

Juan Ramón Jiménez's Reading of Edgar Allan Poe as a Source for a Cosmopolitan *Modernismo*

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Abstract

The article explores Juan Ramón Jiménez's attempt to be a member of the international Modernist generation. For such purpose he rearranges his poetry and the influences that were fundamental throughout his career. By claiming himself a member of the Modernist group, he has to redefine Spanish and Spanish American modernism as a movement that has international roots, Poe being one of them. The article analyzes Jiménez's critical essays *Alerta* and *El Modernismo: Apuntes de un curso* in which he explores the connections of the Spanish modernism to *Modernismo*, creating a "modernismo" that is Jiménez's own blend of the two.

Keywords

Juan Ramón Jiménez, *Modernism*, modernism, *Alerta*, *El Modernismo: Apuntes de un curso*

Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881–1958), considered one of the foremost Spanish poets of the twentieth century, was born in Moguer, a small village in eastern Andalusia, and died in Puerto Rico. He began his career under the influence of Rubén Darío and Symbolism and later developed a much more personal poetry that would be very close to Anglo-American modernist verse. Among the important events in his life was his marriage to Zenobia Camprubí, which resulted in his reading of Anglo-American literature, and their voyage to the United States in 1917, from which arose his book of poems *Diario de un poeta recién casado* (*Journal of a Newly Wed Poet*) (1917). Camprubí had introduced Jiménez to a literature that he had ignored—authors other than Poe whose work would exert an enormous influence on his own literary career: Percy Bysshe Shelley, Rabindranath Tagore (in English translation), Edgar

Lee Masters, William Butler Yeats, and Emily Dickinson.¹ They were instrumental in Jiménez's shift from Symbolism to Modernism, or rather to a personal understanding of Modernism, which is both *modernista* and modernist. Below, three different notions of Modernism will be used: Anglo-American Modernism (started at the end of the nineteenth century and spread all through the first half of the twentieth century in Europe and America), *modernismo* (the Spanish and Hispanic American cultural movement that started at the end of the nineteenth century and expanded into the twentieth and is influenced by Symbolism), and Jiménez's "*modernismo*."

Poe's poetry had a major and early influence on Jiménez's poetry and helped him shape his idea of *modernismo*. He linked Poe's poetics to his own Krausist ideas. Poe's influence may be seen in terms of transatlanticism, since not only Poe's work but also that of Dickinson and Whitman gave Jiménez a way to root the origins of *modernismo* in Spain and then to reevaluate *modernismo* along with Modernism. Poe, in particular, was instrumental because he had created a world of his own in his poetry. Early in Jiménez's career (1900–1913), he found in Poe's poetry themes and motifs that would help him define his own style. In his early books, Jiménez used elements such as decadence, the figure of the poète maudit, and death associated with a young woman.² He also titled "nevermore" one of the sections of his book of poems *Laberinto (Labyrinth)* (1913), in which he quotes verses 93–96 from "The Raven." However, later in his career, when he wrote the *Alerta (Alert)* essays and gave his lectures on *modernismo* at the University of Puerto Rico, he focused on Poe as a predecessor of *modernismo*. At this stage of his career, Jiménez consciously used Poe to ground his own "*modernismo*."

Paul Giles's groundbreaking work on the relationship between American and English cultures and Alejandro Mejías's *The Inverted Conquest* have provided the frame for this study of Jiménez's reading of Poe.³ Literary history has seen *modernismo* and Modernism as distinct movements. "Concerned with the relations between literary form and modes of knowledge and understanding," Modernism was variously interpreted on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴ As Edward Mozejko has pointed out, there is "the false impression that these 'modernisms' remain apart to the point of being incomparable."⁵ Hispanic *modernismo* was part of the large current of literary movements that radically changed the mimetic agreement that had been at the core of representation for centuries. Nonetheless, some scholars have interpreted Hispanic *modernismo* as a local variant isolated from the general current of Modernism.⁶ There was a common agreement that Hispanic *modernismo* was the response to the challenges of modernity and that it looked back to local traditions and to the idealization

of the Romantic period.⁷ However, Jiménez realized that *modernismo* could be multifaceted since it was not a movement but an attitude toward life and art.⁸ Therefore, he attempted to blend that interest in folk culture with the aristocratic impulse that he perceived in Krausism and that he regarded as central to *modernismo*.

Traditionally it has been said that *modernismo* started in Spanish America in the 1880s with the work of the Cuban author José Martí, reached its maturity in the work of Rubén Darío, particularly *Azul . . . (Azure . . .)* (1888),⁹ and declined in 1910, at the beginning of Anglo-American Modernism. In Spain, due to the resistance that native *modernismo* encountered as Mejías-López recounts,¹⁰ it did not spread until the 1890s, when Antonio Machado and Juan Ramón Jiménez, among others, adopted it. Spanish *modernismo* was linked with the decadent bohemian poetic style that Rubén Darío had already assumed. It also combined some major postromantic trends such as Parnassianism, Decadentism, and Symbolism,¹¹ which made it a literary movement of radical renewal, as it indeed was for Jiménez.

Fundamentally, Spanish *modernismo* was the expression of a spiritual and political crisis that turned artistic as soon as its practitioners became disillusioned with contemporary society. To a large extent the *modernista* group regarded itself as elitist, shaped by the Romantic view of the artist largely derived from Shelley's *Defense of Poetry* and the messianic role of the Krausist "Thinking Man."¹² The cultural mission was to spiritually improve people. Richard Cardwell argues convincingly that Spanish *modernismo* developed along the spiritual disorientation and the metaphysical doubt that was present in Krausism.¹³ This emphasis on the spiritual aspect of *modernismo* draws attention to the importance of art and beauty, Cardwell argues. For these *modernistas*, art might achieve what politics could not—that is, effecting the social regeneration of the Spanish people and feeding their spiritual hunger. It is my contention that despite the different developments of *modernismo* in Spain and Spanish America, Jiménez shows an attitude to Hispanic American *modernismo*, which suggests that he regarded both of them as originating from the same tenets and reveals his anxiety about the preeminence of the Hispanic American trend.

From Symbolism to *Modernismo*

It is no coincidence that Jiménez effected a radical change in his poetry during his first voyage to America. During the previous years he had been reading and translating English and American writers with his wife. As González Ródenas

points out, not only did they read these American authors, but they translated many works together, since Juan Ramón was never so fluent in English as to accomplish the task on his own.¹⁴

This reading of American poets helped him to move beyond his Symbolist style. As he declared in an essay, he regarded the Anglo-American poets' verses as more direct, freer, and more modern either because of their simplicity or their complexity, depending on the case.¹⁵ Despite the suspicion that Jiménez might have not read all the poets that he mentions in the essay, as Doce argues,¹⁶ there is little doubt, as he acknowledged himself, that there was an important shift in his style starting around 1914 even if he never completely rid himself of Symbolism, something Doce also claims.¹⁷

As a result of this reading and translating, Jiménez's *modernismo* became the central concern of his poetics, but he also realized there was a link between Symbolism and Modernism. While critics spoke of the divide that existed between *modernismo* and Modernism, he devoted a large portion of his career to bridging them in both his poetry and his essays.¹⁸ Jiménez devoted two books to the topic—*El Modernismo: Apuntes de un curso* (*Modernismo: Notes for a Course*) and *Alerta* (*Alert*)—plus some essays on Rubén Darío in *Mi Rubén Darío* (*My Rubén Darío*).¹⁹ *El Modernismo: Apuntes de un curso* was the basis of his 1953 course at the University of Río Piedras in Puerto Rico. For Jiménez the origins of *modernismo* come from three main sources: Hispanic American literature, represented by Rubén Darío; American literature, in which he cited time and again Whitman, Dickinson and Poe; and Spanish literature, from which he chose Saint John of the Cross and Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer as the main precursors. In this book, he traces the development of the movement claiming its origin in Germany in mid-nineteenth century and moving toward France, the United States, Spanish America, and then Spain. He also makes clear that Parnassianism, Symbolism, and *modernismo* are different names given to the same movement. In addition to this book, he also wrote essays on the topic that he thought of compiling in *Alerta* (*Alert*), a series of radio talks on *modernismo* and modern poetry he gave in 1943 at the invitation of the U.S. State Department. Problems with censorship and the feeling that his talks were being used by the Americans as propaganda put an end to the broadcasts, though Jiménez continued with his plan of compiling and publishing the lectures.²⁰

In *El Modernismo*, Juan Ramón equates Modernism to *modernismo*, which creates confusion between the two disparate movements, since *modernismo* is generally understood to be strongly influenced by Symbolism and Parnassianism. Among the *modernistas*, he includes Ezra Pound, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg.

He mentions the magazine *Poetry*, edited by Marianne Moore, as the most important modernist publication. In *Alerta* he wrote extensively on the origins of the movement, and he also devoted four essays to T. S. Eliot: “Calidad poética moderna de los Estados Unidos” (“Modern Poetic Quality of the USA”), “T. S. Eliot”, “Eliot: Monstruo político y social” (“Eliot: Political and Social Monster”), and “Cultura” (“Culture”).²¹

For Jiménez, *modernismo* was the beginning of modern art: “*Modernismo* was, all in all, and if someone does not want to see it, he must be blind, the beginning of everything that happens today in the world.”²² He goes further and asserts that it is a way of looking at the world, which in turn creates this new artistic practice: “*Modernismo* is an enveloping movement. The schools are Parnassianism, Symbolism, Dadaism, Cubism, Impressionism, etc. Everything is part of *modernismo* because everything is expression in search of something new toward the future,”²³ which includes philosophy, religion, and painting: “This *modernismo*, this freedom, this yearning for the future not only did it affect literature in its beginnings. . . . It also affected religion (Alfred Loisy), philosophy (Nietzsche), society (Ibsen), painting (the Impressionists).”²⁴ *Modernismo* is a movement that has a clear ideological root, which is a blend of intellectual and spiritual aristocratism with the common: “Among the most certain sources of Spanish and Spanish American *modernismo* is, first of all—and in parallel with the spiritual and intellectual aristocratism (El Greco and Góngora, Gracián and Gregorian chants, for example—the praise of the folk.”²⁵ This blend of aristocratism and folk culture was made possible, Jiménez argues, thanks to the Krausist influence on Spanish culture.²⁶ Moreover, in *El Modernismo* he points out that *modernismo* is not a school, arguing that all ideologies and sensibilities are accepted in the movement. He gives the names of Miguel de Unamuno, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Darío as representative instances of it, as well as mentioning José Martínez Ruiz, Azorín, Ramón Pérez de Ayala, and Antonio and Manuel Machado.²⁷

Poe in Jiménez’s *Modernismo*

In his substitution of religion for poetry, Jiménez found a common aesthetic ground with Poe in which beauty stood above everything else. In more specific terms, in “Otoñal” (“Autumnal”) we find a reminiscence of “Ulalume.” Poe may have also been an influence as reflected in some poems published in early books such as *Ninfeas (Nymphs)* and *Almas de violeta (Souls of Violet)*.²⁸ Jiménez found literary affinities in both Poe and Bécquer that helped him to create his poetics. Decadence is another feature that Poe and Jiménez shared,

again despite its possible origin in Bécquer.²⁹ Decadence and beauty are joined in some of Jiménez's early poems, for example "Y las sombras. . ." ("And the shadows . . ."),³⁰ whereas in the "Ofertorio" ("Offertory") to *Ninfeas* the poet depicts a feminine form who is quite similar to Poe's beautiful woman.

Jiménez shows a fair knowledge of Poe's life and works that help him create a genealogy of *modernismo* based on them.³¹ However, in *El Modernismo* he imagines Poe making a voyage to France with the clear purpose of claiming that Poe was influenced by French writers.³² Jiménez's strategy is to claim that *modernismo* started in Europe and then moved to America to go back to Europe again. For that purpose, he created a Poe who returns to America from France as a mature poet influenced by European styles. This was Jiménez's strategy to make Poe a precursor of *modernismo*. In short, according to Jiménez, the imagined Poe absorbed the seeds of Romanticism during his imaginary travel to France and then spread the seeds of *modernismo* when he was read by French authors, who influenced Spanish and Spanish American poets. By sketching this literary trip of influences, Jiménez simply wanted to both naturalize Poe to the aesthetics ideas of *modernismo* and to root American Modernism and South American *modernismo* to Europe.

Jiménez also wrote an article on Poe entitled "En casa de Poe" ("At Poe's House").³³ In Jiménez's eyes, Poe is a Romantic author whose ratiocinate nature is as important as his emotional state. "Intellectual" and "sensual" are the adjectives that Jiménez uses to describe Poe: "an absolute intellectual Romantic, a conscious sensitive Romantic grafted in a sensual virtuous artist."³⁴ Jiménez acknowledges that Poe is neglected by Modernist poets and argues that it is unfair of them to do so since he was the model for a number of them, such as E. Arlington Robinson or the Imagists.³⁵ According to Jiménez's analysis, Poe's poetics remains fundamentally Romantic: "[Poe] seems to us one of the most universal timeless Romantics."³⁶ This does not exclude his Symbolism, as he acknowledges a few paragraphs later, which links him to Baudelaire.³⁷ Jiménez's suggestion that Symbolism is a development of Romanticism leads him to favor fantasy as a fundamental tenet of Poe's poetics: "Poe is an aesthete of his own fantasy."³⁸ Symbolism and—for Jiménez its natural ally—fantasy give way to a series of features that characterize Poe's literature. Jiménez devotes some space to Poe as an aristocratic poet, opposed to the democratic poet, represented by Whitman.³⁹ Poe is a rhetorical, intellectual, and artificial poet, unlike Whitman who produces a kind of natural, direct, and instinctive poetry: "There have always coexisted two forms of expression in life and in art; one is more instinctive, natural, direct; the other, more artificial, intellectual,

rhetorical. Poe represents the second in the United States; Whitman, in a large part of his work, the first.”⁴⁰

Poe’s preference for an intellectual poetry, which Jiménez explains as an aspect of his aristocratism, does not prevent him from stripping Romanticism of everything that suggested over-rhetoricism or old-fashioned neoclassicism: “Poe cleaned Romanticism up, like Baudelaire, of its unuseful scope, and like Bécquer, of its chattering exorbitance, of its more or less anacreontic neoclassicism, the general vice of the age.”⁴¹ As a consequence, he created a poetry that fitted the literary diction of modern life despite his being an aesthete who wrote in a scant and monotonous style.

Jiménez also acknowledges that Poe was an intellectual poet concerned not only with poetry but also with poetical theory, as his essay “The Philosophy of Composition” attests. This critical aspect of Poe is what Jiménez values. Poe is a modern poet because his literary production is associated to his theoretical and critical reflections on literature.⁴² In a sense, he is very close to Eliot, who was also a poet and a critic, and to Jiménez himself, who authored a couple of books and several essays of criticism. This sense of modernity is also present in Jiménez’s analysis of “The Valley of Unrest,” of which he translates an excerpt.⁴³ He acknowledges that the poem is modern because of its psychological intensity and the metaphysical yearning that will resonate later in Baudelaire and Mallarmé. As in previous essays, Jiménez seems to regard Poe as the precursor of Baudelaire, the supreme representative of the modern poet.

Not content with tracing the French connection between Poe and Baudelaire, Jiménez compares Poe and Bécquer in another essay when points to the links between American and Spanish pre-*modernismo*.⁴⁴ It is Jiménez’s contention that Bécquer and Poe were precursors of *modernismo* in their countries. He fleshes out this argument by focusing on a comparison of their lives. Jiménez emphasizes that both poets earned a meager living as journalists, were not understood by their contemporary societies, and were late Romantic poets. More central to my argument is the importance they give to folk culture. Jiménez asserts that Bécquer’s poetry springs directly from the purest source of Spanish folk culture.⁴⁵ When discussing *modernismo* in general terms, Jiménez writes that Poe was highly influenced by the folk songs of the U.S. South: “It is remarkable that the clearest American precursor in this movement, Poe . . . was also so influenced by Southern folk songs of the United States.”⁴⁶ Obviously, this assertion is unfounded, but despite its unlikelihood, Jiménez repeats it in his essay “Dos aspectos de Bécquer” (“Two Facets of Bécquer”) when he says, “Poe writes a fantastic that does not belong in the folk, though it comes down with the folk forms of its black and white being.”⁴⁷ With regard to Bécquer,

Jiménez first analyzes the poet's preface to Augusto Ferrán's book of poems *La soledad* (*Loneliness*) and notes that Bécquer praises the natural simplicity of Ferrán's work, based on the imagination and with roots in Andalusian folk songs.⁴⁸ Then he passes on to Bécquer's poetry and asserts that many of his poems are inspired by the rhythm, meter, and structure of flamenco songs: "Many of Bécquer's rhymes, aren't they but *peteneras*, *soleares*, *malagueñas*, and major *sevillanas*?"⁴⁹

Similarly, for Jiménez, Poe's sources needed be rooted in American folk culture, despite his previous assertions that Poe had traveled to Europe and become acquainted with European literary forms and that there is not a proper folk culture in America. This he argues in the second lecture of *El Modernismo* (January 23, 1953): "Whereas in the United States there is no folk, there is one in Europe. There is a modest bourgeoisie and another one that is better off, but there is no folk."⁵⁰ Since *modernismo*, for Jiménez, is fundamentally based on Krausist ideas and more in particular those of aristocratism and folk culture, he needs to create the figure of a Poe who can embrace both aspects. In his analysis of Poe's French connection, Jiménez stresses the aristocratic element, whereas in his comparison with Bécquer he focuses on the folk element. Here lies the reason Jiménez links Poe and the culture of the South, despite his lack of critical evidence. Jiménez implicitly regards African American culture as the real folk culture of the United States when he affirms, while discussing *modernismo*, that Poe was influenced by Southern folk songs.⁵¹

Along with the issue of folk culture in Poe's writing, Jiménez discusses Poe's much debated aristocratism—or to put it in an American context, Poe as a Southern gentleman. There has been extensive research on this topic, which associates gentry to the South and to racism.⁵² Jiménez is not interested in this type of discussion. For him, aristocratism is a cultural rather than a social issue and is related to the self-improvement that Krausism promoted. Jiménez defines aristocracy as "the state of man in which a deep cultivation of the inner being and a conviction of the natural simplicity of living unite ideality and economy."⁵³ Aristocracy is the end point of a movement that starts with the acceptance of folk culture's importance. As he points out, "the decent people . . . in Spain are, generally, of an authentic and primitive aristocracy."⁵⁴ An aristocrat is not born as such but rather must work to deserve this state, which is, for Jiménez, spiritual. Being an aristocrat is a process more than a result. An aristocrat is formed through his creative effort, which is the creation of our selves: "We are aristocrats because we rise or want to rise to a being that we all should be creating, because we strive to create and are creating our superior self."⁵⁵ The importance of this creative endeavor comes from Krausism, which favors the

inner effort of the individual in his attempt to live a life based on culture and art. Moreover, for Jiménez such an endeavor is connected primarily with the Spanish literary and cultural tradition, as his recurrent comments on Bécquer, Augusto Ferrán, or the Spanish lyrical romances prove.⁵⁶ In Jiménez's ability to link Poe and the Spanish cultural tradition, represented by these poets, resides his strategy to appropriate *modernismo*.

In creating an aristocratic Poe, Jiménez starts with a historical fact: Poe was a Southerner during the time of slavery. The Southern gentleman becomes a literary aristocrat as a result of his acquaintance with European poetry. Curiously enough, Jiménez sees a big difference between Poe's aristocratic poetry and his more democratic literary criticism: "In his poetry, he is a conventional aristocratic aesthete, with an affected historical inwardness; but in his criticism, he is an unselfish, eager, sad aristocrat of misunderstood, ghostly openness."⁵⁷ Jiménez sees Poe as an aristocrat based on his Southern upbringing in order to include him in the *modernista* group. This blend suggests an understanding of Poe not only as a precursor to *modernismo* but as a poet who had absorbed Idealism during his voyage to Europe. This invented trip was necessary for Jiménez to create the image of Edgar Allan Poe as a poet who had become familiar with the era's European poetry as well as its cultural movements, mainly philosophical. Jiménez created a Poe who was a precursor to *modernismo* because the American poet shared the main characteristics of Krausism—that is, an attachment to folk culture and the possibility of improvement by means of cultural growth. The creation of a Poe whose life was closely bound to the arts as a spiritual manifestation of the self linked him to Krausism. His interior worlds, interpreted in Krausist terms as a development and product of the aristocratic cultural endeavor, would permit that he be labeled as a precursor of *modernismo*.

However, in creating a Poe who was a precursor, Jiménez was also thinking of naturalizing *modernismo* as Spanish and also in appropriating the concept and the movement for his own purposes to explain his whole literary career—from his early Romantic-Symbolist poetry to his late modernist poem—as an evolution of *modernismo*, his "*modernismo*".

Yet Jiménez displays anxiety when writing about the origins and chronology of "*modernismo*." In *El Modernismo* he acknowledges that the movement started somewhat earlier in Spanish America since in the United States, poets had not cultivated a poetry that was genuinely American or nativist and there were no great poets. These circumstances turned out to be a stroke of good fortune since having only minor poets in the United States had limited the creation of a strong tradition in which a literary diction coalesced. Yet Jiménez

seemed reluctant to accept that *modernismo* was a movement of American origins, despite his clear acknowledgement that it started in America: “then that movement turns up with that name in Spanish America.”⁵⁸ Contrary to what recent explorations of the American origin of *modernismo* have shown,⁵⁹ Jiménez argued for an artistic movement solidly located in Spain and which then spread to Spanish America.

Jiménez’s solution to circumvent the problem of the foreign roots of “*modernismo*” was to invent a Spanish origin located in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. For Jiménez, “*modernismo*” began in France with the Symbolist movement, but he dates back its roots to British Romantic poetry, German music, and Spanish mysticism: “French Symbolism is not French but a great amalgam of the great English lyric poetry with (American) Poe, German music, and Castilian mysticism.”⁶⁰ This is consistent with his opinion that the term was first used in Spain and then spread to other countries such as Germany, the United States, and Spanish America.⁶¹ It also explains why some of the exponents of early “*modernismo*” that Jiménez mentions are Friedrich Nietzsche, Henrik Ibsen, and Alfred Loisy. Though Jiménez acknowledges, albeit implicitly, that the origin of “*modernismo*” lies in French Symbolism⁶²—a literary movement that was transplanted to Spanish America and to Spain with the help of Rubén Darío—he states that the origins of Symbolism and Parnassianism, however, lie in Spain itself: “The Parnassus and all its Romantic influence . . . originated in . . . Spain.”⁶³

Moreover, as Mejías-López has argued,⁶⁴ since Jiménez cannot deny the American origins of “*modernism*,” he gives a twist to those origins by claiming that they are rooted in Spanish Golden Age—that is, in Spanish mystical poetry, and more particularly in Saint John of the Cross.⁶⁵ By reacting in such a manner, he appropriated the movement and naturalized it into Spanish culture.

It must be noted, too, that Jiménez makes a contemporary reading of the Spanish literary tradition via Symbolist aesthetics. In the Spanish mystic writers he finds the origins of Symbolism that he wanted to appropriate as Spanish.⁶⁶ In 1903–4 a group of writers, Jiménez among them, edited *Helios*, a literary magazine that stood outside the mainstream of the Spanish literary world. The editors of *Helios* were particularly interested in publishing foreign modern literature and left behind any type of late Romanticism. Their aim was, as Jiménez pointed out in a review, to break away from the Spanish moral and intellectual isolation.⁶⁷ Authors such as John Ruskin, Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Thomas Carlyle were reviewed, translated, or discussed in *Helios* issues. For instance, in issue 13 (1904), Viriato Díaz Pérez’s translation of “The Raven” was published.⁶⁸

It is in his role as an editor of *Helios* that Jiménez proposed a return to the classical writers of the Spanish Golden Age, a move that was supported by Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo's lectures on Saint John of the Cross and Platonism delivered in 1881 and 1889.⁶⁹ As Blasco Pascual points out, Jiménez found in the Spanish tradition a language that was perfectly suited to express the nuances and rhythms of French Symbolism.⁷⁰ The lectures on Platonism and Saint John of the Cross, which were discussed in the press, marked a shift in the appreciation of the allusive and understated poetic language that Bécquer had already used in his *Rimas* (*Rhymes*). They also fostered a return to Platonism, already present in Bécquer. Both the use of allusive language and the return to Platonism meant an increase of the imagination for the *modernistas*, who, in this regard, were literary descendants of the Romantics as Derek Flitter has argued.⁷¹

In his concern with the Spanish origin of "*modernismo*," expressed in several passages of *Alerta*, Jiménez emphasizes the influence of Bécquer on Spanish American poets to the extent of stating that in "Spanish America Bécquer's influence was stronger and previous than in Spain" and that to him "Bécquer is the clearest precedent of Spanish and Spanish American *modernismo*."⁷² It is bearing in mind this concern with the origin of "*modernismo*" that the reader must consider Jiménez's comparison of Poe's and Bécquer's lives and works. Both were poets who lived on the margins of society and cultural life, though they would greatly influence literature at the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, they would develop a poetry that was simple and natural, close to Jiménez's reading of folk poetry, and which provided a diction that was, in Jiménez's reading, allusive and understated. For Jiménez, Poe and Bécquer were Romantics who triggered Symbolism in France and in Spain, respectively.

Among the creators of "*modernismo*" stands Darío, a friend and mentor to Jiménez. Darío casts a long shadow over Jiménez's appropriation of "*modernismo*" both because he was the great *modernista* in Spanish America and because he had written an essay on Poe that became vital in Poe's reception in early twentieth-century Spain.⁷³ Darío seems to have been a literary companion, rather than a competitor as Mejías-López suggests. The second section of *Mi Rubén Darío* is given the general title of "Rubén Darío español" ("Rubén Darío, Spaniard"). In this memoir-like piece of narrative, he describes Darío as "the high uniformed representative of Spanish America in Spain" in discussing his favorite image of Darío from among the various models—the good, the bad, the insane, or the sane—that Darío performed in his life, concluding that they all belong to the Spanish cultural tradition: "All those Rubenes Daríos . . . had a throbbing heart and a ruby in the Spanish golden reliquary."⁷⁴ Jiménez

naturalizes Darío as a Spanish poet, fully immersed in the Spanish literary tradition despite his Spanish American origin.

More appropriate for my argument is Jiménez's 1944 essay "Con Rubén Darío en Savannah" ("With Rubén Darío in Savannah"), in which he acknowledges that Whitman and Poe were the two poets Darío admired most. This affiliation reappears in both *El Modernismo* and *Alerta*, where Whitman, Poe, and Darío are some of the models he would refer to in order to sketch out the development of "*modernismo*" and Darío was the natural link between America and Spain.

In any case, Jiménez was familiar with Poe via Darío's essay on the American published in his book *Los raros (The Strange Ones)* in 1896, with a second edition in 1905. Darío's essay promoted Poe as a poet rather than as a short story writer that had been so popular in Spain during the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ As early as 1934 John Englekirk stated that in Spanish America Poe had been known as a poet rather than as a writer of fiction, a fact that, undoubtedly, helped to create the idea of a poet whose work was moving from Romanticism toward Symbolism.⁷⁶ Darío's essay added nothing to the knowledge of Poe's work. He relied heavily on John Ingram's biography, Rufus Griswold's obituary, and Charles Baudelaire's essays. The importance of Darío's essay is that it emphasizes the French creation of the image of a poet forced to live in a materialistic and utilitarian society in which his work as a poet is despised or simply unknown. Darío focused on the bohemian and decadent characteristics of Poe that had been stressed by Griswold and Baudelaire, and that he would later use for himself. Jiménez read the essay and, not interested in bohemianism as a way of life, chose only the characteristics that suited his Krausist poetics, and would consequently emphasize the role of beauty and art and the importance of aristocratism and folk culture.

Jiménez's acquaintance with Rubén Darío was instrumental in his development of "*modernismo*" in Spain, which was primarily a naturalization of French Symbolism since, due to Krausism and to the Spanish literary tradition of its Golden Age, he managed to make Symbolism a completely Spanish movement. He includes Poe among the early precursors of "*modernismo*." If the invented voyage to Paris portrays Poe as an inheritor of European culture, now Jiménez goes a step beyond by placing Poe in the tradition of British Romantic literature. Poe becomes the link between Europe and America in the creation of "*modernismo*," but Jiménez goes even further in his appropriation of "*modernismo*." He states that modern poetry has different meanings in Europe and in America—"Maybe what is called modern poetry does not have the same meaning in Europe as it has here?"⁷⁷—and he mentions Poe again to illustrate the distinction. For him Poe is a Romantic writer—"we have always regarded Poe a downright intellectual Romantic"—and the precursor of Baudelaire and the

Symbolist tradition.⁷⁸ However, when compared to poets who may be labeled as modern (e.g., Pound, Eliot, and Perse), Jiménez realizes that their poetry is very different from Poe's. There is a terminological confusion in this because Jiménez does not distinguish between modern, modernist, and *modernista*. Modern is the poetry that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and would comprise what he calls "*modernismo*" and Modernism. Eliot and Pound, he claims in *El Modernismo*, belong to the same movement as Poe.⁷⁹ Jiménez equates the American Brahmins with the French Parnassian poets in the sense that they are all, for him, aristocratic writers.⁸⁰ He explores American "*modernismo*," stating that there are two trends: "U.S. Modernism has two different forms: first, that of the Midwestern mystics: William Vaughan Moody . . . (Second: the Imagists)."⁸¹

Jiménez's "*modernismo*" served to vindicate his literary career, from the late Romantic, Symbolist poetics of his early years to the modernist poetry that he produced during his time in Florida and Puerto Rico. He faced a double challenge, that of preserving the Spanish tradition in a foreign context and acknowledging and opening up to the new poetic trends of the twentieth century, namely, Modernism.

The Spanish writer found in Poe an author he could use to foreground his cosmopolitan poetics of "*modernismo*," since Poe could be re-created variously, first as a late Romantic poet, much in the vein of Bécquer; then as an American author who had traveled to France to become acquainted with Symbolism; subsequently as an aristocratic poet with a base in folk culture, a characteristic that was absolutely necessary to be *modernista*; and finally as the precursor of Jiménez's "*modernismo*." Jiménez read Poe as early as 1904, and Darío's *Los raros* was instrumental in attracting Jiménez's interest in Poe's poetry, although it made little impression on him. He also quoted Poe in *La soledad sonora* (*Sonorous Loneliness*) (1908) and *Laberinto* (*Labyrinth*) (1913), which has a section titled "Nevermore." There are other instances of influence, most of them topical, during his early years, but Jiménez maintained an interest in Poe that resurfaced in the 1940s and 1950s when he wrote some of his essays in *Alerta* (*Alert*) and delivered his lectures on modern poetry, later collected as *El Modernismo*, in which he devoted a renewed attention to Poe. He insisted on Poe's aristocratism as emanating from folk culture while also expanding the range of "*modernismo*" to include Symbolism along with Modernism and making Poe a precursor of his version of the literary movement.

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Notes

1. Howard Young, *The Line in the Margin: Juan Ramón and His Readings in Blake, Shelley, and Yeats* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).
2. Richard A. Cardwell, *Juan R. Jiménez: The Modernist Apprenticeship, 1895–1900* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1977), 111, 113.
3. Paul Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002); Alejandro Mejías-López, *The Inverted Conquest: The Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 2009).
4. Michael Bell, "The Metaphysics of Modernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11.
5. Edward Mozejko, "Tracing the Modernist Paradigm," in *Modernism*, vol. 1, ed. Astradur Eysteinnsson and Vivian Liska (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 15.
6. Gerard Aching, *The Politics of Spanish American Modernismo: By Exquisite Design* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
7. Ricardo Gullón, *Direcciones del Modernismo* (Madrid: Alianza, 1990), 56–57.
8. Gullón, 31.
9. Gayle Rogers, *Incomparable Empires: Modernism and the Translation of Spanish and American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 112. For a more in-depth exploration of the topic see Cathy L. Jrade, *Modernismo, Modernity, and the Development of Spanish American Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); and Mejías-López, *Inverted Conquest*.
10. Mejías-López.
11. Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), 69.
12. Richard A. Cardwell, "Una hermandad de trabajadores espirituales: Los discursos del poder del modernismo en España," in *¿Qué es el Modernismo? Nueva encuesta, nuevas lecturas*, ed. Richard A. Cardwell and Bernard McGuirk (Boulder, Colo.: Society of Spanish and Spanish American Studies, 1993), 166. See also Derek Flitter, "La misión regeneradora de la literatura: Del Romanticismo al Modernismo pasando por Krause," in Cardwell and McGuirk, *¿Qué es el Modernismo?*, 127–46. I have used Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Thinking Man" as it expresses clearly and precisely the Krausist concept of the intellectual and the artist.
13. Richard A. Cardwell, "Los albores del modernismo: ¿Producto peninsular o transplante transatlántico?," *Boletín de la Biblioteca Menéndez Pelayo* 61 (1985): 317–18.
14. González Ródenas, *Juan Ramón Jiménez a través de su biblioteca: Lecturas y traducciones en lengua francesa e inglesa (1881–1936)* (Seville: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla-Secretariado de Publicaciones, 2005), 65.
15. Juan Ramón Jiménez, *Prosas críticas*, ed. Pilar Gómez Bedate (Madrid: Taurus, 1981), 110.
16. Jordi Doce, *Imán y desafío: Presencia del romanticismo inglés en la poesía española contemporánea* (Barcelona: Península, 2005), 228–29.
17. Doce, 208.

18. For example, Gayle Rogers in *Incomparable Empires* (112–13) explores the difficulties that both Modernism and *modernismo* encountered in being so linked.

19. Juan Ramón Jiménez, *El Modernismo: Apuntes de un curso* (1953), ed. Jorge Urrutia (Madrid: Visor, 1999); Jiménez, *Alerta*, ed. Francisco Javier Blasco Pascual (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1983); Jiménez, *Mi Rubén Darío*, ed. Antonio Sánchez Romeralo (Madrid: Visor, 2012). Jiménez never collected these essays in book form; in fact, both *El Modernismo* and *Alerta* were published posthumously. For a detailed analysis of the dates of Jiménez's texts, see Francisco Javier Blasco Pascual, *La poética de Juan Ramón Jiménez: Desarrollo, contexto y sistema* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1982).

20. Francisco Javier Blasco Pascual, "Introducción," in Jiménez, *Alerta*, 11–13.

21. Juan Ramón Jiménez, "Calidad poética moderna de los Estados Unidos," in *Alerta*, 86–90; Jiménez, "T. S. Eliot," in *Alerta*, 135–38; Jiménez, "Eliot: Monstruo político y social," in *Alerta*, 138–39; Jiménez, "Cultura," in *Alerta*, 139–40.

22. "El modernismo fue en suma, y estará ciego quien no lo quiera ver, el comienzo de lo que hoy pasa en el mundo," Jiménez, *Alerta*, 65. All translations of Jiménez's texts are mine. In "Prólogo General [*sic*] ("General Prologue"), Jiménez advances his intention to talk about Spain, Spanish America, and the United States of America and to explain why he links them: "Esplicaré [*sic*] por qué voy a enlazar esta época de los tres países con sus coincidencias de tiempo y tendencia. Es un triángulo definido" ("I will explain why I am going to link this age of the three countries, with their coincidences of time and trend. It is a definite triangle"). *Alerta*, 54–55. The reasons he gives for linking the three nations are important for my analysis. One of the reasons why Jiménez establishes a cultural union at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries between the three regions may be partially explained in biographical terms. Jiménez married Zenobia Camprubí, of Puerto Rican descent, with whom he read and translated poetry in English. The other biographical element was the State Department's commission of a series of radio talks that were the seeds of *Alerta*.

23. "El modernismo es un movimiento envolvente. Las escuelas son parnasianismo, simbolismo, dadaísmo, cubismo, impresionismo, etc. Todo cae dentro del modernismo porque todo es expresión en busca de algo nuevo hacia el futuro." Jiménez, *El Modernismo*, 80.

24. "Este modernismo, esta libertad, esta ansia de futuro no tocó solo en sus comienzos a lo literario. . . . Sino a lo religioso [*sic*] (Alfred Loisy), a lo filosófico (Nietzsche), a lo social (Ibsen), a lo pictórico (los impresionistas)." Jiménez, *Alerta*, 67.

25. "Entre las procedencias más seguras del Modernismo español e hispanoamericano está, en primer término, y paralelamente con la determinación del aristocratismo espiritual e intelectual (el Greco y Góngora, Gracián y la música gregoriana, por ejemplo), la exaltación de lo popular." Jiménez, 63.

26. Jiménez, 76.

27. Jiménez, *El Modernismo*, 11. These are Spanish writers who were his contemporaries.

28. In *Juan R. Jiménez*, Cardwell argues that these works were influenced by Bécquer's poetics (86), which makes sense. But we should not leave aside Bécquer's knowledge of poetry in English, still insufficiently studied, and the evidence shown by some scholars that Bécquer was fairly well acquainted with Poe, as well as the fact that in one of the essays Jiménez devotes to Bécquer in *Alerta* he compares the Spanish and the American poets.

29. Cardwell, 98.

30. Cardwell, 110–111. In this as in other poems, we should not forget the importance of Baudelaire's concept of ennui and his interest in "The Philosophy of Composition," which may have influenced Jiménez's early poetics.

31. Jiménez owned a copy of *Eureka, Marginalia, A Chapter on Autography, The Literati* (Boston: Four State Press, 1884) and *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* (Paris: Georges Crès et Cie, 1921), translated by Baudelaire. Jiménez may have read some biographies, both accurate and forged, during his stay in the United States, but there is no evidence of any kind about this point. There is only evidence that he read Darío's essay on Poe published in *Los raros (The Strange Ones)* and Baudelaire's essay published in *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses*.

32. Jiménez, *El Modernismo*, 13.

33. Jiménez, *Alerta*, 127–32.

34. "Un romántico intelectual absoluto, un conciente [*sic*] romántico sensitivo injerto en un virtuoso sensual." Jiménez, 127.

35. Jiménez, 127–28. In *El Modernismo* (102–3) Jiménez argues that the Imagists and poets such as Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, and Edgar Lee Masters are the exact correspondents of Hispanic American *modernismo*.

36. "[Poe] nos parece un romántico intemporal de los más universales." Jiménez, *Alerta*, 127.

37. "Poe es un esteta de su fantasía." Jiménez, 127–28.

38. Jiménez, 128.

39. Jiménez, 129.

40. "Siempre han coexistido en la vida y en el arte dos formas de expresión [*sic*]; una más instintiva, natural, directa; otra más artificial, intelectual, retórica. Poe en sus Estados Unidos, significa la segunda; Whitman, en gran parte de su obra, la primera." Jiménez, 130–31.

41. "Poe depuró el romanticismo, como Baudelaire, de magnitud inútil, y como Bécquer, de exorbitancia charlatana, de neoclasicismo más o menos anacrónico, vicio jeneral [*sic*] de la época." Jiménez, 131.

42. Jiménez, 131–32.

43. For an analysis of the translation, see Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan, "Spanish Versions of a Modern Classic: Poe's Poetry in Spain Through the Twentieth Century." In *Translated Poe*, ed. Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 2014), 291–92.

44. Jiménez, *Alerta*, 98–105.

45. Jiménez, 99–101.

46. "Y es curioso que el precedente más claro de América en este movimiento, Poe . . . estuviera tan influido también por las canciones populares del sur de los Estados Unidos." Jiménez, 64.

47. "Poe en lo impopular fantástico, aunque se contajie [*sic*] para su metafísica de las formas populares de su ser blanco y negro." Jiménez, 102.

48. Jiménez, 99.

49. "Muchas de las rimas de Bécquer, ¿qué son sino peteneras, soleares, malagueñas, sevillanas mayores?" Jiménez, 101. All of them are types of flamenco songs.

50. "Pero, en Estados Unidos no hay pueblo, sí en Europa. Hay burguesía modesta y otra más acomodada, pero pueblo, no." Jiménez, *El Modernismo*, 19.

51. Jiménez, *Alerta*, 64.

52. Richard Gray. *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); David

Leverenz. "Poe and Gentry Virginia," in *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 210–36.

53. "El estado del hombre en que se unen—unión suma—un cultivo profundo del ser interior y un convencimiento de la sencillez natural del vivir: idealidad y economía." Jiménez, "Aristocracia inmanente," in *Conferencias, I*, ed. Javier Blasco and Francisco Silvera (Madrid: Visor, 2012), 54.

54. "El pueblo digno . . . en España, es, por lo común, de una auténtica y primitiva aristocracia." Jiménez, 59.

55. "Somos aristócratas por ascender o querer ascender a un ser que todos debemos estar creando, porque estamos aspirando a crear y creando nuestro yo superior." Jiménez, 58.

56. See the essay on Bécquer in *Alerta*; for Ferrán see Jiménez, "A Luis Cernuda," in *Prosas críticas*, 107; for the Spanish lyrical romance, see Jiménez, "El romance, río de la lengua española," in *Conferencias, II*, ed. Javier Blasco and Francisco Silvera (Madrid: Visor Libros, 2010), 187–256.

57. "En su poesía es un esteta de aristocracia convencional, de amanerada interioridad histórica; pero en su crítica es altruista, deseoso, aristócrata triste de fantasmal intemperie incomprendida." Jiménez, *Alerta*, 131–32.

58. "Entonces ese movimiento aparece con ese nombre en Hispanoamérica." Jiménez, *El Modernismo*, 75.

59. Mejías-López, *Inverted Conquest*.

60. "El simbolismo francés no es francés, sino una gran amalgama de la gran lírica inglesa con Poe americano; la música alemana y la mística castellana." Jiménez, *Alerta*, 67.

61. Jiménez, 67.

62. Jiménez, *Alerta*, 64–65.

63. "El Parnaso con todo su romanticismo de arrastre . . . salió . . . de España." Jiménez, 67.

64. Mejías-López, *Inverted Conquest*, 49–124. Jiménez was familiar with the early critical arguments that Spanish critics published in periodicals criticizing the new literary movement as alien to Spanish tradition. He reacted by appropriating the movement and naturalizing it into Spanish culture.

65. Mejías-López in *Inverted Conquest* (166) points to that reconnection with the Renaissance. This is not restricted to Spain but was also present in Anglo-American literature (e.g., in T. S. Eliot's reassessment of the Elizabethan poets).

66. Blasco Pascual, *La poética de Juan Ramón Jiménez*, 87.

67. Blasco Pascual, 91.

68. Edgar Allan Poe, "El cuervo," trans. Viriato Díaz Pérez. *Helios* 13 (April 1904): 458–62.

69. Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, "La poesía mística en España," in *La mística española* (Madrid: Afrodísio-Aguado, 1956), 139–201; and Menéndez Pelayo, "De las vicisitudes de la filosofía platónica en España," in *Ensayos de crítica filosófica* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1948), 9–115.

70. Blasco Pascual, *La poética de Juan Ramón Jiménez*, 92.

71. Flitter, "La misión regeneradora de la literatura."

72. "En Hispanoamérica fue más firme y anterior la influencia de Bécquer que en España"; "Bécquer es para mí el precedente más claro del modernismo español e hispanoamericano." Jiménez, *Alerta*, 64.

73. The importance of Darío in Jiménez's career may be seen in his book *Mi Rubén Darío*. Antonio Sánchez Romeralo compiled and edited Jiménez's writings on Darío in 1990 under that title. For that purpose he followed the unpublished index that the poet had prepared. *Mi Rubén Darío*, ed. Andrés Sánchez Romeralo (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2012).

74. "Rubén Darío era el alto representante uniformado de América Española en España"; "todos aquellos Rubenes Daríos . . . tenían el corazón palpitante y rubí en el relicario de oro de España." Jiménez, *Mi Rubén Darío*, 40, 46.

75. On the reception of Poe in Spain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan, "Un persistente recuerdo: La recepción de Poe en España," in *Los legados de Poe*, ed. Margarita Rigal (Madrid: Síntesis, 2011), 145–74; Guerrero-Strachan, *Presencia de Edgar A. Poe en la literatura española del siglo XIX* (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Científico, Universidad de Valladolid, 1999); and David Roas, *La sombra del cuervo* (Madrid: Devenir, 2011).

76. John Eugene Englekirk, *Edgar Allan Poe in Hispanic Literature* (New York: Instituto de las Españas en Estados Unidos, 1934), 97. For a detailed study of the shift in the reception from poet to writer of narratives, see 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" *Resources for American Literary Study*, vol. 31, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Richard Kopley (New York: AMS Press, 2006), 31–54; and Esplin, *Borges's Poe: The Influence and Reinvention of Edgar Allan Poe in Spanish America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016). For the reception of Poe via the French Symbolists in Spanish America, see James Lawler, "Daemons of the Intellect: The Symbolists and Poe," *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. (1987): 95–110; and Jorge Olivares, "La recepción del decadentismo en Hispanoamérica," *Hispanic Review* 48, no. 1 (1980): 57–76.

77. "¿Será que lo llamado moderno poético no significa en Europa lo mismo que aquí?" Jiménez, *Alerta*, 127.

78. "Hemos considerado siempre a Poe un romántico intelectual absoluto." Jiménez, 127.

79. Jiménez, *El Modernismo*, 102–3.

80. Jiménez, 102.

81. "El modernismo de los Estados Unidos presenta dos formas distintas: primer los místicos del Medio Oeste: William Vaughan Moody . . . (Segundo: los imaginistas)." Jiménez, 102–3. Jiménez only mentions Moody as one of the Midwestern mystics. As for the Imagists in this section of the book he lists Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, and Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Ezra Pound in another section.