



Review of Esplin, Emron & Vale de Gato, Margarida. (Eds.). 2014. *Translated Poe*. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press. 471 pages. ISBN 978-1-61146-171-8.

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The bicentenary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth in 2009 generated a renewed enthusiasm in the American writer and his work. International conferences and monographical studies re-examined the importance of Poe and his influence on twenty-first-century national literatures. Among the most recent studies, Cantalupo's *Poe and the Visual Arts* (2014) puts in context Poe's oeuvre and the artwork to which he was exposed in the 1830s and 1840s. In the same vein, Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato's edited volume *Translated Poe* deals with translations and translators of Poe in an attempt to demonstrate "how Poe's translations constitute multiple contextual interpretations, testifying to how this prolific author continues to help us read ourselves and the world(s) we live in" (2014: xix). Echoes of Lois Davis Vines' *Poe Abroad* (1999), a landmark in Poe studies published to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the writer's death, abound in this compilation of articles. In this regard, Esplin and Vale de Gato, who acknowledge having been inspired by Vines' work, commissioned an outstanding group of Poe experts and translators to assess the specific vehicle that delivers Poe to the world: translation. "One can understand Poe", contends Cagliero in his review of *Poe Abroad*, "by understanding those who read his texts and how they understood him" (2000: 45). And this statement may also be fitting for *Translated Poe*.

Charles Baudelaire's *Histoires Extraordinaires* (1856) and *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires* (1857) did the groundwork for nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century translations of Poe's work from French to other foreign languages. Unsurprisingly, French Symbolist Paul Valéry hurriedly remarked in 1924 that Poe "would today be completely forgotten if Baudelaire had not taken up the task of introducing him into European literature" (qtd. in Vines, 1999: 1). Despite this comment, considered by Vines "both an exaggeration and an understatement" (1999: 1), Valéry failed to see that Poe's influence looms large, far beyond his estimation as the American writer was widely read (and translated) in South

America and Asia. This is the starting point of *Translated Poe*, a collection of critical studies that must be considered as the most serious attempt to put in context both translations of Poe's oeuvre and their impact on national literatures.

In the introduction, the editors establish that one of the aims of translation resides in its possibility of making available "textual exchanges across cultures and languages" (2014: xi) while, at the same time, the transnational dynamics of reading Poe inform the difficulties encountered by translators in their efforts to produce faithful renditions of Poe's works. Esplin and Vale de Gato acknowledge that Edgar Allan Poe's oeuvre is also an exceptional case as few, if any, American authors "owe so much of their current reputation to translations" (2014: xi). This is in part due to the author's endeavors to produce a *single* effect in his writings and the urge to provoke the reader's reaction, as he had expressed it in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1984/1842: 572).

Regarding the methodological viewpoint, the editors favor an interlingual translation approach in which the English version of Poe's text is compared with its counterpart in a foreign language. By following this approach, Esplin and Vale de Gato contend that Poe translations within particular national traditions (and, in some cases, regional varieties, i.e., Peninsular Spanish vs. South American Spanish) are fully examined. The volume thus follows a geographical representation rather than a chronological approach and it is this translation studies approach that explains why the editors chose a cultural and linguistic organization.

The book is divided into two parts: Part I, entitled *Poe Translations in Literary Traditions*, explores in nineteen chapters the different renditions of Poe's work in foreign languages; Part II, *Poe's Fiction and Poetry in Translation*, consists of case studies of Poe's tales or poems examined by accomplished experts and translators.

The first ten chapters explore the fortunes of Poe in Europe. In Portugal, Margarida Vale de Gato reflects on the fact that nineteenth-century translations of Poe were instrumental in the attack on the formality of morals of Catholic Portugal. In the twentieth century, Fernando Pessoa embarked on an ambitious plan, as George Monteiro remarks, to bring to Portugal many of the great works of English-language literature in his own translations (2014: 283). In Spain, nineteenth-century translations of Poe's tales came from Baudelaire's French version while in the twentieth century, modernist writers and avant-gardists offered various renditions of the American writer's work. Nonetheless, as Margarita Rigal-Aragón comments, the most influential translator of Poe in Spain was the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, who was commissioned by UNESCO to translate the complete tales of the American writer. This translation still ranks amongst the best in Spanish.

In Italy, Ugo Rubeo states that the majority of nineteenth-century Poe translations came from Baudelaire's French edition. However, unlike other European countries, early Italian translators preferred Poe's poems—"The Raven" became a favorite piece—rather than his

fiction. However, in the 1960s a flowering of new translations of Poe's tales was published while, at the same time, Poe's *Gordon Pym* remained almost ignored almost until the 1970s. Maria Filippakopoulou also emphasizes the presence of Baudelaire's translations and critical writings as the primary source for Greek translators. In her contribution, she explores the short-lived aestheticism of the early twentieth century of some of the most important Greek literary figures, namely Nikolaos Episkopopoulos, Takis K. Papatsonis and Nikolaos Politis.

Lois Davis Vines examines Poe translations in France and reminds us that Baudelaire, contrary to popular belief, was not the first translator of Poe in French. The triad Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry, each one of them interested in a particular side of Poe, propelled the fame and influence of the American icon throughout Europe and South America.

In Germany, the popularity of Edgar Allan Poe among German readers remains unbroken to the present day (2014: 55). Marius Littschwager states that German translations began simultaneously with French translations in France. Despite this fact, many mid-nineteenth-century renditions evince the influence of Baudelaire's version. Even today, Poe is the most translated US author in German, and the only one with five different editions of his complete or collected works in this language (2014: 64).

The earliest translations of Poe in Russia came also from Baudelaire's French edition, even though the Russians preferred the psychological tales to other sub-genres. In her analysis, Elvira Osipova contends that like their French counterparts, Russian Symbolists found in Poe their soul mate and soon became interested in Poe's art and aesthetics. Poe translations undertaken after the Second World War were characterized by harsh ideological pressure. In this regard, translators adapted the text by omitting religious symbols, thus making it more suitable to the taste of the Soviet readers in an attempt to convince them, that Poe's philosophy "was essentially 'anti-capitalist and atheistic'" (2014: 72).

Liviu Cotrău, a translator and an expert in lexical literalism, alludes to the importance of the "French connection" (Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry) in Romania at a time when the French language was in vogue as a reaction against the centuries-old Ottoman influence. Early translations of Poe's texts came from Baudelaire's edition, as not too many Romanians were fluent in English. This, in the words of Cotrău, caused a psychological problem to Poe translators, as they reproduced the same errors Baudelaire may have committed in his translations (2014: 84).

Unlike in many other European countries, Poe translations in Sweden did not come from French. Nineteenth-century Swedish avant-gardists became interested in Poe's fiction when it was available in Swedish. Johan Wijkmark's study analyzes how editors changed the titles of the stories to make them more marketable. Thus, for instance, "Berenice" was translated as "Love and Teeth", a title that gives away too much as it exposes the denouement of the story, thus destroying the final effect that Poe might have pursued.

As might have been expected, translations of Poe's work in Morocco come from French. However, Bouchra Benlemlih ascertains that translators altered significantly the text,

thus offering renditions that made the text more readable and docile. In this sense, many nuances were eliminated so as to culturally accommodate the translation to Moroccan readers. Similarly, Poe translations in Egypt came along with footnotes aiming to explain Western cultural aspects. In “The Cask of Amontillado”, Magda M. Hasabelnaby explains, the translator, by eliminating the Latin phrase “In pace requiescat” at the end of the tale altered the story’s finale preventing readers from interpreting Montresor’s crime.

In her contribution about the presence of Poe in Turkey, Hivren Demir-Atay indicates that renditions of the American author appeared in three different alphabets. “The Black Cat” came out in 1889 in Karamanlidika, the Greek orthography used by the Orthodox Christians living in Cappadocia. Later on, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” was published in Ottoman orthography in 1902. Finally, after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, a modernization project based on a new national identity was fostered by Kemal Atatürk. The reforms instigated by the government included the adoption of a Latin alphabet that became the orthography in which “The Masque of the Red Death” appeared in 1928. Ever since then, translations of Western classics, among which Poe’s work became an outstanding reference, were promoted by the state-run translation offices for cultural nationalist homogeneity, modernity and territorial unity (2014: 138).

Transatlantic renditions of Poe’s work appeared as early as 1867 in Mexico. Rafael Olea Franco and Pamela Vicenteño Bravo examine nineteenth-century translations of Poe and determine that, unlike many European countries, Mexican readers preferred poetry over fiction. Translations of Poe in Brazilian Portuguese appeared in 1944 in what seemed to be a direct translation from Baudelaire’s French edition. In Lenita Esteves’ contribution, it is interesting to see how the language of Jupiter in “The Gold-Bug” was rendered, as some translators used standard Portuguese while others fell back on a number of linguistic strategies to differentiate Jupiter’s sub-standard English from that of the other characters in the story.

In Japan, national writers created their own style by reading and translating Western canonical writings. In this sense, Takayuki Tatsumi explains how many Japanese authors cannibalized Poe following the manner of Baudelaire in France. Yone Noguchi, one of the Japanese disciples of Poe, created a poetic style that imitated that of his master, which made it difficult to determine whether his achievements were either translation or adaptation. As happens in other Asiatic languages, translators of Poe in Japanese were to simplify grammar and provide syntactic adaptation of his prose.

Chinese readers, on the other hand, had access to Poe via Japan in 1904, although RuijuanHao predates its introduction in 1903 (2009). Detective stories were fashionable in China, and Dupin’s stories became very popular. Zongxin Feng establishes two major periods in the translations of Poe in China: from 1905 to 1949 and from 1978 to 2012. In the first period, translations and retranslations of the same tales were produced, each one of them closer to spoken Chinese. Between 1950 and 1977, Poe translations came to a halt as China

aimed to break away from old cultural traditions. Finally, the second period started in 1978 after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The last chapter of this first part focuses on translations of Poe into Korean. Pirated editions of Poe's works spread in the 1950s. Besides, many translators were free to modify texts and suit them to the Korean publishing industry. In his contribution, Woosung Kang denounces that the case of Korea is, in fact, a fine example of the control that publishers exert over scholars and professional translators based on profit margins. On the other hand, Kang reminds us of the difficulties Asian translators of Confucian and Buddhist origins have in rendering the scientific and psychological symbolism of Poe's texts (2014: 198).

The second part of the volume includes thirteen chapters that explore translations of Poe's tales and poems in different national literatures. The contributors, many of them professional translators, chose their focus from a wide range of topics, among them Poe's poetry examined from a chronological perspective, a particular subgenre, or pieces of fiction translated by the same or different translators from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century.

In his approach, Henry Justin contends the necessity of undertaking a new translation of Poe in French. He considers that a retranslation of Poe is a must and also a way to bridge those passages which Baudelaire was unable to render properly, or were substantially improved, as a result of Poe's occasionally erratic grammar, a fact which had been pointed out by Quinn (1957: 124). In a similar fashion, Daniel Göske examines the translation of Poe by Arno Schmidt, still considered the most comprehensive and authoritative rendition of the American author in German. Göske states that Schmidt believed that Poe wrote within the European tradition. As such, he Germanized him and even "Schmidtified him thoroughly" (2014: 215). In his essay, Göske criticizes Schmidt for his use of a diction that harks back to German literature from earlier centuries making his German Poe sound even older than it really is.

In Russia, "The Gold-Bug" was the first of Poe's tales to be translated and still ranks among the favorite stories for juvenile readers. Alexandra Urakova's contribution examines this tale and the reasons why its first translation became an epitome within the kid-lit canon. Even though it was considered a difficult tale due to the untranslatable puns and Jupiter's Southern dialect, "The Gold-Bug" found a place in Russia's *The New Library for Education*, a project that emphasized education through prose reading, inasmuch as it fostered youngsters to solve a riddle (and deciphering a code was regarded as an instructive task). Although Poe became a darling among Russian Symbolists in the 1880s, the triumph of the October Revolution marked the decline of the Symbolist movement, which started to be regarded as "decadent" and "bourgeois". Poe was partly rejected; only his stories containing mysteries were praised by the Soviets (2014: 228).

Renata Philippov studies the Portuguese rendition of "The Fall of the House of Usher" published by Oscar Mendes in Brazil in 1965. In her contribution, Philippov addresses to

what extent this translation “keeps and/or distorts the allegorical meaning conceived by Poe” (2014: 243). One of the problems, in her view, is to be found in the title itself, “A Queda da Solar de Usher”, as the word “solar” weakens the polysemic richness of the original title. Along with it, Philippov identifies a number of instances which reflect changes in the translation affecting the allegorical effect of the tale, a fact that prevents the reader from perceiving certain elements devised by Poe to create an impact.

Julio Cortázar’s translations of Poe still enjoy favorable recognition among readers both in the Americas and in Spain. In fact, this is the starting point of Emron Esplin’s analysis of “William Wilson” in which he compares versions of this tale by Cortázar and Armando Bazán. Esplin contends that Cortázar’s rendition meticulously follows Poe’s language choice from the paragraph level to the typographical level (2014: 254). Unlike Cortázar’s, Bazán’s edition, published in 1944, does not maintain italics and translates into Spanish foreign phrases that appear untranslated in the original version.

The arrival of Poe in Japan was influential in the birth of two genres: science fiction and the detective story. In his contribution, J. Scott Miller examines four different translations of “The Black Cat” into Japanese in order “to demonstrate the accommodations and adaptations these translators performed for their readers who did not share Poe’s Western cultural horizon” (2014: 262). One of those translators had to offer explanatory passages for less-literate readers who might not know the importance of Pluto in classical literature. Precisely, the cultural distance between East and West gave rise to readings of this tale as a Buddhist parable, as Pluto is killed by its owner, but eventually reincarnates to appear perched on the corpse of the narrator’s wife.

Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan’s contribution focuses on translations of Poe’s poems by three twentieth-century Spanish poets: Nobel-prize winner Juan Ramón Jiménez, Francisco Pino and Leopoldo Panero. As a precursor of Modernismo both in the Americas and Spain, Jiménez always sought the “internal accent” (2014: 291) in Poe’s poems as he was interested in creating a particular poetic constitution, thus recreating the foreign poet’s spirit. Pino, on the other hand, rejects the use of traditional Spanish feet in poetry as he strives to offer a rendition of Poe’s “The Raven” as metrically close as possible to the original text. Finally, Panero preferred to render a free translation of “Annabel Lee” and offers a manipulative reading (a ‘per-version’, as he calls it) of Poe’s poem.

Walter Benjamin’s concept of translation is the starting point of Ástráður Eysteinnsson and Eysteinn Þorvaldsson’s study of seven translations of “The Raven” in Icelandic. Einar Benediktsson’s rendition is the most well-known and imitated by subsequent translators. It plays down the tone of the poem while other nineteenth-century versions of this poem aim to respect the Icelandic metric tradition, which favors alliteration. The translations undertaken by Þorsteinn frá Hami (1985) and Helgi Hálfðanarson (published posthumously in 2011) are innovative in that they create combinations of words and images which pull in threads from Old Icelandic literature and mythology (2014: 320).

The volume closes with a contribution by Christopher Rollason, an independent scholar and prominent figure in Poe studies. Rollason analyzes three examples of Mexican translations of Poe's poems so as to expose elements of cultural interchange and literary filtering. Mario Murgias' version of "Eldorado" intends to re-hispanicize the context, bringing the term "Eldorado" back home to Latin America where it belongs. Although Poe's Mexican translators have always offered faithful translations when it comes to transposing the Greco-Roman elements into their versions, Rollason concludes by noting a tendency towards elision of "Protestant" biblical allusions, thus suggesting that a domestication process may be at work which "Mexicanizes" Poe's verses by eliminating "non-Catholic" elements (2014: 328).

Translated Poe is not only an ambitious book within Poe studies, but a milestone in translation studies partly thanks to the worldwide projection of the American author. It should also be considered an outstanding project for its multi-perspective analyses of translations of the fiction and poetry of one of America's most acclaimed authors. As the editors explain in their introduction, the volume neither judges the "quality" of any given Poe translation nor claims to be exhaustive. Hence, although there is a wide selection of national traditions, the volume does not include, as the editors rightly acknowledge, translations of Poe in Czech, Hebrew or Sub-Saharan African languages, due to various reasons. Hispanic America is also scarcely represented. Nonetheless, the editors welcome the possibility that a future collection could offer a wider coverage of Poe's presence in those national literatures not dealt with in this volume.

The edition is almost impeccable and all chapters are read with great interest and enjoyment. In short, it seems fitting to acknowledge that Margarida Vale de Gato and Emron Esplin have successfully achieved a pioneering volume thanks to their ability to combine experts in the Poe tradition from different nationalities and accomplished translators of the American author in a great variety of languages. The volume may not only be considered a continuation of *Poe Abroad*, as its scope goes further beyond that of Vines' book, but a groundbreaking contribution which may soon become a landmark in Poe studies.

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