

## Omission in Translating "Horror Symbolism"

### in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of The House of Usher"

الحذف في ترجمة "رموز الرعب" في "سقوط منزل عائلة أشر" لإدغار آلان بو

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**Abstract:**The translation of gothic literature entails conveying cultural and symbolic elements that can be unfamiliar to the readers of the target language, consequently, translators are required to reproduce these features while still prioritizing the feeling of horror that the readers are supposed to experience. In order to achieve that, they have to find adequate equivalents, but when they are not able to, some of them opt for omission. The aim of this paper is to evince whether the strategy of omission that was heavily relied on by Nadia Farid was a wise choice for the translation of the selected excerpts from "The Fall of the House of Usher". Comparing these examples in the original language and their translation will help determine if the latter produces the same effect of visceral Horror for target readers as the original text.

**Keywords:** Edgar Allan Poe, Gothic Literature, Horror, Symbolism, Omission.

ملخص: تعتمد ترجمة الأدب القوطي على نقل عوامل ثقافية ورمزية يمكن أن تكون غير مألوفة بالنسبة لقارئ اللغة الهدف، إذ يتعين على المترجم نقل تلك المضامين مع إعطاء الأولوية لشعور الرعب الذي يجب أن ينتاب القارئ والذي يعد أهم خاصية لهذا النوع من الأدب. ومن أجل الوصول إلى ذلك يجب على المترجمين تحقيق التكافؤ من خلال إيجاد عبارات تُحدث نفس الأثر الذي تحدثه تلك الموجودة في النص الأصلي، لكن عندما يتعذر فعل ذلك، يلجأ البعض منهم إلى استراتيجية الحذف التي قد تم توظيفها بكثرة عند ترجمة قصة إدغار آلان بو القصيرة "سقوط منزل عائلة أشر" لذا تطرقنا في بحثنا إلى استراتيجية الحذف لنرى إذا كانت هذه الأخيرة كفيلة بتحقيق أثر الرعب في نفسية قارئ اللغة الهدف وذلك من خلال دراسة نماذج تحمل في طياتها رمزية القصص القوطية.

كلمات مفتاحية: إدغار آلان بو، الأدب القوطي، إستراتيجية الحذف، الرعب، الرمزية.

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## 1.Introduction:

Translating any literary work is a challenging task for translators, whose aim is to render a text which is as faithful to the original text as possible, especially when it comes to translating gothic literature as this genre is characterized with themes that were unprecedented back when the romantic movement was prevailing, The aim of this research is to figure out whether omission was successful or not in rendering the meaning and the horror effect carried in the selected examples extracted from the Fall of the House of Usher.

The effect of omission on translation was studied by choosing examples that contain the symbols of visceral fear and horror from the above-mentioned short story, along with their translation in Arabic to showcase the gain or loss that may have been caused.

The effect of visceral fear and horror previously mentioned is called "The sublime effect", this latter has to do with the setting, the atmosphere, and characters portrayed in gothic literature. These are some of the main pillars of any gothic novel or short story and the purpose behind their use is to captivate readers and turn them into characters that would experience every traumatic event in the story along with the real protagonists.

Edgar Allan Poe's objective was to create stories that would terrify readers but at the same time, would also fascinate and mesmerize them so much that it would be impossible for them to stop reading. He was fully aware of the effect that his representation of the gothic would have on the readers of his stories, in this regard, Allen (1969) explained:

"The claim of a predetermined effect is firmly based of Poe's consciousness of the reader's reaction. The idea of selecting an effect implies that the author assumes an established standard of reactions on the reader's side" (as cited in Takahashi,2011, p.01)

In order to achieve that effect Poe relied on symbolism which according to Zohdi (2018):

"...has a different value because it makes the story richer than in meaning for readers and help them relate themselves to the characters and plot. Symbolism is among stylistic devices, which has been used a lot in previous literary works, as the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare. Symbols are used to add beauty to work and decorate a work of art and in some cases for purposes such as political, social and cultural." (p.314)

Symbolism has its origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in France and symbols were used to express ideas concerning religion, art, history, and even literature, they were used to depict the thoughts of the writers in addition, they gave an insight into the latter's mind; their thoughts and the way they saw the world. Symbolism is said to enrich the narrative by inferring ideas on the unconscious level, in that respect, Diel argued that: "the symbol is a vehicle at once universal and particular. Universal, since it transcends history; particular, because it relates to a definite period of history" (as cited in Zohdi, 2018, p.315). In addition, a literary symbol is "something that means more than what it is. It is an object, a person, a situation, an action, or some other item that has a literal meaning in the story, but suggests or represents other meanings as well" as Perrine (1974) stated. (as cited in Elaheh, 2011, p.20)

Edgar Allan Poe's short stories are still very popular as they still transcend through the decades, because the mysteries, the fear, and the suspense they contain still have the same effect on readers, and the factor which stands out is the unexplainable and unknown fears that distress the characters, and Poe's use of symbolism enabled him to infer certain thoughts and ideas without having to unveil them because if those were expressed in a direct way they probably wouldn't have had the same effect on his readers.

According to Zohdi (2018) there are two kinds of symbolism: Conventional Symbolism (cultural or universal) and personal symbolism. Conventional symbolism has to do with the culture of people who belong to the same society and who agree to give a certain meaning to any given sign; of course, this kind of symbolism is different from one society to another, for example, seeing an owl is considered as a bad omen for Arabic people as it symbolizes death; whereas in other cultures owls symbolize wisdom. As for personal symbolism, it changes from one person to the other, as the interpretation of any idea or word differs according to the individual's culture or job, for example, for some people the symbol of happiness is wealth, whereas for others, it is family and friendship.

## 2. Symbolism in the fall of the House of Usher:

The fall of the house of Usher is one of the most famous gothic short stories ever written, and it contains numerous gothic symbols which make it a unique literary masterpiece that is

still a people's favorite. This short story contains numerous gothic symbols and in her essay about the significance of symbolism in Edgar Allan Poe's works Rahman (2015) averred that:

"Edgar Allan Poe was fascinated by using symbols as it is a more indirect way for expressing one's own ideas and notions. Most of his works are enriched with symbols which carry the essence of those works. For example, in the short story „The Fall of the House of Usher“, Poe not only highlights the structural fall of that house, rather emphasizes the ending of the Usher bloodline." (p.10)

The themes contained in the fall of the house of Usher represent the symbols that Poe wanted to infer subliminally throughout his story and these are: The theme of evil, isolation, madness and illness; mystery, family, fungus and decay, the tarn and the lake around the house, the bridge, the storm, the moon, the painting, the poem, and the collapse of the house inside the tarn.

### 3. Literature Review:

Omission is a strategy which translators recourse to in order to render structural complexities or elements that are proper to a certain culture.

In this regard, Bilous et al.(2020) asserted that: "such translation transformations can only be used in particular cases where, for example, cultural specific information is unimportant for its recipient, excessive or impossible to understand." (p.2674)

It is also required according to Nida (1964) "to avoid redundancy and awkwardness" (as cited in Sharma,2015, p.06)

Nevertheless, omission could weaken the pragmatics laid by the author within the text and it can also have a significant effect on its content which could lead to a shift or deformation of the text coherence because according to Bilous et al.(2020):

"The omission of a phrase affects the syntactic structure of the sentence, and the omission of one or more sentences can affect textuality in general, for example some important information may remain out of focus." (p.2674)

Van Dijk (1988) stated that the strategy of deletion, which can be used interchangeably with omission, is based on internal and external consideration (as cited in Sharma, 2015), the internal considerations are sometimes subjective and have to do with professional and

ideological norms and values, the external ones have to do with the impossibility of checking the veracity of controversial details.

On the other hand, Baker (1992) acknowledged the strategy of deletion and she defined it as "omission of a lexical item due to grammatical or semantic patterns of the receptor language" (as cited in Sharma,2015, p.08) she also added that this strategy is extreme but explained that in some contexts it is not harmful to omit a word or an expression especially if it allows the translator to avoid writing a lengthy and distracting explanation.

However, some scholars refer to omission as being the most obvious form of translation loss; which means that a text would lose important elements including its meaning if this strategy is relied on, in this respect, Khanmohammad and Aminzad stated that additions and omissions might inflict irreparable damages on the text if the loss-gain balance is overlooked. (2015)

In addition to that, Sharma (2015) said that omission can be the result of the cultural clashes that exist between the source language and the target language and it often occurs while translating texts from English into Arabic and he explained that the use of this translation strategy reaches its peak in subtitling translations as the translator omits words that do not have equivalents in the target tongue, or that may be ambiguous or even misinterpreted by the receptors.

He then mentioned that translators would rather not opt for omission especially in vital translations because they think it might dilute the original meaning of these latter.

He also explained that saying that omission can only cause a distortion in the meaning of the source text is wrong and if the meaning conveyed by a certain expression is not necessary or that it would require a lengthy explanation on the part of the translator to convey it, it would be a better option just to dismiss it.

On the other hand, and as it was previously mentioned some theorists believe that omission is the result of the incompetence of translators who opt for it, Alwazna (2014) affirmed that the failure of a translator to convey an element of meaning can cause loss, and if the latter is not competent in the target language, he/she will delete some words and phrases and as a result loss will occur, he also added that the other cause of loss is due to the

linguistic and extralinguistic differences between the source and target language in addition to extralinguistic discrepancies which include the cultural and religious dissimilarities between these languages which hinder the translation process by forcing translators to resort to omission because of their incapacity to find the proper equivalent in the target language. (as cited in Tiwiyanti and Retnomurti,2017)

#### 4. Research methodology:

This research used a descriptive-qualitative method, as an analysis of some passages from the Fall of The House of Usher that contain gothic symbolism was carried out, and considering the fact that this whole literary genre is unfamiliar to other cultures especially the Arabic one, the main aim of this study is to demonstrate whether the use of omission has generated gain or loss and most importantly, whether resorting to it has made reading this story as enjoyable and distressful for Arabic readers as it is for the readers of the original language.

#### 5. Data analysis procedure:

The examples studied down below showcase the symbols and themes contained in the fall of the house of Usher along with their translations in Arabic and their descriptions.

These descriptions consist of comparisons between the English and the Arabic versions which are going to help determine whether the translator succeeded in rendering the same effect of horror that the readers of the original language would feel.

**6. Data analysis:** The five examples down below contain horror symbols such as: the weather, death and terror, ghosts, the haunted house of Usher, illness, death, corps and burial.

#### 6.1 Example 1 (Weather Symbolism)

"During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher." (Poe, 1839, p.03)

"في يوم مظلم من أيام الخريف، كنت مسافرا على ظهر جواد خلال الطريق قفر مترامي الأطراف... وعندما حل الظلام كنت قد وصلت إلى مشارف منزل عائلة آشر." (فريد، 1986، ص.71)

Although the description of the weather is very detailed in the English version as the author pictured that day as "a dull, dark and soundless day ...when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens" which perfectly sets the tone of horror, the translator used only one adjective "مظلم" which translates into "dark". The translation cannot possibly have the same impact as the original description as this latter allows the readers to imagine what that scene looked like and also makes them able to feel immersed in the story. In addition, the translator dismissed the expression that stated that the narrator was alone.

Furthermore the translator didn't choose to use a metaphor to transfer the following expression "as the shades of the evening drew on" as she used a much more simple expression saying "عندما حل الظلام" and decided to dismiss the expression "view of the melancholy" which could be translated into "المنظر الكئيب" which diminishes the sublime/Horror effect for the Arabic reader.

## 6.2 Example 2 (death and terror symbolism)

"...but then without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and

reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated." (Poe,1839, p25)

"و لكن هناك... عند مدخل الباب... كان يقف جسد الليدي مادلين أشرف في الكفن، كان هناك قطرات من الدماء فوق أثوابها البيضاء و آثار من نضال ميريكان يبدو على كل شبر من جسدها، وقفت ترتعش لبرهة في مدخل الباب ثم في صرخة حزن خافتة، اندفعت نحو شقيقها وألقت بنفسها عليه في .. فقد كان رودريك أشرف. عنف، و في صرخة للمصير المحتوم، قامت بسحبه معها على الأرض... جثة ميتا...ضحية الرعب الذي هو نفسه قد تنبأ به."

(فريد، 1986، ص.109)

In this example the narrator is describing the scene where Lady Madeline came out of her tomb, saying that her figure was "loft and enshrouded" the term enshrouded was preserved in Arabic as the translator used the expression "في الكفن" but she dismissed the word lofty

which means that her body was elevated from the floor , and that diminishes the horror effect , then the narrator said that she had blood all over her "emaciated" body but the translator decided to remove this adjective even though it is necessary to portray the image of a cadaverous body.

She also erased the expression " reeling to and fro upon the threshold" where the writer pictured Madeline going back and forth upon the doorstep and that also wasn't a wise decision as the Arabic reader is certainly not going to imagine the horrific image of Madeline's soon to be corps.

### 6.3 Example 3 (Ghost symbolism)

"Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer."(Poe ,1839,p. 22-23)

"عند هذه الكلمات جاءت إلى أذني صرخة ضعيفة على البعد، كان صوت صرير أو صراخ يشبه إل حد بعيد أنين التنين الذي كنت أقرأ عنه في تلك اللحظة، ولكن هذه الصرخة لم تكن من وحي خيالي.. " (فريد، 1986، ص. 103). فقد سمعتها فعلا

The narrator is admitting to getting more and more scared as the strange sounds keep coming, and here again the strategy that the translator opted for is omission as the first sentence was completely left out "Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say)" although the sentence here is very important as it depicts the unexplainable fear that baffled the narrator as he couldn't understand where these sounds were coming from or come to the fact that Roderick was right about the fact that these weren't hallucinations. As for the description of the sound the author said that it was a "distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound" but in Arabic the translator has chosen to describe it as " صرخة " which is far from being a literal translation as " كان صوت صرير أو صراخ



harsh translates into خشن in Arabic and protracted into ممتد or مطول and grating into "مزعج" and she has chosen the adjective "صيرير" which could be translated into "squeaking" to replace all of these adjectives although this latter doesn't fit the brief.

She also replaced the term shriek which can be translated into "صراخ" with the word "أنين" which means "moaning" or "whining" in addition to dismissing the adjective unnatural.

As for the final part of this sentence "the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer." The narrator expressed that the object of his imagination had conjured up the dragon's shriek, the verb conjure up can be translated into "استحضار" and although this image gives this sentence more relevance the translator decided to omit it by simply saying that what the narrator has heard was not imaginary but real by saying "ولكن هذه الصرخة لم تكن من وحي خيالي.. فقد سمعتها فعلا" As a matter of fact she decided to omit the whole story that the narrator was reading to Roderick.

#### 6.4 Example 4 (Haunted house and illness symbolism)

"Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him" . (Poe,1839, p.04)

"كان منزل رودريك أشر الذي كان صديق طفولتي.. ولقد مرت سنوات عديدة منذ رأى كل منا الآخر. فقد كنت أعيش في ذلك الوقت في منطقة منعزلة من البلدة لذلك فقد كتب لي أخيرا خطابا مستفيضا يحدثني فيه عن مرضه الخطير وعن الاضطراب العصبي الذي أصابه." (فريد، 1986، ص71)

The translator removed the first sentence of the paragraph "Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks" even though there is no point of dismissing it as it gives a perfect description of the gloomy feeling the narrator got from looking at the house of Usher. In addition to that she also removed the expression "had admitted of no other than a personal reply" and "The MS. Gave evidence of nervous

agitation". After reading both sentences it feels like the Arabic version is a summary of the original sentence written in a much simplified language but it also lacked the elements that would have given it a much greater impact.

### 6.5 Example 5 (Death, corps and burial symbolism)

"Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house." (Poe,1839,p.17-18)

" و وضعنا حملنا الحزين على مصطبة خشبية داخل القبو، ولم يكن غطاء التابوت قد تم تثبيته بعد، فقمنا برفعه لنلقي نظرة أخرى على وجه مادلين أشر، ولأول مرة ألاحظ الشبه الواضح بين الأخ وربما استمع صديقي إلى أفكاره فقد أخذ يتمتم وقال إنهما كانا توأمين، ثم قال أنه كان وأخته، هناك تفاهم غريب يجمع بينهما دائما.. توافق خفي غير واضح أو محسوس لأي شخص آخر. لكننا لم نتحمل النظر إليها لمدة طويلة، فقد ترك المرض على وجهها مسحة من الحمرة الباهتة، وكانت هناك ابتسامة غامضة تبدو على شفيتها، ابتسامة مرعبة للموت. وقمنا بإعادة غطاء التابوت و تثبيته ثم غادرنا القبو، وأغلقنا الباب الحديدي خلفنا وأخذنا في الصعود إلى الجزء العلوي من المنزل، الذي كان أيضا معتما مثل القبو الذي تركناه في التو."

(فريد، 1986، ص.93)

The author perfectly described the basement saying that it was "a region of horror" considering the fact that it then became home to Lady Madeleine's corps, but the translator opted for a more basic option calling it exactly what it is "القبو" which undermines the horror effect.

In addition to this, he mentioned the disease that took the life of Lady Madeleine saying that it “.. had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face.”

We can easily notice that the whole sentence used by the writer to depict the effect of the disease on the departed Madeleine was erased from the Arabic version as well as the word “bosom” which refers to the chest area of the body probably because the translator thought it would be inappropriate for the target readers.

### 7. Discussion and Interpretation of the results:

After analyzing the examples in this short story, it became noticeable that the strategy of omission was excessively resorted to, and sometimes unnecessarily; the use of this latter here did not do the translated text any favors because the key to achieving the sublime/horror effect is the detailed description of gothic elements which was overlooked in this case.

The original examples studied above contain a number of symbols which are: the weather, death, horror, the ghost of lady Madeleine, the haunted house, illness in addition to death, corps and burial.

All of these were rendered in a manner that took away from their effect of visceral fear and horror and this was due to the decision of the translator to erase or drastically shorten the descriptions that Edgar Allan Poe presented in order to make the readers see every single scenery and live all of the events at the same time as the protagonists as if they were part of this story.

The review of related literature revealed that omission and deletion have been advocated by a few theorists such as Nida (1964, as cited in Sharma,2015) who explained that both strategies could be a judicious choice in order to avoid redundancy and awkwardness that the translator may encounter as a result of cultural differences.

On the other hand, some theorists such as Mona Baker (1992) expressed that deletion could be a wrong choice as it is extreme but she also added that it is sometimes inevitable to resort to it to avoid an unnecessary and lengthy explanation. Others such as Bilous et

al.(2020) as well as Sharma(2015) also explained that omission could lead to a distortion in meaning and that it could weaken the pragmatics laid by the author in a text but that it is needed in some cases where culture represents an obstacle for the translator.

Furthermore, Khanmohammad and Aminzad (2015) explained that translators shouldn't opt for the strategy of omission because they assume it might dilute the meaning of the original texts and finally Alwazna (2014) even went to say that omission is a sign of incompetence on the part of the translator as it prevents the readers from having full access to the source text.

### 8. Conclusion:

In view of what was mentioned in the discussion above, the intention behind this paper was to give an understanding and insight into the concept of omission in the process of translation in the hope that it will pave the way for further research about this topic.

The use of omission is necessary when translators encounter situations where they cannot find the right and adequate equivalents especially when it comes to rendering a text full of symbolic, cultural and stylistic elements into a culture where these are unfamiliar.

Nevertheless, based on our findings the use of omission when translating the Fall of the house of Usher was not justified in addition to being unnecessary and dismissive. Furthermore, relying on it, in this case, has also caused a loss as the translator dismissed a lot of descriptions that have to do with gothic symbolism which is the main element that can produce the effect of terror that the readers are supposed to feel while reading any gothic work. Therefore, it is safe to say that the translator was not able to preserve the authenticity of Poe's masterpiece and that deleting such an important number of elements and descriptions from the story is clearly not going to make the Arabic readers appreciate this short story at its fair value.

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