

Fernando Pessoa

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A poem is an intellectualised impression, or an idea made emotion, communicated to others by means of a rhythm. This rhythm is double in one, like the concave and convex aspects of the same arc: it is made up of a verbal or musical rhythm and of a visual or image rhythm, which concurs inwardly with it. The translation of a poem should therefore conform absolutely to the idea or emotion which constitutes the poem, to the verbal rhythm in which that idea or emotion is expressed; it should conform relatively to the inner or visual rhythm, keeping to the images themselves when it can, but keeping always to the type of image.

It was on this criterion that I based my translations into Portuguese of Poe's "Annabel Lee" and "Ulalume", which I translated, not because of their great intrinsic worth, but because they were a standing challenge to translators.

1923?

Páginas de Estética e de Teoria Literárias. Fernando Pessoa. (Textos estabelecidos e prefaciados por Georg Rudolf Lind e Jacinto do Prado Coelho.) Lisboa: Ática, 1966: 74.