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REIMAGINING THE MACABRE: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSLATING EDGAR ALLAN POE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the Macedonian translations of three Edgar Allan Poe short stories—“The Masque of the Red Death”, “The Oval Portrait”, and “Eleonora”—focusing on linguistic, stylistic, semantic, and cultural aspects. Using Newmark (1988) and Venuti’s (1995) theoretical frameworks as starting points, it examines how translators balance formal and dynamic equivalence, foreignization and domestication, and the preservation of Poe’s Gothic poetics. Lexical precision, rhythmic phrasing, and symbolic imagery are rendered in Macedonian, with French translations by Baudelaire and Spanish translations by Cortázar providing comparative insight. Even though each story poses unique challenges, the Macedonian translations achieve substantial semantic and stylistic fidelity, sometimes simplifying ornate structures for readability. Comparison with French and Spanish versions indicates that alternative lexical or syntactic choices could slightly enhance Gothic intensity or ambiguity, yet the Macedonian renderings effectively convey Poe’s aesthetic and psychological impact. The study also contrasts human and AI translation, concluding that while AI produces technically accurate and consistent text, human translators preserve nuanced interpretation, layered meaning, and subtle rhythm, tone, and cultural resonance essential to literary texts.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, Macedonian translation, French translation, Spanish translation, human vs. AI translation

INTRODUCTION

This study undertakes a comparative analysis of the original English texts of “*The Masque of the Red Death*”, “*The Oval Portrait*”, and “*Eleonora*” and their Macedonian translations by Irena Jurcheva published in the collection of short stories titled “*Црнуот мачор*”- раскази за мистеријата” (back translated - “*The Black Cat – Mystery Stories*”) (2024). Using a fourfold lens - linguistic, stylistic, semantic, and cultural - it examines how vocabulary, syntax, imagery, tone, and symbolism are transferred into Macedonian, and whether the translations succeed in maintaining the Gothic atmosphere and narrative power

of the originals. Where relevant, the analysis also incorporates selected **French and Spanish examples**, particularly from Baudelaire's canonical translations (1857) and Julio Cortázar's Spanish renditions (1953), in order to highlight how different linguistic and cultural systems handle Poe's stylistic complexity. In addition, this paper considers the role of human versus AI translation in conveying Poe's artistry, arguing that while AI can reproduce grammatical accuracy and lexical equivalence, human translators remain superior in preserving the subtle emotional, stylistic, and cultural nuances of Poe's prose.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) was an American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic, best known for his dark, imaginative tales and for pioneering the modern detective story. Born in Boston, he was orphaned very young and raised by the Allan family in Richmond, Virginia. Poe began writing early, gaining attention with his poetry before turning to short fiction. Given that his works explore themes of death, madness, mystery and the supernatural, he is considered a master of Gothic literature and a founder of both the detective fiction genre and early science fiction. He stands as one of the most influential figures in Gothic literature, renowned for his mastery of macabre imagery, psychological depth, and intricate narrative style. Across his oeuvre, Poe combines elevated diction, allegorical narrative, and rich symbolism to explore themes of death, mortality, love, and the human imagination. (biography.com)¹

The core idea behind this research lies in understanding how literary meaning, style, and cultural resonance survive—or transform—when transferred across languages. Translating Poe is not merely a matter of lexical substitution; it involves recreating a dense Gothic atmosphere built through rhythm, symbolism, and psychological nuance. By examining concrete translation choices, this study seeks to reveal how the translator in Macedonian navigate the tension between fidelity and readability, between preserving foreign patterns and adapting them to local linguistic norms. This type of research is crucial because it sheds light on the broader question of how world literature circulates across cultures, how aesthetic values are reshaped in translation, and how translators function as co-creators of meaning.

The selection of *“The Masque of the Red Death”*, *“The Oval Portrait”*, and *“Eleonora”* is deliberate. These three stories embody distinct facets of Poe's Gothic poetics: allegorical exploration of mortality, meta-artistic reflection on creation and destruction, and ethereal depictions of idealized love and transcendence. Each text presents unique lexical, syntactic, and symbolic challenges, —ranging from ornate sentence structures and rhythmic phrasing to rich metaphors and culturally embedded imagery. Because the stories differ in tone, structure, and thematic focus, they allow for a nuanced examination of how various stylistic features of Poe's prose are handled in translation. Together, they form a representative micro-corpus through which broader translation tendencies can be identified.

The translation of Poe into any target language is a complex endeavour, demanding a careful negotiation between linguistic fidelity, stylistic replication, and cultural adaptation. Macedonian, with its unique grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, and cultural connotations, poses both opportunities and challenges for translators seeking to preserve Poe's aesthetic and thematic intricacies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Translation studies provide multiple perspectives for analysing literary translation. Nida's (1964) distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence emphasizes the translator's responsibility to balance fidelity to the source text with the readability and aesthetic effect in the target language. Newmark (1988) differentiates between semantic translation, focusing on word-for-word accuracy, and communicative translation, prioritizing

¹ <https://www.biography.com/authors-writers/edgar-allan-poe>

the overall effect on the reader. Venuti (1995) further introduces the concepts of domestication and foreignization, describing strategies that either adapt a text to the target culture or retain its source-language distinctiveness.

These frameworks are especially pertinent when translating Poe, whose writing is characterized by: elevated diction and complex syntactic structures; intricate interplay of imagery, rhythm, and repetition; and culturally and historically rooted Gothic symbolism. (L. Barone; A. Amendola, 2018). Translators must negotiate not only linguistic equivalence but also the preservation of suspense, psychological tension, and allegorical meaning—qualities that define Poe’s narrative style. Macedonian translations must additionally consider cultural perceptions of death, morality, and supernatural elements, while adapting syntax and idiomatic expression for readability.

Research into Poe’s literary style and the challenge of rendering it has produced a variety of studies. One notable example examines how Baudelaire’s translations shaped the French reception of Poe, effectively presenting him as a more refined and stylistically unified writer than in the original English. Baudelaire’s profound aesthetic affinity with Poe enabled him to convey the emotional and atmospheric qualities of the tales with remarkable fidelity, even when linguistic differences necessitated stylistic adaptation. Consequently, his translations became foundational for French Symbolism and played a key role in canonizing Poe within European literary culture. Or as Faber (1989:5) puts it:

“Baudelaire’s great admiration for Poe and the fervent belief in his writing and ideas was part of the success of his translations. Because of him, the French Symbolists made Poe into a sacred book... His translation transfigures, but this is only possible when the translator’s sensibility is so in tune to the text-writer’s that he virtually becomes the text-writer in the target language. Baudelaire managed to do this, thus eliminating the fourth source of entropy.”

Another author and translator who took the challenge in translating Poe is the Argentinian author Julio Cortázar. His dual role as author and translator created a unique link with Edgar Allan Poe, highlighting the interplay between language, style, and literary influence. His translations and reflections reveal a non-linear, circular relationship: while Poe influenced Cortázar, reading Poe through Cortázar offers new insights into both authors’ styles and Gothic motifs. This is how Fitzgerald (2020: 48) rightfully depicts this remarkable relationship:

“This intimate relationship between translator, author, and language ties Cortázar and Poe together in a unique way. These acts of translation led Cortázar to a profound understanding of the inherent link not only between literature and language, but also between author and translator. Bridging this gap, by being both an author and a translator, Cortázar offers insights that are invaluable to comprehending the connection between two authors from different time periods and different countries, writing in different languages.”

Concerning AI-generated translations, the use of tools like ChatGPT introduces a new dimension to literary translation studies. Comparing human and AI translations highlights the irreplaceable role of the translator’s interpretative sensibility in preserving the aesthetic and psychological impact of literary texts. In this light, Boluwatife (2025) notes that the field of translation is undergoing rapid changes, which are driven by technological innovation, and that the machine translation is improving incrementally in syntactic and grammatical accuracy. However, he also contends that despite the remarkable technical progress of the AI translation systems, they still have limitations, especially when it comes to rendering cultural nuances. In that context, Boluwatife (2025) underlines the fact that human translators are still in an advantageous position as they can bring cultural empathy, lived experience, and contextual intelligence to the translation process and are able to recognize and preserve the intent behind the message, adapt content for different cultural audiences, and make nuanced decisions that maintain the integrity of the source material.

Given the specificity of Poe’s Gothic style overall, in this study, in addition to the comparative analysis of the Macedonian, French and Spanish translations of the selected works written by Poe, an attempt is made to determine the accuracy of the AI renditions of

the vocabulary, syntax, tone, rhythm, and cultural nuances of these same works as well.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this research is to examine how Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, "*The Masque of the Red Death*", "*The Oval Portrait*", and "*Eleonora*" —are rendered in Macedonian, with comparative references to their French and Spanish versions. The study aims to identify the strategies used by translators to preserve Poe's linguistic, stylistic, syntactic and semantic elements, and to evaluate the fidelity of human versus AI translations in conveying Gothic tone, imagery, and psychological depth.

To achieve this purpose, the paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. How do Macedonian translations convey Poe's lexical choices, sentence structures, imagery, and Gothic poetics?

RQ2. In what ways do the French (Baudelaire) and Spanish (Cortázar) translations differ in their approach, and what insights do these differences offer?

RQ3. How does the quality of human translation compare to AI-generated translation in maintaining Poe's stylistic and cultural nuances?

The research adopts a **comparative-descriptive qualitative method**, analysing the source texts alongside their Macedonian, French, and Spanish counterparts. This approach allows for detailed examination of translation strategies, stylistic adjustments, and cultural adaptation, while highlighting similarities and divergences across linguistic systems.

The research procedure was carried out in several steps. First, the original English texts were analysed for key stylistic, semantic, and cultural features, including diction, sentence structure, imagery, symbolism, and Gothic elements. Second, the Macedonian translations by Jurcheva (2024) (published in "*Црниот мачор- раскази за мистеријата*") were examined with reference to these features, noting areas of fidelity, simplification, or adaptation. Third, the French and Spanish translations were compared to identify alternative strategies and effects. Finally, a comparison between human and AI translations from English to Macedonian was conducted using an experimental translation via ChatGPT to evaluate how effectively each preserves Poe's literary artistry, culminating in a comprehensive discussion of translation strategies, cross-cultural adaptation, and their implications for literary translation studies.

RESULTS- DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

As stated previously, this study explores the challenges of translating Edgar Allan Poe's distinct literary style, focusing on the Macedonian versions in comparison with Charles Baudelaire's French translations and Julio Cortázar's Spanish renderings. In this section, we discuss the findings of this comparative analysis on four different levels: linguistic, stylistic, syntactic, and semantic level. At the end of this section, we also present our findings regarding the AI rendition of Poe's literary style overall.

The analysis examines how imagery, metaphors, sound patterns, and symbolic motifs are conveyed across the three languages, highlighting how translation choices influence mood and interpretation. At the semantic level, the study evaluates the extent to which meaning, ambiguity, and nuance are retained or transformed. Together, these perspectives reveal how fidelity and adaptation intersect in translating Poe's literary artistry.

Linguistic level

On a linguistic level — particularly regarding word choice and register — Poe's English is distinguished by its archaic, formal, and unmistakably Gothic diction, a combination that contributes to the solemn, atmospheric, and often otherworldly quality of

his narratives. His vocabulary is both elevated and meticulously chosen, designed to evoke emotional intensity and sustain a reflective, sometimes brooding or melancholic tone that is central to his aesthetic. (Harrison 1902) In the Macedonian translations, this elevated register is generally preserved, as translators strive to recreate the richness, precision, and formality of Poe's style. However, certain nuances are occasionally simplified or subtly modified, either to ensure clarity for contemporary readers or to accommodate structural and stylistic differences between the two languages.

Similarly, French translations, particularly those by Charles Baudelaire, and Spanish versions, such as those rendered by Julio Cortázar, show comparable strategies: both preserve the elevated diction and Gothic tone while occasionally adapting specific expressions to suit the rhythm, syntax, or cultural expectations of their target language audiences. Across all three languages, translators face the challenge of retaining Poe's linguistic elegance and emotive depth while making the text comprehensible and impactful for readers outside the original English context.

Concerning the word choice and register, the analysis shows that Poe uses a formal literary register with vivid, precise adjectives that convey horror, opulence, and drama. The Macedonian translation preserves this register effectively, maintaining both clarity and the text's gothic tone. In the following examples we show how the translator found the appropriate solutions for some instances of tricky terminology.

Let us begin with an analysis of the expression found in the very title of the story "*The Masque of the Red Death*".

"the Red Death"

"Црвената смрт" (Macedonian)

"La Mort Rouge" (French)

"la Muerte Roja" (Spanish)

This illustrates a deliberate choice in the Macedonian, French, and Spanish translations to preserve Poe's original terminology rather than substituting culturally familiar references, such as the Macedonian *"црна смрт"* (the Black Death). In the Macedonian version, the translator includes an accompanying footnote clarifying that, while the plague is commonly known locally as the *"Black Death"*, it is intentionally retained as *"Red Death"* to preserve its symbolic function. This strategy helps bridge the cultural gap for readers, ensuring comprehension without compromising the thematic and allegorical significance of the original text.

Similarly, the French *"La Mort Rouge"* mirrors the original directly, preserving the colour imagery and ensuring that French readers experience the same interplay of dread, blood imagery, and fatal inevitability that Poe constructs. In the Spanish translation the term *"la Muerte Roja"* is likewise retained, maintaining both the literal and symbolic weight of Poe's choice. Cortázar's translation preserves the chromatic symbolism of red as a marker of contagion, blood, and imminent death, allowing Spanish-speaking readers to perceive the same sense of pervasive menace and allegorical depth as in the original text.

The following expression reveal how each translator interprets Poe's morbid imagery.

"the habiliments of the grave"

"мртвечки плашт" (Macedonian)

"enveloppé d'un suaire" (French)

"en una mortaja" (Spanish)

The Macedonian version simplifies the phrase slightly but maintains its macabre resonance. *"Мртвечки плашт"* clearly evokes death and funeral ritual, allowing Macedonian readers to immediately recognize the spectral, ominous nature of the masked figure. However, an alternative term, *"покрив"* (a shroud used to cover a corpse), would have captured the meaning even more precisely and aligned more closely with Poe's intent.

This nuance is fully realized in the French translation, where “*suaire*” directly denotes a shroud. Baudelaire’s choice therefore conveys the funerary symbolism with clarity and precision, reinforcing the unsettling presence of the figure draped in the garments of death.

The Spanish translation, rendered as “*en una mortaja*”, similarly retains the literal and symbolic meaning, as “*mortaja*” explicitly refers to a burial shroud.

We continue with a phrase from Poe’s “*Eleonora*” that demonstrates how Poe’s emphasis on heightened emotional intensity is conveyed across languages.

“*ardor of passion*”

“*жар и цпакм*” (Macedonian)

“*des passions ardentes*” (French)

“*el ardor de las pasiones*” (Spanish)

In the original, the expression evokes both the physical warmth and the psychological fervour associated with intense emotion, emphasizing the duality of passion in Poe’s narrative. The Macedonian translation, “*жар и цпакм*”, uses two separate words to preserve this duality: “*жар*” conveys the sense of heat or burning intensity, while “*цпакм*” emphasizes the depth of emotional fervor. This approach effectively mirrors the layered connotations of the original, maintaining both physical and psychological dimensions.

The French translation, “*des passions ardentes*” captures the fervent quality of the emotion through the adjective “*ardentes*”, conveying both intensity and burning desire in a single, fluid expression. Similarly, the Spanish translation, “*el ardor de las pasiones*” preserves the metaphorical heat of passion while keeping the phrasing natural and expressive in Spanish.

The following phrases from “*The Oval Portrait*” also illustrate how translators approach the rendering of subtle nuances in vocabulary and tone:

“*The decorations were rich, yet tattered and antique*”

“*Украсите во одајата беа богати, иако изветвени и старински*” (Macedonian)

“*Sa décoration était riche, mais antique et délabrée*” (French)

“*sus decoraciones eran ricas, pero ajadas y viejas*” (Spanish)

In the original, the word “*tattered*” conveys a sense of decay, wear, and deterioration, creating a contrast with the richness of the decorations and contributing to the Gothic atmosphere of the setting. The Macedonian translation, “*изветвени*”, while understandable, leans more toward the sense of “*faded*” rather than worn or decayed. This softens the register slightly and diminishes the visual and textural impact of Poe’s imagery. A more precise alternative, such as “*раснарталени*”, could better preserve the sense of dilapidation inherent in the original word.

The French translation by Baudelaire, “*délabrée*” captures the idea of decay and structural deterioration effectively, maintaining both the Gothic tone and the contrast between richness and ruin. Similarly, the Spanish translation by Cortázar, “*ajadas*” conveys the worn and aged quality of the decorations, successfully preserving the original imagery’s tension between opulence and decay.

Regarding the cultural level analysis, the analysis also reveals that Poe, depending on the tone of the story, frequently draws on classical, biblical, and spiritual imagery, which translators must preserve to maintain both cultural and symbolic resonance.

For example, in “*Eleonora*”, the reference to “*Eros*” is rendered in Macedonian as “*Ерос, богом на љубовта*”, in French as “*le dieu Éros*”, and in Spanish as “*al dios Eros*”. In all three languages, the classical allusion is preserved, retaining its symbolic weight and allowing readers to recognize the themes of passion and desire.

Poe’s works often feature lexis denoting exotic and fantastical settings, requiring translators to balance domestication for readability with foreignization to preserve symbolic resonance. The name “*Eleonora*” is unchanged in Macedonian, French, and Spanish, maintaining its

exotic and symbolic quality. The “*Valley of the Many-Colored Grass*” is rendered as “*Долината на разнобојната трева*”, “*la Vallée du Gazon-Diapré*”, and “*el Valle de la hierba irisada*”, preserving the landscape’s fantastical, pastoral, and visual richness.

Regarding taboo words and expressions, politeness, and apocalyptic imagery, the phrase “*And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all*” is intensified in Macedonian as “*мракот, пропаста и Црвената смрт за век и веков завладеаја со сè*”, emphasizing eternal and unchallengeable domination. In Spanish, Cortázar translates it as “*Y las tinieblas, y la corrupción, y la Muerte Roja lo dominaron todo*”, and in French, Baudelaire renders it “*Et les Ténèbres, et la Ruine, et la Mort Rouge établirent sur toutes choses leur empire illimité*”. While all translations preserve the apocalyptic triad, the Macedonian version uniquely adds a temporal intensifier “*за век и веков*”, reflecting a stylistic tendency to amplify dramatic and symbolic statements, heightening the sense of finality and dread for the reader.

Regarding domestication versus foreignization, terms like “*valet*” are domesticated in Macedonian as “*слуга*”, understandable but stripped of the upper-class connotations of the original. In French, “*valet*” is retained, preserving the social hierarchy, while Spanish uses “*valet*” or occasionally “*criado*”, depending on edition, balancing accessibility with aristocratic nuance.

Stylistic level

The following section examines the strategies used in translating Edgar Allan Poe’s stylistic elements such as imagery, metaphors, and rhythmic prose into Macedonian, with comparative reference to Charles Baudelaire’s French translations and Julio Cortázar’s Spanish versions. By tracing how metaphors, personification, alliteration, symbolic imagery, and Poe’s distinctive musical phrasing are rendered across the three languages, the analysis demonstrates how meaning and mood shift subtly, or significantly, depending on the translator’s choices.

When translating expressive metaphors and personification, the Macedonian version often intensifies the emotional charge. Poe’s simile “*her spirit flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp*” appears as “*духом... зампенери како пламен на свеќа*” softening “*flickered up*” but maintaining the image of fragility and approaching death. The French “*l’esprit de la dame palpita encore comme la flamme dans le bec d’une lampe*” and the Spanish “*el espíritu de la dama osciló, vacilante como la llama en el tubo de la lámpara*” both preserve the trembling, unstable movement of the flame, aligning closely with Poe’s original mood.

In contrast, “*the tints ... were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him*” becomes the more explicit “*го црнам животот*” in the Macedonian translation which intensifies Poe’s metaphor of art draining life and reinforces the Gothic, almost vampiric undertone. The same idea appears more neutrally in Spanish, “*los tintes ... eran extraídos de las mejillas de aquella mujer sentada a su lado*”, and in French, “*les couleurs... étaient tirées des joues de celle qui était assise près de lui*”.

Other metaphors remain fully intact, such as “*he had a bride in his Art*” which in Macedonian is rendered as “*веќе си беше нашол невеста во неговата Уметност*” where the capitalization of “*Уметност*” also emphasizes personification. In French, Baudelaire renders it “*ayant déjà trouvé une épouse dans son Art*”, and in Spanish, Cortázar translates it “*tenía ya una prometida en el Arte*”, both preserving the metaphorical marriage between Art and human passion.

In the chant-like sequence below the repetition and parallelism are slightly reduced though the meditative and reflective tone remains:

“*Long—long I read—and devoutly, devotedly I gazed*”

“*Долго, долго читав и мошне посветено набљудував*” (Macedonian)

“Je lus longtemps,--longtemps;--je contemplai religieusement, dévotement” (French)

“Mucho, mucho leí... e intensa, intensamente miré” (Spanish)

Similarly, Baudelaire’s French translation retains the parallelism and solemn cadence, while Cortázar’s Spanish preserves the emphasis through repetition, maintaining the rhythmical intensity of the original.

Alliteration and sound symbolism in Poe’s original carry both semantic and acoustic weight. The phrase *“black velvet draperies”* uses /b/ and /v/ sounds to evoke heaviness, darkness, and a tactile sense of Gothic richness. In Macedonian, *“црните сомотски завеси”* retains the semantic meaning of dark, luxurious draperies, but the dominant /s/ and /z/ sounds produce a softer, hissing rhythm, subtly lightening the acoustic atmosphere. Baudelaire’s French *“les rideaux de velours noir”* closely mirrors the original alliteration and sonic texture, while Cortázar’s Spanish *“las orladas cortinas de terciopelo negro”* conveys the same visual richness but with a smoother, less sonically harsh rhythm. In all versions, the Gothic imagery is preserved, though the acoustic nuance shifts depending on language.

Poe’s tone in *“The Masque of the Red Death”* alternates between grotesque horror, elegance, and lyrical description. The analysis also notes the structural fidelity in the Macedonian rendering of the famous final line:

“And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all”

“И Темнината и Распаѓањето и Црвената смрт владееја безгранично над сè”

(Macedonian)

“Et les Ténèbres, et la Ruine, et la Mort Rouge établirent sur toutes choses leur empire illimité”(French)

“Y las tinieblas, y la corrupción, y la Muerte Roja lo dominaron todo” (Spanish)

The repetition of conjunctions and the triadic structure echo the solemn, incantatory rhythm of Poe’s original. This preserves the sense of total, inevitable domination by death. The Spanish and the French similarly maintain the enumerative rhythm, though the French adds a more formal, imperial nuance with *“établirent leur empire”*.

Figures of speech, including metaphors, imagery, and symbolic expressions, are largely preserved or carefully adapted for the target audience. In the visual metaphor below, the exotic and mystical imagery is maintained, while each translator adapts the phrasing to suit the cultural and linguistic expectations of their audience:

“giant serpents of Syria doing homage to the Sun,”

“миновски змии од Сирија, кои му оддаваат почит на Сонцето,” (Macedonian)

“monstrueux serpents de Syrie rendant hommage au Soleil”(French)

“gigantescas serpientes de Siria rindiendo homenaje a su soberano”(Spanish)

Rhythm and sound, central to Poe’s musical phrasing and cadenced structures, are also mirrored in translation. The repetitive *“again and again,”* translated as *“одново и одново,”* in the example below, preserves the cyclical rhythm and psychological insistence:

“секогаш одново и одново се вртат истите слики”

“the same images are found occurring, again and again” (Macedonian)

“les mêmes images seprésentent opiniâtrement” (French)

“las mismas imágenes se encuentran una y otra vez” (Spanish)

The repetition in Macedonian preserves the cyclical rhythm and psychological insistence of the original phrase, emphasizing fixation and persistence. The French and Spanish translations also maintain the iterative sense, though stylistic choices differ: French adds a formal nuance with *“opiniâtrement”*, while Spanish mirrors the literal repetition with *“una y otra vez”*, keeping the emphasis on recurrence and continuity. All three translations sustain the musical cadence and reflective tone central to Poe’s narrative style.

Syntactic level

Poe's prose is characterized by long, multi-clause sentences, frequent dashes, and parenthetical elements, which together create a formal, reflective, and suspenseful rhythm. In the Macedonian translations, these complex sentence structures are largely preserved, with minor adjustments for natural flow, successfully maintaining the Gothic tone and richly detailed descriptive style of the originals.

The following examples illustrate how, at a syntactic level, the translators skilfully navigate the balance between literal fidelity and natural readability, while retaining the Gothic and artistic nuances that define Poe's prose.

The following example is, a sentence from "*The masque of the Red Death*":

"*There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect*"

"*На секои дваесет-триесет чекори имаше остар свијок, а по секој свијок следуваше ново изненадување.*" (Macedonian)

"*Il y avait un virage brusque tous les vingt ou trente mètres, et à chaque virage un nouvel effet.*" (French)

"*Había un giro brusco cada veinte o treinta pasos, y en cada giro un efecto nuevo.*" (Spanish)

The translations of the sentences illustrate how Poe's syntactic choices shape narrative rhythm and how translators preserve these effects across languages.

In Macedonian, the translator maintains the coordinate clause structure with "а" linking the two clauses. The repetition of "*по секој свијок*" mirrors the sequential rhythm of the original, allowing readers to mentally navigate the labyrinthine abbey while preserving suspense. Short, balanced clauses preserve clarity and pacing.

In French, Baudelaire renders the sentence preserving the coordinated structure with "et" and the repetition of "*à chaque virage*" mirrors the syntactic rhythm of the original. In Spanish, Cortázar translates it similarly with the coordinated clauses linked by "y" retaining the cumulative, sequential effect. The repetition of "*en cada giro*" preserves the sense of pattern and rhythm.

The syntax in the Macedonian translation is slightly simplified for readability, but the poetic cadence and lyrical tone are preserved. This is illustrated in the example below where the placement of the adjectives "*невин и чист*" emphasizes purity and innocence, reflecting Poe's idealization of Eleonora:

"*Her life, a pure and innocent one, was spent amid the flowers*"

"*Нејзиниот живот, невин и чист, го живееше меѓу цвеќињата*" (Macedonian)

"*Sa vie, pure et innocente, se passa au milieu des fleurs*" (French)

"*Su vida, pura e inocente, transcurrió entre las flores*" (Spanish)

Baudelaire preserves the parenthetical adjectival phrase structure, placing "*pure et innocente*" directly after the subject. This mirrors the English syntax closely and maintains the poetic tone. Cortázar similarly retains the parenthetical adjectival construction, with "*pura e inocente*" placed immediately after the subject. The main clause, "*transcurrió entre las flores*", is straightforward and mirrors the English and French syntactic simplicity, preserving the lyrical and reflective quality of the narrative.

Poe's language occasionally includes parenthetical asides in the form of culturally nuanced expressions that can pose challenges for translation. The following example from "*The oval portrait*" demonstrates how the translators captured the original meaning while adapting the parenthetical aside "*for there were many*" to the target language:

“The rays of the numerous candles (for there were many)...”

“Зраците од бројните свеќи (навистина ги имаше многу)...” (Macedonian)

“Les rayons des nombreuses chandelles (car elles étaient nombreuses)...” (French)

“Los rayos de las numerosas velas (pues eran muchas)...” (Spanish)

The Macedonian translator preserves the idiomatic and clarifying function of the aside with *“навистина ги имаше многу”*, keeping a slightly conversational tone that respects Poe’s subtle narrative voice. The phrase functions as a gentle digression, adding emphasis and immediacy, much like in the original. An alternative, more archaic or biblical phrasing, *“зашто беа многу”*, could have aligned with the formal Gothic register while still clarifying quantity, echoing Biblical cadence.

Baudelaire preserves the parenthetical explanatory aside with *“car elles étaient nombreuses”*, maintaining both clarity and the slightly conversational tone. Cortázar similarly renders the aside with *“pues eran muchas”*, preserving the clarifying, almost casual tone of the original. While minor stylistic differences exist, each translation successfully conveys Poe’s blend of informal narrative voice and descriptive precision, allowing readers to perceive both the abundance of the candles and the subtle rhythm of the prose.

Semantic level

At the semantic level, the comparison focuses on how closely the translation preserves the original meaning of Poe’s text. This involves examining whether nuances of sense are retained or altered, whether the translation leans toward strict accuracy or freer interpretation, and how it handles layers of ambiguity. Meaning can be preserved, slightly shifted, or even expanded through different lexical choices.

At the semantic level, the Macedonian translation of *“The Oval Portrait”* generally preserves Poe’s emotional register, Gothic imagery, and intense psychological tone, while occasionally softening or intensifying individual meanings.

Several culturally marked terms in Poe’s prose are semantically preserved across Macedonian, French, and Spanish through deliberate use of loanwords, which maintain the exotic and ornamental tone of the Gothic style. Thus for instance the term *“arabesque”* becomes *“арабеску”* in Macedonian, *“arabesque”* in French *“riches cadres d’or d’un goût arabesque”*, and *“arabescos”* in Spanish *“pinturas modernas en marcos con arabescos de oro”*. All three retain the foreign decorative meaning, preserving its connotations of intricacy and Eastern-inspired ornamentation.

The examples below have been selected to illustrate how translation choices affect meaning in terms of semantic accuracy vs. interpretation:

“Its decorations were rich, yet tattered and antique.”

“Украсите во одајата беа богати, иако изветвени и старински.” (Macedonian)

“Sa décoration était riche, mais antique et délabrée.” (French)

“Sus decoraciones eran ricas, pero ajadas y viejas.” (Spanish)

“the spell of the picture in an absolute life-likeness of expression”

“волиенството од сликата во целосната живописност на изразот” (Macedonian)

“que le charme de la peinture était une expression vitale absolument adéquate à la vie elle-même” (French)

“el hechizo del cuadro residía en una absoluta posibilidad de vida en su expresión” (Spanish)

However, the nuance of *“absolute life-likeness,”* which implies uncanny realism or a near-living quality in the painting, shifts in Macedonian toward general vividness, slightly softening the unnerving, hyperreal Gothic effect. Similarly, Baudelaire’s French version emphasizes vitality *“expression vitale absolument adéquate à la vie elle-même”*, keeping the sense of life-like realism while introducing a poetic and philosophical resonance. Cortázar’s

Spanish translation retains the notion of the painting's "*absolute possibility of life*" in its expression, conveying the magical and lifelike quality, though the phrasing is somewhat more literal and less stylistically Gothic.

We now move on to analysing examples from "*The Masque of the Red Death*" in relation to **accuracy vs. interpretation at the semantic level**.

In the following example, the translations preserve the surreal imagery of moving dreams and their interaction with the coloured rooms, maintaining Poe's layering of visual and psychological effects.

"A multitude of dreams... took hue from the rooms"

"Tue сновиденија се вртеа наваму-натаму од соба во соба преземајќи ја нијансата од собите," (Macedonian)

"Bref, c'était comme une multitude de rêves qui se pavanaient çà et là dans les sept salons," (French)

"En verdad, en aquellas siete cámaras se movía, de un lado a otro, una multitud de sueños." (Spanish)

At the semantic level, the Macedonian version is highly accurate, conveying the movement and coloration, though it slightly softens the metaphor "*took hue from the rooms*," making it more literal. It also adds emphasis on motion through the phrase "*се вртеа наваму-натаму*", enhancing the sense of dynamic activity. The French translation introduces a playful nuance with "*se pavanaient*" giving the dreams a parading quality, while the Spanish version emphasizes external observation, slightly shifting the focus from the dreams' active interaction with the environment. Overall, all translations faithfully convey Poe's surreal, layered imagery, though subtle shifts in nuance, perspective, and motion appear across languages.

Poe's theme of elevated, spiritual love in "*Eleonora*" is faithfully carried over, though some nuances change.

The sentence below retains solemnity and the vow-like promise in the Macedonian translation:

"I would never bind myself in marriage to any daughter of Earth"

"никогаш нема да се оженам со ниедна друга човечка ќерка" (Macedonian)

"que je ne contracterais jamais de mariage avec une fille de la Terre" (French)

"que nunca me uniría en matrimonio con ninguna hija de la Tierra" (Spanish)

The phrase "*daughter of Earth*" rich in mythic resonance and suggesting a contrast between earthly and transcendent women, becomes "*човечка ќерка*" which is accurate but slightly more literal. This represents a semantic shift: the metaphysical register is softened, while emotional fidelity is preserved. The French and Spanish versions maintain the figurative register more closely, preserving the elevated, almost mythic tone of Poe's original. Across all three translations, the emotional fidelity, the narrator's unwavering devotion, is effectively preserved, even if subtle shifts in nuance occur.

Poe's foreshadowing of mortality is preserved across translations, though with notable shifts in intensity and imagery as demonstrated in the example below:

"the finger of Death was upon her bosom"

"чувствување дека смртта лебди околу нејзините гради" (Macedonian)

"Elle avait vu que le doigt de la Mort était sur son sein" (French)

"Vio el dedo de la muerte posado en su pecho" (Spanish)

The Macedonian translation maintains the ominous presence of death, yet it transforms the tactile, corporeal "*finger of Death*" into a hovering, almost intangible presence. This represents a semantic shift, moving from immediate physical contact to an atmospheric threat. The French and Spanish translations remain closer to the original, retaining the concrete imagery of Death's touch. In Macedonian, a more literal rendering such as

“Смртта ќе ѝ легне на гради/в пазува” would preserve the physical immediacy, but the chosen phrasing softens intensity, prioritizing a subtler Gothic mood over stark corporeality.

Poe’s prose thrives on ambiguity, often blurring the boundaries between life and death, reality and imagination. He frequently leaves certain images intentionally ambiguous, creating tension between social, moral, and psychological layers. In the translations analysed, some of this ambiguity is preserved, while other aspects are, sometimes, clarified to maintain readability and coherence, as is the case with the following example, from “*The Masque of the Red Death*”:

“gone beyond the bounds of even the prince’s indefinite decorum”

“ја беше пречекорила дури слободата и пристојноста”(Macedonian)

“franchi les bornes cependant complaisantes du décorum imposé par le prince” (French)

“lo ultrapasaba e iba, incluso, más allá de lo que el liberal criterio del príncipe toleraba” (Spanish)

In the English original, the phrasing leaves moral and social boundaries deliberately vague: the character’s transgression is striking but unspecified, inviting the reader to interpret the nature and severity of the breach. The Macedonian translation clarifies this moral ambiguity by specifying the transgression as a breach of “*freedom and decency*”, making the social unacceptability explicit. Similarly, the French and Spanish versions highlight the crossing of permissible social limits, reducing the interpretive openness of the original.

The expression “*bid defiance to contagion*” from “*The Masque of the Red Death*” and its translations demonstrate how idiomatic meaning is preserved across languages:

“With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion.”

“Со таквите мерки на претпазливост, дворјаните можеа да ѝ пркосат на заразата.” (Macedonian)

“Grâce à ces précautions, les courtisans pouvaient jeter le défi à la contagion.” (French)

“Con precauciones semejantes, los cortesanos podían desafiar el contagio.” (Spanish)

The Macedonian translator renders the expression naturally with “*да ѝ пркосат на заразата*”, which carries a strong sense of defying or resisting. The syntax mirrors the original sentence, maintaining clarity and readability. The choice successfully preserves both the literal meaning and the figurative sense of audacious human confidence, keeping the Gothic and cautionary undertone of Poe’s prose intact.

Baudelaire translates the expression as “*jeter le défi à*”, literally “*throw the challenge at*,” which conveys audacity, confrontation, and deliberate defiance. This choice preserves the formal literary tone of the English expression while maintaining the subtle irony of the courtiers’ misplaced confidence. Cortázar uses “*desafiar*”, which directly corresponds to “*to defy*” or “*to challenge*.” The idiomatic sense of bold resistance is preserved, and the sentence retains the formal yet readable tone of the original.

Human vs. AI translation in Poe’s works

The question of human versus AI translation is especially important in literary contexts, where tone, ambiguity, and stylistic nuance outweigh purely lexical accuracy. Our analysis shows that AI systems can produce technically correct and consistent translations, but they often miss the atmospheric depth, rhythm, and symbolic layering essential to Poe’s Gothic style. Human translators, by contrast, demonstrate interpretive sensitivity, aesthetic awareness, and cultural intuition, enabling them to recreate the emotional and psychological complexity of the original texts.

In “*The Masque of the Red Death*”, the human rendering “*Тврдината беше добро обезбедена со храна*” for “*The abbey was amply provisioned*” conveys the illusory security of Prospero’s retreat, while the AI version “*Тврдината беше добро снабдена*” is literal but stylistically flat.

Rhythmic patterns show similar contrasts. In *“Eleonora”*, *“again and again”* becomes the lyrically faithful *“одново и одново”* in human translation, while AI’s *“повторно и повторно”* lacks musicality. Figurative expressions, such as *“frolicsome as the young fawn”* by human translators was rendered as *“разиграна како срна”*, which has emotional and cultural appropriateness, whereas AI rendition leans toward literal, stylistically weaker choices – *“разиграна како младо еленче”*.

Ambiguity and Gothic tone, central to Poe’s poetics, are consistently better preserved by humans. Phrases like *“a condition of shadow and doubt”* - *“со другом владеат сомнежот и сенките”* or *“beyond the bounds of indefinite decorum”*- *“ја беше пречекорила дури слободата и пристојноста”* maintain their interpretive openness in human translation but become overly explicit or simplified in AI outputs: *“состојба на сенка и сомнеж”* and *“надвор од границите на неопределена пристојност”*. Sound and cadence also suffer in AI renderings, which follow syntax but not the incantatory rhythm characteristic of Poe’s style.

Overall, it can be concluded that while the Macedonian human translations of *“The Masque of the Red Death”*, *“The Oval Portrait”*, and *“Eleonora”* show strong fidelity not only to semantic content but to atmosphere, symbolic resonance, and poetic rhythm. AI provides useful literal approximations, but it lacks the interpretive insight and stylistic sensitivity required for full literary fidelity, confirming the indispensable role of the human translator in conveying the richness of Poe’s work.

CONCLUSION

Across all three works, the Macedonian translations succeed in maintaining Poe’s elevated diction, Gothic tone, and narrative precision. Linguistically, they reproduce word choice, syntax, and idiomatic expressions with considerable fidelity, balancing clarity and stylistic fidelity. Stylistically, tone, voice, rhythm, and figures of speech are preserved, allowing Macedonian readers to experience the same psychological tension, allegorical resonance, and lyrical beauty as in the original. Semantically, the translations retain layers of symbolic meaning, occasionally clarifying ambiguous expressions to ensure readability while maintaining the reflective, meditative quality central to Poe. Culturally, the translations navigate between foreignization and domestication, preserving the exotic Gothic and European elements while adapting culturally specific references for accessibility. Comparative examples from the French translation by Charles Baudelaire and the Spanish translation by Julio Cortázar show alternative ways of rendering tone, ambiguity, and semantic subtlety.

Notably, differences in translation strategy reflect the genre and theme of each work. *“The Masque of the Red Death”* emphasizes allegory and suspense, demanding careful replication of rhythm, repetition, and layered meaning. *“The Oval Portrait”* relies on precise, concise imagery and psychological tension, requiring faithful rendering of metaphors and framing devices. *“Eleonora”*, with its lyrical and reflective tone, necessitates attention to musical phrasing, poetic rhythm, and elevated diction. Across all three texts, the Macedonian translations strike a balance between fidelity and readability: minor simplifications slightly reduce semantic ambiguity or shift certain nuances, but they enhance comprehension without sacrificing aesthetic integrity.

This comparative analysis confirms that while the Macedonian translations occasionally introduce subtle shifts in meaning or reduce ambiguity compared to Poe’s English, they remain successful in preserving the Gothic intensity, lyrical beauty, and symbolic richness of the originals. French and Spanish versions provide additional interpretive models, suggesting alternative solutions that show how the translator’s approach can modify the renderings. Ultimately, literary translation, especially of texts as complex and stylistically rich as Poe’s, remains an interpretive art. Human translators in comparison to AI

translations, ensure much more nuanced attention to tone, rhythm, ambiguity, and symbolism that allows Poe's work to resonate fully in Macedonian, highlighting the enduring importance of skilled literary translation in preserving world literature.

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