

**EDGAR ALLAN POE IN MONTEVIDEO IN 1919:  
on the volume of translations into Spanish *EL CUERVO Y OTROS POEMAS*  
(*THE RAVEN AND OTHER POEMS*)**

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Students of the reception of Edgar Allan Poe in the Spanish-speaking world now have at their disposal a resource of great value, made available as an easily accessible e-book<sup>1</sup>. This resource is the volume *El Cuervo y otros poemas* (*The Raven and other poems*), which originally appeared in Montevideo (Uruguay) in 1919 under the imprint of the Claudio García publishing house, made up of a selection of 29 of Poe’s poems translated by three different hands, with a prologue signed by a major Hispanic literary figure and Poe devotee, the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867-1916)<sup>2</sup>. The translators are: the Uruguayan Alberto Lasplaces (1887-1950); the Colombian Carlos Arturo Torres (1867-1911); and (for ‘The Raven’) the Venezuelan Juan Antonio Pérez Bonalde (1846-1892). Part of the contents (all but Lasplaces) had been published together in Madrid in 1909, and there appears to have been a reissue of the volume as we have it, also in Montevideo, in 1938<sup>3</sup>. The electronic text was produced in 2012 by the Spanish e-publisher 519 Editores<sup>4</sup>.

The poems translated<sup>5</sup> are: by Lasplaces (24): ‘Annabel Lee’, ‘To My Mother’, ‘For Annie’, ‘Eldorado’, ‘Eulalie’, ‘A Dream Within A Dream’, ‘The City in the Sea’, ‘The Sleeper’, ‘Bridal Ballad’, ‘The Coliseum’, ‘The Conqueror Worm’, the first ‘To Helen’ (‘Helen, thy beauty is to me’), ‘Sonnet - To Science’, ‘To --’ (‘I heed not that my earthly lot’), ‘To --’ (‘The bowers whereat, in dreams, I see’), ‘To the River --’, ‘Song’ (‘I saw thee on thy bridal day’), ‘Spirits of the Dead’, ‘Romance’, ‘Fairyland’, ‘The Lake’, ‘The Evening Star’, ‘The Happiest Day’, and ‘Imitation’; by Torres (4): ‘The Bells’, ‘Ulalume’, the second ‘To Helen’ (‘I saw thee once – once only – years ago’), and ‘Dreamland’<sup>6</sup>; and by Pérez Bonalde: ‘The

<sup>1</sup> This e-book is available in Kindle-friendly form. The same applies to all other e-books mentioned in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The volume also features two graphic images. The front cover has a collage of two illustrations to ‘The Raven’, respectively by Odilon Redon and Gustave Doré; the Doré reappears alone as the frontispiece.

<sup>3</sup> Listed, again as published by ‘C[laudio].García y Cia [compañía]’, in J.E. Englekirk, *Obras norteamericanas en traducción española. Primera parte, Revista Iberoamericana*, 2009 (revista-iberoamericana.pitt.edu). The same bibliography also has the entry: ‘[Poe,] *Poemas*. Madrid, Primitivo Fernández, 1909. Trads. Carlos Arturo Torres y J. A. Pérez Bonalde. Pról[ogo]. Rubén Darío’, indicating a previous publication comprising all the material but the Lasplaces translations.

<sup>4</sup> A web version, with the same content as the e-book and also dated 1919, exists at: [https://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Poemas\\_\(Poe\)](https://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Poemas_(Poe)). In addition, the entire content of the e-book before us, prologue included, was included in 2015 by the e-publisher Iberialiteratura, along with a selection of tales, in a different e-book, entitled *Edgar Allan Poe – Obras – Colección*.

<sup>5</sup> All references to the original texts of Poe’s poems are to the Mabbott edition, i.e. Poe ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott, *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969, repr. 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Mabbott gives this poem a hyphenated title (‘Dream-Land’). Torres’ translation retains the English title, unhyphenated, as ‘Dreamland’. As the hyphen does not appear to have any special significance one way or the

Raven' (only). The titles are, with a few exceptions, what would be expected in Spanish.<sup>7</sup> None of the translations show any sign of having been filtered through the French renderings of the revered masters Charles Baudelaire<sup>8</sup> or Stéphane Mallarmé<sup>9</sup>: all appear to have been done directly from the English<sup>10</sup> (for the Pérez Bonalde 'Raven' this is known to be the case), though nowhere is it specified which edition(s) of the English texts the different translators used.

Darío's prologue first appeared in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* in 1893, and was republished in 1896 and again in 1905, as a chapter in the first and second editions of his book *Los raros* (*The misfits*), a collection of pieces on his contemporaries<sup>11</sup>. Equally, Pérez Bonalde's 'Raven' was not making its sole flirt and flutter here: it first rapped at the world's window in New York in 1887, and the bibliographers list various republications, from 1895 on<sup>12</sup>. The Torres translations had also been published in Buenos Aires in 1916<sup>13</sup>. In other words, of the book's four components three were not new in print. Given that the Darío, Torres and Pérez Bonalde material had appeared together in the 1909 Madrid volume mentioned above, the Uruguayan compiler may simply have added Lasplaces (who alone was still alive in 1919) to create the book as we have it. In the form in which it has come down to us, this volume may be the product of chance, the outcome of two successive aggregations of

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other, for simplicity's sake the poem (both original and translation) will be referred to here throughout as 'Dreamland'.

<sup>7</sup> Apart from the non-translated 'Dreamland', the following translated titles merit comment. 'Eulalie' becomes 'Eulalia' (whereas the names Annabel Lee, Annie and Ulalume are unchanged); the second 'To Helen' ('I saw thee once ..') becomes 'Estrellas fijas' ('Fixed Stars') (the first and better-known one becomes 'A Elena').

<sup>8</sup> Baudelaire translated four poems by Poe. His rendition of 'The Raven' is included in his translation of 'The Philosophy of Composition', as 'La Genèse d'un poème' in *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* (Poe tr. Baudelaire, 1865, *Oeuvres en prose*, Paris: Gallimard (Pléiade), 1951, 815-997; 979-997). Of the poems included in this volume, Baudelaire also translated 'The Conqueror Worm' (as an insert in 'Ligeia') (Poe tr. Baudelaire, *Histoires extraordinaires*, 1856, *Oeuvres en prose*, 5-267; 241-257), and 'To My Mother' (published as part of the front matter to *Histoires extraordinaires*). His fourth translation, of a poem not included in the Montevideo volume, is of 'The Haunted Palace' (inserted into 'The Fall of the House of Usher') (Poe tr. Baudelaire, as 'La chute de la maison Usher', *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, 1857, *Oeuvres en prose*, 269-493; 337-357).

<sup>9</sup> Poe tr. Mallarmé, 'Le Corbeau' (1875), in Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris: Gallimard (Pléiade), 1945.

<sup>10</sup> The direct translation approach is not as outlandish for the time as it might seem: it could be supposed a priori that Poe's poems would have been indirectly translated via the consecrated French versions, but a precedent for direct translation was created as early as 1867 in the Mexican writer Ignacio Mariscal's version of 'The Raven', which he offered from the beginning as 'based ... on the "original" English[-language] poem' (Mariscal served as Mexican ambassador to London). See: Rafael Olea Franco and Paula Vicenteño Bravo, 'Encountering the Melancholy Swan: Edgar Allan Poe and Nineteenth-Century Mexican Culture', in *Translated Poe*, eds. Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato, Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2014, 141-150 and 381n-384n (141).

<sup>11</sup> Rubén Darío, 'Edgar Allan Poe': first published in *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, 1893; repr. in *Los raros*: 1<sup>st</sup> edn, Buenos Aires: La Vasconia, 1896; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Barcelona: Maucchi, 1905, and in *Obras completas*, vol. VI (*Los raros*), Madrid: Afrodísio Aguado, 1950, 255-270. An English version of this essay is included, under the title 'Edgar Allan Poe: Fragment of a Study' and in its guise as a chapter from *Los raros*, in the volume: Rubén Darío, *Selected Writings*, ed. and intr. Ilan Stavans, tr. Andrew Hurley, Greg Simon and Steven F. White, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2005 (400-409). This volume consists of a selection of Darío's poems (bilingual in Spanish and English) and prose pieces (in English only).

<sup>12</sup> Englekirk, in a summary and rather confusing multiple entry, lists the first publication, in *La América* (New York) in 1887, and what appears to be a Chilean edition from 1895. Hensley C. Woodbridge ('Poe in Spanish America', *Poe Newsletter*, January 1969, Vol. II, No. 1, 2, 12-18) lists three publications. The first, from the same year as our volume, appeared in *Cosmópolis*, No 6 (1919), 206-211. The other two are later republications: *Revista nacional de cultura*, No 54 (Jan.-Feb. 1946), 50-53; and *Letras del Ecuador*, Nos. 50-52 (1949), 14. *Letras del Ecuador* apart, Woodbridge does not specify the country of publication.

<sup>13</sup> Englekirk lists: '*Las campanas y otros poemas*. Buenos Aires, 1916. Trad. Carlos Arturo Torres. Eds. Mínimas'.

originally unrelated texts. Nonetheless, serendipitous juxtaposition is not without its fascination.

Before the advent of electronic publishing, to obtain a copy of this compilation would have been a feat. It is true that the Pérez Bonalde and Darío components are texts which have not been without projection elsewhere. Poe's 'The Raven' has been the object of multiple renditions into Spanish, from the nineteenth century<sup>14</sup> to our own day<sup>15</sup>. In that context, Pérez Bonalde's is one of that poem's better-known Spanish-language versions and has been cited by fellow writers and by scholars. In a recent essay (2016) the Colombian academician Efraim Otero Ruiz called the Pérez Bonalde 'Raven' 'quizá la más conocida ... de todas' ('perhaps the best-known ... of all')<sup>16</sup>. It was noted early on by Rubén Darío himself, who in 1909 prefaced 'The Raven' *in that translation* (in a text not to be confused with Darío's prologue to the volume under study), and, indeed, praised Pérez Bonalde's work as 'milagroso' ('miraculous')<sup>17</sup>. It later merited the attention of Jorge Luis Borges, who in an article of 1935 on Poe's 'The Philosophy of Composition' stated that Pérez Bonalde had 'vinculado ese poema a la literatura española' ('bound up the poem with literature in Spanish')<sup>18</sup>. More recently, it has been highlighted in a study of Poe in Spanish America by Emron Esplin, who draws attention to its known status as a direct translation from Poe's English and calls it 'crucial to any analysis of Poe's reception in Spanish America'<sup>19</sup>. In a chapter of the collective volume of 2014 *Translated Poe*, the Mexican critics Rafael Olea Franco and Pamela Vicenteño Bravo praise the Venezuelan as 'a major vehicle of Poe dissemination in the Spanish-speaking world', considering his translation 'one of the most famous and most influential'<sup>20</sup>. Otero Ruiz and Esplin both examine aspects of the Pérez Bonalde text in some detail<sup>21</sup>, while both Esplin and Olea Franco/Vicenteño Bravo additionally cite the Darío prologue from one of its other avatars<sup>22</sup>. However, if Pérez Bonalde's translation and Darío's prologue have received scholarly attention, the same does not seem to be the case for the

<sup>14</sup> The first translation into Spanish of 'The Raven' is that (footnoted above) by the Mexican writer, politician and diplomat Ignacio Mariscal, done in 1867, published in *El Renacimiento* (Mexico City) in 1869, and subsequently oft-republished across the Hispanic world (see Olea Franco and Vicenteño Bravo, 141-142). The Mexican poet Enrique González Martínez translated the poem in no less than five different versions between 1892 and 1945. For this, see: Carlos Paul, 'El Colegio Nacional celebra la universalidad de la creación literaria de Edgar Allan Poe', *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 20 July 2011, 6 - [www.jornada.unam.mx/2011/07/20/cultura/a06n1cul](http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2011/07/20/cultura/a06n1cul).

<sup>15</sup> Recent translations of 'The Raven' include, in Mexico, two done under the auspices of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), respectively by Ana Elena González Treviño and Alejandro Pacheco García, in *Edgar Allan Poe: El cuervo y otros poemas - Edición bilingüe conmemorativa del bicentenario del natalicio de Edgar Allan Poe*, tr. Proyecto Helbardot [collective], Mexico City: Stonehenge Books, 2009; and, in Colombia, the rendering by Efraim Otero Ruiz, "'El cuervo" de Edgar Allan Poe [essay plus translation]', *La hojarasca*, No 27, January-February 2016, [www.escriitoresyperiodistas.com/NUMERO27/efraim.htm](http://www.escriitoresyperiodistas.com/NUMERO27/efraim.htm).

<sup>16</sup> Otero Ruiz, loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Ruben Darío, 'Prólogo de "El cuervo" de Edgar Allan Poe'. 1909. In *Prólogos de Rubén Darío*, ed. José Jirón Terán, Managua: Academia Nicaragüense de la Lengua, 2003, 72-81 (81). Darío's praise is confined to generalities: affirming that Pérez Bonalde's translation 'habla por sí sola' ('speaks for itself' – *ibid.*), he does not attempt analysis of its specifics. It should be stressed that this text marks a voluntary act of prefacing on Darío's part, rather than an add-on republication by a third-party editor.

<sup>18</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, 'La génesis de "El Cuervo" de Poe', *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), 25 August 1935, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Emron Esplin, 'From Poetic Genius to Master of Short Fiction: Edgar Allan Poe's Reception and Influence in Spanish America from the Beginnings through the Boom', in *Resources for American Literary Study*, Vol. 31, New York: AMS Press, 2007, 31-54 (35, 37).

<sup>20</sup> Olea Franco and Vicenteño Bravo 382n.

<sup>21</sup> Otero Ruiz *passim*; Esplin 35-37. Our analysis of the translation below should thus be considered complementary to theirs.

<sup>22</sup> Esplin 39-40; Olea Franco and Vicenteño Bravo 143, 382n (both sources cite Darío's text from its 1896 publication in *Los raros*).

Lasplaces and Torres material, nor does the volume as a whole in its specific configuration appear to have been examined in detail until now.

Regarding the four contributors, little appears to be known of Lasplaces<sup>23</sup>: Torres and Pérez Bonalde, however, are remembered figures in their national traditions, both with cosmopolitan associations, while Darío is a leading light of Hispanophone letters. Torres was a poet, essayist, journalist, politician, university professor and member of the Colombian Academy of Language, who served as special envoy in France, as consul in Liverpool and as Colombia's finance minister, dying in Venezuela. Pérez Bonalde, born in Caracas, was a professional man of letters, poet and translator<sup>24</sup>, conversant in seven languages classical and modern, including English. He lived in Puerto Rico and New York as well as his native Venezuela, and is buried in his country's national pantheon, occupying a special niche in Venezuelan letters for his patriotic poem of 1877, 'Vuelta a la patria' ('Return to the homeland')<sup>25</sup>. He also translated 'The Pit and the Pendulum'<sup>26</sup> and 'The Cask of Amontillado'<sup>27</sup>.

Rubén Darío's work has a quite exceptional international dimension<sup>28</sup>: the Nicaraguan poet, short story-writer and essayist lived at one time or another in no less than six different Latin American countries (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Argentina), as well as in Madrid, Barcelona and, notably, Paris (at one point as Nicaraguan consul there). Darío is seen as the great renewer of Hispanic poetry of his time and as Nicaragua's greatest writer: his birthplace, formerly known as Metapa, is today Ciudad Darío. In a letter to Darío written in response to the first edition (1888) of the poet's flagship volume *Azul ... (Blue ...)*,<sup>29</sup> the Spanish writer Juan Valera laid stress on the Nicaraguan's 'espíritu cosmopolita' ('cosmopolitan spirit')<sup>30</sup>. The *Penguin Book of Latin American Verse* (1971) states that 'his work marks a turning point in Spanish poetry, because, through him, Latin America began to influence Spain'<sup>31</sup>. In his volume of poems of 1905, *Cantos de vida y esperanza (Songs of life and hope)*, Darío makes a number of ideological statements, affirming a notion of pan-Hispanic identity - a unity in diversity imaged as 'un solo haz de energía' ('a single bundle of energy') - and interrogating the imperial pretensions of the US, 'el futuro invasor' ('the future invader').<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in that volume he asks rhetorically: '¿Tantos millones de hombres

<sup>23</sup> Other than that he wrote short stories and essays. A cursory on-line notice exists at: [https://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Alberto\\_Lasplaces](https://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Alberto_Lasplaces).

<sup>24</sup> He also translated Heinrich Heine.

<sup>25</sup> This poem is available in an e-book, *Obras de Juan Antonio Pérez Bonalde*, published in 2012 by Ediciones la Biblioteca Digital.

<sup>26</sup> Logged by Woodbridge: "El pozo y el péndulo", *La América* [New York], I, 6 (15 July 1871), 85-89'.

<sup>27</sup> Published in *El Domingo* (Mexico), as 'La pipa del amontillado', on 12 January 1873. See Olea Franco and Vicenteño Bravo, 144 and 382n.

<sup>28</sup> For an account of the various tendencies in Darío's thought (Hispanism, pan-Americanism, cosmopolitanism), see: Rocío Oviedo Pérez de Tudela, 'Rubén Darío: panamericanismo y lenguaje', *Les ateliers du SAL*, No 4 (2014), 131-142.

<sup>29</sup> *Azul...* (a collection of poems and prose pieces; the three dots are part of the title) was published in two different forms - first edition (Valparaíso, Chile), 1888; second (expanded) edition (Guatemala City, Guatemala), 1890. Juan Valera responded to the first edition with two letters to Darío, both published in the Madrid newspaper *El Imparcial* in 1888: both were annexed to the second edition of Darío's volume. For the complete text of *Azul...*, including the material from both editions and Valera's letters, see the following e-book: *Azul... segunda edición completa*, Public domain, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Juan Valera, 'Carta I de don Juan Valera' ('Letter I from Juan Valera') (1888, reprinted 1890; in the e-book version of *Azul...* (second edition) cited above)..

<sup>31</sup> E. Caracciolo-Trejo (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Latin American Verse*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, xxiv.

<sup>32</sup> See, respectively, Darío's poems 'Salutación del optimista' ('Greetings from the optimist') and 'A Roosevelt' ('To [Theodore] Roosevelt') (*Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905); available as e-book, Public domain, 2011).

hablaremos inglés?’ (‘Will we be speaking English in our millions?’)<sup>33</sup>. Nonetheless, Poe at least represented an element of US culture that Darío could approve. He quoted ‘Ulalume’ admiringly in a poem of 1905<sup>34</sup>; prefaced, as we have seen, ‘The Raven’ in the Pérez Bonalde translation in 1909; and authored a remarkable study, ‘Edgar Poe y los sueños’ (‘Edgar Poe and Dreams’), published in *La Nación* in 1913<sup>35</sup>, in which, with ample quotation from Poe’s tales and poems, he pursues the leitmotiv of dreams across his hero’s work, praising him as ‘genial y fuera de la común humanidad’ (‘a genius outside the bounds of common humanity’) – a visionary whose writing pushes ‘hasta más allá de los límites de lo expresable’ (‘beyond the limits of the expressible’), or an alchemist evoking ‘vislumbres de sabidurías herméticas desaparecidas’ (‘glimpses of lost hermetic lore’). Darío is not known to have translated Poe (or indeed to have practised translation at all), but the prologue text and other evidence suggest that he had a decent knowledge of English and that he most likely read Poe in the original<sup>36</sup>.

Moving now to the volume itself, we will first examine Darío’s text, before analysing in detail one translation from each of the three subsets, namely ‘The City in the Sea’ (Lasplaces), ‘Dreamland’ (Torres) and ‘The Raven’ (Pérez Bonalde)<sup>37</sup>.

In his 1893 essay on Poe, reappropriated as the volume’s prologue, Darío relates his first-time arrival in the US and New York of that year, connecting his sensations as the Statue of Liberty looms with his impressions of Poe: ‘En una mañana fría y húmeda llegué por primera vez al inmenso país de los Estados Unidos’ (‘On a cold and damp morning I arrived for the first time in the immense country that is the United States’). Poe appears variously as *poète maudit* in conflict with his materialist society, as devotee of beautiful and ethereal women, and as purveyor of esoteric wisdom. Darío evokes the New York crowds, disembarking from the liner or thronging Broadway, in a vision that anticipates Federico García Lorca’s dark exploration of the metropolis in *Poeta en Nueva York (Poet in New York)*<sup>38</sup>, and also recalls Poe’s own ‘The Man of the Crowd’<sup>39</sup>. Poe is viewed in Baudelairean guise<sup>40</sup> as a spirit

<sup>33</sup> In ‘Los Cisnes’ (‘The Swans’) (*Cantos de vida y esperanza*).

<sup>34</sup> In ‘Psiquis’ (‘Psyche’) (*Cantos de vida y esperanza*): ‘¡Oh Psiquis, oh alma mía! – como decía aquel celeste Edgardo’ (‘¡O Psyche, O my soul! – in the words of that celestial Edgar’). The reference is of course to ‘Psyche, my soul’, in Poe’s ‘Ulalume’.

<sup>35</sup> This essay was published in *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), in three parts (8 May, 20 July and 24 July) in 1913. A republication in Spain, with the essay featuring as a non-fiction annex to a selection of Darío’s fantastic fiction, appeared in: Rubén Darío, *Cuentos fantásticos*, Madrid: Alianza, 1976 (91-112). The essay can also be found online at: [www.lamaquinadeltiempo.com/Poe/poedario.htm](http://www.lamaquinadeltiempo.com/Poe/poedario.htm). The text includes substantial quotations in Spanish from Poe’s poetry and prose, though Darío does not indicate a source for the translations.

<sup>36</sup> The opening sequence of the prologue text is peppered with English words, used correctly: the first paragraph alone includes ‘steamer’, ‘all right’, ‘clergyman’ and ‘jockey’. In addition, Darío wrote in ‘Edgar Poe y los sueños’: ‘Otro reino de sueño es el que aparece en “The Haunted Palace”, cuya descripción, sobre todo en el original inglés, transporta al arcánico mundo de los ojos cerrados’ (‘Another realm of dreams appears in “The Haunted Palace”, the description of which, especially in the English original, transports us to the arcane world of closed eyes’). The texts by Poe quoted in that essay include several not translated by Baudelaire (various poems, some at length; the ‘Marginalia’; and, notably, one of the relatively few stories excluded by the French poet, ‘The Assigment’).

<sup>37</sup> The three poems selected are all mentioned by Darío in ‘Edgar Poe y los sueños’, and ‘Dreamland’ in particular is extensively quoted there.

<sup>38</sup> Federico García Lorca, *Poeta en Nueva York*, written 1929-1930, published New York: W.W. Norton, 1940; bilingual English/Spanish edition, ed. and intr. Christopher Maurer, tr. Greg Simon and Stephen F. White, as *Poet in New York*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990.

<sup>39</sup> ‘The street was a narrow and long one, and his course lay within it for nearly an hour, during which the passengers had gradually diminished to about that number which is ordinarily seen at noon in Broadway near the Park.’ (Poe, ‘The Man of the Crowd’ (1840), in *Collected Works vol II*. Ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1978, 505-518 (512)).

fundamentally opposed to the mercantile ethos of his country (Darío sees the US as ‘un país de cálculo’ – ‘a land of calculation’, and New York as ‘la capital del cheque’ – ‘capital of the chequebook’). Against the remembered backdrop of ‘el hirviente Broadway’ (‘seething Broadway’), Darío imagines a procession of fatal or fated women from Poe’s tales (Ligeia) and poems (Ulalume, Annabel Lee, Lenore of ‘The Raven’). He hails Poe as a doomed genius, ‘el cisne desdichado’ (‘the unfortunate swan’), and concludes with fulsome praise of the depth of his metaphysical insight, as evidenced in ‘Mesmeric Revelation’ or ‘The Power of Words’, his ‘vislumbres ... del espíritu en el espacio y el tiempo’ (‘glimpses .. of the spirit in space and time’). Darío’s text, with its vivid image of the Latin American intellectual arriving in the US, may be seen as ‘look[ing] gigantically down’ – to quote Poe’s own words from ‘The City in the Sea’, later to be appropriated by Hart Crane in his encounter with Poe’s phantom in New York in *The Bridge*<sup>41</sup> – on the translations that follow, whose several representative texts we shall now examine.

The translations by Alberto Lasplaces are in all cases prose versions, and in this the translator follows (but does not calque<sup>42</sup>) Mallarmé<sup>43</sup>. Lasplaces’ translation strategy is essentially one of literalism plus paraphrase. Any divergences from Poe look more like misunderstandings than deliberate changes: thus, in ‘Annabel Lee’ the ‘kingdom by the sea’ becomes ‘un reino mas allá de la mar’ [*a kingdom beyond the sea*]<sup>44</sup>, and at the end of ‘The Conqueror Worm’ (‘El gusano vencedor’) the ‘unveiling’ angels are imagined as doing quite the opposite, ‘cubriéndose’ [*covering themselves*]: The Latin American connection supplied by Poe’s surprising condor image, in ‘Romance’ (‘La Romanza’) and again in ‘The Conqueror Worm’ is taken over but not further developed. We shall now examine ‘La ciudad en el mar’, Lasplaces’ version of ‘The City in the Sea’.

Poe’s trademark poems were written to be recited, and ‘The City in the Sea’ is no exception. Apart from its sonority of rhyme, alliteration and assonance, this poem is marked by a constant tension between two opposing movements, *up* and *down*. Alas, this dimension is here lost in translation. The ‘up’ of the city’s vertically-rising illumination is repeatedly rendered

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<sup>40</sup> The notion of Poe as *poète maudit* – a successor to Byron, a spiritual aristocrat out of place in a fast-industrialising United States with its credo of democracy – is central to Baudelaire’s (highly influential) reading of his life and works. In *Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe* (1857) the French poet saw Poe as ‘le Byron égaré dans un mauvais monde’ (‘a Byron lost in an evil world’) (Poe tr. Baudelaire, *Oeuvres en prose*, 1049-1062; 1051); and in *Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages* (1852) as in permanent conflict with the values of US society: ‘Les États-Unis furent pour Poe une vaste cage, un grand établissement de comptabilité, et (...) il fit toute sa vie de sinistres efforts pour échapper à l’influence de cette atmosphère antipathique’ (‘The United States were for Poe a great cage, a glorified accountancy firm, and (...) all his life he made doomed efforts to escape the influence of that uncongenial atmosphere’) (Poe tr. Baudelaire, *Oeuvres en prose*, 1001-1029; 1002). Darío’s prologue, it may be noted, also compares Poe to Byron.

<sup>41</sup> Poe writes in ‘The City in the Sea’: ‘While from a proud tower in the town / Death looks gigantically down’. In his poem ‘The Tunnel’, included in *The Bridge* (1930), Hart Crane addresses Poe thus: ‘And why do I often meet your visage here, / Your eyes like agate lanterns - on and on / Below the toothpaste and the dandruff ads? (...) / And Death aloft, - gigantically down / Probing through you - toward me, O evermore?’ (*The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, New York: Liveright, 1986).

<sup>42</sup> Lasplaces’ version of ‘The Sleeper’ (‘La durmiente’) includes a gallicism, ‘panneaux’ (placed in inverted commas) for the original ‘panels’ (of the vault). However, since his text does not calque Mallarmé’s this one word should not be taken as suggesting the translator did not work from Poe’s English, though he may have used Mallarmé as a reference. Lasplaces presumably found ‘panneaux’ more apt than any Spanish term.

<sup>43</sup> Mallarmé’s translations (included as *Poèmes traduits par* [Stéphane] *Mallarmé* in Poe, *Oeuvres complètes*; e-book, LCI E-books, 2014) are in prose without exception. Of the four poems translated by Baudelaire, only one, ‘The Raven’, is rendered in prose, the rest being presented as (somewhat prosaic) verse.

<sup>44</sup> For ease of identification and to ensure a clear differentiation from Poe’s originals, all retrotranslations from the Spanish-language texts will henceforth be given in italics and within square brackets (titles of poems excepted).

by ‘sobre’ [*upon*], a preposition lacking in dynamic force. Death, rather than looking ‘gigantically down’, periphrastically ‘contempla la ciudad que yace a sus pies’ [*contemplates the city that lies at his feet*]. At the end, the resonant ‘Down, down that town shall settle hence’ simply becomes – the internal rhyme also disappearing – ‘cuando ... esta ciudad sea engullida por fin y profundamente fijada bajo la mar’ [*when ... this city is finally swallowed and fixed deep under the sea*]. The description of the city that forms the bulk of the poem is adequately rendered, but there is a serious divergence (whether error or alteration for alliteration’s sake) when ‘the viol, the violet and the vine’ becomes ‘claveles, violetas y viñas’ [*carnations, violets and vines*]. All in all, this text exposes the limitations of Lasplaces’ literal-periphrastic strategy, reading almost more like a study aid than a translation. The strategy is nonetheless well-meant, and Lasplaces’ renditions, which form the bulk of the volume, remain useful, as bringing Poe nearer to the Hispanic reader and constituting a translation pole against which the other versions may be contrasted.

In contrast to Lasplaces, Carlos Arturo Torres operates a verse translation strategy permitting significant variation from the original – an approach especially visible for ‘The Bells’ (‘Las campanas’) – in that hyper-sonorous poem’s case understandably – and for the second ‘To Helen’, rendered extremely freely and even retitled as ‘Estrellas fijas’ (‘Fixed stars’) – an image not present in the original. We shall now examine Torres’ version of ‘Dreamland’.

Torres retains the English title, though ‘Tierra de sueño’ or something similar would be perfectly acceptable in Spanish. This might seem un auspicious, but the translation in fact manages to replicate much of the original’s sonorousness. The allusion to Eldorado, a Latin American element, is elaborated on rather more than the condors in Lasplaces, with Poe’s ‘‘Tis, oh, ‘tis an Eldorado!’ becoming ‘el asilo de la paz suprema / del reposo y la calma en Eldorado’ [*the refuge of supreme peace / of repose and calm in Eldorado*] (hence *the* rather than *an* Eldorado). The Ultima Thule reference, which Poe’s editor Thomas Ollive Mabbott locates in Virgil’s *Georgics*,<sup>45</sup> is actually closer to its Latin source than in Poe, with ‘this ultimate dim Thule’ becoming, in the last stanza, ‘la inexplorada, última Thule’ [*the unexplored Ultima Thule*]. The ‘Titan woods’ become ‘bosques titánicos’ [*Titanic woods*], with Torres thus carving out a closer partnership with the ‘alley Titanic’ of ‘Ulalume’. Overall, Torres’ ‘Dreamland’ not only draws out further certain elements of the text, but vindicates his freer translation strategy, successfully communicating the incantatory otherworldliness of Poe’s dream-visions.

There now remains Pérez Bonalde’s ‘El cuervo’ (‘The Raven’). This poem represents the maximum challenge for any translator of Poe’s poems. Its recent translator Efraim Otero Ruiz<sup>46</sup> usefully notes four elements of difficulty: the title; rhythm and rhymescheme; archaisms; and allusions – all relevant to discussion of the version in hand.

The title is actually untranslatable: as Otero Ruiz stresses, the raven (*Corvus corax*) is not a South American bird<sup>47</sup>; nor is it the same as the carrion crow (*Corvus corone*). The King James Bible is home to the raven sent out by Noah<sup>48</sup> and the ravens which fed Elijah<sup>49</sup> –

<sup>45</sup> Mabbott refers (*The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, 345n) to the *Georgics*, I, 30. The relevant passage, in which Virgil addresses the Emperor Augustus, reads: ‘tibi serviat ultima Thule’ (‘farthest Thule owns thy lordship’) (Virgil, *Georgics*, in *Virgil I* (Loeb Classical Library), tr. H.R. Fairclough and G.P. Gould, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1999, 97-259). -

<sup>46</sup> Efraim Otero Ruiz, ‘“El cuervo” de Edgar Allan Poe’ (cited above).

<sup>47</sup> Otero Ruiz, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Genesis 8:7 ‘And he sent forth a raven, which went to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth’.

appropriately enough, a man of Gilead<sup>50</sup> - but nowhere in the entire biblical text does the word ‘crow’ occur. The ‘stately raven of the saintly days of yore’ has a dignity which the crow lacks, yet Spanish does not distinguish between the two: ‘cuervo’ has to make do for both.

If translating the title implies an inevitable loss, the poem’s rhythmic sonority and complex rhyme-scheme, internal rhymes included, can only be partially conveyed in Spanish. Here Pérez Bonalde adopts a mixed approach, in some stanzas replicating the rhymescheme even at the expense of sense, and in others translating more literally and less rhythmically<sup>51</sup>. His strategy may thus be seen as midway between those of Lasplaces and Torres. The result is that, read aloud, this translation comes across like a light flashing alternately on and off. To cite two contrasting examples, in the first stanza, ‘While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping / As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door’ is rendered prosaically and unrhythmically as: ‘inclinando soñoliento la cabeza, de repente / a mi puerta oí llamar’[*as I bowed my head sleepily, suddenly / I heard a knock at my door*]; but in the next stanza, ‘Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December, / And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor’ becomes: ‘¡Ah! Bien claro lo recuerdo: era el crudo mes del hielo, / y su espectro cada brasa moribunda enviaba al suelo’ [*Ah! Well I remember: it was the raw month of ice, / and each dying ember cast its spectre on the floor*’], with rhythm retained and something resembling internal rhyme - even if ‘the bleak December’ has disappeared.

Poe deploys his huge vocabulary to maximum effect in ‘The Raven’. One aspect of his exploitation of the resources of English is his use of archaisms, such as thou-forms and lexical items like ‘quaff’ or, in the refrain, ‘quoth’. Pérez Bonalde responds not by translating archaism for archaism but by adopting similar usages elsewhere in the text: examples are the Cervantine ‘do’ for ‘donde’ [*where*], and lexical items such as ‘pavuras’ [*fears*] or ‘ábregos’ [*gales*]. There is also a case of lexical Hispanisation when Poe’s ‘thing of evil’ is rendered as ‘duende’; this acculturation risks changing the sense, since in Spanish-speaking countries a ‘duende’ is a kind of spirit, not necessarily malevolent<sup>52</sup>.

Poe’s poem contains a fair sprinkling of cultural allusions, split approximately equally between the Hebraic/biblical and the Hellenic/classical. A translator (and the translator’s readers) from a Latin and Catholic background might be expected to be more comfortable with the classical references, and so it is here. The ‘bust of Pallas’ and the ‘Plutonian’ night are retained, as is the Homeric ‘nepenthe’<sup>53</sup>, but the ‘Tempter’ (i.e. the devil) disappears altogether, and the biblical ‘balm in Gilead’, a reference to the book of Jeremiah<sup>54</sup>, is replaced by the non-specific ‘algún bálsamo o consuelo’ [*some balm or consolation*]. Nonetheless, the poem’s allusive quality as such remains, and all in all Pérez Bonalde’s version may be considered a valiant effort to convey the essence of a text whose unique characteristics have over the years attracted and bemused translators into a host of languages.

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<sup>49</sup> I Kings 17:6: ‘And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening’.

<sup>50</sup> I Kings 17:1: ‘Elijah, .. who was of the inhabitants of Gilead’.

<sup>51</sup> Otero Ruiz notes of Pérez Bonalde: ‘Hay que darle el crédito de que intenta cierta rima interna’ (‘He should be given credit for attempting a degree of internal rhyming’ - Otero Ruiz, 7).

<sup>52</sup> See, for instance, the influential lecture which Lorca dedicated to the ‘duende’ conceived as the pervading spirit of Spanish culture (‘Teoría y juego del duende’. 1933. Federico García Lorca, *Prosa, vol. I*. Ed. Miguel García-Posada. Madrid: Akal, 1994, 328-339).

<sup>53</sup> Mabbott sources Poe’s ‘nepenthe’ to Homer’s *Odyssey*, IV, 219-220 (*The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, 373n).

<sup>54</sup> Jeremiah 8:22: ‘Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?’



Rubén Darío, in his preface to the Pérez Bonalde 'Raven', calls Poe 'el poeta más original e inspirado que ha nacido en América' ('the most original and inspired poet to have been born in America'<sup>55</sup>). His use of 'America' implies not the United States alone but the Americas, the continent seen as one. A comparable pan-Americanism may be seen as infusing the volume we have discussed. Pérez Bonalde's 'Raven' is a fitting culmination to a compilation whose episodic shortcomings are amply compensated by its sweep and range in embracing a diversity of translation strategies and by the multiple provenances of its contributors. The plurality of translation approaches parallels and reinforces the pan-Latin American plurality of the book's participants. Indeed, the volume may be seen as a pan-American gesture, enabling an equal cultural dialogue between North American subject and Central/South American prologuist and translators. Under Rubén Darío's auspices, this volume welcomes Edgar Allan Poe, a writer from a culture that might be perceived as alien, within the Hispanic world, not through a restrictive appropriation either way, but through an implied discourse of creative universality that transcends cultural barriers.

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<sup>55</sup> Darío, 'Prólogo de "El cuervo" de Edgar Allan Poe', 81.