *Sarrasine*, in which a castrato disguised as a woman becomes the subject of description: "This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility" (Barthes 1977, 143). Barthes asks: Who is speaking here? Is it the story's hero, oblivious to the castrato concealed beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, whose personal experiences shape a particular philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author, advancing literary tropes about femininity? Or is it universal wisdom, romantic psychology, or some other impersonal force? The origin of the voice remains uncertain. For Barthes, this indeterminacy lies at the core of literature, which he describes as a "special voice" composed of multiple indistinguishable voices. Literature, he argues, invents a neutral, layered entity in which all fixed identities dissolve—including the identity of the writing body itself.

By doing so, Barthes redirects the focus from Proust's deep self of the writer to the surface of the text, where the origins of writing remain unresolved. We know Balzac wrote *Sarrasine*, but we do not know who speaks within its pages. While Proust invites a psychoanalytic reflection on the act of writing, Barthes immerses us in the realm of narratology, where the author's voice is fragmented and muted. Without entirely abandoning the question of the unconscious, Barthes views the text as a collection of bygone citations and anonymous formulas. But what are these citations? Which formulas? They are words, phrases, rooted in the author's memory, never fully reaching the threshold of consciousness. These are buried recollections—familiar utterances that lulled the author's childhood and punctuated their adult years. Fragments of language collected in the recesses of the mind, where they are reshaped, recontextualized, and ultimately appropriated. Barthes reminds us that we are the sum of the words we have read, heard, spoken, written, thought, and forgotten. These words act within us like spirits, moving through us and propelling us into the act of writing. They possess us, though we remain unaware of their possession. This, for Barthes, is why the author is dead. If the author exists within the text, it is only as a ghost—a spectral figure speaking through the words but never revealing their true self. We cannot fully grasp the inner reality

of the individual as they write— the "depth" of the person, as Proust might say. Instead, we hear echoes of multitudes, resonating within the text. The author, like a ventriloquist, gives voice to these nameless crowds while simultaneously becoming one of them.

This dissolution of the author's singular identity into a chorus of voices resonates with the work of Derrida, who extends these ideas into narratology. In *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, Derrida examines the narrative ambiguities of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter*. Like Barthes, Derrida demonstrates how texts resist a single, authoritative voice, instead presenting a multiplicity of perspectives that blur the boundaries between author, scribe, narrator, and character.

By doubling the narrator figure, Derrida highlights how, in Poe's tale, the narrator is simultaneously narrating and narrated. This technique recurs in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, where Poe's narrative strategies grow increasingly intricate. Pym functions as both the narrator and the narrated subject of the novel—at once the storyteller and the one whose story is told. He recounts past experiences as though they are unfolding in real time. At first glance, this is unremarkable: Poe employs familiar conventions of first-person storytelling.

The situation becomes far more intricate and original when we consider the question of scription. Pym is not only the narrator but also one of the two scribes of the text. He is the fictional author of the preface, where he recounts the novel's genesis, initiated by an encounter with the American writer Mr. Poe—who agrees to collaborate on the book's writing.

> Among those gentlemen in Virginia who expressed the greatest interest in my statement, […] was Mr. Poe, lately editor of the Southern Literary Messenger […]. He strongly advised me, among others, to prepare at once a full account of what I had seen and undergone, and trust to the shrewdness and common- sense of the public […]. Notwithstanding this representation, I did not make up my mind to do as he suggested. He afterward proposed […] that I should allow him to draw up, in his words, a narrative of the earlier portion of my adventures, from facts afforded by myself, publishing it in the Southern Messenger under the garb of fiction. To this, perceiving no objection, I consented, stipulating only that my real name should be retained. Two numbers of the pretended fiction appeared, consequently, in the Messenger for January and February (1837), and, in order that it might certainly be regarded as fiction, the name of Mr. Poe was affixed to the articles in the table of contents of the magazine. (Poe 1982, 748.)

Poe's clever trick lies in weaving the novel's editorial history into the fictional genesis of a jointly authored work: the first three chapters were, in fact, published in January and February 1837 in the *Southern Literary Messenger* under Poe's name.

Before continuing our examination of the writing and narrative agents within the novel, it is helpful to summarize the information we have so far, beginning with the most evident: the author of the book is Edgar Allan Poe. As we saw with Proust, this author should not be conflated with "Mr. Poe," the figure subjected to biographical critiques. While we will not revisit Proust's theories in detail here, it is worth noting that Poe, too, establishes a distinction between himself as an author and his social persona, who appears in the preface as "Mr. Poe."

Edgar Allan Poe is not, in fact, Mr. Poe. Mr. Poe is a fictional entity within Pym's uni- verse but also serves as the formal title of the writer as a public figure in 19th-century American society. Poe's mystification is not primarily intended to evoke the Proustian enigma of the deep self of the author. Instead, it creates a *mise en abyme* effect, adding a dynamic and self-reflective layer to the novel's narratological complexity.

The intrusion of Mr. Poe into Pym's narrative blurs the reality of the author, who remains on the other side of the fiction. More significantly, it highlights a narratological category often overlooked in the relationship between author and narrator: the scribe. In our reality, we know who wrote the book. But within the fictional dimension, where narrator and characters coexist, who, then, is responsible for the text? Who performs the act of putting the words we read onto paper?

As long as the narrator does not explicitly state, "I am writing these lines," we cannot be certain. The narrator is a voice. For example, when Ishmael addresses readers in the opening line of *Moby Dick*—one of the most famous incipits in world literature—he exists as the one who speaks to us, not the one who writes.

In *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, we know the identity of the two scribes of the text: Mr. Poe and Arthur Gordon Pym, though it remains unclear who wrote what. In the final note from the fictional and anonymous editors of the work, we learn of the hero's death, which occurred before he had time to complete the last two chapters. The editors state:

> The gentleman whose name is mentioned in the preface, and who, from the statement there made, might be supposed able to vacuum, has declined the task – this, for satisfactory reasons connected with the general inaccuracy of the details afforded him, and his disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narration. (Poe 1982, 882).

At the novel's conclusion, it falls to the editors to conclude the narrative, yet we as readers will never know their identities. Through this final twist, Poe masterfully extends the scribe-narrative sleights of hand that pervade the novel, emphasizing that narration is always the work of a scribe—generally anonymous and often relegated to the background.

This intricate layering of narratological roles—the author, the narrator, and the scribe— underscores the fluidity and ambiguity of authorship in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. Poe's deliberate mystification blurs the boundaries between the creator and the fictional constructs within the text, compelling us to question not only who speaks but also who writes. As the narrative's scribal attributions shift among Mr. Poe, Pym, and the anonymous editors, the act of storytelling becomes a complex interplay of voices.

This interplay naturally extends to another dimension of authorship: the translator. Like the scribe, the translator mediates the narrative, embedding their voice within the textual mosaic. In the case of Poe's novel, Baudelaire's translation exemplifies this dynamic. Initially titled *La Relation d'Arthur Gordon Pym*, the narrative was ultimately published in 1858 in its definitive version as *Les Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym*. Baudelaire's translation foregrounds the perspective of the narrated narrator, raising critical questions: To what extent does the translator's voice redefine the original? And how does this reframing alter our understanding of authorship itself?

Hauntology and Translation

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida situates translation within the realm of hauntology, particularly in his reflection on a line from *Hamlet*: "the time is out of joint":

> A striking diversity disperses across the centuries the translation of a masterpiece, a work of genius, a thing of the spirit which precisely seems to engineer itself [*s'ingénier*]. Whether evil or not, a genius operates, it always resists and defies after the fashion of a spectral thing. The animated work becomes that thing, the Thing that, like an elusive specter, engineers

> [*s'ingénie*] a habitation without proper inhabiting, call it a haunting, of both memory and translation. A masterpiece always moves, by definition, in the manner of a ghost. The Thing [Chose] haunts, for example, it causes, it inhabits without residing, without ever confining itself to the numerous versions of this passage, "The time is out of joint." In their plurality, the words of translation organize themselves, they are not dispersed at random. They disorganize themselves as well through the very effect of the specter, because of the Cause that is called the original and that, like all ghosts, addresses samely disparate demands, which are more than contradictory. (Derrida 1994, 21-22).

Translation is not the original work—this is the inevitable failure that all translators confront. Translation is, at its core, a work of mourning. Like Orpheus, the translator yearns for the return of what is lost—the original work—while simultaneously marking its disappearance through the act of translation. A text can always be translated again, differently, and with varying degrees of success.

The numerous and complementary French translations of *The Raven* highlight the infinite translatability of any work. The poem itself serves as a *mise en abyme* of the translations it has inspired and those yet to come. Lenore symbolizes the original work, a spectral presence haunting the translators. Through the raven's cry of "nevermore," whose every repetition paradoxically asserts the impossibility of repetition, we confront the fundamental paradox of all translation.

We now aim to present a nuanced application of hauntology to translation studies through a detailed comparative analysis of several French translations of *The Raven*. The selection of this poem is justified on two levels. First, it has been critically analyzed by Nicolas Abraham in *The Shell and the Kernel*, where he explores the mechanisms of what he terms the "unconscious of the text." According to Abraham, a literary text functions as a symptom: it contains repressed elements, or neuroses, while simultaneously offering a symbolic resolution. Nicholas Rand builds on this view, suggesting that the text harbors a hidden secret—a latent message subtly emerging from beneath its surface.

Furthermore, the thematic concerns of *The Raven* align deeply with hauntology. The poem depicts a student haunted by the memory of a woman he loved and lost, spiraling into an ever-deepening obsession with each successive verse.

Since January 9, 1853, when the first anonymous translation of Poe's poem appeared in the *Journal d'Alençon*, over forty French translations of *The Raven* have been published. A few months later, on March 1, the first Baudelairean translation was released in *L'Artiste*. The following year, on July 29, Baudelaire published *La Genèse d'un poème* in *Le Pays*, which included *Le Corbeau* along with *Méthode de composition*, his translation of Poe's *Philosophy of Composition*. This version was later revised and incorporated into *Histoires sérieuses et grotesques* in 1865. Baudelaire's definitive translation introduces numerous substitutions, amplifying the student's voice by enhancing the presence of subjects and adding personal pronouns and possessive adjectives throughout.

The focus on the translator's voice is significant because it demonstrates how translation transforms the source text, creating a new work that reflects the translator's stylistic choices and cultural context. Mallarmé, for instance, takes a distinct approach in his version of *The Raven*, first published in *La Revue indépendante* in 1875. His translation prioritizes the poem's literal meaning. While Baudelaire seeks to bring the reader closer to Poe's narrator by intensifying his personal presence, Mallarmé, by contrast, envelops them in a more lyrical and enigmatic atmosphere. These two translations exemplify divergent strategies for rendering Poe's haunting vision into French.

However, they are also complementary: one enhances the narrativity of Poe's poem by amplifying the presence of subjects and the grammatical articulation of sentences, while the other draws the reader into the strangeness and mesmerizing power of the language through literalism and conciseness. Together, they reveal a phenomenon that can be described as the dispersion of the letter or, in Derrida's terms, dissemination. Each translation preserves a fragment of the original text; yet collectively, through their interplay over time, they embody the spectral essence of the original work—whole yet indivisible.

Indeed, the French translations of Poe's poem highlight the inherent difficulty of fully reuniting signifier and signified in a different language. Translating *The Raven* presents a formidable challenge. The translator's task is to achieve the impossible: to preserve the rhythmic movements, the musical power of the verses, the internal rhymes, echoes, and paronomasias.

Throughout the 20th century, numerous translators have attempted to replicate the intricate musicality of Poe's *The Raven* by recreating its echo

effects—such as internal and external rhymes, phonemic repetitions, and partial homophonies. Below are a few examples, focusing specifically on translations of the poem's first stanza:

> Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary, Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore —
> While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping, As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
> "Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door — Only this and nothing more." (Poe 1982, 943)

> TR. ARMAND ROBIN
> Au bord d'une ombre d'épouvante mon âme sombrait lasse lente, Lourde d'étranges, grisants grimoires d'une doctrine sans apôtre J'étais soumis, presque assoupi, lorsque naquit un tapotis, Comme si quelque ami gentil eût su sans bruit gratter ma porte !
> "Ce n'est qu'un hôte, chuchotais-je, qui rôde et tapote à ma porte Et tout le reste c'est ma mort !" (Robin 1986, 40)

> TR. NICOLAS ABRAHAM
> L'heure d'une minuit sourde, lorsque mon âme lasse et lourde, J'eus fouillé dans maint bizarre et vieux volume aux morts trésors, Tandis que je songe, inerte, brusquement se fait un heurt,
> On eût dit : quelqu'un qui heurte, heurterait à l'huis dehors,
> "C'est quelque hôte qui – soufflé-je – heurte à peine à l'huis dehors, Oui, le reste est sans rapport." (Abraham 1987, 114)

> TR. PIERRE PASCAL
> UNE fois, | vers le temps d'un lugubre minuit, |
> ors que j'épiloguais, | recru et mal réduit, sur maint volume, | étrange et curieux, | de gnose oubliée et de nul renfort,
> ors que, le chef ballant, j'étais demi-tôquant, | soudain, en tapinois, | j'ouïs un tapement,

comme d'un, | grattant gentiment, | grattant l'huis de ma chambre, | outre le corridor.
"Un visiteur" | – chuintai-je entre les dents – "tapote à l'huis de ma chambre, | dehors – cela tout juste, | et rien de plus, au fort". (Pascal 1977, 19)

TR. NICHOLAS RAND
Il était une heure assourdie, je me plongeais, l'âme alourdie, Dans maint fantasque et bizarre volume de morts trésors –
Me balançant las, endormi, mais brusquement il vint un bruit,
C'est quand quelqu'un, tout doux, frappe, tapote à mon huis dehors.
"Est-ce un hôte qui", soufflé-je, "frapperait à l'huis dehors – Seul cela et rien d'autre". (Rand 1989, 107)

TR. PIERRE BOUTANG
Une fois qu'au minuit lugubre, je me penchais faible et lassé Sur maint volume curieux de vieille sapience oubliée –
Que je tombais presque assoupi, soudain se fit un léger bruit, Comme d'un frappant à mon huis, doucement à l'huis, dehors –
"C'est un visiteur", murmurai-je, "tapotant à l'huis, dehors – Cela seul et plus rien encore." (Boutang 1988, 101)

TR. HENRI JUSTIN
Voici par un minuit lugubre où lourd et las j'élucubrais
Sur maints volumes curieux les gloses d'une gnose obscure – Quand déjà je dodelinais – que soudain : un tapotement, Comme si quelqu'un toc-toquait, toc-toquait à ma lourde porte.
"Quelque visiteur, marmonnai-je, qui toquera doux à ma porte – Cela seul, et rien d'autre sorte." (Justin 1997, 6)

Armand Robin's translation is structured as a series of paired octosyllabic lines, with the exception of the second line, which consists of a decasyllable divided into two blank pentasyllabic segments, followed by an octosyllable. This prosodic structure seeks to recreate the balance of Poe's original metrical organization. The rhyme in [ãntə] at the end of the first two octosyllables, combined with the final alliteration in [l] ("lasse, lente"), substitutes for the original rhyme in [iəri] ("dreary" / "weary"), which is tied to the repetition of the phonemic cluster [wi] ("weak," "weary").

Additionally, Robin's translation achieves rich musical effects through repeated phone- mic associations: the alliteration in [s] and [l] at the end of the first line ("sombrait," "lasse," "lente"); the pervasive alliteration in [b] within the first line of both octosyllables ("bord," "ombre," "sombrait"); and the repetition of the syllable [gri] in the resonant phrase "grisants grimoires." These phonetic choices, combined with the assonance in [ɛ], [ã], and [ɔ], establish an auditory rhythm distinct from Poe's original while evoking a comparable melancholic atmosphere.

Nicolas Abraham's translation consists of alternating octosyllabic and heptasyllabic lines, faithfully replicating Poe's rhyme scheme, with the sole exception of the internal rhyme at the end of the first half of the third line. Abraham employs alliteration in *[l]* at the conclusion of the first line ("lasse," "lourde"), creating a sonorous link. He further emphasizes repetition through the recurrence of the consonantal cluster *[rt]*, introduced at the end of the first octosyllable in line 3 ("inerte") and linked to the rhyme in *[ærtə]*. The rhyme in *[ɔr]* in the final three lines of the stanza remains true to Poe's original choice.

Pierre Pascal adopts the rhyme scheme of the American writer, translating "nothing more" literally as *"rien de plus"* while maintaining the final rhyme in *[ɔr]*.

In Nicholas Rand's translation, the alliteration in *[l]* at the end of the first line, composed of a double octosyllable, and the assonance in *[a]* (*"l'âme alourdie"*) create an inverted paronomasia between *[al]* and *[la]*. Rand further enhances the rhyme in *[i]* through another paronomasia (*"assourdie"* [asurdi], *"alourdie"* [alurdi]). He also faithfully reproduces the original rhyme in *[ɔr]* in lines 3, 4, and 5.

Similarly, Pierre Boutang extends the rhyme in *[ɔr]* across the final three lines of the stanza (*"dehors," "encore"*). He introduces assonance in *[i]* in line 3

(*"assoupi," "fit," "bruit"*) and incorporates a rhyme in *[üi]* at the end of line 3 and the first half of line 4 (*"bruit," "huis"*).

Henri Justin's translation is composed in octosyllables. The end of the two halves of the first line and the conclusion of the second line are marked by a paronomastic repetition of the phonemes [u], [b], and [r]: *lugubre, élucubrais, obscure*. In the second octosyllable, completing the first line, Justin employs alliteration with [l]: *lourd, las, élucubrais*. The phonetic group [kür] is repeated at the end of the third and fourth octosyllables: *curieux, obscure*. Instead of the original rhyme in [ɔr], he substitutes a rhyme in [ɔrt] for the final three lines, accompanied by an additional echo effect in lines 4 and 5 through paronomasia: [amalurdəpɔrt] / [duamapɔrt] (*à ma lourde porte, doux à ma porte*).

The various attempts to remain faithful to the supple, dense, rhythmic language of Poe's poem, rich in echoes, fall short of fully reconstructing the original text in its entirety. What is missing is the narrative force of the work. Absent, too, are its grotesque accents and theatricality. Let us now address the specific challenge of translating the refrain. It hinges on a single word, "*nevermore*," a word of striking simplicity—so simple, in fact, that it resists translation. The difficulty lies in preserving the musical resonance of the consonant *[r]* and the vowel *[o]*. Examining this challenge will further illuminate the phenomenon of textual dispersion from one translation to another.

Concerning the rhymes in *[mɔr]* that conclude all the stanzas, the translations by Armand Robin, Pierre Pascal, and Henri Justin aim for sonic resemblance or equivalence.

THE RAVEN (1845)	TR. ARMAND ROBIN
Only this and nothing more.	Et tout le reste c’est ma mort !
Nameless here for evermore.	Sur toute terre nom de mort
This it is and nothing more.	Et tout le reste c’est ma mort !
Darkness there and nothing more.	Tout dans cette ombre était ma mort
Merely this and nothing more.	Seul mot d’un cœur pris par la mort
‘Tis the wind and nothing more.	"C’est la bise prise à ma mort."
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.	Siégea, juché, muet de mort.
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."	Le corbeau dit : "Muet de mort !"
With such name as "Nevermore."	Avec ce nom : "Muet de mort"
Then the bird said "Nevermore."	Il dit : "Jamais avant ta mort."
Of ‘Never — nevermore.’	"Te voilà mort, muet de mort !"
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."	Me croassait : "Muet de mort !"

She shall press, ah, nevermore!
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
Shall be lifted — nevermore!

TR. PIERRE PASCAL

cela tout juste, et rien de plus, au fort
ici-bas, sans nom qui la remémore.
c'est bien cela, et rien de plus, au fort.
n'étais rien de plus que ténèbre, au fort.
lui, simplement, et rien de plus, au fort.
ce n'est rien de plus que la bise, au fort.
se percha, campa, rien de plus, au fort.
Et le corbeau déclina : "Nevermore".
avec un nom semblable à "Nevermore".
Incontinent, l'oiseau dit : "Nevermore".
que ce refrain de "Never – nevermore".
cuidait prouver, croassant : "Nevermore".
qu'elle – ah ! non plus ! – ne palpera, dès lor
Et le corbeau rétorqua : "Nevermore".
Et le corbeau rétorqua ! "Nevermore".
Et le corbeau rétorqua : "Nevermore".
Mais le corbeau rétorqua : "Nevermore".
ne reprendra, non ! – jamais plus ! –
l'essor. (Pascal 1977, 19-30)

Rien d'Elle n'aidera ma mort
Il dit : "Jamais avant ta mort !"
Le corbeau dit : "Baume de mort !"
Il dit : "Pas même après ta mort !"
Il dit : "Pas même après ta mort !"
Avant ni même après ma mort.
(Robin, 40-46)

TR. HENRI JUSTIN

Cela seul, et rien d'autre sorte.
Nom qui sombre ici dans la mort.
Cela seul, et rien d'autre sorte
Que le noir ! et rien d'autre sorte.
Ce seul mot, seul, et seul encore.
C'est le vent, c'est le vent encore !
Prendre perchoir, sans une volte.
Le freux proclama : "Mort emporte".
Et proclamant que "Mort emporte" ?
Mais lui de couper : "Mort emporte".
"Ah, la mort – ah, la mort emporte !"
Quand il croasse "Mort emporte".
Celle que Noire Mort emporte.
Le freux rappela : "Mort emporte".
Le freux proclama : "Mort emporte".
Le freux proclama : "Mort emporte".
Mais le freux : seule Mort emporte.
Attend là que la mort l'emporte.
(Justin 1997, 6-8)

When embraced by the French language, the rhyme in *[mɔr]* acquires an added resonance: it speaks of *la mort*—death—already present in the raven's utterance, a word signifying all final moments, all farewells, all mourning. Translation, then, is not merely the act of moving between languages; it retains the imprint of the translator's listening, who, even before beginning to translate, hears the original work through the prism of the target language.

The Raven's utterance is a paradox: a word of life and death. For the absence of an- other—the eternal absence, the death of those we mourn—to be spoken, there must be a subject. There must be life, then. There must have been life. There must still be life. Here lies the joy of translation. Here lies the beauty

of the act of translating: it teaches us the art of imperfection, urging us to confront loss and even to move toward it willingly. At the same time, translation invites us to encounter the other, revealing how Derridean hauntology is intrinsically linked to one of the philosopher's foundational notions: hospitality. Hospitality, for Derrida, represents an ethical openness to the Other—situating the ghost within the realm of the Stranger. Hauntology necessitates an embrace of discomfort: the unease of thought confronting the unspeakable and innumerable, and the discomfort of inhabiting a language and space haunted by anonymous presences.

In conclusion, the study of hauntology within the realms of narratology and translation opens a profound dialogue about signs, absence, and the spectral nature of language. As Derrida suggests, literature is a space where reality is simultaneously constructed and deferred—a dynamic mirrored in the act of translation. Translators, like critics, engage in a perpetual negotiation with the "other," preserving the essence of the original while embracing its inevitable trans- formation. Ultimately, both literature and translation invite us to dwell in uncertainty, to embrace the ghostly echoes that haunt their lines, and to confront the endless possibilities of interpretation. In doing so, they remind us that the true essence of literary inquiry is not to provide definitive answers but to sustain the questions—an enduring engagement with the mysteries that define literature.

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