

Poe's Unity of Effect Called into Question: Revisiting Cortázar's Translation of "The Tell-Tale Heart"

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THE EDGAR ALLAN POE REVIEW

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Richard Wilbur

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Poe's Unity of Effect Called into Question

Revisiting Cortázar's Translation of "The Tell-Tale Heart"

José R. Ibáñez

Abstract

During the early 1950s, Argentine writer Julio Cortázar was commissioned by UNESCO to translate Edgar Allan Poe's prose into Spanish. Cortázar's deep knowledge of the English language and his acquaintance with the life and work of the American writer meant that, over the ensuing decades, he produced renditions which are still considered to be among the most literary of all twentieth-century Spanish translations of Poe's work. This article presents a detailed analysis of two paragraphs from "The Tell-Tale Heart," comparing Cortázar's translation with other, more recent Spanish versions. I aim to show that although Cortázar's rendering is in many ways the most faithful to the original text, his sometimes nonstandard use of Spanish substantially changes the meaning of the original. For this reason, speakers of Peninsular Spanish may have difficulty in understanding his translation, and might not fully appreciate the unity of effect around which Poe composed this story.

Keywords

literary translation, Cortázar's translations, unity of effect, "The Tell-Tale Heart", "Evil Eye", "death watches in the wall"

In the Hispanic literary world, the translations of Edgar Allan Poe's work by Argentine writer Julio Cortázar (1914–1984) in the mid-1950s still rank among the most respected. In the ensuing decades, the literary prestige of Cortázar as a novelist and short story writer helped to secure the reputation of his Poe translations, which soon came to be regarded as canonical texts. The publication of *Translated Poe*,¹ a comprehensive study of the translations and interpretations of Poe's oeuvre across cultures, prompted Poe reviewers to reexamine the Spanish translations of his fiction and poetry. The editors, Emron Esplin and Margarida

Vale de Gato, acknowledged that Julio Cortázar's versions "remain the most well-known and highly distributed translations of Poe's prose in Spanish."² In the same vein, Margarita Rigal Aragón suggests that there are two plausible explanations for the great international acclaim earned by these translations: "First, Cortázar's name on a book is always a plus since he is extremely popular and respected in Spain as an author of fiction in his own right. Second, his translations of Poe are based not only on Cortázar's great management of the Spanish language, but also on a sound knowledge of Poe's biography."³ Such explanations, while serving to buttress the importance of Cortázar's translations, they did not encourage further critical readings of the renditions themselves.

This article aims to revisit Cortázar's translation of "The Tell-Tale Heart," one of Poe's best-known tales, and reexamines two paragraphs in which Poe explores the use of expressions which refer to human senses, specifically those of sight and hearing, which are of paramount importance in the development of the story. In my analysis, I compare Cortázar's translations of these paragraphs with other, more recent Spanish renditions of the same section. Cortázar can no doubt be considered one of the finest Poe connoisseurs⁴ that the Spanish world has ever had, and his translations are among the most literary and exhaustive in Spanish over the last half century. However, my main concern here is that, first, Spanish readers may have a faulty appreciation and understanding of the tale as a result of a questionable choice of words at some points; and second, that Cortázar's version of two of the story's key paragraphs might in fact dilute the unity of effect which Poe regarded as a trademark of his skill as a storyteller and as a central element in the creation of his art.



First published in the January 1843 issue of Boston's *The Pioneer*, "The Tell-Tale Heart" is the monologue of a murderer, a nameless narrator, who reveals having developed "the sense of acute hearing" and whose only aim is to convince the reader of his sanity: "True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease has sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story."⁵

It is among Poe's shortest narratives, and the tale is widely considered to be one of his greatest achievements, due in part to the horrible setting created by a psychologically unstable narrator, who begins by denying his madness,

reflecting his anxiety by means of an elaborate and constant use of anaphoras, sentence repetitions and linking verbs to underline his inner anguish.⁶

The story opens with the narrator's self-confession, in which he claims to have nothing against the old man who inhabits the premises where he also lives. He does not mention whether the old man is related to him or the reason why they live under the same roof. He does, though, state that he loves him dearly—"Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man" (303)—only to reveal that his (irrational) hatred toward him is the result of the revulsion caused by a veiled eye, the object of his obsession: "it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye" (303). The mention of the "Evil Eye" has drawn a great deal of attention among Poe scholars, many of whom have dwelled on the significance of the visual and aural senses in this tale. I shall turn to the expression "Evil Eye" below, but first let us consider the interpretation given by some researchers to the sense of sight here.

Defining it as probably the "most shorn of trimmings of Poe's tales,"⁷ Marie Bonaparte's psychoanalytic reading of the tale interprets "the eye" as the father's vision, fixed on the child in the darkness of the room. "Thus the adversaries are opposed," affirms Bonaparte, "the eyes of the son, in the dark, being fixed on the menaced father."⁸ The narrator's urge to murder the old man, she argues, can be equated with the annihilation of the father figure, Poe's foster father John Allan.⁹ Along similar lines, Daniel Hoffman suggests the possibility that the narrator could be the old man's son—"his Eye becomes the all-seeing surveillance of the child by the father, even The Father."¹⁰

Contrary to this psychoanalytical interpretation of the eye's capacity, others have explored the superstitious meaning of the expression "evil eye," turning to those ancient cultures and traditions with which Poe himself may have been acquainted. Thus Thomas Ollive Mabbott argues that Poe probably heard of the superstitious influence of the evil eye at firsthand "when he was stationed at Fort Moultrie in Charleston Harbor, since Negroes in South Carolina . . . sometimes carry a horse chestnut (a 'buckeye') as a protection" (M 3:789). B. D. Tucker also discusses the obvious presence of the "eye" in Poe's fiction ("Ligeia," "Metzengerstein") and poetry ("Sonnet—To Science"), while also establishing that what the narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" feels is hatred rather than fear at the sight of the old man's vulture-like eye.¹¹ James Kirkland claims that Poe could have drawn on a variety of classical sources, among these Plato, Aristotle, Pliny, Plutarch, and Ovid, and also suggests that he might have been exposed to beliefs and practices related to the evil eye during the five years he spent in Britain (particularly Scotland) during his childhood, and also afterward, upon returning to America in 1820.¹²

All such accounts that argue for a superstitious interpretation of the evil eye seem to assume that the disease mentioned by the narrator at the beginning of the tale, which itself has led to his over-acute senses, is the result of the old man's having given him the evil eye. If this were the case, then we could safely establish that the murder of the old man would serve to release the narrator from the eye's evil effects. Yet he himself never determines whether his torment would disappear once he killed the old man. "I made up my mind," he says right at the beginning, "to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever" (303); on the contrary, he recognizes that his unease, rather than reflecting any superstitious beliefs, is in fact the result of the physical revulsion produced by the eye being *fixed* on him. Hence, if we put to one side the idea of a supernatural or superstitious effect of the eye on the narrator, we can consider the eye more clearly as an organ of sight. On this reading the "eye" is indeed evil, but inasmuch as it was disgusting to the narrator, simply because "it" is a deformed eye, similar to that of a vulture, with a veil resembling a cataract: "a pale blue eye, with a film over it" (303). This idea is supported by the events in the narrative. In the first place, the narrator acknowledges the revulsion that the eye produces in him *every time* the old man stares at him: "whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold" (303). Further on, the narrator stands holding a lantern one night, right at the entrance of the old man's room. He opens the lantern a little and a ray of light falls directly on the old man's eye: "for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot" (305). The "damned spot," then, refers to the white film covering the eye, a kind of horrid covering, a cataract, which terrifies him. Furthermore, when the narrator suffocates the old man by dragging him onto the floor and pulling the heavy bed onto him, he gladly admits that "his eye would trouble me no more" (305). If we take this latter confession at face value, and there seems no obvious motive for not doing so, we might then accept that the narrator has succeeded in getting rid of the "evil eye"—that is, the physical eye, the disgusting glance of the eye with the cataract, whose mere presence had tormented him. At the same time such an explanation effectively discards the traditional superstitious connotation of the expression "evil eye."

The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* defines "the evil eye" as "a gaze or stare superstitiously believed to cause harm."¹³ However, in Poe's story "evil eye" refers to a wicked eye, one that simply by its shape, its appearance and the disgusting cataract that covers it, terrifies the mad narrator to an extreme degree. In his translation of "The Tell-Tale Heart," Julio Cortázar, who was bilingual in Spanish and French, could well have taken into account Baudelaire's rendition ("mauvai oeil") and followed suit, thus translating "Evil Eye" into Spanish as "mal de ojo,"¹⁴ thus assuming the superstitious semantics of the expression. However, in light of

the importance attributed to the senses of sight and hearing in the story, I suggest that the best rendering for “evil eye” is either “maldito ojo” (“damned eye”), as Farrán y Mayoral, Del Castillo, and Núñez del Prado did in their 1972 translation of the same work,¹⁵ or to translate it as “Ojo Perverso” (“wicked eye”), as suggested by Santoyo and Broncano in their 1996 translation.¹⁶ In what follows I will turn to an analysis of another paragraph, one that deals with the sense of hearing.



In his reading of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Charles E. May has noted that time is the obvious motif of the story¹⁷ as the psychotic narrator’s mind counts the minutes, the hours, the nights and days before he decides to undertake his horrible deed. The text is, indeed, characterized by an isotopy¹⁸ of time, an array of words and time-related expressions which appear throughout the narration, with at least thirty different terms within this four-page piece.¹⁹

The time motif had previously been identified by James W. Gargano, who remarked on the protagonist’s “compulsive obsession with images and sounds that evoke the rhythm of time.”²⁰ The narrator thus hears the sound of time everywhere and in all things (a mouse crossing the floor, the minute image of a watch used by the narrator to compare his own hand’s swift movement, the incessant beating of the old man’s heart, the beating of his own heart, the “death watches” in the wall, etc.).

I believe a productive relation can be seen in the notion of the senses of sight and hearing in the story, which themselves relate to the narrator’s alleged over-acuteness of the senses, with the theme of time. Such a relation is seen especially powerfully in one of the most exciting passages in the story, one which I believe has often been overlooked or indeed misread by Poe critics: “I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to *the death watches in the wall*” (304, italics added). The semantics of the expression “the death watches in the wall” encapsulates Poe’s skillful exploitation of the noise perceived by both the unstable narrator and the reader, and greatly helps in conferring unity on this story.

Most commentators of “The Tell-Tale Heart” have agreed that the sounds heard by the narrator time and again in the story are produced either by his own madness or are the product of hallucinations.²¹ The deranged narrator claims that night after night he hears a rather peculiar noise, one that he believes comes from within the wall. This sound is produced, according to him, by the “death watches” in the wall in the still of the night, when he opens the door of the old man’s

chamber to watch him. The deathwatch beetle is an insect that gnaws through the rafters of a building, leading to its decay. John E. Reilly identifies a number of authors—among them Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift, Oliver Goldsmith, John Keats, Henry D. Thoreau and Mark Twain²²—who took an interest in this wood-boring bug. In his study, Reilly focuses on a narrator who is reliable when, at the end of the story, he acknowledges that the sound he can hear, while he is sitting over the dismembered body of his victim and chatting with the police officers, is a noise that “was *not* within my ears” (306)—in other words, an external sound that his ears could perceive in that it indeed originated outside of him. In his meticulous analysis of Poe’s tale, Reilly takes pains to explain that the narrator’s deranged imagination amplifies the steady sound of what he considers to be a “lesser death-watch” rather than a “greater death-watch.” In support of his claim, Reilly equates the “death watches” in Poe’s story with the cadence and frequency emitted by the ticking of such bugs. Thus, while the sound of the “greater death-watch” resembles that of the drumming of a pencil at irregular intervals, the sound emitted by the “lesser death-watch” is faint, regular, and sustained over a period of hours.²³ In many countries, the presence of deathwatch beetles in the rafters of a building was regarded as an omen of impending death in the household. This beetle uses its head to tap on wood, usually in the stillness of quiet summer nights, thus creating a ticking sound that attracts mates. In popular culture and superstition, it was assumed that the ticking was a harbinger of death, and that the person who heard the sound thus had his days numbered. Others, however, associated the word “watch” with the sleepless nights spent by those who kept “vigil” (“watch”) over a dying person. In other words, the ticking was not heard by the person whose death was impending, but by those who remained in close proximity, keeping a watchful eye on the dying person.

Reilly even suggests that Poe could have been acquainted with an essay written in 1838 by Thoreau in which he mentions the deathwatch beetle. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” however, Poe’s use of the expression is more involved, retaining its connotation of time carried by the words “death” and “watch” (i.e., a “time-piece”) while at the same time eliminating the word “beetle” from the phrase. As the story unfolds, the narrator affirms that he is tormented by “a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton,” and he determines that this sound is being produced by the “beating of the old man’s heart” (305). This same expression is also repeated at the end of the tale, underlining Poe’s intention to set up a connection between the sound emitted by the deathwatches in the wall and that of a human heart. Poe’s ambiguity in the artistic construction of the tale leads the reader to think that the noise could have come from three different sources, namely (1) from the deathwatches knocking their heads against

the wood following their mating ritual, (2) from the narrator's own anguished heart, or (3) from the dead old man's beating heart, now buried under the bedroom floor boards, this indeed leading to the narrator's final revelation as well as to his admitting to the murder of the old man. All these sounds are eventually perceived by the narrator as a noise similar to that of a *watch* enveloped in cotton.

Drawing our attention to the Spanish versions of Poe's tale, my concern is the polysemic use of the phrase "death watches" and how this phrase should be translated into Spanish. Quite surprisingly, this nuance has almost disappeared in Cortázar's Spanish translation of the paragraph when he renders "death watches" as "taladros cuyo sonido anuncia la muerte."²⁴ Indeed, translating "death watches" for "taladro," a word which we can assume is widely used in the Rio de la Plata region, puzzles readers in Spanish who are unfamiliar with its meaning. In Argentina and Uruguay, the "insecto taladro" or "bicho taladro" refers to a type of woodworm which became known in this region of South America in the 1950s. Such a meaning, however, does not appear in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española (Dictionary of the Spanish Language)* of the Real Academia Española (Royal Spanish Academy), perhaps the most authoritative lexicon of the language in the Hispanic world. The entry for "taladro" here has two different definitions: that of a "bore" and the "hole caused by a bore."²⁵ Castilian Spanish readers who read "taladro" according to these accepted meanings might never realize that Cortázar was in fact referring to a kind of woodworm which produces a characteristic sound, instead interpreting the noise in the wall as being produced artificially by a tool. In my view, the meaning here simply gets lost in Cortázar's version, at least for Peninsular Spanish readers, and Poe's ingenious wordplay fades. A direct consequence of this unfortunate choice of word also affects the unity of effect in the story—the sound allegedly being produced by the protagonist's heart, the old man's heart, or the death watches in the wall—and hence the ensuing development of events may well not be understood by non-native speakers. I argue that such a rendition, then, significantly diminishes the final effect of the story, one of the most important of Poe's contribution to the development of the short story.²⁶ Furthermore, in his attempt to remain faithful to Poe's text, Cortázar maintains the meaning of the original phrase by adding the expression "cuyo sonido anuncia la muerte" ("whose sound announces death"), which affords the reader extra information not revealed in the original text. What remains to be resolved is the question of why Cortázar did not choose the phrase "escarabajos del reloj de la muerte" (literally "deathwatch beetles"). This was perhaps outside the literary conventions that he favored in resorting to the translation he eventually chose, yet had he used this latter phrase, which contains the words "reloj"

(“watch” as synonymous with “timepiece”) and “muerte” (“death”), the likely effect for many Spanish readers would have been very similar to that of the English version for the original North American readership.

Although Cortázar’s rendering of this passage may have its lexical limitations, other translators have provided far less fortunate versions of the same phrase. Thus, in the 1972 version of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Farrán y Mayoral, Del Castillo, and Núñez del Prado translate the expression “hearkening to the death watches in the wall” as “oyendo las arañas de la pared”²⁷ (“hearkening to the spiders on the wall”), an unfortunate and inexact rendition, as the emphasis is not on wood-boring bugs but rather on spiders and the unlikely sound emitted by them. Two decades later, Julio-César Santoyo and Manuel Broncano translated the same phrase as “los ruidos de la carcoma en la pared” (“the noise produced by woodworms in the wall”),²⁸ though in a footnoted addendum they explained that “carcoma” refers to “deathwatch,” which they translate literally as “el vigilante de la muerte” (“the watch of death,” “watch” with the meaning “guard”). Needless to say, the noise produced by the woodworm (“carcoma”) does not resemble the thudding-ticking one produced by the deathwatch beetle’s head in its effort to attract females of its species.

Finally I will consider two even less fortunate versions of the same phrase. The first is by Mauro Armiño²⁹ in his 1998 translation of the tale: “escuchando las pisadas [*sic*] de las arañas de la pared” (“hearkening to the footsteps of spiders in the wall”).³⁰ Two questions arise here: do spiders move in footsteps, and can these be perceived by a human ear? The second translation is from a very recent edition of some horror tales by Poe, *Diez cuentos de terror*, published in March 2017. The translator, Susana Carral, provides the following rendition: “escuchando; como he hecho yo noche tras noche, prestando oídos a los fatídicos relojes de la pared”³¹ (“hearkening, as I have done night after night, pricking up my ears to the ominous watches (timepieces) in the wall”), which perhaps needs no further examination, given the utter misunderstanding of the whole sentence here.

In conclusion, in the first excerpt analyzed in this paper, Cortázar chooses to translate “Evil Eye” into Spanish as “Mal de Ojo,” thus following Baudelaire’s French rendition. This translation may account for the narrator’s illness which produced in him an over acuteness of senses. However, such a translation raises a larger question. Can any connection be established between the popular superstitious belief sustained by many Poe scholars and the malady that affects the narrator? Nothing seems to account for such an explanation. In my view, “Evil Eye” refers to the physical constituency of the ocular sense and not to popular superstition, as the narrator seems to illustrate when he directs the lantern’s thin ray of light on the “damned spot.”

Regarding the translation of the “death watches in the wall,” the second example analyzed, Cortázar’s rendition (“taladros”), is limited to a meaning current in the Spanish of the Río de la Plata region and perhaps also to some other countries in South America. The crux of the matter in this translation is the limitation that it leads to in the Spanish language. Indeed, many native (Castilian) Spanish readers may not only fail to grasp the meaning of the paragraph, but as a result may also remain unaware of the unity of effect of the tale. The meticulous choice of words here is key in Poe’s premeditated effect, in that he thus seems to connect the ticking of the insect, which announces the death of a person, with a heart beating. Poe may have deliberately conceived the dénouement of the tale as open to multiple interpretations. Thus, in his own nervous breakdown, does the narrator hear the beating of *his* own heart, which he mistakenly attributes to a noise that was “*not* within my ears”? Or should we, as readers, partake of his madness, and believe that the beating comes from the heart of the dismembered body buried beneath the floor? A third interpretation, which cannot be perceived in Cortázar’s translation, is also possible: that ticking sound, that ringing, might be produced by the deathwatches in the wall which act as harbingers of the narrator’s final destiny. Poe sought to maintain this ambiguous dénouement and hence to let the reader decide whether the narrator is reliable. Herein lies the rub: whichever option we choose, what remains unquestionable is Poe’s masterful crafting of the tale as a means of striking terror and anguish in his readers.

As a closing remark, I turn to the words of Clifford Landers when he talks about the life span of a literary translation: “The half-life of a translation, it has been said, is from 30 to 40 years; every 30 years (or 40 or 50—take your pick) the translation loses half its vitality, its freshness, its ability to communicate to the reader in a contemporary voice. If this is true, it follows that major works of literature must be retranslated periodically if they are to retain their function as a bridge between cultures and eras.”³² I firmly believe that this assertion can be applied to Poe’s entire oeuvre in Spanish, and although in many ways Cortázar’s translations have been rightly regarded as the finest and most comprehensive among all the twentieth-century literary renditions, a serious reassessment should now be undertaken, some sixty years after their publication, to reassert the vitality and freshness of Poe’s original texts.

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llegada inesperada y otras historias (Encuentro, 2015), an anthology in Spanish of thirteen stories by Ha Jin. He has also published articles and book chapters on American Southern literature (O'Connor, Dubus, Crone, Gautreaux), the Jewish American short story (Malamud, Englander), and the reception of Edgar Allan Poe among nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish authors. He is a board member of the Edgar Allan Poe Spanish Association (EAPSA).

Notes

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1. Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato, eds., *Translated Poe* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 2014).

2. Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato, "Introduction: Poe in/and Translation," in Esplin and de Gato, *Translated Poe*, xv.

3. Margarita Rigal Aragón, "A Historical Approach to the Translation of Poe's Narrative Works in Spain," in Esplin and de Gato, *Translated Poe*, 23.

4. Indeed, this idea was also confirmed by Cortázar himself in interviews, when he claimed that his interest in the fantastic began when he was nine and read Poe for the first time. Later on, he decided to translate his fiction while, at the same time, he explored Poe's language, often criticized by English and American critics as too baroque. In "Interviews with Writers, Musicians, Artists: Julio Cortázar," *Itineraries of a Hummingbird*, n.d., <http://www.itinerariesofahummingbird.com/julio-cortazar.html>.

5. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart," in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (London: Penguin, 1987), 303. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.

6. Examples of anaphoras: "very, very dreadfully nervous" (303), "all closed, closed" (303), "slowly, very, very slowly" (303), "but the beating grew louder, louder" (305); examples of frequent sentence repetition: "a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton" (305–6), "but the noise steadily increased" (306, twice); examples of linking verbs which reveal a change in the narrator's mood: "and I grew furious" (304), "it grew louder, I say, louder" (304), "I felt myself getting pale" (306), "I now grew very pale" (306).

7. Marie Bonaparte, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation* (London: Imago, 1949), 495.

8. Bonaparte.

9. Bonaparte, 503.

10. Daniel Hoffman, *Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 228.

11. B. D. Tucker, "'The Tell-Tale Heart' and the 'Evil Eye,'" *Southern Literary Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 92–93.

12. James Kirkland, "'The Tell-Tale Heart' as Evil Eye Event," *Southern Folklore* 56, no. 2 (1999): 136.

13. See *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, s.v. "evil eye" (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1998), 638.

14. Edgar Allan Poe, "El corazón delator," in *Narrativa completa*, ed. Margarita Rigal Aragón, trans. Julio Cortázar and Margarita Rigal Aragón (Madrid: Cátedra, 2013), 488.
15. Edgar Allan Poe, "El corazón delator," in *Narraciones extraordinarias completas y seguidas de varios poemas*, vol. 1, trans. J. Farrán y Mayoral, Francisco B. del Castillo, and J. Núñez del Prado (Barcelona: Ed. Iberia, 1972), 318.
16. Edgar Allan Poe, "El corazón delator," *El gato negro y otros cuentos de horror*, trans. Julio-César Santoyo and Manuel Broncano (Barcelona: Vicens-Vives, 1996), 108.
17. Charles E. May, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), 76.
18. "Isotopy" is a narratological term defined as "the repetition of semiotic features that institutes the coherence of a text." In Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 47.
19. To cite just a few: "day and night" (303), "every night, about midnight" (303), "for seven long nights—every night just at midnight" (303), "a watch's minute hand" (304), "it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight" (305).
20. James W. Gargano, "The Theme of Time in 'The Tell-Tale Heart,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1968): 379.
21. John E. Reilly lists those reviewers who have interpreted the sounds heard by the narrator as "an hallucination or as the narrator's misapprehension of his own heart beat." In John E. Reilly, "The Lesser Death-Watch and 'The Tell-Tale Heart,'" *Edgar Allan Poe Society*, 1969 (rev. 2001), <https://www.eapoe.org/papers/misc1921/jer19691.htm>.
22. Curiously enough, the only instance in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in which deathwatches are mentioned has been suppressed by the Spanish translator of one of the most popular unabridged Spanish editions. Chapter 9's opening paragraph also brings to bear the superstitious interpretation of the deathwatch beetle as perceived by Tom: "And now the tiresome chirping of a cricket that no human ingenuity could locate, began. *Next the ghastly ticking of a death-watch in the wall at the bed's head made Tom shudder—it meant that somebody's days were numbered.* Then the howl of a far-off dog rose on the night air, and was answered by a fainter howl from a remoter distance. Tom was in an agony." See Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1992), 48, italics added. The italicized sentence above is absent from the Spanish edition, substituted by an ellipsis mark in brackets: "Y entonces el monótono cri-cri de un grillo, que nadie podría decir de dónde venía, empezó a oírse. . . . Después se oyó, en la quietud de la noche, el aullido lejano y lastimoso de un can; y otro aullido lúgubre, aún más lejos, le contestó. Tom sentía angustias de muerte." See Mark Twain, *Las aventuras de Tom Sawyer* (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1943), 60.
23. See Reilly.
24. Poe, "El corazón delator," in Rigal Aragón, *Narrativa completa*, 488.
25. See *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, s.v. "taladro," vol. 2, 22nd ed. (Madrid: Real Academia Española), 2125.
26. In his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, Poe established that a writer should bear in mind a "certain unique or single effect to be wrought out" when he was determined to construct a tale. For him, "in the whole composition [of a tale] there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design." See Edgar Allan Poe, *Essays and Reviews* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 572. Charles E. May considers that this "tight aesthetic unity of the short story form derives from one of his [Poe's] most typical themes: the theme of psychological obsession embodied in a first-person narrator," as reflected in the mind of the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart." See May, *Edgar Allan Poe*, 69.

27. Poe, "El corazón delator," in *Narraciones extraordinarias*, 319.
28. Poe, "El corazón delator," in *El gato negro y otros cuentos de horror*, 110.
29. Armiño is the recipient of three National Translation Awards (1971, 1979, and 2010).
30. Edgar Allan Poe, "El corazón delator," in *El Pozo y el Péndulo y otras historias espeluznantes*, trans. Mauro Armiño (Madrid: Valdemar, 1998), 118.
31. Edgar Allan Poe, "El corazón delator," in *10 Cuentos de Terror: Edgar Allan Poe*, trans. Susana Carral (Madrid: Reino de Cordelia, 2017), 142.
32. Clifford E. Landers, *Literary Translation: A Practical Guide* (Clevendon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters, 2001), 10–11.