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Dissertation Abstract

Edgar Allan Poe in Czech Reception: Translation and Interpretation History

The doctoral thesis investigates the history of Edgar Allan Poe's reception in Czech culture from the 1850s to the present. Its aim is to scrutinize how the author's image has been shaped and reshaped over the course of time by various book editions, interpretive approaches and key translations, and what socio-cultural, literary or individual factors contributed to these transformations. The thesis is intended to contribute to the understanding of the history of Czech literary translation and of Czech literature's intercultural affinities.

Chapter 1 defines the research goal, presents the theoretical background and outlines the structure of the thesis. It reveals the inseparableness of Poe's image as the author and the man, i.e. the Poe "myth" that started developing during Poe's lifetime, and the necessity to also account for it when studying his Czech reception.

Chapter 2 focuses on the period up to the early 1890s and examines the earliest interpretations. These were strongly influenced by R. W. Griswold's infamous "Memoir" and dwelt mainly on the circumstances of Poe's life. Furthermore, the chapter provides an overview of the first prose and poetry translations which were occasionally published in daily newspapers and magazines. It also includes a deeper analysis of Poe treatises by Jakub Arbes, who was the first to see beyond Poe's prose as merely Gothic fiction. Additionally, Arbes found inspiration in Poe's tales for his own writing. Finally, the translation competition for the best rendering of Poe's "Eldorado", and Jaroslav Vrchlický's pioneering volume of translations of Poe's poetry are discussed in detail.

Chapter 3 deals with Poe's reception among authors affiliated with the Decadent aesthetics at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, who shared some of Poe's views on art and its role, originality and an author's individuality. The main focus is directed at the critique of Vrchlický's translation by Jiří Karásek, the speaker of the Decadent generation. The chapter also investigates the numerous translations of Poe's prose and essays by Jiří Živný and their reviews. Sporadic Decadent translations of Poe's poems and his reception outside of the Decadent circle are mentioned only marginally.

Chapter 4 covers the years 1927 to 1930, which were marked by a new wave of approaches to Poe's work. It analyzes the only complete edition of Poe's prose to date and its reviews in the

context of domestic fiction trends. It further discusses Albert Vyskočil's reception of Poe's essays on the theory of literature. Not only did he translate them, but he also explored Poe's impulses in the spirit of his own Christian worldview. The chapter's critical analysis details the poetry translations by Vítězslav Nezval in the view of his own writing of that time and probes O. F. Babler's parallel translation of "The Raven" and the ensuing discussion on translation methods incited by the two versions.

Chapter 5 focuses on the book editions published, often in hundreds of thousands of copies, under the communist regime, from 1948 to 1989. It investigates to what extent the official ideology is traceable in prefaces and afterwords and whether the governing powers interfered in the publication process. The research focuses in particular on the *Zrádné srdce* anthology from 1959, which included new prose translations by Josef Schwarz and poetry translations by Josef Hiršal. Efforts to reincorporate Poe in the context of Romanticism are uncovered, and his new role as a classic in literature for children and youth is noted.

The closing Chapter 6 offers an outlook into the period after 1989, observes main trends in publishing Poe's work in the market economy, and draws attention to the voices calling for a revision of the author's image as established in the previous period.