

The Portuguese Dactylic Hexameter: An Overview

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the practice of Lusophone translators of employing the Portuguese dactylic hexameter, a practice that dates back to the eighteenth century. A key figure was Carlos Alberto Nunes, whose practice in the middle of the twentieth century differs a little from that of his predecessors (such as Nolasco da Cunha and Júlio de Castilho, among others), as he avoids the substitution of trochees with dactyls and also changes his way of making the caesura. It can be argued that Nunes anticipated the twenty-first century trend of translating ancient epic in vernacular hexameters. His translations influenced Brazilian poetry in the fifties and continue to provide inspiration to contemporary researchers and translators of classical poetry, not only epic, but also elegy and lyric, in Brazil.

Keywords: dactylic hexameter in Portuguese; Carlos Alberto Nunes; poetical translation; classical poetry; Latin metre; Portuguese metre; History of Translation.

Resumo:

Com o artigo investigo como tradutores e poetas lusófonos se serviram do hexâmetro datílico vernáculo, desde o século XVIII, quando a prática se iniciou, até meados do século XX, com o maranhense Carlos Alberto Nunes. O modo como Nunes acolheu hexâmetro datílico difere do que fizeram seus predecessores (José Anastácio da Cunha, Vicente Pedro Nolasco da Cunha, José Maria da Costa e Silva) por evitar substituir dátilos por troqueus e por alterar a maneira de impor cesura. Postulo que Nunes antecipou a atual tendência de traduzir épica grega e latina em hexâmetros datílicos vernáculos entre nós, que suas traduções da *Ilíada* e da *Odisseia* intervieram na poesia original composta no país nos anos 1950 e que ainda hoje no Brasil motivam pesquisas e traduções contemporâneas de poesia antiga, já não apenas épica, mas também elegíaca e até lírica.

Palavras-chave: Hexâmetros datílicos em português; Carlos Alberto Nunes; tradução poética; métrica latina; métrica portuguesa; história da tradução.

This paper aims to explore the history of appropriations of the dactylic hexameter in Portuguese, which culminates in the work of the poet and translator Carlos Alberto Nunes, a very prolific translator who published complete translations of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid* but also translations of the complete works of Shakespeare and Plato, among other important works²⁰⁴. As a necessary complement regarding Lusophone hexameters, I intend not only to survey the Portuguese speaking poets and translators who precede Nunes but also to propose the reappraisal of Nunes' translations. In recent years new translations of ancient epic (specifically of Homer) into several languages suggest a trend, not to say a phenomenon: the

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²⁰⁴ My colleague and friend, the co-editor of this volume, has already dealt with the revival of dactylic hexametric translations of ancient poetry (cf. e.g. Gonçalves et al. 2011).

employment of dactylic hexameter, as was the case before, particularly in the 18th century. For example, Agustín García Calvo's Spanish translation of the *Iliad* was published in 1995, Rodney Merrill's English translations of the *Odyssey* as well as that of the *Iliad* were published in 2002 and 2007, respectively; Philippe Brunet's French translation of the *Iliad* was published in 2010 (he is currently working on the *Odyssey*); Daniele Ventre's Italian translation came out in 2010, among others²⁰⁵. So, the occasion is especially opportune to consider these translation practices, i.e., the use of the Portuguese dactylic hexameter and the hexametric translations of Homeric and Virgilian epic in which we Lusophones, particularly in Brasil, tend to engage.

The poet and translator Carlos Alberto da Costa Nunes was born in São Luís do Maranhão in 1897 and died in 1990. He was a prolific translator from English, German, Spanish, but in my paper I will focus on his translations of ancient Greek and Latin. He translated all of Plato's *Dialogues*, the *Odyssey* (1941), the *Iliad* (after 1945), and the *Aeneid* (1981) marking the 2000th anniversary of Virgil's death. I use the word "reappraisal", but as a matter of fact, the critical and historical appraisal of his work, both as author and translator, has yet to be made. In this respect, the mere proposal of rendering Greek and Roman epic into Portuguese dactylic hexameters should have received more attention in Brazil, if not, so to speak, in the literate circles, where at least his translations have been mentioned, certainly in the philological environment, the University, mainly from 1960 onwards, when translation began to be theoretically enhanced in Brazil.

Carlos Alberto Nunes was the only translator in the twentieth century to have produced *new complete poetic* translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into Portuguese published in both Brazil and Portugal. In terms of verse translations this achievement remained unmatched until 2002. But in Portuguese Nunes' translations, now including the *Aeneid*, remain unique because all three are the only ones ever done in Portuguese hexameters, a very remarkable and important achievement. From the first editions onwards they proudly bore the inscription: "*Iliad / Odyssey / Aeneid* translated by Carlos Alberto Nunes in the original meter".

Most crucially perhaps Nunes' translation stimulated the production of new poetry. For example, the Brazilian poet Cassiano Ricardo used meter in his poem "Eu no Barco de Ulisses" ("Me in Ulysses' ship") published in 1957 in an attempt to imitate the way Ezra Pound had engaged poetically with the eleventh book of the *Odyssey* in his own *Cantos*.²⁰⁶ The way Nunes

²⁰⁵ The interested reader can consult Brunet's list of hexametric translations of ancient epic in Brunet's preface to the volume he edited in French journal *Anabases* (Brunet, 2014).

²⁰⁶ Cassiano Ricardo's poetic procedure did not escape the sharp perception of Mário Faustino (1930–1962), a poet himself and also a critic: "O mesmo não se pode dizer de "Eu no Barco de Ulisses". A ideia central, emprestada

employs dactylic hexameter in translation impacted Ricardo's composition, thus echoing the rhythm of ancient Homeric poetry, but mainly the form employed by Nunes. The allusive "paraepic" effect to which Ricardo aspired depended on the particular form adopted by Nunes in his translation. Ricardo's poem in turn helped establish Nunes' translation as a landmark, the hypotext to which his poem is intertextually linked.

In terms of theory and as well as practice, Nunes' translations are now considered a model for the new generation of Brazilian translators. A characteristic example is the case of ten students who worked with Rodrigo Tadeu Gonçalves and used Nunes' meter to render an excerpt of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (10.1-297). They used, however, a broader range of tropes, mainly *anacrusis*. Érico Nogueira also deviated a little from Nunes' model, but was still working under his influence. He created what he calls a "hexatonic hexameter", a hexameter with six ictuses, which is a feature of all Portuguese hexameters, including Nunes', to render Theocritus' bucolic idyls into Portuguese. Leonardo Antunes in his translations of ancient Greek poetry strictly adopted Nunes' hexameter.²⁰⁷

The question that arises is what "original meter" means. Nunes' hexameter reproduces the dactyl, replacing the quantitatively long vowel with a tonic in Portuguese and the short

dos *Cantos*, de Ezra Pound (aproveitar, modernamente, o Canto XI da *Odisseia*), a versificação emprestada de Carlos Alberto Nunes (tradução, ritmicamente conforme ao original grego, da *Ilíada* e da *Odisseia*)... excesso de meios e deficiência de resultados": "The same cannot be said of 'Me in Ulysses' boat'. The central idea, taken from Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* (to make modern use of *Odyssey* Book XI), the versification, borrowed from Carlos Alberto Nunes (in his translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* imitating the rhythm of the Greek original) cause an excess of means and a lack of results". This stresses the perception that Nunes' poetics was at implicated in some of the debates of his times. This complex nexus of receptions would be worth discussing further.

²⁰⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.1-5. Gonçalves *et alii* 2011: 119.

Vai-se Himeneu com o **manto** dourado luzente coberto
o **Éter** imenso percorre e dali se retira, seguindo
em **busca** da **costa** da **Trácia**, em **vão** por **Orfeu** foi chamado.
Lá ele esteve presente por **certo**, mas não **trouxe** aos **noivos**
votos felizes, **palavras** solenes, **semblantes** alegres.

Idyls, 1.1-6. Nogueira 2012: 135.

Doce é o **murmúrio**, **cabreiro**, que o **pinho** (aquele **lá**,
junto da **fonte**) solfeja, e assim **doce** tu **tocas** a **tua**
siringe: **depois** de **Pã**, o **prêmio** de **vice** levavas.
Se ele escolhesse o **bode** chifrudo, pegavas a **cabra**;
mas, se ele a **cabra** de **brinde** pegasse, a **ti** caberia a
cabrita: a **cabrita** de **carne** macia, até o **dia** em que a **ordenhes**.

Homeric Hymn 6, To Aphrodite. 1-6. Antunes 2015: 14.

Canto a formosa Afrodite, de **láureas** douradas e **augusta**,
que tem por **lote** as **idades** muradas de **Chipre** marinha
toda, onde a **úmida** **força** do **Zéfiro**, **tendo** soprado,
trouxe-a por **cima** das **ondas** do **mar** de múltiplas **vozes**
dentro de **espuma** macia. As **Horas** de **frisos** dourados
a **receberam** **gentis** e a **envolveram** com **veste** ambrosina.



vowels with atonic ones. For the sake of precision, Nunes' hexameters maintain the original hexametric ictuses by making Portuguese stressed vowels incide in that position. Here is an example from the beginning of the *Iliad* (1.1-7):

**Canta-me a cólera – ó deusa // – funesta de Aquiles Pelida,
causa que foi de os Aquivos // sofrerem trabalhos sem conta
e de baixarem para o Hades // as almas de heróis numerosos
e esclarecidos//, fican//do eles próprios// aos cães atirados
e como pasto das aves. // Cumpriu-se de Zeus o desígnio
desde o princípio em que os dois // em discórdia ficaram cindidos:
o de Atreu filho // senhor de guerreiros // e Aquiles divino.**

In Rodney Merrill's hexametric translation:

Sing now, goddess, the wrath of Achilles the scion of Peleus,
ruinous rage which brought the Achaians uncounted afflictions;
many the powerful souls it sent to the dwelling of Hades,
those of the heroes, and spoil for the dogs it made of their bodies,
plunder for all of the birds, and the purpose of Zeus was accomplished –
sing from the time when first stood hostile, starting the conflict,
Atreus' scion, the lord of the people, and noble Achilles.

(Merill 2007: 29)

This kind of hexameter has the following features: a) it presupposes the non-existence of quantities in Portuguese; b) it does not admit replacements; c) it always has caesura, mainly penthemimeral, or trimimeral and heptemimeral, as in v. 7; d) sometimes it has anacrusis.

To my knowledge, before Nunes only six lusophone poets employed dactylic hexameters; five Portuguese and one Brazilian: José Anastácio da Cunha, Vicente Pedro Nolasco da Cunha, José Maria da Costa e Silva, Júlio de Castilho, Carlos Magalhães de Azeredo and Fernando Pessoa²⁰⁸.

The pioneer José Anastácio da Cunha was also the first to employ hexameters in translations and only in translations. From the very beginning Portuguese dactylic hexameters were linked to issues of translation. He translated *Menalca e Tírsis*, an idyl based on a prose composition by Salomon Gessner (1730–1788)²⁰⁹, and the final excerpt from the second book of Virgil's *Georgics* (2.458-63). Here is a short passage from his translation:

/ / / / / / / /
— — | — — | — // — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — x
Ôh! quão | dito|sos, // | se o | próprio | bem conhe | cessem

²⁰⁸ The five Portuguese poets/translators were: the mathematician, soldier, professor, translator and poet José Anastácio da Cunha (1744–1787), the pioneer Vicente Pedro Nolasco da Cunha (1773–1844); José Maria da Costa e Silva (best known by the Arcadian name “Elpino Tagídio”, 1788-1854); Júlio de Castilho (1840–1919, Antônio Feliciano de Castilho's son); and the famous poet Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935). The list also includes the Brazilian poet Carlos Magalhães de Azeredo (1872–1963).

²⁰⁹ Swiss painter and poet, notorious for his love of pastoral themes.



him a brief and most probably the first catalogue of quantitative metrical rules in our language.²¹⁰ José Maria da Costa e Silva is the third Lusophone dactylic hexametricist, but as far as translation is concerned, he is the first to explicitly state, in his “Foreword” to his translation of Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, that meter is convenient not only to render ancient epic into Portuguese, but also to translate in the same number of verses, i. e., applying isostichy. In the same prologue, he makes an interesting statement: “I would not hesitate to employ the hexameter to translate the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but I did not dare to present to the public an unknown poem in a meter equally unknown”. That is, since there are already other translations of Homer in more canonical poetic forms, he would consider it appropriate to retranslate them in hexameters. However, since he was translating Apollonius’ poem into Portuguese for the first time, he did not consider it appropriate to do it using hexameters, which would constitute a kind of ‘double novelty’, a transgression.

Julio de Castilho’s hexametric translations, as far as I am concerned, were composed to illustrate his father’s new prescription about vernacular dactylic hexameter found in his “Treatise on Metrification”. Castilho was aware of Nolasco’s attempts. The quotation is long but relevant, because in it Castilho outlines the value of Portuguese dactylic hexameter from the point of view of a metricist’s. He argues, moreover, that it is convenient in translations. Even now it is the only piece of historical criticism of that meter made in Portuguese:

In these eleven kinds of verse I have just exemplified we have all poetic meters we can use in Portuguese; none other can be invented which is not composed by the above mentioned ones and which must not be condemned. The endeavours, not so modern, in which in modern times our dear Vicente Pedro Nolasco, a man of talent, by the way, has so insisted in making Portuguese hexameters and pentameters is a chimera with not a glimpse of effectiveness. Portuguese language, lacking quantities, a sine-qua-non condition to building the eleven feet of elegiac couplet, can but mock them. [...]. To insist in a matter so obvious is to waste time required by better thoughts.

(Castilho 1874: 29-30)

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Afterwards, Castilho changed his mind and added the following:

²¹⁰ Not very long after Anastácio da Cunha, the poet and journalist Vicente Pedro Nolasco da Cunha wrote two articles about quantities in Portuguese “Considerações sobre o verso saphico, e principios geraes de syllaba, applicados particularmente á lingoa portugueza” (“Some comments on Sapphic verse and general principles of syllables applied specifically to the Portuguese language”) and “Sobre a Objecção do Snr. Bento Pereira á cerca da Syllaba Portugueza” (“Answer to the objection of Mr. Bento Pereira concerning Portuguese syllables”) both in the journal *Investigador Portuguez em Inglaterra*, October 1815, vol. 13 n° 52, pp. 510 to 519 and November 1815, vol. 14, n° 54, p. 185 respectively. *O Investigador Portuguez em Inglaterra ou Jornal Literario, Politico* (“The Portuguese Investigator in England or Literary, Political Journal”) was published in London, funded by the Portuguese crown from 1811 to 1819. In the second article (p. 115) he stated: “o immortal Joze Anastacio da Cunha, que taõbem fez versos hexametros, e cremos, o primeiro que os fez na lingoa Portugueza, em quanto não tivermos documentos que mostrem o contrario” (“the eminent Jose Anastacio da Cunha also made hexameters and he was, I think, the first to do it in Portuguese as long as documents showing otherwise are not provided”).



However, four years after the first edition, pondering once again over the subject, I admit that to exclude, so radically as I did, Latin metrification from Portuguese poetry is not so well founded. The objection that Portuguese, unlike Latin, has no quantities still remains, but one may argue that those who listen to this beautiful language, although unable to pronounce and, therefore, unable to distinguish long and short vowels, are not incapable, however, of recognizing the harmony in Virgil's or Ovid's lines. So much so that, when they listen, even in a fast reading, they identify a line badly recited. This only argument proves that our ears, which are pleased by these meters when read in the Portuguese way, without the ancient prosody, might as well find, analogically, agreeable music in those verses that in Portuguese are similar.

A great benefit could result from the transplantation, if, on the one hand, hexameters and pentameters were composed only by those well versed in Latin and gifted enough to imitate them easily, and on the other, if readers were not completely lacking in the poetic background to enjoy them. The benefit, I say it again, would be the ampler space allotted to the poetic fancy.

The dodecasyllabic verse, so often attacked, is widely spread after all. Why so? Not so much because of its music as because of its extension. For the same reason, the hexameter, even longer, would even more fittingly respond to the space poets often struggle for. There is another point that must be taken into consideration, and not an unworthy one: while Portuguese meters are restricted to an unchangeable number of syllables, hexameters and pentameters, instead, allow much more breadth, due to the freedom to replace dactyls with fake spondees. Hexameters may have 14, 15, 16, or 17 syllables, i. e., 4 syllables more than the opulent dodecasyllabic line. Pentameters may have 12, 13, even 14 syllables.

But now I put aside theoretical explanations to show a fragment composed by a poet well versed in Latin²¹¹:

A bruma **do alto mar**// some ao **longe** o Real foragido.
Chora-o de pé na tor//**re a** constante, a misérrima **Dido**.
Na tormenta cruel// que lhe **agita** as turbadas **idéias**,
Enéias brilha só//: triste **Dido!**, o teu **mun**do era **Enéias!**
E Enéias vai cortando // (impia **sorte!**) as **undosas campinas**;
superna mão lhe **apon**//**ta** entre **névoas** as **plagas latinas**.
Nada espera nem **vê**//: se interroga o cerrado futuro,
se inquire o **que lá vai**//, só vê **Tróia** abrasada no **escuro**.

²¹¹ I. e. Júlio de Castilho, Antonio's son.



O marulho do **ocea**//**no** **os** rugidos do incêndio arremeda,
e os **sibilos** do **ven**//**to** **o** estralar da fatal labareda.
E olhando **além** Carta//**go** **a** sumir-se entre as sombras da tarde,
em gemidos **exa**//**la** **as** profundas saudades em **que** arde. [...]

[At sea from afar the mists fade the noble runaway.
Standing in the tower the faithful, unhappy Dido mourns him.
Amidst the cruel storm that strikes her troubled thoughts
Aeneas sole shines: poor Dido, thy world was Aeneas!
And Aeneas sails, cutting the wavy meadows;
a hand supernal guides him throughout the mist to the Latin shores.
He expects nothing and sees nothing: he asks himself about the concealed future,
wondering what it will be, but in the dark he only sees burnt Troy.
The roars of the sea are louder than the creaks of the flames
and so are the whistling wind noisier than the crackling fire.
And looking back at Carthage vanishing in the sundown shadows,
he exhales the moans among which he deeply burns with longing.²¹²]

(Castilho 1874: 30-32)

Castilho inserted rhyme where there was none. But as to the meter, technically speaking, what Castilho achieves is to eliminate the strangeness produced by the non-coincidence between ictuses and the word's natural stresses, which is exactly Nunes' process. But unlike Nunes, Castilho admits replacements of dactyls with trochees (spondees actually do not exist in Portuguese). What really counts in such a sequence is that in the six stressed syllables a stressed one is followed by one or at most two unstressed syllables – otherwise dactylic rhythm is destroyed. Thus, Castilho offers a variety that is arguably even more interesting than Nunes' stiffness, mainly where space is too much for the respective content. Castilho also deals with translation in a rather modern way: besides endorsing the convenience of hexameters for translating ancient poetry, which is similar to the contemporary phenomenon I described in the beginning, he argues that poetry, poetically translated, belongs to the vernacular literature: “to give our literature the great Roman poets”. This assertion echoes Peter France and Stuart Gillespie's claim in the five volumes of *The Oxford history of literary translation in English*.²¹³

²¹² The literal translation is mine.

²¹³ I quote two brief passages, one from the “General editors foreword” (France, P. & Gillespie, S. 2008; in Ellis, R. ed, vol 1: vi): “In the five volumes of *The Oxford history of literary translation in English* we aim to present for the first time a critical and historical overview of the development of this art or craft in the English-speaking world. The story of English language translation begins in England but eventually expands to include Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and from the late eighteenth century America, India, and all the other parts of the world where English became one of the languages of culture. Over this wide geographical area, these volumes show how literary translation has challenged, enriched, and transformed the native traditions”. The other passage is from the “Preface” to the third volume (Gillespie, S. & Hopkins, D. 2005: 1): “The main aim of this volume, as of *The*

In tracing the lineage of metricists from Anástácio to Castilho one can say that all successors were familiar with the work of their predecessors. In the case of Azeredo, he openly acknowledged that his model was Giosué Carducci's *Odi Barbare*, but he did not mention the Portuguese hexametricists. When we come to Nunes, it is hard to ascertain his knowledge of those translators. Except for Castilho, a well known metricist, we do not know if he was familiar with their work at this point in time. Nunes, unfortunately, never explicitly mentioned any model, but it is highly improbable that he, as a poet himself, was not aware of so influential a work as Castilho's *Treatise*, especially in its later editions. If that was the case, Nunes would have simply left aside that inopportune coupled rhyme – which in any case was never used by his predecessors. He rejected the substitutions of dactyls for spondees (or trochees, if we assume Portuguese does not have quantity), but maintained the caesura. So, From Anastacio until Castilho there is, no matter short it was, a tradition, that we can thus represent:

Anastácio
↑
Nolasco
↑
Costa e Silva
↑
Castilho

After Castilho and until Nunes, there were two additional poets who are worth mentioning, a Brazilian, Carlos Magalhães de Azeredo, and a Portuguese, Fernando Pessoa. Azeredo imitated the Italian poet Carducci, not the Lusophones Anastácio, Nolasco, Costa e Silva, and Castilho, but we do not know whom Pessoa imitated. In the case of Pessoa we know that Nunes was not aware of his work because Pessoa's hexameters were published posthumously by Fernando Lemos in 1993, long after Nunes translations appeared and three years after he died. However, it is worth examining three excerpts, one written by Azeredo, and two by Pessoa, to see how they utilize hexameters. First, Azeredo's lines:

Era uma triste e pálida// e opaca manhã de Janeiro.

Oxford history of literary translation in English as a whole, is to explore the rich tradition of translated literature in English, and its centrality to the 'native' tradition. Modern accounts of the history of English literature have often paid scant attention to the non-English writing that has been such an abiding presence and influence at its heart – usually in the form of translations very often read by the same public and written by the same authors”.



O céu de **Roma** – abóbada// **imensa** de ardósia – não **tinha**
nesga de **azul** nem **raio** de **sol**// Recordava o céu **plúmbeo**
de Londres, o céu **úmido**// e **baixo** da **Suécia**... Nevava.

(Azeredo 1904: 59)

It was a sad, pale and opaque January morning.
Rome's sky – this huge slate vault – had not
a single breach of blue nor a ray of sun. It looked like
London's lead grey sky, and Sweden's low one: it was snowing.

(Author's literal translation)

Azeredo's hexameter consists of an asynartetus of an octosyllable and a hexasyllable, which are common verse lines in Portuguese poetry, and as such, do not allow for substitutions.

Let us now examine two passages the two ways in which the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa dealt with dactylic hexameters; first in the introductory verses of the *Aeneid*:

Armas **e o** **varão** | eu **canto** que **vindo** de **Troia**
À **costa** **italiana** | **primeiro** **impulso** da **sorte**
E à Lavínia **chegou** | em **mar** e **terra** **agitada**.

(Lemos 1993: 104)

Arms and the man I sing, who departing from Troy
To the Italian shores, Fortunes' first impulse,
Came to Lavinia across the disturbed sea and land.

(Author's literal translation)

These hexameters follow only in Castilho's footsteps, i.e., the six ictuses of dactylic hexameters coincide with the normal stress of the stressed words. But this is not the case with the opening verses of Pessoa's translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry*, whose precise content is slightly modified. Here in the second verse, the stress falls in the syllable –nas of “penas”, but the normal stress of this word falls in the syllable –pe:

A uma **cabeça** **humana** | **se** **juntasse** um **pintor**
Pescoço **e** **penas** | **despois** **juntasse** em **seguida**
Membros **de** **um** **animal** | uns **e** **outros** **de** **outro** **animal**.

(Lemos 1993: 110)

To a human head if a painter assembled
Neck and feathers and if he assembled next
Limbs from another animal, different from that one.

(Author's literal
translation)

So, in these three examples, the first follows Castilho's model; the second Nolasco's and the third Castilho's again. So our diagram of the lineage from Castilho onwards can be represented as follows:

Castilho

↑
⋮

Azeredo (probably knew Castilho's *Treatise*).

↑
⋮

Pessoa (probably knew Castilho's *Treatise*; may well have known Anastácio's, Nolasco's and Costa e Silva's poems; most unlikely knew Azeredo's poem).

↑
⋮

Nunes (most certainly knew Castilho's *Treatise*; probably was not familiar with Anastácio's, Nolasco's and Costa e Silva's poems; may have known Azeredo's poem; could not have known Pessoa's translations).

The mere superficial compararison between what the predecessors had tried and what Carlos Alberto Nunes achieved demonstrates the key role he played in the translation and reception of classical texts in Brazil. As a hexametricist in Portuguese Nunes was late in comparison with Klopstock, Voss and other 18th century poets,²¹⁴ not to mention the Italian and French hexametrical tradition, which can be traced back to the Renaissance.²¹⁵ However, given the fact the his *Aeneid* was published in 1981, not so long ago in historical terms, no one can deny that his Brazilian translations of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* were ahead of their time compared to the contemporary trend of hexametric versions in Europe and the United States. Another reason why the lack of awareness of Nunes' work (even in Lusophone countries) is something that must be addressed. I hope that the brand new edition of Nunes' translation of the *Aeneid* I had organized and published can help remedy that situation.

²¹⁴ See Bernhardt-Kabisch 2003: 130-63.

²¹⁵ See respectively Carducci 1881, *passim*; Pejenaute, 1971: 215-216 and Brunet (ed.), 2014.



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