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Fantastic neologisms in translation: creature names in professional and amateur renderings of Sapkowski's *Witcher* series into English

Despite its significant popularity outside its circle of readers, fantasy as a genre is still commonly regarded as second-rate literature. This perception might have a bearing on translation quality and the decisions translators take, and especially so in the case of Polish-English translation.

In the post-1989 era many Polish translators of Anglophone fantasy have been recruited from the fan community, characterized by insider knowledge and deep attachment to the type of literature; for such translators, reading fantasy, or speculative fiction in general, often precedes translating [Guttfeld, 2008]. In the case of Polish to English translation, however, there is a scarcity of trained translators specializing in both the source language and the genre, which means there is a much higher likelihood fantasy texts are going to be translated by any available translators from Polish, who may not themselves be very familiar with the genre. In such a case, the popular perception of fantasy as inferior literature may become an important factor, and result in the genre's characteristic features being disregarded or overlooked. The alternative is for fantasy texts to be rendered out of Polish by non-professionals outside official literary circulation. Indeed, the scarcity of translations from Polish or

the appearance of some professional translations by non-fans who might fail to grasp some aspects of a work that fans deem important produces a reaction in the form of fan translations, as readers seek to promote their favourite authors themselves.

Both these extremes manifest themselves in the case of Andrzej Sapkowski's *Witcher* series. According to a survey conducted in 2012 among Polish fans of speculative literature [Guttfeld, Jankowska, Krawczyk, 2013], the series ranks as an all-time classic of fantasy literature in Poland, and the writer is undisputedly viewed as the most eminent Polish fantasy author, whose popularity abroad was boosted in 2007 by the international success of the first computer game based on the series. However, due to the usual imbalance in literary exchange [see Guttfeld, 2008], his works received translations into Czech, Slovak, Russian, Lithuanian, as well as major Western-European languages (Spanish, German, French) before they were translated into the language in which most of the world's fantasy works originate. Of the professional translators into English whose versions of at least one story were officially published (Michael Kandel, Danusia Stok, David French), none are both native speakers of the source language and familiar with the genre.

On the other hand, translations of Sapkowski's works were also prepared by fans, representing a very wide spectrum of translation skills, from professional-level to enthusiastic but hardly successful efforts. With only a sample of his work translated into English for Anglophone press (*Warsaw Voice*, by Agnieszka Zych in 1998), Polish fan translators apparently wished to advertise their favourite author abroad. Michael Kandel's translation of a short story bundled with a computer game may also be viewed as circulated outside traditional publishing distribution. The game itself, which might also be viewed as an adaptation of the text, created more demand for English translations in book form, which finally resulted in the Gollancz series translated by Stok.[1]

[1] Since one volume of Sapkowski's stories was skipped to keep up with the game, and a 5-year hiatus ensued between the publication of subsequent novels, a niche opened for a new wave of amateur translations, resulting in forum-based versions distributed on-line. However, just as the official translations by David French, who took over the Gollancz series from Stok, these fan renderings are based on previously introduced terminology (from the games and from Stok's translation). As largely

The complex universe of the series features examples of established fantasy lexis as well as a variety of authorial neologisms formed by borrowings, semantic shifts, and various word-formation processes. I will examine selected translations of Sapkowski's works into English by both amateur and professional translators to observe problems in the treatment of neologisms denoting fantastic creatures, stemming from 1) the medium of translation, and presence or absence of pressure from the series, 2) the translators' background (linguistic and cultural competence, familiarity with the genre and the works, fan or non-fan perspective). This group of terms has been selected since they constitute a crucial element of the fantastic world, a concept which might be viewed differently by those translators who are and those who are not readers of fantasy. Their disparate renderings will translate into the survival of some of the primary features of Sapkowski's works contributing to their huge success in Poland: the construction of the protagonist, the complexity of the presented world, its linguistic diversity, and the series' humour, often based on subverting expectations about decorum and juxtaposing language registers. Sapkowski's works feature a vast array of creature names which range from established names derived from folklore to borrowings, derivates, and coinages. Differences between the translators' competences and approach to genre will be examined on the example of scenes that involve 1) creature names featuring polysemy or representing semantic shifts, 2) mispronounced creature names, 3) juxtaposed terms for creatures indicating register differences between characters.

Potential impact of translator profile

Many Polish translators of Anglophone fantasy are fans of the genre themselves [Guttfeld, 2008], for whom reading fantasy, or speculative fiction in general, precedes translating. By contrast, the number of translators from Polish into English available to Anglophone publishers of fantasy, and the number of Polish fantasy texts translated into English is

derivative in this sense, neither French's translation nor these amateur renderings will be discussed in this paper.

so small that the situation is radically different; as will be illustrated later, the first book translations of Sapkowski into English have been done by a translator who has apparently little experience as either a translator or a reader of fantasy.

In the case of fantasy, genre competence could manifest itself in the knowledge of certain vocabulary items, intertextual references, etc. as well as the ability to assume a certain mindset characteristic for the genre's readers. Indeed, I would argue the chief difficulty in translating speculative fiction for "outsider" translators is not just terminology (although plenty of genre-characteristic vocabulary items do exist) but primarily a readiness to delve into the imaginary world and consider it important. A translator who is a reader of fantasy, or ideally a fan of a particular world or series, and thus a member of the target audience, will likely devote attention to and try to preserve details barely visible to others. By contrast, a translator from outside the target group might run the risk of stereotyping the genre as consisting of trashy, mass-produced works, or fail to understand its chief attraction. At least to the Polish fans surveyed in 2012, the main reasons for reading speculative fiction included immersion in a different world [Guttfeld, 2013], whose separateness, complexity and internal logic are values in themselves.

All these qualities may potentially be disregarded by translators who are not fantasy readers themselves. The stereotypical perception of speculative fiction (again, at least according to its surveyed readers) casts it as literature for (mental) adolescents. As a result, fantastic elements in fantasy might be perceived as purely arbitrary in a way that absolves the translator from preserving their interconnections and connections to aspects of extra-textual reality. For a reader of fantasy, this is an obvious misconception: fantasy worlds are rarely completely autonomous, if only because the language used to describe them relies on the one developed to discuss reality. In fact, often the setting is at least partially meant to be connected to a specific period in history or a shared literary heritage, which require the translator's attention. Moreover, regardless of the setting, the fantastic elements usually at least attempt to form organized and internally coherent systems. As a result, factual and logical mistakes are possible in fantasy, and factual and logical mistakes are possible in its translation if the translator lacks motivation to closely examine the text and the world it depicts.

Another result of a stereotypical view on fantasy is that the fantastic elements might be considered to be of secondary importance. A reader struggling to explain the phenomenon of fantasy's popularity among adult readers and seemingly serious writers might come to the conclusion that this must be literature about respectable realistic problems with the fantastic elements functioning as nothing but a conventional costume. Again, this attitude might translate into specific decisions in rendering fantasy texts: if the fantastic elements are perceived as non-crucial, they may be substituted with realistic ones, or their genre-specific meaning and connotations disregarded.

Naturally, the possibility of factual, logical and linguistic mistakes, neglectful or incompetent translations, caused by disregard for the genre as such, is hardly unique to fantasy and probably does not require illustration. The second phenomenon, involving the reduction or elimination of some fantastic elements, may be exemplified by one of the most controversial Polish translations of fantasy by a translator from outside the fandom, the rendering of *The Lord of the Rings* by Jerzy Łoziński. While the case merits a separate discussion, one of the rather overlooked features of the translation is its tendency toward reducing the source text's fantastic elements, such as references to magic, or reinterpreting them in terms of psychology, philosophy or politics. This is especially visible in the synopsis of the one of the volumes, where the translator probably felt he had most freedom and thus translated "returned from death" more realistically as "uniknął śmierci", or rendered "rescued him from the *spells* of Wormtongue" as "udało się wyleczyć go z apatii i wyrwać spod wpływu doradcy" [Tolkien, 1997a: 8-9, emphasis mine]. The translator seems to have considered the novel primarily as a vehicle for a philosophical and political message (an attitude visible in some of his other translation decisions which will not be discussed here). Against this realistic message, which the translator seeks to highlight, the fantasy elements seem a fanciful and perhaps rather embarrassing costume, an effect of a purely formal exercise, and may be treated as expendable, even against the express opinions of the author.

Finally, apart from translations failing to understand or respect the value of fantastic elements, an outsider's perspective on fantasy might also result in translations reflecting the translator's puzzlement: even if an "outsider" is aware of the existence and importance of a fantastic

element, it might still be difficult to interpret and thus be rendered in a safe way with the use of the most conservative translation procedures, such as literary translation by means of dictionary equivalents.

Naturally, in many cases the problems in rendering fantasy caused by a translator's attitude to the genre might be difficult to distinguish from the effects of insufficient linguistic competence (as will be illustrated on the example of one of the amateur translations), or of particular context in which a given translation was supposed to function. However, the notion of genre competence, encompassing both background reading and research but primarily, I believe, an understanding of what constitutes fantasy, will prove useful in diagnosing some of the shortcomings of the professional translation by Stok.

The *Witcher* series in English translations

As stated above, the Witcher world as available to Polish fans is now an extensive franchise, launched by a series of twelve short stories featuring the title character, then published in book form in two volumes, with one more story short forming a narrative frame.[2] After this 1986-1993 era of short stories, adapted for a series of comic books and a role-playing game, between 1994 and 1999 the author published the main five-volume series of novels, followed by another edition of a role--playing game, a film and a TV series. The next wave of interest in the world coincides with the success of a series of three computer games (2007-2015), followed by card games, board-games, another series of comic books (2011-2015), and – to come full circle – yet another prequel novel from Sapkowski in 2013. It was the also the last computer game which helped the author gain some popularity in the Anglophone world. Before 2007, he was known to the English-speaking reader only for one standalone short story, "The Malady", unconnected to his hallmark world.[3]

[2] Another short story, featuring the protagonist's parents, constitutes a prequel to the series, and yet another features the characters, but remains a playful text situated outside the main narrative timeline. These have not been translated to date.

[3] Translated by Wiesiek Powaga in *Polish Writing: Prose and Poetry from Poland*.

The causes of Sapkowski's success in Poland, all of them setting clear translation challenges, seem to be threefold: the protagonist, the world, and the humour. First, the protagonist he offered was an attractive mixture of fantasy tropes: almost as educated as the upper-class magic users, and involved in a relationship with a sorceress, he is nevertheless a man of action, counted among the rather lower strata of the society. An outsider able to adapt to any circumstances, he maintains a sense of individuality and distance from his commissioners, resembling a hard-boiled detective, who interacts with the powerful and loves a sophisticated femme fatale, but spends most of his time among the lower classes, keeping his common touch. This is reflected in the language of his foils, whose register varies from formal, modern, scientific, to stylized, rustic and archaic.

Secondly, what certainly contributed to Sapkowski's success is that his world features modern problems, not usually tackled by fantasy, from racism to drug abuse, in a complex and harshly realistic way. The fantastic elements are not perceived awe-inspiring or marvelous; instead, they are discussed from a very practical perspective, and embedded in a network of down-to-earth interests. Many of the themes responded to the needs of the Polish audience of the 1990s, portraying forces of politics and economy at work in the fantasy world. Again, this realism is reflected in the language, which is often colloquial, sometimes vulgar and primitive, suggesting a lifelike level of ignorance and obscenity. The class-conscious protagonist generally sticks to straightforward, standard Polish, but is able to adjust his style to that of the interlocutor, which reflects his liminal status.

Finally, the series, especially the short stories, derived much popularity from the abundance of humorous cultural and intertextual allusions, including ironic reworking of classical texts and tropes of the genre. The collage nature of the series is reflected in its use of proper names and terms derived from or alluding to various languages (including some that are clearly inspired by English, which could present a translation problem). The language is also a source of humour, due to witty repartee, register diversity, as well as colloquialisms and vulgarisms subverting expectations about the fairy-tale, epic or quasi-Biblical poetics commonly assumed by fantasy.

To summarize, if the features chiefly contributing to Sapkowski's popularity are to be preserved in translation, the language of the target

version needs to be as diverse as the various aspects of the protagonist and his interactions; as realistic as the presented world; and as humorous and robust in the clashes of registers it affords as the varieties of Polish used by the author. On just a few examples, the paper will illustrate how the various translations approach the problem.

Approaches to neology in selected English translations

Chronologically the first translation into English seems to be an undated (but pre-1998) amateur translation of excerpts from the first story in the series, "Wiedźmin", made available on the Internet by a certain Istredd 109, linked on the fan website *Andrzej Sapkowski Zone*. The translator was clearly a fan of the series, as evidenced by the nickname, derived from a story by Sapkowski, and apparently excited by the un--Tolkienian language, attempting to highlight the swearwords, informal style, and modern vocabulary. The translation is quite low on the scale of linguistic quality, and is unlikely to have been meticulously revised. Given the selection of the scenes (a fight scene, a conversation providing details of the depicted world), the aim was probably to showcase the series. Unsurprisingly for a fan, Istredd 109 pays much attention to world-building details, striving to preserve all the proper names in an unchanged form, and render the more unique terms for fantastic creatures, even those that could cause cultural problems, or ones he does not fully understand in the original. All these features of the translation are visible in the short excerpt quoted below:

> Parszywe czasy nastały – monologował Velerad pociągając z kufla. – Namnożyło się wszelkiego plugastwa. W Mahakamie, w górach, aż roi się od bobołaków. Po lasach dawniej aby wilki wyły, a teraz akurat: upiory, borowiki jakieś, gdzie nie spluniesz, wilkołak albo inna zaraza. Po wsiach rusałki i płaczki porywają dzieci, to już idzie w setki [Sapkowski, 1995: 11].

> Hard times – declared Velerad while draining his mug. – A lot of shit's been breeding. In Mahakam, in the mountains, it's crawling with Bobowaks. In the forests it used to be the wolves that howled, but now; wraiths, some kind of mushroom and shit, you can't spit without hitting a werewolf or some other crap. In the villages nymphs steal children by the hundreds [Sapkowski, trans. Istredd 109].

Apart from the enthusiasm for expletives, and the preservation of the original proper names (*Velerad*, *Mahakam*), what is notable is the translator's treatment of the names of fantastic creatures. *Wilkołak* has an established translation, *upiór* also finds a close equivalent, *rusałki* and *płaczki* are rendered by a joint term, *nymph* (which also denotes a feminine water creature), but it is the most enigmatic and unique terms, *bobołaki* and *borowiki* that deserve the most attention. The form *Bobowaks*, which is highly unnatural in English, is clearly an attempt to, as much as possible, keep the original term intact. The translator does not realize or chooses to disregard the etymology behind the term, which combines the term for an unspecified childhood spook, and a skin-changer alike to a werewolf. At the same time, the capital letter proves the translator is aware of the role the creatures play in Sapkowski's world: unlike the other species, *bobołaki* are mentioned elsewhere is Sapkowski's writings as an ancient civilization, a people, which explains the capitalization. Such knowledge of the fantasy world does not necessarily go hand in hand with an understanding of the mythologies which went into its making, as attested by the treatment of *borowiki*; rather than Slavic wood demons, the translator understands these to be a species of mushrooms, as dictated by the common modern meaning of the word, and translates the term accordingly. Although this lack of cultural or linguistic competence results in something very much alike to Łoziński's reduction of fantasy elements, Istredd's motivation is probably the exact opposite: rather than attempting to eliminate a fantasy feature, perhaps he imagined the term to be a neosemanticism for a magical mushroom of Sapkowski's invention.

Istredd's translation of this excerpt might be contrasted with that by Michael Kandel, prepared (as "Spellmaker") for *A Polish Book of Monsters* anthology (published in 2010), but distributed in 2007 with the computer game. As might be expected, the translation by Kandel, a writer of speculative fiction himself, with an extensive experience in translating linguistically inventive works by Lem from Polish, reads incomparably better than that by Istredd:

> All sorts of filth have multiplied. In Apiph, in the hills, an infestation of werecats. In the forests of yore a wolf might have howled: now it's vampires, trolls, ghouls, you can't spit without hitting a goblin or some other abomination.

> Undines in the shires, hags making off with offspring, hundreds of cases of that now [Sapkowski, trans. Kandel, 1999].

The translator uses a much more varied and colourful English, playfully ranging between registers in a way characteristic of Sapkowski. He also introduces wordplay ("off with offspring") and allusions to the culture of Anglophone countries ("undines in the shires") as opposed to Istredd's *nymphs*. In other places, he introduces more items specific of the target culture, including creatures familiar from target-culture folklore (*changeling*, *banshee*), and more elements of humour in compensation for what the translation must inevitably lose of stylistic uniqueness. Unlike Istredd, Kandel does not exhibit a fan's attitude toward Sapkowski's world; nor does he need to, since he was only contracted for this single story, not the whole series, in a period where there was no great pressure from the internationally recognizable franchise. This is clearly visible in his relaxed attitude to proper names, which are coined anew even where they are devoid of semantic meaning in the source language and such an intervention might seem unfounded; for instance, in the narrative quoted above (by *Hrobost*, not *Velerad*, in Kandel's version), the dwarf city of *Mahakam* is called *Apiph*.

Having a native-speaker's and a writer's ease with English, and able to treat the story as a standalone text, Kandel apparently enjoys making up these names, prioritizing the humorous effect. Naturally, he does not cling to Sapkowski's neologism *bobołaki* but coins the much more natural term *werecats*. He also multiplies the names of creatures: in the above excerpt alone, he has three items ("vampires, trolls, ghouls") in place of Sapkowski's two ("upiory, borowiki"), a strategy that, for a fan of the series, would mean introducing new elements into the fantasy world. In this sense, if one wishes to learn whether trolls or vampires are supposed to inhabit a particular land in Sapkowski's world, or even exist there, Istredd's translation might be a more reliable source, while Kandel treats the budding world as little but a generic fantasy setting, where such elements are mostly interchangeable. Since both vampires and trolls are mentioned in other texts by Sapkowski, and receive their own descriptions, Kandel's renderings would be confusing if adopted for the whole franchise; but as this was never the plan, Kandel was free to experiment.

In fact, in his pursuit of interesting neologisms and proper names, Kandel loses, or perhaps does not even consider, the consistency of his renderings. *Bobołaki* not only get a more natural translation in his version of the story: the get two, *werecats* and (further on) *trolls*, which, as visible in the excerpt quoted above, is also Kandel's term for *upiory* or *borowiki*. Kandel also gives two alternative names to the king of a neighbouring country (rendering *Vizimir* as *Cuthbond* and *Glothur*), and the country's capital (rendering *Novigrad* as *Kloffok* and *Globbur*); while none of these plays any major role in the story, they feature extensively in further stories and novels by Sapkowski, a factor that would probably make any fan-translator attempt to preserve them in a consistent form.

The same story was also translated by Danusia Stok, and published in the first Gollancz volume, *The Last Wish*. At the time, Stok, the British-born author of a Polish phrasebook and self-study guide, had no experience in translating speculative fiction and, more importantly, little experience in reading it in Polish, as strongly implied by her rendering of *niziołek*, a canonized Polish translation of Tolkien's *halfling*, as *Lowlander*, on the basis of associations with *niski* rather than the term's established fantasy usage. Stok's translation of Sapkowski, due to the pressure from the series and franchise, is much less flippant about the proper names; the perspective of translating a whole set of stories makes the translator introduce only minor modifications to the original proper names. Neither does she multiply the creature names as freely as Kandel: in her rendering of the same excerpt, there are six terms for fantastic creatures for Sapkowski's six:

> 'Foul times,' Velerod muttered, drinking deep from his tankard. 'All sorts of filth has sprung up. Mahakam, in the mountains, is teeming with bogeymen. In the past it was just wolves howling in the woods, but now it's kobolds and spriggans wherever you spit, werewolves or some other vermin. Fairies and rusalkas snatch children from villages by the hundreds [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2007: 6-7].

However, although she follows the Polish text much closer than Kandel, Stok also loses track of some of the minor background elements: while *bobołaki* are initially rendered as *bogeymen* (which conveys the association with childhood fright), they are later in the same story referred to as *spriggans* (a term earlier used for *browiki*), and in another story – as *weretots*.

The consequences of Stok's relative lack of experience with fantasy come to the foreground in her translation of another story, "Mniejsze zło", which can be compared to a fan translation by Piotr Krasnowolski (as "Lesser Evil"). The latter is an interesting case: produced and published online in 1999, it is an unofficial translation performed by a fan, who happened to be a professional translator, consulted the author, and obtained his permission. As a fan of the series, Krasnowolski sticks close to the original proper names and world-building details, although he was not about to translate and showcase more than a single story. His variants of creature names are also quite close to the original ones, although he tries to suggest the type of a creature and facilitate the pronunciation by Anglophone readers. Familiar with the series, the depicted world, and the genre, Krasnowolski is able to tell the crucial world-building elements from those he can use (successfully, on the whole) to create a humorous effect. In his rendering of *bobołaki*, Krasnowolski is close to both Kandel (with his *werecats*) and to Stok (who has *weretots* here), rendering them as *werebobos*.

The most notable difference between Krasnowolski and Stok, however, concerns another creature name, *kikimora*, a term derived from Slavic folklore but used by Sapkowski to denote a spider-like marsh monster. Here, Stok stays very close to Sapkowski's version of the name, using *kikimora* [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2007: 76], although the term looks unnatural in English, rather like a plural (which is Stok's version is regular, *kikimoras*), while Krasnowolski modifies it to *kikimore*. This is of secondary concern, since the term is meant to be a specialized one, used by the monster-slaying protagonist and educated magic-users, but strange to most commoners, who mispronounce it in a comical way. In one of those clashes of registers typical of Sapkowski's prose, a village elder calls the creature *kociozmora*, a nonce formation revealing the speaker's inability to expand his lexicon. Krasnowolski tries to duplicate this effect by creating a plausible and comically incongruent distortion of *kikimore* ("kinky mare"), while Stok translates the distorted term literally, as if it were another name for an element of the imaginary world. The term *felispectre* [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2007: 77] shows no similarity to *kikimora* and fails to create humour in the scene. It might be hypothesized that, with little experience concerning the genre of fantasy, the translator in this case proved unable to position herself inside

the imaginary world and tell its actual element, denoted by a neologism, from a nonce formation created by an uneducated speaker. While for a fan translator the aim of translation would be to present a story set in an imaginary world, Stok seems concerned with dutifully recreating the neologisms, regardless of their function.

Fantastic meaning and dictionary meaning

Stok's way of rendering such terms is often based on dictionary equivalents or, as in the case of *kociozmora*, on dictionary equivalents of their discernible elements (*kocia* + *zmora* calqued as *feline* + *spectre*): a safe translation that could be the result of the translator hedging her bets in the face of an unfamiliar genre and series. However, dictionary equivalents are register-blind and the resulting rendering of *kociozmora* does not work on either the level of the scene or the whole world depicted by the series: it disregards the language varieties the scene is supposed to juxtapose, as the term *felispectre*, with its Latinate etymology, does not seem fitting for a simple commoner, and in effect abolishes the class difference between the protagonist and his interlocutor.

It is to be remembered that linguistic diversity is crucial in the amalgam world of Sapkowski, who likes to mix familiar and unfamiliar terms as well as proper names derived from a variety of cultures. Sapkowski visibly enjoys managing and mixing levels of exoticism by using elements of real world cultures and languages; some geographical names (e.g. *Daevon*, *Novigrad*, *Cairngorm*, *Skellig*, *Powys*, *Exeter*, *Łukomorze*) are borrowed directly or with slight modifications from various countries and languages for their sound and the associations they evoke (for instance, the city of Oxenfurt is, like Oxford, the seat of a famous university). He also forms character names by means of such borrowings, regardless of their original meanings (*Angouleme*, *Demawend*, *Freixenet*, *Toussaint*, *Roggeveen*, *de Vries*, *Dijkstra*, *Coehoorn*, etc.), sometimes choosing from among names of various species, particularly fish and insects, in Latin (*Loxia*, *Fringilla*) or Polish (*Niszczuka*, *Piskorz*, *Pluskolec*, *Remiz*, *Zakorek*, *Złotolitka*). Stok usually reacts to such Polish names by finding a dictionary equivalent (e.g. translating the personal name *Pluskolec* as *Boatbug*, both of which signify the same

insect). She treats the names of fantastic creatures in a similar way, which, unfortunately, detracts from those features that made Sapkowski successful in Poland: the protagonist, the world, and the humour, as will be illustrated below.

In *Blood of Elves*, the protagonist works on a barge, protecting it from the attack of monsters reputedly inhabiting the river. Accosted by one Linus Pitt, an Oxenfurt scholar, he describes his first-hand experiences with water monsters to the rather skeptical and disdainful intellectual. The contest between academic and practical knowledge is then settled in the witcher's favour, when the naturalist witnesses an attack by one of the very monsters whose existence he disputed, and Geralt saves the day. As illustrated by the excerpt below, the conversation between the scholar and the witcher highlights their different use of language:

> – Żagnica? To jakaś ludowa nazwa. Wolałbym, byście posługiwali się nazewnictwem naukowym. Hmm… Żagnica… doprawdy nie wiem, który gatunek macie na myśli…
>
> – Mam na myśli kostropate potworzysko, długie na dwa sążnie, przypominające obrośnięty glonami pniak, mające dziesięć łap i szczęki jak piły.
>
> – Opis pozostawia wiele do życzenia pod względem naukowej ścisłości. Czyżby chodziło o któryś z gatunków z rodziny *Hyphydridae*?
>
> – Nie wykluczam tego – westchnął Geralt. – Żagnica, z tego, co wiem, pochodzi z wyjątkowo parszywej rodziny, żadna nazwa nie jest dla tej rodziny krzywdząca [Sapkowski, 1994: 164].

The effect is undoubtedly meant to be comical. As the scholar keeps correcting the witcher ("hyfydra, którą uparcie nazywacie żagnicą", 166), they both showcase a number of common and scientific terms for various creatures. The scene stresses the diversity of the depicted world, where different vocabulary is used by different social classes, as well as the liminal position of the protagonist: as visible in a further excerpt, while Pitt is limited to academic register, Geralt is able to use both sophisticated and common terms, and insists on the latter at least partially to dissociate himself from the refined scholar:

> Rodzina *Hyphidridae*, należąca do rzędu *Amphipoda*, czyli Obunogów, obejmuje cztery znane nauce gatunki. Dwa z nich żyją wyłącznie w wodach tropikalnych. W naszym klimacie spotyka się natomiast, obecnie bardzo rzadko, niewielką *Hyphydra longicauda*, oraz osiągająca nieco większe rozmiary

Hyphydra marinata. […] W księgach znaleźć też można wzmianki o podgatunku *Pseudohyphydra*, żyjącym w bagnistych wodach Angrenu. Jednak ostatnio uczony Bumbler z Aldersbergu dowiódł, że jest to całkowicie odrębny gatunek z rodziny Mordidae, czyli Zagryźców. Żywi się wyłącznie rybami i małymi płazami. Został nazwany *Ichtyovorax bumbleri*. […] …

– Stwór, o którym mówicie, to żyrytwa, w Starszej Mowie nosząca nazwę cinerea. A jeśli uczony Bumbler twierdzi, że żywi się wyłącznie rybami, to wnoszę, że nigdy nie kąpał się w jeziorku, w którym żyrytwy bytują [Sapkowski, 1994: 167].

Characteristically for Sapkowski, the seemingly neological Polish terms, as well as the Latinate ones, are not his inventions, but actual if little known names for species of insects. *Żagnica* denotes a hawker or darner dragonfly, while *żyrytwa* is an insect popularly known as a waterbug or saucer bug. Similar borrowed terms appear throughout Sapkowski's texts: his *wijun* is a myriapodan, *przeraza* is a species of fish knows as chimera, *wojsiłek* is another insect commonly called a hangingfly or scorpionfly, etc. However, this biological etymology is of no importance for the narrative, as the Polish names are obviously selected not for their denotation, but for their evocativeness and fantasy potential. *Żyrytwa* seems to be connected to *żerować* (to feed) and *brzytwa* (razor); żagnica – to *żgać* (to stab) or *żagiew* (firebrand); *wijun* clearly dervies from *wić* (to slither); *przeraza* connotes *przerażać* (to frighten), etc. In fact, Sapkowski's descriptions of the creatures prove they have little to do with their namesakes: the fish chimera gives name to a monster inhabiting deserts and mountains [Sapkowski, 1995: 130], *wojsiłek* is said to have hands [ibidem: 167], and the underwater monster *żagnica* certainly looks nothing like a dragonfly.

However, Stok clearly favours the dictionary meaning of each of those terms over its connotative potential, and renders the names in a way which eliminates the heteroglossia of the source text. Since the English biological nomenclature she relies on is almost universally Latin-based, Latinate diction takes over the stage, with *aeschna* hardly classifiable as a vulgar, common name, deserving to be scoffed by the scholar:

'Aeschna? That's some kind of common name. I would rather you used the scientific terminology. Hmm… aeschna… I truly do not know which species you have in mind–'

> ‘I’m thinking of a bumpy and rough-skinned monster four yards in length resembling a stump overgrown with algae and with ten paws and jaws like cut-saws.’
>
> ‘The description leaves a lot to be desired as regards scientific precision. Could it be one of the species of the *Hyphydridae* family?’
>
> ‘I don’t exclude the possibility,’ sighed Geralt. ‘The aeschna, as far as I know, belongs to an exceptionally nasty family for which no name can be abusive [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2008: 174].

While the original scene juxtaposed international Latinate names (*hyphydra*), their Polonized variants (*hyfydra*), and local Polish names (*żagnica*), the translation uses *hyphydra* and *aeschna*, which do not represent such a contrast (“the hyphydra, which you persist in calling an aeschna” [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2008: 176]). Duplicate terms, in Polish and Latin, used in the original to signify taxonomical genera (*Mordidae* / *Zagryźce*, *Amphipoda* / *Obunogi*), are rendered exclusively with Latin-based terms, as visible in the excerpt below:

> The *Hyphydriae* family, belonging to the *Amphipoda* order, includes four species known to science. Two live exclusively in tropical waters. In our climate, on the pther hand, one can come across – though very rarely now – the not-so-large *Hyphydra longicauda* and the somewhat larger *Hyphydra marinata*. […]… Mention can also be found, in the great books, of the subspecies *Pseudohyphydra*, which lives in the marshy waters of Angren. However, the learned Bumbler of Aldersberg recently proved that this is an entirely different species, one from the Mordidae family. It feeds exclusively on fish and small amphibians. It has been named *Ichtyovorax bumbleri*. […]
>
> The creature you’re talking about is an ilyocoris, called a cinerea in Elder Speech. And if the learned Bumbler states that it feeds exclusively on fish then I assume he has never bathed in a lake with an ilyocoris [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2008: 177].

In the translation, the terminology used the second speaker, Geralt, does not differ from that used by the learned tutor (the first speaker); moreover, to an English reader, both *ilyocoris* and *cirenea* are probably equally unfamiliar, although one stands for a common term (*żyrytwa*), and the other for a term in the language of elves. As a result, not only is the language impoverished and the object of debate in the scene rendered quite obscure; the protagonist’s personality and social position also undergo a shift, the world depicted in the series is made less

complex, and the fantastic creatures, its crucial element, are more difficult to imagine for the readers. Some of the other evocative names of fictitious creatures receive a similar treatment: the translator follows the scientific denotation of the terms borrowed from biology textbooks by Sapkowski, rather than the use to which the author put them. *Przeraza* is translated as *chimera* [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2008: 116], *wojsiłek* becomes a *mecopteran* [Sapkowski, trans. Stok, 2007: 160], and *wijuny* are rendered as *myriapodans* (165) although, as in the case of *kociozmora*, the term is supposed to be used by illiterate commoners.[4]

What makes this translator sacrifice so many important values that have contributed to the success of the original texts seems to be the anxiety of somebody who, not being one of the target readers and perhaps not understanding the genre, can be never sure where the imaginary begins and where it ends, and feels it safest to stick to the dictionary meaning, reducing the fantastic to the certainty of a biology textbook. The source of the problem is not encyclopedic knowledge of the genre (after all, *kikimora* and *żyrytwa* as creature names are not typical lexemes), as much as intuition of the way in which the text is likely to be read.

The renderings might be contrasted with two more translations of Sapkowski's texts featuring the same creature names: the translation of an excerpt from Sapkowski's story "Głos rozsądku" by Agnieszka Zych for *Warsaw Voice* (1998), and the adaptation of Sapkowski's works for the purposes of the computer game. While the excerpt by Zych is too short to make any definitive statements, she seems to follow the connotations, not denotations, of some of the terms. Zych's treatment of *żagnica* proves she realizes the biological origins of the term (and, presumably, the other two terms of this type: *żyrytwa* and *przeraza*): by modifying the spelling of "dragonfly", she points at the denotation but draws attention to the possibility of reading the word literally, as referring to a being with the features of both a fly and a dragon:

[4] In the case of the *chimera*, it might initially seem that the translator chose to depart from the original text and substitute a more established type of fantastic creature for Sapkowski's invention (which in itself would be a risky technique, like the introduction of *trolls*). However, the plural used by Stok (*chimerae*) proves that she means the fish species, not the mythical creature; this is not a creative departure from the source text, but a departure from its spirit, by following its letter.

> Mantikora, wyvern, mglak, *żagnica*, *żyrytwa*, *przeraza*, leszy, wampir, ghul, graveir, wilkołak, gigaskorpion, strzyga, zjadarka, kikimora, wipper [Sapkowski, 1995: 121].
>
> Manticora, vivern, fogger, *dragon-fly, girazor, horribler*, wooder, vampire, ghoul, graveir, werewolf, gigascorpion, lamia, eater, kikimore, vipper [Sapkowski, trans. Zych, 1998, emphasis mine].

In translating *żyrytwa* and *przeraza*, Zych creates neologisms that mirror the associations triggered by the Polish words: *girazor* connotes *razor*, and *horribler* features the associations. *Leszy*, the name of a Slavic wood spirit, and *zjadarka* are treated in a similar way Zych is also willing to modify the spelling of some of the neologisms to a more familiar one (*kikimora* into *kikimore*) or, conversely, a less familiar one (*wyvern*, a borrowing from English, is strikingly non-Polish due to its spelling, an effect duplicated in the translation by the spelling *vivern*).

The term *przeraza* also appears in the computer game *The Witcher* (2007). Bundled with Kandel's short story translation, featuring his ingenious if erratic terminology, the game itself needed more consistent and recognizable versions of key terms that would be closer to the literary originals. Since the game was largely developed by fans of Sapkowski's series, the need was not only motivated by marketing needs but probably also by attachment to the familiar lexis and a need to showcase the fantastic world to international audiences. In cooperation with Gollancz, the game developers provided the publisher with a list of suggested English versions of key neologisms and proper names, such as Dand(i/e)lion. Nevertheless, some differences appeared between the two versions, as the game developers proved more willing to depart from the original wording in the interest of euphony and more natural spelling (while the city *Wyzima* is called *Wyzim* by Stok, the game has *Vizima*; where Stok has *kikimora*, the game, like Krasnowolski and Zych, opts for *kikimore*). Most tellingly, in place of Stok's *chimera* for *przeraza*, the game has *frightener*, a neologism that, like Zych's *horribler*, abandons biological denotation for a functional meaning (danger), and agrees with the monster's appearance. The last issue is crucial for the game, which had to create a visual form for the creature, which, as might be expected, has little to do with a species of fish.

Removed, in terms of its treatment of neologisms, from both the freedom of Kandel's translation (which presented the writer rather than the world) and from the rather misplaced fidelity of Stok (who sacrificed the imaginary for the realistic), the translation featured in the game seems closest to the reading of fantasy by its fans: attending to world-building detail, highlighting the imaginary world and its fantastic elements.

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Summary

The paper discusses possible differences between translations of fantasy executed by translators who are themselves members of the source text's audience, i.e. readers and enthusiasts of the genre, and those who are not, on the example of strategies used to render names of fantastic creatures in the several English

translations of works by Andrzej Sapkowski. The examined translations differ in terms of translators' experience (from amateurs to professionals), competence in the source and target languages and cultures, as well as the presence or absence of series and franchise pressure on consistency. The chief comparison concerns the rendering of nonce formations (mispronounced names) and neosemanticisms (names borrowed by the author from real species for their evocative etymology).

Keywords: translation, fantasy, neologisms, Sapkowski

Streszczenie

Fantastyczne neologizmy w przekładzie: nazwy istot fantastycznych w profesjonalnych i amatorskich tłumaczeniach cyklu o Wiedźminie na język angielski

Artykuł wskazuje możliwe różnice między przekładami fantasy dokonanymi przez tłumaczy będących i niebędących członkami grupy docelowej, tzn. czytelnikami i miłośnikami tego gatunku, na przykładzie traktowania nazw istot fantastycznych w kilku angielskich przekładach utworów Andrzeja Sapkowskiego. Omawiane przekłady różni też stopień doświadczenia tłumaczy, poziom kompetencji w zakresie obu języków i kultur, a także obecność lub nieobecność presji przekładu całej serii tekstów. Główne opisywane różnice dotyczą przekładu neologizmów użytych jednorazowo (nazw błędnie wymawianych przez postacie) i neosemantyzmów (zapożyczonych nazw istniejących realnie gatunków).

Słowa kluczowe: przekład, fantasy, neologizmy, Sapkowski