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**Navigating the Translation Techniques of Cultural References
in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt***

BACHELOR'S THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

In the span of a few decades video games stopped being seen as a hobby for the so-called ‘nerds’, available only in certain places like the arcades and grew in popularity. Nowadays everyone knows what video games are and a large number of the population enjoys spending their free time interacting with the pixel world with the use of computers, consoles and mobile devices. The growth of video games’ popularity allowed new companies to appear that focused on game development making them even more available for the wider audience.

However, video games are not only a relaxing way to spend some time after a long day of work but they are also an important medium for sharing one’s culture, language and views. With the use of games, the developers are able to show and explain certain values and educate people on important topics. Games are just another medium used for storytelling and thanks to translation and localization people all around the world are able to explore different aspects of life, experience rich narrations and realities that are not easily available for them in the real world which will consequently open their minds to new, unknown things. They can teach people understanding and tolerance.

Game translation is a key challenge for the creators as games often include various cultural references that need to be interpreted to retain authenticity and comprehensibility for a diverse audience and translators need to have an understanding of cultures they are tasked to write about. It is an important job as good localization is sure to catch interest of people who might end up buying the game.

In this project we will investigate cultural references found in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and analyze the techniques used and possible explanations for such choices.

CHAPTER 1

1.1. DEFINITION OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is a type of translation used in media that, as the term audiovisual is explained by the Cambridge Dictionary as to be used to refer to something that involves seeing and hearing, including both audio and visuals. It mostly concerns movies, TV shows and games. It is an important process that makes the medium more accessible to people who not only speak other languages and need translation but also for people hard of hearing, who need subtitles. As a result, it increases the popularity and consumption of such titles (Martínez, 2020, p. 3).

The audiovisual translation had its growth in the twentieth century thanks to the popularization of television. According to Remael (2010) the earliest form of AVT may have been the translation of intertitles in silent films. The subtitles, put on the ‘title cards’ which contained dialogue and key plot points, were translated into other languages and redistributed around the world (Surdyk, 2020). Higher demand for it came with the introduction of talking roles in the 1920s thanks to the development of technology and later in the second half of the century to the rising popularity of technology and, later in the second half of the century, to the rising popularity of TV shows. Apart from television, the second half of the 20th century was the birth time of another colossus – video games. When talking about the oldest video game, most of us will automatically think about *Pong*, a simple table tennis simulator. However, as stated by Steven L. Kent (2001), the first game ever created was actually *Tennis for Two*, invented in 1958 by Willy Higinbotham, a scientist at the Brookhaven National Laboratory, 14 years before *Pong*.

As gaming becomes more prominent and there are more studios being created daily, audiovisual translation becomes crucial for those who want their product to sell. The process can be challenging, the difficulty comes in the linguistic complexity of in-game dialogues, the terminology used, the cultural differences, translating humor, and many more. Neither subtitling nor dubbing should contain immersion-breaking errors as they can negatively affect the player experience, resulting in more returns and

losses. The translation should help players connect with the storyline, bond with the characters, and easily comprehend the conflict presented.

1.2 TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN GAMING

When looking for the meaning of the word ‘translation’ most of us will use Google as it is the most accessible way to search for information. What it shows us is the definition taken from Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) which reads “something that is translated, or the process of translating something, from one language to another”. However, does it give us enough information?

Digging deeper, we can find academic papers written about translation with the author's own explanations. One of the definitions, as provided by Newmark (1988) states that translation is “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text”.

According to Catford (1965), “translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)”. By that, he explains that it is important to find words that hold the same meaning in both languages. The information taken from the SL should remain unchanged in the TL.

From both statements, we can understand translation as simply as reproducing various kinds of messages by changing their SL into TL. The difficulty comes from the differences in languages. Each language has its own rules and grammatical structures, there are jokes, specific terminologies and customs which may lose the original meaning when taken out of the culture. Finding an equivalent can pose a challenge to the translator. To help with that, there are many strategies and techniques that must be taken into consideration

1.3 TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES FOR CULTURAL REFERENCES

Translation in a hindsight can be seen as something effortless, especially in less formal mediums like video games. There are many devices that can do it in seconds. In reality, it can be a long and demanding process. As Costales (2012, p. 349) underlines

“translation is a context-sensitive process and, as any human activity, it is also highly conditioned by the particular decisions and the choice of the translator who has to convey the meaning from the source culture to the target audience”.

It should be a translator’s main priority to keep the context as close to the original as possible. It is important for the audience from other countries to get the same experience as someone who understands the SL. As a consequence, we are presented with a number of questions. Is it possible to do that without losing any nuance? How can we achieve a translation that will not only be correct, but also will please the audience? Can we even do that?

Costales (2012) argues that when it comes to video games, there is no concept of right or wrong translation. What translators ought to do is preserve the experience of the game. The idea of how a translation should look like is a topic recurrently discussed in gaming communities. There are people who agree with Costales’ way of thinking. They do not care about how close it is to the original, as long as the context and the feel of the game remains the same they will be happy with the translation. However, there is also a loud group who have a different opinion. They want the translated text to be exactly the same. What can pose the greatest difficulty is translating culturally specific items – certain customs, ways of thinking, and especially humor – there are ideas in other cultures which are almost impossible to understand for people who were not born in it.

Translators are met with lots of obstacles in their job, it is important to know how to get through them. There are multiple techniques that can help with it, although it is important to remember that there is no one good method, there is no one strategy that is used for one genre, they can and should be mixed to preserve the meaning as closely as possible

1.3.1 Localization

Localization is a translation technique used for adapting texts for a certain region or culture. The main aim of localization is to ensure that the game is aligned with the local culture, language conventions, and legal and technical requirements as to be understood by the target audience. There is a need to remember that a localization

process does not concentrate solely on technical adjustments, but also on cultural nuances (Gacek, 2019). Translators not only have to understand the target language well, but be well-versed in the culture it is related to.

Localization is key for international success for the reason that it increases accessibility for players from other cultures. It is easier for people to immerse themselves into the game if it is understood by them.

1.3.2 Domestication vs foreignization

The idea of domestication and foreignization was first proposed by Lawrence Venuti, in his book *The Translator's Invisibility* that he published in the year 1995. Foreignization is a translation technique that aims to keep the elements of the original text in full, even if they might be unintelligible to the audience. The translator decides to keep all the cultural elements, phrases and references. As Costales (2012, p. 395) explains, “foreignization strategies are intended to keep the look and feel of the original game and transfer the atmosphere and the taste of the source culture into the target local”. The aim of it is to retain the authenticity and specifics of the original text.

It is a risky technique but can be used successfully in certain contexts. For example, when a game is set in a foreign country the translator might choose to use foreignization to make the atmosphere feel more real which will help the player to immerse themselves into the story. Costales (2012) brings up *Assassin's Creed* as a good example of well-made foreignization. The game is set in Italy and is based on several Italian locations, so certain aspects of the culture and names have been preserved in the English version of the game to make it feel as real as possible.

If the game does not require the audience to experience original culture then the translator can decide to use domestication instead. Domestication is a technique that aims to make the game more comprehensible to the player. As Fade Wang (2014, p. 2424) explains, domestication is “oriented to the target culture and in which unusual expressions to the target culture are transmuted and changed into some familiar ones to make the translated text easy to be understood by the target readers”.

When using domestication, the translator tries to adjust the source text with the audience in mind by removing elements that are culturally alien or difficult to understand.

The difference between domestication and foreignization is the means of how the translators adapt the source text to the target language and culture. They either try to assimilate the text to the target culture (domestication) or to preserve the characteristics of the original text, even if they are foreign for the target audience.

1.3.3 Transcreation

Transcreation, as it is explained by the name itself, is a technique that combines the elements of translation and the creation of a text. According to Timofejeva (2023) “transcreation is a creative process that involves recreating content in a new language while maintaining its original meaning, style, and tone”. It is useful in advertisements, slogans and creative texts where it is important to convey emotions. The more complex and creative the text is, the more useful transcreation can be. Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) were the first to apply it to video games.

Transcreation is often seen in the RPG (role-playing game) genre. Translating certain names of items word-to-word can be a difficult task that is why a lot of translators opt to use transcreation, it gives them more freedom and can make the game more exciting for the gamers.

1.3.4 Literal translation

It is a word-to-word translation. The definition taken from Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) explains it as being “done by translating each word separately, without looking at how the words are used together in a phrase or sentence”.

In literal translation, the emphasis is on accuracy and faithfulness to the original, often without taking into account idiomatic differences and cultural contexts between

languages therefore it is most often found in legal documents. Literal translation can lead to vagueness and loss of meaning in the target text

1.3.4 No translation

It is a translation technique that, as Costales (2012, p. 397) writes, “may be subject to a wider foreignization strategy”. It is used in games where translation of certain terms or names would ruin the player’s experience.

A well-known case of such translation can be found in popular multiplayer games like *League of Legends* where certain phrases were not translated into any other languages. People working on the translations of the game decided to leave out English expressions like ‘pentakill’ as they are already well-known in the community and understood by those interested in games. According to Costales (2012, p. 398), some items in video games are sometimes named after mythological places or biblical events or they are given a proper noun, therefore they should not be translated “as they are regarded to be specific terminology associated with the story”.

1.4 MANAGING CULTURAL CONTEXTS IN TRANSLATION

Culture is a complex and multifaceted concept which encompasses a wide range of aspects of people's social lives. It can be defined as a set of values, beliefs, traditions, behaviors, language, symbols, religion and art that are shared by a community and, as Nirmala and Krishnagopal Rajanala (2015, p. 2) underline, "are learnt during childhood from the environment and stays through one's adult life". It can include almost anything and everything. Larson (1984) agrees with this notion, he characterizes culture as "complex beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people share".

Culture is something that is close to us even if we do not feel it during our daily lives, it is a big part of it that is why seeing it be portrayed accurately is an important thing to a lot of us and that is why we get mad when it is handled in a bad way or is completely misconstrued.

Translating culture sensitive items can be a delicate process that requires a deep understanding of not only the culture of the source text but also of the culture of the target text. According to Morina (2013, p. 165) "Translation plays an important role in increasing awareness and understanding among diverse cultures and nations". The translator should be well-versed in the cultures they will be handling, which encompasses the understanding of traditions, values, societal norms and the history of the region. The most difficult aspect of translating cultural items are the differences in cultures. Larson (1984, p. 150) points out that "different cultures have different focuses. Some societies are more technical and others less technical." which can be seen in the amount of vocabulary used in languages when talking about certain topics.

When met with the challenge of having to translate other cultures, it is critical to avoid the spread of any stereotypes unless it is important to the story of the game. It is important to portray the culture exactly as it is to not offend or confuse anyone.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 RESEARCH AREA AND OBJECTIVES

It is challenging to address all issues related to the translation of cultural references; this project will focus solely on the Polish culture depicted in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. The primary aim is to answer the questions: why is the translation of such references important, and how should it best be approached? Additionally, I will examine whether the translators of *The Witcher* have successfully accomplished this task.

This project will attempt to demonstrate whether the translation of Polish culture in *The Witcher* remains faithful to the original in the English version, and how closely the English version adheres to the original cultural references as they exist in Polish culture. Therefore, it is important that the original text, as well as the translation reflects reality as accurately as possible.

2.1.1 Research questions

How should the cultural references be translated in games?

What are the most effective techniques for translating cultural references?

How does translating cultural references affect the game's reception?

Why do translators leave cultural items untranslated?

2.2 CORPUS AND THE CONTEXT

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt is a Role-playing game created by the Polish studio CD Projekt RED, it is a third installment of a series of games inspired by the books written by Andrzej Sapkowski. The game premiered in 2015 for PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

The game tells a story of Geralt, a monster hunter dubbed with the title of a Witcher. In this particular game the main focus is on the invasion of Northern Kingdoms by the Empire of Nilfgaard and Geralt's personal mission - getting rid of the titular Wild Hunt. The story is set in an open world divided by different regions, each with unique scenery. The player is free to explore the whole map, engage in various side missions and look for hidden secrets. The game provides a challenging combat system which requires the skillful use of weapons, signs (simple magic spells), elixirs and bombs. Additionally, the choices made by players influence the story, there are several ending scenarios based on player's involvement which influences the replayability value as players may want to experience them all. *The Witcher 3* garnered international critical acclaim and fan support, it won several awards including The Game Awards 2015 in the Game Of The Year category.

The game takes around 100 hours of play time to complete. According to the site howlongtobeat.com, which gathers information from people about their times, finishing the main story takes 51.5 hours, 103 hours with all side quests and completionists who strive to find every little thing will have to spend 173 hours. For those interested in more, after winning the Game of the Year award, CD Projekt Red released another version of the base game with additional content that adds 4.5 hours of the main story, 22 hours of side quests, and it will take players 16 hours more to get the game to 100%.

Furthermore, two DLCs (downloadable content) are available that add more quests that expand the world and the story. *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt - Blood and Wine* takes 15 hours to finish the main story, 28.5 hours with all the side quests and 40.5 hours to complete everything. *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt - Hearts of Stone* has 10 hours of main content, it takes 14 hours to finish it with all the side quests and 18 hours to get 100%.

2.3 RESEARCH TOOLS

The tools used in research should be determined by asking the research question(s) and what is the best way to address them (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). "Qualitative research collects, analyzes, and interprets data by observing what people do and say." (Kandel, 2020, p. 2). Qualitative research is used to provide insight and understanding of phenomena found in everyday life, it allows us to gather information that we cannot explain with the use of numbers. As Berg (2020) explains, qualitative research covers definitions, concepts, symbols, metaphors and descriptions.

In contrast, quantitative research "involves looking at amounts, or quantities, of one or more variables of interest". (Rudolph et al., 2015, p. 23) It is a method that concerns itself with variables and their relationship which are measured in a numerical way. It is controlled and objective.

2.4 COURSE OF THE STUDY

The main research tool used in this paper is the game itself. There are many references to Polish culture in *The Witcher 3* but most of them are fleeting lines said by NPCs (non-playable characters) placed randomly around the world, finding them is optional and the information given by them is not of much importance thus giving translators more creative freedom. The most important references are found in side missions, most notable the mission concerning Dziady celebration and the wedding which was the main storyline in the DLC called *Hearts of Stone*.

Thanks to the user Mechtank who created a mod available on the website called Nexusmods that allows the creation of a .xml file with written dialogue, I have access to the transcript of English dialogue. Gathering Polish version of subtitles was done on my own by playing the game and writing everything down.

When playing the game I managed to find several references to Polish culture, I wrote them down and started researching by looking at various sources, including academic papers, books, and movies.

2.5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The study was done using quantitative research which is “a process of gathering, structuring and interpreting qualitative data to understand what it represents.” (Dye, n.d.) as well as contrastive analysis which is a tool in translations used to “consider the ways in which the translators negotiate the challenges of the source texts within the context” (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2014, p. 94)

The collected dialogues from the game were properly examined to find any cultural references then they had to be found in the Polish version of the game by playing it and looking for certain scenes on YouTube to confirm them and find Polish translations. Both language versions of dialogue were analyzed for any insight on the translation techniques used and the intentions behind them.

Chapter 3

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 PROPER NOUNS

Proper nouns in the game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* play an important role in creating a cultural identity in the world and help it appear more alive. Many of them reference Polish culture and were translated into English in a way that would help English speakers pronounce and understand them as it would be difficult to move around the world and remember names that are atypical.

Additionally, the translation of the nouns influences the atmosphere of the game giving it a local character, with everything else being in English the names being in Polish would look out of place.

3.1.1 Character Names

The name itself, the ‘witcher’ (‘wiedźmin’) comes from the word ‘wiedźmak’ meaning a male witch. The word is a neologism created by Sapkowski, the book series’ author. He wondered why the male equivalent of ‘a witch’ does not exist in the Polish language and decided to change that (SuperExpress, 2001). The profession never existed in the real world, as monsters described in the book do not exist, it is also Sapkowski’s own creation.

Character	Original text	Translation
Temerian Bandit 02	Chet, Lesh , back off. I'll teach this vagrant a lesson, man on freak.	Ciesław, Leszko , odstępście. Dam przybłędzie nauczkę w pojedynkę.

Tab. 1 “*First Names*”

Names in *the Witcher 3* were translated into the English language to closely resemble the original version. As Wang (2011, p. 1228) explains “Phonetically, some phonemes in foreign language can neither be heard clearly nor be pronounced correctly, thus posing on great barriers to memorizing them”. Translation of names, especially in games, is important as it allows the player to memorize them easier. Finding sounds and names in the language familiar to them will exponentially raise the probability of the player remembering them. Many times in the game the player is tasked to find a certain person or a certain name is mentioned in a dialogue, it is easier to follow the story if the player knows and remembers the characters.

Redanian Noble 02	Do you know our friend Vivaldi is in possession of five canvases by van der Knoob ?	Wyobraź sobie, że nasz przyjaciel Vivaldi jest w posiadaniu pięciu płócien van der Hooia...
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Tab.2 “*van der Knoob*”

The word *knob* is (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) a British slang for ‘a penis’. The funny name was definitely intentional as the other painter referenced later is named Longendijk, which sounds like ‘long dick’. The Polish version of the name also references male genitalia but in a more obscene way as ‘chuj’ is a swear word. The translation works really well as the topics of obscenities and sex are universally funny.

Olgierd von Everec	Squire Herodore 's new saber.	Nowej szabelki imię Bohatyrowicza.
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Tab.3 “*Herodore*”

One of Olgierd von Everec’s men is called Bohatyrowicz in Polish, it is a nod to the character Jan Bohatyrowicz of *Nad Niemnem* written by Eliza Orzeszkowa and released in 1888. In the English translation the name is Herodore which does not reference anything in the English culture. The translators decided to take ‘Bohater’ from Bohatyrowicz’s name and translate it literally as a ‘Hero’ and added the suffix -dore to make it sound like a surname.



Fig.1 “English grave”



Fig.2 “Polish grave”

On the southern end of Hauteville district in the city of Beauclair lays a cemetery. On many of the graves the player can find mentions of people who worked on the game but one of them stands out as it looks like an incoherent strand of letters. The name on it says Neimak Nap and stays the same in both language versions. However, it is not a random line of letters as they are two words mirrored. The grave says Pan Kamien which in Polish means ‘Mister Stone’.

3.1.2 Location Names

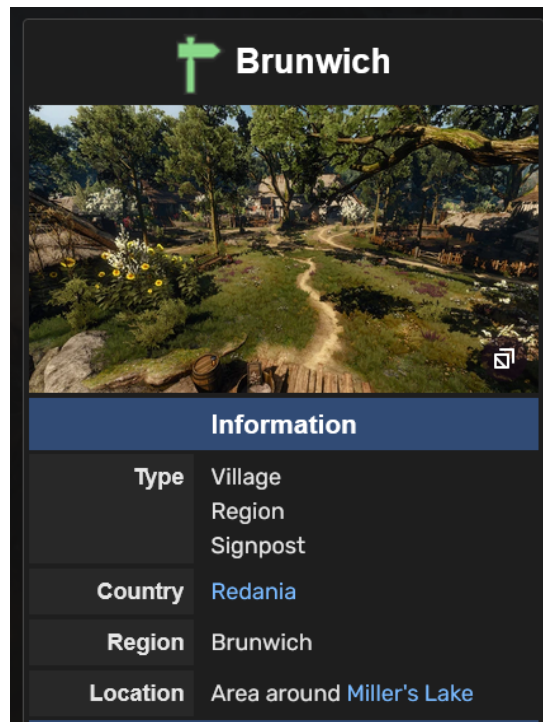


Fig.3 “Brunwich”

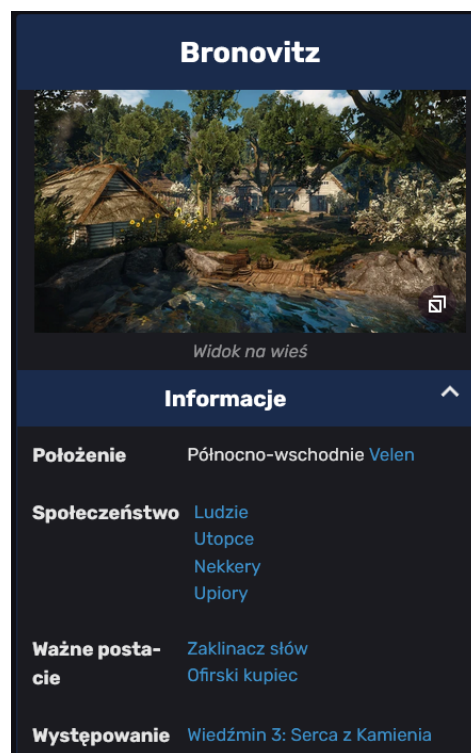


Fig.4 “Bronovitz”

The village was based on a Polish play, written by Stanisław Wyspiański in 1901 called *Wesele (The Wedding)*. The story takes place in a similar place called Bronowice. The name of the game's village in Polish language sounds like a germanized version of it, instead of using the real name Bronowice they called it Bronowitz.

In the English version they changed it to Brunwich, the beginning of the name was kept the same but a suffix -wich was added. The suffix -wic, "in Anglo-Saxon, signifies a dwelling-place" as it is mentioned by Riley (n.d). Many towns in Britain carry this suffix, including Middlewich and Nortwich. The change of the name was done so it would feel more domestic to the international, English speaking audience.

3.1.3 Mythical Creatures

Slavic mythology is full of fascinating creatures that had an important part in beliefs, rituals and folk stories. They portrayed emotions, illnesses and parts of nature that people did not understand. A lot of them are found in *The Witcher 3*, some of them based on the actual legends and some that only share the name.

The translation team had two ways of handling the names.

1. Literal translation

The names of the creatures would remain the same but, as they were not proper nouns, their meaning would be translated.

- Noonwraith (Południca)

A specter of a woman that would kidnap children and cause illness whose symptoms (aches, dizziness) are nowadays known as a heat stroke. Usually seen walking through the fields during noon, as it is in her name.

- Godlings (Ubożęta)

A spirit that protects the house, usually created from the souls of old ancestors. They brought luck and prosperity. The difference in the actual beliefs and the game is that in real life they were not seen as little children but as small men.

- Striga (Strzyga)

Strigas were known as a wraith. They were creatures that came back from the dead only to harm living people and spread sickness.

2. The names were left as they are with small changes in writing to make them easier to read for English native speakers.

- Kikimora

Kikimora was a creature that lived in houses. If the living space was left unattended or the owners did not care about it she would play pranks of them. Some of them would make noises at night, waking up children or ruining the owners' work. She was portrayed as a small lady with disheveled black hair, sometimes with chicken legs. In The Witcher 3 games she was changed into a huge spider.

- Leszy (Leshy)

A humanoid creature who guarded forests. Believed by some as evil, however his attitude towards humans was based on how they treated nature.

3.2 FOLKLORE REFERENCES

“Folklore is the collection of traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community passed through the generations by word of mouth.” (Michalopoulos and Meng Xue, 2021, p. 1993). Folklore encompasses a variety of elements including legends, stories, rituals, music, dance and artisanry. It is an important part of cultural heritage, and it allows us to look into the past and helps familiarize us with the customs and values of our ancestors. In media, folklore can help us familiarize with the world, we can learn about various cultures and understand them better.

3.2.1 Songs

Folk songs are an inherent part of folklore, they carry an educational, social and cultural function. As Kaučič (2005, p. 180) writes “in different contextual settings, the song’s function was different”. In the past, when the songs were created, the ‘writers’, which were the common folk, based them on their changing lives. In different circumstances different songs were created, we have old children’s songs (*Laboga dziewczuszki*), religious or ritual songs (*Włóczył się Jaryło*), dance songs (*Hej sokoły*), and many more. They are not only a source of entertainment but a notable way of connecting to one’s past, values, and emotions that shaped the society through the years. Thanks to the simplicity, the songs are a great testament of tradition and cultural identity.

Character	Original text	Translation
Troll 1	Who drink barrels and ask for more? The infantry from Tregotor!	Kogo z kuflem wita zorza? To piechurzy z Łukomorza!
Troll 1	Pikes in air, swords to sky! Nilfgaard scum must die die die!	Piki do boju, miecze w dłoń, Niflgaardczyka goń, goń, goń
Troll 1	Who makes Emhyr wet his panty? Cavalry from Nimnar Valley!	Przed kim Emhyr ma cykora, to redańssey z Tretagora
Troll 1	Pikes in air, swords to sky! Nilfgaard scum must die die die!	Piki do boju, miecze w dłoń, Niflgaardczyka goń, goń, goń

Tab.4 “Żurawiejka”

The song being sung by the troll is a reference to ‘żurawiejkas’. Żurawiejkas (singular form: żurawiejka) are a type of short, usually two versed, humorous Polish folk song. They were composed for the Polish Army's cavalry regiments and were used to ironically comment on a history of a specified regiment. Every cavalry had one, two, and sometimes even three żurawiejkas known as ‘official’, and various unofficial ones. (Żurawiejki, 2014) ‘Official’ żurawiejkas were well-known and commonly sung, whereas ‘unofficial’ żurawiejkas were often malicious and written with obscene language. They were never sung during official ceremonies nor during marches or training. Their usage was limited for social occasions like parties and banquets.

Żurawiejka referenced by the creators of the game is the 27th song of the 24th Uhlan Regiment:

*Piją wina pełne dzbanki,
kochają ich Lublinianki.*

*Lance do boju, szable w dłoń,
bolszewika goń, goń, goń*

*Gubi lance, gówna warty,
to jest pułk dwudziesty czwarty*

*Lance do boju, szable w dłoń,
bolszewika goń, goń, goń*



Fig.5 *"Patriotic Song Night"*

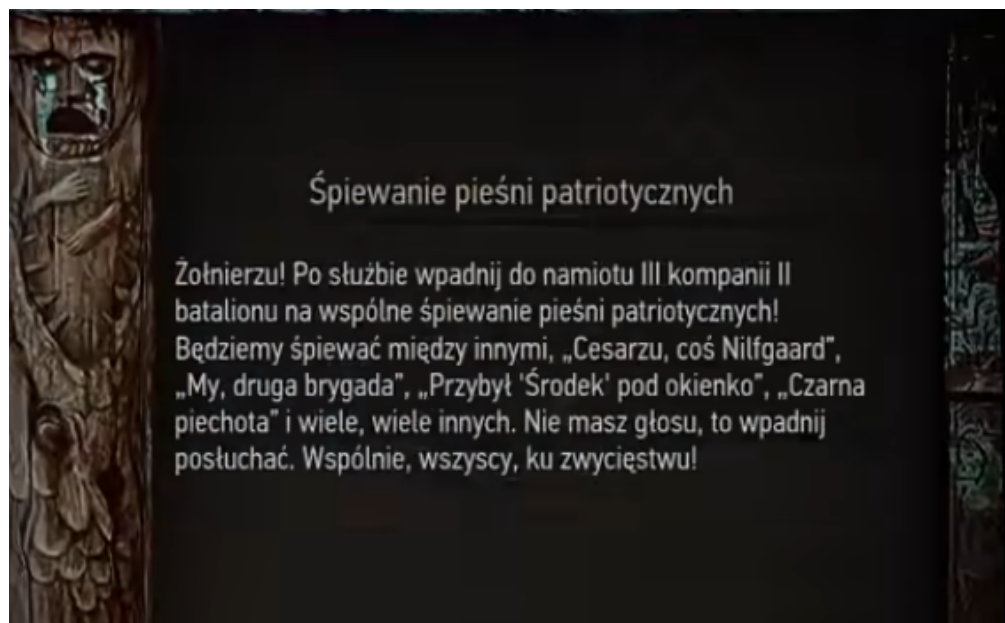


Fig.6 *"Śpiewanie pieśni patriotycznych"*

Another reference to patriotic songs can be found on a notice board set in Nilfgaardian 'Center' Camp. The notice invites soldiers to an event with group song singing. The songs mentioned in the Polish version are: *Cesarzu coś Nilfgaard* (a reference to *Boże coś Polskę*), *My, druga brygada* (*My, pierwsza brygada*), *Przybył 'Środek' pod okienko* (*Przybyli Ułani pod Okienko*) and *Czarna piechota* (*Szara piechota*). The titles were changed to fit better in the game's world, the names of characters and places are a part of the story which helps the game feel more authentic and lets the player immerse themselves better.

In the English version the titles were mostly left the same: *We, the second battalion*, *When Army Group Center Comes Marching In*, *"The Black Infantry*. All of these titles are still references to Polish patriotic songs, the only one that got localized is *Cesarzu, coś Nilfgaard* which became *Gods Save the Emperor* as a nod to the United Kingdom's national anthem *God Save the Queen*.

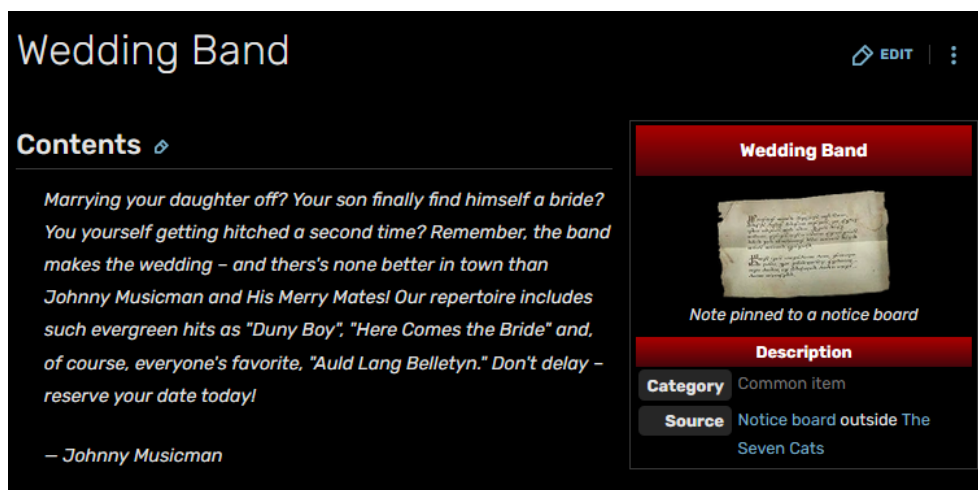


Fig.7 “Wedding band” https://witcher-games.fandom.com/wiki/Wedding_Band

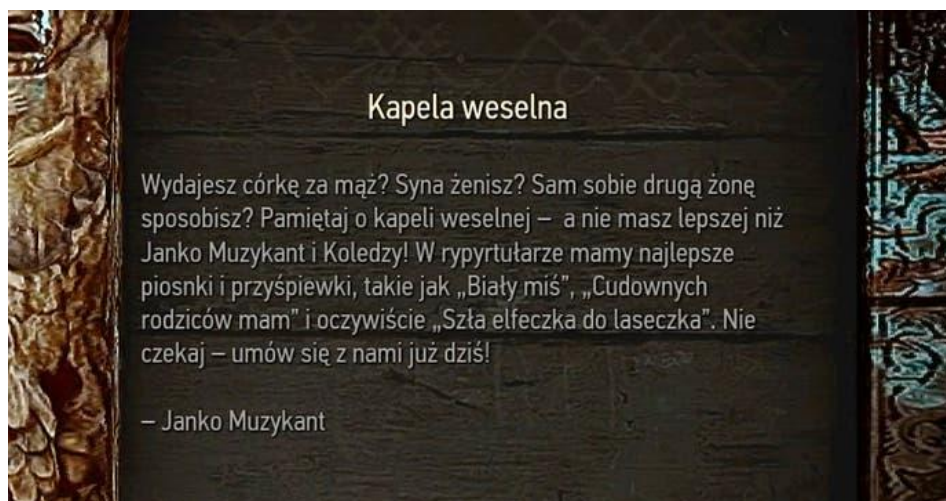


Fig.8 “Kapela weselna”

On a notice board standing outside The Seven Cats tavern we can find a note of a certain person advertising their services. Johnny Musicman and His Merry Mates are open for invitations for weddings and, as it is written on the note, will sing *Duny boy* referencing *Danny boy* an Irish song written by English lawyer Frederic Weatherly, *Here Comes the Bride* a song by the same title played for the bride’s entrance during the wedding and *Auld Lang Belletyn* which references *Auld Lang Syne*, a Scottish song written in 1788 by Robert Burns, it is now associated with Scottish Hogmanay (New Year’s celebration). (Lewis, R. 2023)

In Polish, the person advertising is called Janko Muzykant, the name is a reference in itself. Janko Muzykant is a character from Henryk Sienkiewicz's novella *Janko Muzykant* usually translated as *Janko the Musician*. The English translation team decided to translate his name literally. They used the English version of his name and the last name 'Muzykant' became 'Musicman'. In this versions the titles used are *Biały miś*, *Cudownych rodziców mam* and *Szła elfeczka do laseczka* (as a reference to *Szła dziewczeczka do laseczka*). All of those songs are often heard during Polish weddings.

This specific notice is one of a few examples of well made localisation, in both language versions the players can understand the references.

Verden Boy 01	It's rainin', it's pourin', emp'ror Emhyr's snorin', he bumped his head when he went to bed and wet himself come mornin'.	Cisza na morzu, cisza w komnacie, cysarz Emhyr narobił w gacie
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Tab.5 “*It's rainin*”

This certain song, or rather a small part of it, is sung in a game by a little boy, playing in the mud. It is another translation that is a great example of well made localisation. In both languages the rhyme being referenced is a part of popular nursery rhymes. Nursery rhymes are “short songs and verses often read or sung to, or by, young children” (Galway, 2013) which makes perfect sense for a small kid to be singing them while making fun of a political figure that is likely being mentioned a lot in the village. The nursery rhyme being references in the English version is *It's raining it's pouring*:

“It's raining its pouring, the old man is snoring he went to bed and bumped his head and couldnt get up in the morning”

The Polish nursery rhyme is:

“Cisza na morzu, cisza w komnacie, kto się odezwie, ten ściąga gacie.”

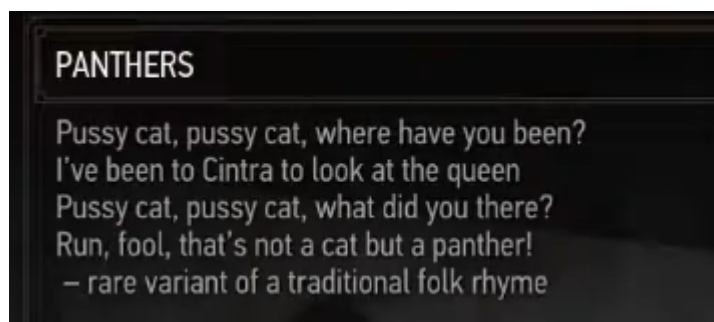


Fig.9 “*Pussy cat*”

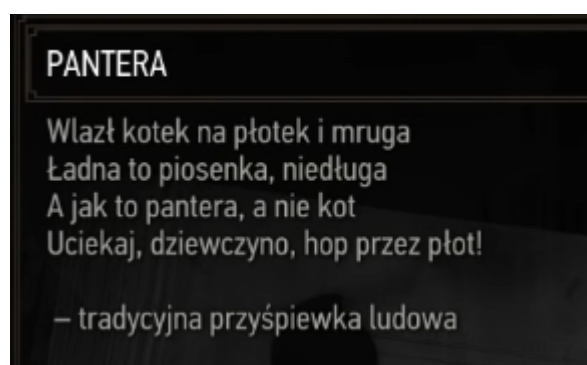


Fig.10 “*Włazł kotek*”

Bestiary is a kind of an encyclopedia that the player fills in while exploring the game. It allows the user to check the information on any animal and monster met, it contains description, characteristics, weaknesses and strategies helpful when deciding to attack the creature. One of the animals the player can meet in the game is a panther. In the panther's entry, the people responsible for writing of the catalog decided to put a reference to another nursery rhyme. In the English version, the lyrics are taken from *Pussycat Pussycat* and words relating to the real world were changed to reflect the game's world.

*Pussycat pussycat, where have you been?
I've been to London to see the fair Queen
Pussycat pussycat, what did you do there?
I frightened a little mouse under her chair*

London was changed to Cintra and the last verse was completely changed to “Run, fool, that's not a cat but a panther!” as a humorous attempt to describe the animal from the entry.

In the Polish version, the nursery rhyme referenced is titled *Wlazł kotek na płotek*. The song has many versions but the first two lines stay the same. They were first written by Oskar Kolberg.

*Wlazł kotek na płotek i mruga,
taka to piosenka niedługa.*

The rhyme keeps the style of four verses, with two first ones being the same and the latter two changing based on the region. The game stayed true to that and instead of changing anything two verses were added talking about the panther.

Auction Guard 02	House	Threats don't scare me. I've sworn to serve Redania, till death do us part. And I'll keep my oath - with a song on my lips!	Nie boję się twoich grózb. Przysięgłem służyć Redanii aż do śmierci i słowa dotrzymam - ze śpiewem na ustach!
Auction Guard 01	House	Careful. Bugger means it.	Uważaj. On tak na poważnie.
Auction Guard 02	House	Gaaaaude, Maaaater Redaaaaniaaaa, prooole fecuuuunda nooobiiliiii!	Gaaaaude, Maaaater Redaaaaniaaaa, prooole fecuuuunda nooobiiliiii!

Tab.6 “*Gaude Mater Redania*”

Gaude Mater Polonia or *Rejoice, oh Mother Poland* is a medieval Polish hymn written in Latin around the 13th century. It was sung by the chivalry after a successful fight. The reference is the same in both languages as it is in Latin, the only change is the country. Instead of Polonia the guard sings about Redania.

3.2.2 Movies

Movies play a significant role in preserving and portraying folklore. They are a powerful medium for sharing traditions, legends, and culture to a wide audience. Besides being a great way of adapting history, myths, legends, they can be used as a commentary on contemporary life. Movies created in the modern times will be used to explain the cultural differences in current and future society as they convey our current way of living.

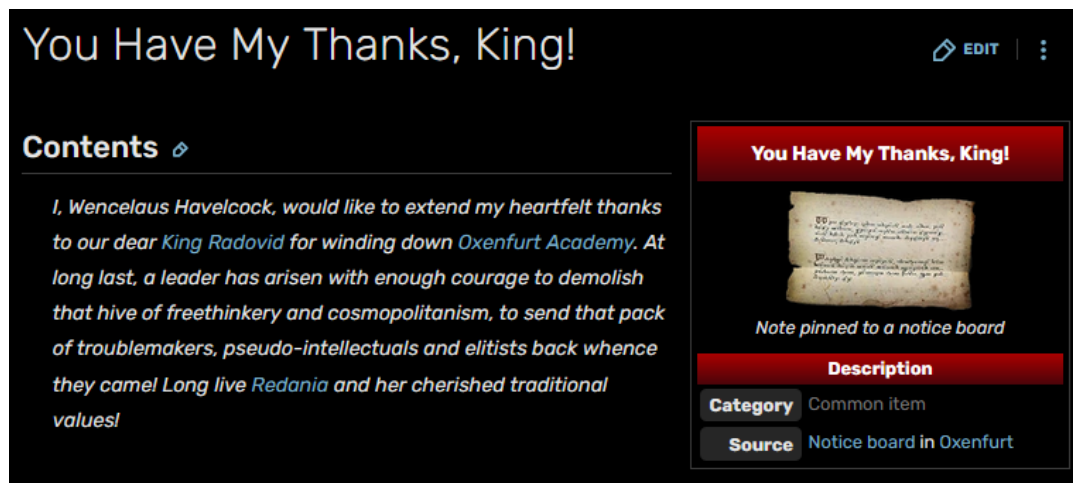


Fig.11 “You Have My Thanks, King!”

https://witcher-games.fandom.com/wiki/You_Have_My_Thanks_King!

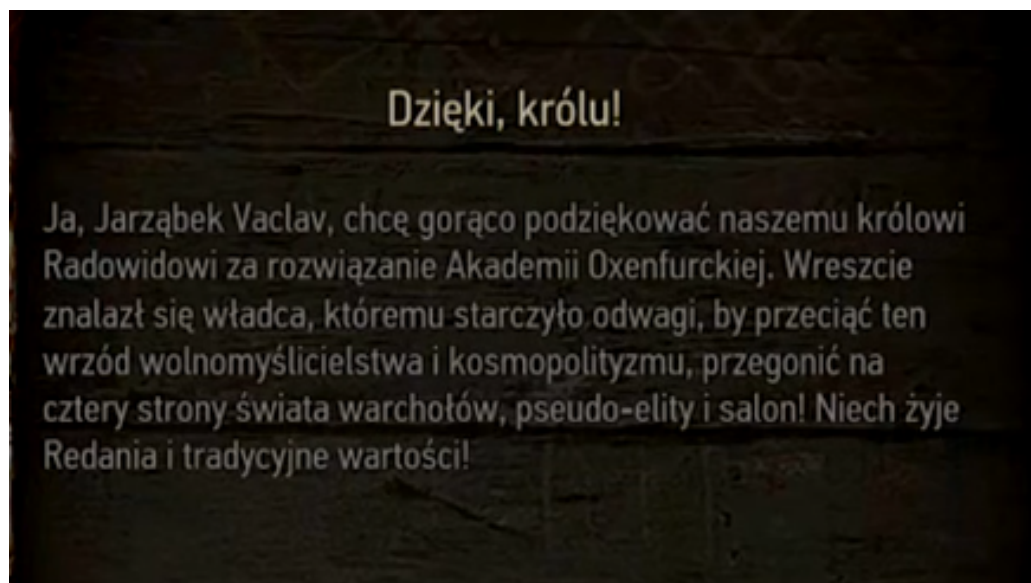


Fig.12 “Dziękuję, królu!”

The notice can be found in the city of Oxenfurt. The Polish version is an obvious reference to the 1981 Polish comedy movie *Miś* (*Teddy Bear* in English) directed by Stanisław Bareja. The movie is a commentary on Polish society living under the communist regime, many scenes from it became classics, often repeated by people. The Witcher 3 references one of those scene, where a character monologues:

“To mówiłem ja, Jarząbek Waclaw, trener drugiej klasy, niech żyje nam prezes, 100 lat! To jeszcze ja, Jarząbek Waclaw bo w zeszłym tygodniu nie mówiłem bo byłem chory, mam zwolnienie. Łubu dubu, łubu dubu! Niech żyje nam prezes naszego klubu! Niech żyje nam! To śpiewałem ja, Jarząbek.”

The same name, with a different spelling, was used (Jarząbek Vaclav) and a similar sentence structure.

The English version of the game is more difficult to understand. The sentence structure stays the same, still as a nod to *Miś*, but the name was changed to Wencelaus Havelcock. The name may be referencing Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia, a real Prince who lived in the 10th century Bohemia and a titular character of a Christmas carol *Good King Wenceslas* written in 1853 by John Mason Neale. (T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2024)

Herodore	I've hit on a name for her! Fair saber, I dub thee - Traditiana!	Mam już dla niej imię! Będzie się zwała - Tradycja! .
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Tab.7 “*Traditiana*”

It is another reference to a classic movie *Miś* which is a satire on life under Communism in Poland. In the movie, one of the characters wants to call his daughter ‘Tradycja’ as it sounds modern to him. One of the interpretations of that joke is how a lot of people choose to name their kids a noun like ‘Olimpiada’ instead of usual Polish names.

Olgierd von Everec	Would you wait, sir, for the dribble to subside?	Może chcesz waść poczekać, aż siąpić przestanie?
Geralt	Makes no difference to me.	Mi wszystko jedno.

Tab.8 “Duel”

The words said by both of the characters are directly taken from the movie *Potop (The Deluge)* from 1971 directed by Jerzy Hoffman. The movie is an adaptation of a book with the same title written by Henryk Sienkiewicz and released in 1886. The conversation took place before Geralt and Olgierd’s duel which is a mirror image of a scene that happened in the movie between Wołodyjowski and Kmicic. In *The Witcher 3*, you will find Olgierd’s men lighting an estate of fire and planning to kill the owner, if you stand up for him Olgierd will leave the burning building and offer a fight with him in exchange for the estate owner's life. In the movie, which takes place in 17th century Poland during the Swedish deluge, Kmicic kidnapped Aleksandra Billeczówna and hid, threatening to blow up the whole place. Wołodyjowski, who did not want any innocent person to die, intervened and challenged Kmicic to a duel.

- *Może chcesz waść zaczekać aż siąpić przestanie.*
- *Mnie wszystko jedno.*
- *Żal umierać w taki deszcz.*
- *Pułkownika będę chować, to i niebo płacze. Stawaj waść!*

3.2.3 Books

Olgierd Bandit 02	That? Oh, right. You know how it is - feast drags on with plenty o' dancin', merry-makin', rough play , hehe. We got a bit carried away, truth be told.	To? A tak... Wiesz, jak to jest - uczta trwała, były tańce, hulanki, swawole i trochę nas poniosło.
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Tab.9 “*Hulanki*”

This particular quote comes from Adam Mickiewicz’s *Pani Twardowska* released in 1822. The story of “Pani Twardowska” was based on a Polish legend about Master Twardowski, who sold his soul to the Devil. In Mickiewicz’s story Twardowski is staying in the tavern called ‘Rome’ performing magic. The quote describes the party’s atmosphere and explains what was happening.

Furthermore, the reference to *Pani Twardowska* is not accidental. It is mentioned in the DLC *Hearts of Stone* which follows Olgierd von Everec whose story arc was based on the character of Master Twardowski. Just as Twardowski, Von Everec signed a chirograph with the Devil. Just as Twardowski added a paragraph to the pact, that the Devil can only take his sound in Rome where he never planned to go but the Devil got him in the tavern called ‘Rome’, Von Everec added a mention that his soul can be only taken on the moon. The Devil then lured him to the temple of Lilivati, a place of Moon God’s worship, with the image of the moon itself on the floor. The place chosen is another nod to the Polish legend as the Moon is a place where Twardowski remained after running from the Devil.

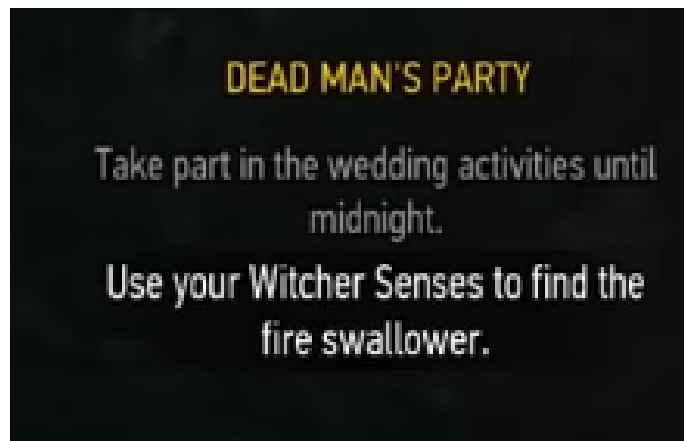


Fig.13 “*Dead Man’s Party*”

During the gameplay of *Hearts of Stone* the player will eventually find a quest called *Dead Man’s Party*. It is a reference to Oingo Boingo’s album with the same name released in 1985. The quest takes place during the wedding celebration hence the decision to use a popular album with ‘party’ in the name.

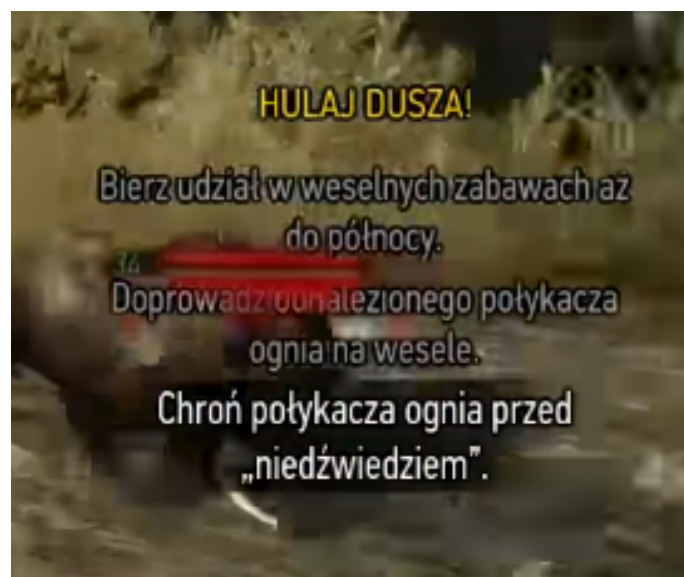


Fig.14 “*Hulaj Dusza!*”

The Polish version of the quest is called “Hulaj dusza!”. The Polish translation team, instead of choosing one of many albums that reference parties, opted to use a line from *Pani Twardowska* written by Adam Mickiewicz.

Toussaint Noble Man 01	I think it is life that imitates art. And not vice versa.	Uważam, że to życie naśladuje sztukę, a nie odwrotnie.
Toussaint Noble Man 02	Right you are, Fingal. Take Baron de Cordelle, for one.	Racja, Fingalu. Weźmy na przykład barona de Cordelle.
Toussaint Noble Woman 01	Oh yes, that nose - he actually had a mage enlarge it after he saw that de Rebcarege play.	Odkąd obejrzał to nowe przedstawienie, ciągle próbuję się bratać z chłopstwem.
Toussaint Noble Woman 02	And now he's begun courting his cousin!	I wszędzie szuka jakiegoś złotego rogu!

Tab. 10 “Play”

The dialogue comes from NPCs (non playable characters) sitting in isolation, it is not a part of the main story but rather an addition to shape the world and have it appear more real. The characters are commenting on the behavior of a politician that the player knows of, making it feel as if even though the player is not a part of certain events, they are still happening in the background just like in real life. The characters do not exist in a vacuum that only make choices when the player is present but their actions influence the world.

The characters are talking about Baron de Cordelle, who decided to magically enlarge his nose and is courting his cousin after seeing a play called *de Rebcarege*. It is a reference based on a play *Cyrano de Bergerac* written in 1897 by Edmond Rostand. In the play the main character has an obnoxiously large nose that causes him many doubts about his self image, not only that but he falls in love with a woman who turns out to be his cousin.

In the Polish version of the game, the characters are talking about events similar to the story of *Wesele (The Wedding)* by Stanisław Wyspiański, released in 1901.

The story of *Wesele* takes place at a wedding between a member of Polish intelligentsia and a peasant. It is a story commenting on the trend of ‘chłopomania’ (‘peasant-mania’) among the Polish intelligentsia. ‘Złoty róg’ (‘Golden Horn’) is a symbol of uprising used in the play and is the most known symbol from it, often cited by people.

*This picturesque little village's beauty makes it a frequent subject of works by bards and poets. The best-known piece whose action is set in Brunwich is "**The Betrothing**," a farce penned by **Stanislas Islas**. The reputation thus gained has made it a popular destination for bohemians from Oxenfurt, who escape here during the hottest months to pass the time with contests for the most beautiful feathered cap and hunts for a golden horn held at night in the nearby woods.*

*Niewielka, malownicza wieś, jedna z najładniejszych w regionie, jest często opiewana w utworach poetów i bardów. Najbardziej znanym dziełem, którego akcja ma miejsce we wsi Bronovitz, jest wodewil „**Zrękowiny**” autorstwa **Stanisłasa Islasa**. Wieś szczególnie upodobała sobie oxenfurcka bohema, która uwielbia spędzać tu sezon letni – wówczas to organizowane są konkursy na najpiękniejszą czapkę z piór oraz nocne poszukiwania złotego rogu, odbywające się w pobliskich lasach.*

The description of the village Brunwich comes from a glossary found in the game. It is another reference to *Wesele*, besides the location name as explained before the game writers included a fictional work of a poet taking place in the village called ‘The Bethroding’ in English and ‘Zrękowiny’ in Polish. The names essentially mean ‘A wedding’. The poet responsible for writing it is Stanisław Islas, the name kept the same in both languages. Stanisław sounds similar to Stanisław while Islas includes the word ‘Isla’ a root for ‘Island’ which in Polish means ‘Wyspa’. It is a humorous nod to the author of *Wesele* whose name was Stanisław Wyspiański.

Character	Original text	Translation
Guslar	Goat of mine! Dearest, sweetest goat!	Koziu moja, koziu miła.

Tab.11 “Goat”

In the game we are tasked to find Guslar's goat named Princess. Succeeding allows us to talk to him again, the conversation starts with Guslar welcoming the goat back. In the Polish version of the game, the words used by the Guslar reference a fable written by Ewa Szelburg-Zarembina called *Koza, która prawdy nie mówiła* (*A goat that didn't tell truth*).

Wyszedł dziad kozie na spotkanie i pyta:

Koziu moja, koziu miła.

Coś ty jadła? Coś ty piła?

A koza na to:

Nic nie jadłam, gospodarzu!

Nic nie piłam, gospodarzu!

Jakem biegła przez sadeczek, zerwałam jeden listeczek.

Jak stąpałam przez grobelkę, chwyciłam wody kropelkę...

Nic nie jadłam, gospodarzu!

Nic nie piłam, gospodarzu!

The English version of the game stays the same, the translator decided against making it a reference to a poem about goats that an English native would understand and instead translated it literally.

3.3 RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

When playing the DLC of the game *Hearts of Stone* the player will meet a character named Guslar. It is not actually his name but a profession. ‘Guslar’ is a literal translation of the word ‘Guślarz’ taken from Polish language and he is named as such in the Polish version.

Guślarz is another word for a Volkhv (Wołchw in Polish), Volkhvs are priests in Slavic paganism responsible for leading various rituals and holidays. As Szyjewski (2003) [own translation] mentions, Volkhvs were mostly found in the east, the Polish equivalent of the occupation is a Zhert (Żerca). They knew and understood old myths and messages and could reconstruct a consistent system of beliefs. According to Gieysztor (2006) [own translation] the name was taken from words ‘wołchwianie, wochwianie’ that Slovincians, an ethnic subgroup of Kashubians, knew as bewitching.

Character	Original text	Translation
Guslar	Forefathers' Eve is nigh, we've rites to conduct. Wandering souls to emerge, damned souls, too. We've the circle to protect from these wretches.	Zbliża się noc Dziadów i mus nam święto urządzić. Przyjdą zbłąkane duchy, ale i potępieńcy. Trza chronić krąg przed potworami.

Tab.12 “*Forefathers’ Eve*”

In *Hearts of Stone* we meet a Guslar who will later task us with attending the Forefathers’ Eve ritual and protecting him.

Forefathers’ Eve is an old celebration of death. People gather around in a circle and with a priest leading the ceremony, welcome back the souls of the dead and offer them food and drinks. The ceremony was described in the play written by Adam Mickiewicz with the name *Dziady II (Forefather’s Eve part 2)*.

Character	Original text	Translation
Guslar	What is this life? Well ye know...	Czym jest życie? Sami wiecie.
Chorus Eve	Fleeting torment ere we go.	Krótką męką na tym świecie.
Guslar	What comes next, once life subsides...	To, co po nim następuje.
Chorus Eve	Man his own fate decides.	Każdy z nas sam decyduje.
Guslar	Soon will rise thy dead, thy buried...	Zaraz zjawią się przodkowie.
Chorus Eve	Each will say by what they're harried.	Co ich dręczy, każdy powie.
Guslar	Will ye grant these souls reprieve?	Czy gotowiście na swady?
Chorus Eve	We're prepared to end their grief!	Przybywajcie już czekamy.
Guslar	Let's begin Forefathers' Eve!	Zaczynamy tedy Dziady!

Tab.13 *"Let's Begin"*

The words said by the Guslar and others forming the circle are a description of what happens during the ceremony and what is a part of Slavic pagan beliefs mixed with Christianity. Life is just a short fragment of existence and we are responsible for what happens to us after death. In Slavic paganism we have two souls, one of them gets reborn in our family and the second one goes to Nawia (Nav). During Forefather's Eve we meet with the souls of our ancestors in a positive atmosphere, sharing food and drinks. In the play the souls are brought to the fire as they cannot go further, each of them are plagued with certain aspects of life they led before death.

Guslar	Ye we summon, ye we call. Enter, souls, we'll judge ye all	Przyzywamy, zaklinamy. Każdą duszę przebadamy.
Chorus Eve	All is quiet, all is gloom. What beings in the darkness loom?	Ciemno wszędzie, głucho wszędzie. Co to będzie, co to będzie?
Guslar	Something whispers, something peeps. Someone near our fire creeps.	Cosik szemrze, cosik piska. Ktoś się zbliża do ogniska.
Chorus Eve	All is quiet, all is gloom. What beings in the darkness loom?	Ciemno wszędzie, głucho wszędzie. Co to będzie, co to będzie?

Tab.14 *"All is quiet"*

"Ciemno wszędzie, głucho wszędzie. Co to będzie, co to będzie?" is the most known quote from the play, repeated many times throughout the book.

Guslar	Ye who wander on the gale,	Kto z was wietrznym błądzi szlakiem,
Chorus Eve	Ever caught in this world's thrall,	Nie opuścił tego świata,
Guslar	See this sign, gentle, pale,	Tego lekkim, jasnym znakiem,
Chorus Eve	Ye we summon! Ye we call!	Przyzywamy, zaklinamy.

Tab. 15 *"Ye We Summon"*

This whole exempt from the ritual in game is a part of Guslar's monologue found in the play.

*Naprzód wy z lekkimi duchy,
Coście śród tego padolu
Ciemnoty i zawieruchy,
Nędzy, płaczu i mozołu
Zabłyśnęli i splonęli
Jako ta garstka kądzieli.
Kto z was wietrznym błądzi szlakiem,
W niebieskie nie wzleciał bramy,
Tego lekkim, jasnym znakiem
Przyzywamy, zaklinamy.*

The English version is not localized just as it should be. The whole quest is based around an important part of Polish history and tradition, changing anything to make the international audience feel closer and understand the task better would ruin the importance of it. Finding any other ceremony similar to Forefathers' Eve in Celtic beliefs would be offensive to the Polish audience. Having it here, with every line of dialogue translated literally, is a great representation of Polish culture that can be shared and can be a great start for others to learn more about it.

One of the mechanics implemented in the game are runestones, they allow the player to enhance (upgrade stats and apply buffs) steel and silver swords. There are various runestones to find in the game. Names of the runes were taken from Slavic mythology, they are names of Slavic Gods, although some of them have less historical basis and their existence is a controversial topic between anthropologists and historians.

- Chernobog (Czernobóg)

Chernobog is a God described by Hemhold (1556, as cited in Pełka, 2021)[own translation], who concluded that if Slavs believe that prosperity and good fortune come from goodness then misfortune is given by the badness, that is why the Bad God is

called Djabol or Czernoboh who is a black God. However, it is not known if Czernoboh or his opposite Bieloboh were actually worshiped. According to Leonard J. Pełka (2021) [own translation] we do not know much about them, not even their roles. He mentions how Hemholdt alluded to Pomeranian Gods particularly liking the blood of Christians. It might be a tendency of the chronicler to discredit old pagan beliefs and in charge to create new ones to make the religion appear hostile.

The rune names in both versions of the game are a translation of the God's name.

- Dazhbog (Dažbóg)

Dazhbog is one of the names of God of fire and sun. We have a few examples of historical worship of him, Pełka (2021) wrote about how the prince Włodzimierz Wielki, by unifying the religious system, mounted a statue of Dazbog. We have a few legends who put him in the presence of Egyptian Gods but their authenticity is questionable. There are no mentions of Slavic Gods in Egyptian mythology nor in any works of Homer.

The rune names in both versions of the game are a translation of the God's name.

- Devana (Dziewanna)

Devana is named by Lubicz (1911) [own translation] as a Goddess of Pure Virgins. She is another deity first attested by Długosz, a historian who is not seen as a valuable source. Pełka (2021) [own translation] describes him as someone who did not have enough materials in the 15th century to be able to portray an authentic picture of the religion of the Slavs. He would look for analogies in Greek and Roman beliefs, trying to fill the gaps with fantasy, without any factual historical sources.

- Morana (Morana)

Morana is another deity with a questionable source, chronicles of Jan Długosz, although we do have other mentions of her, as the burning of her effigy at the end of winter is a tradition in Poland. Szyjewski (2003) [own translation] writes about the existence of such rituals in Pragian and Poznanian synods from the 14th and 15th century. However, we do not know if she was recognized as a deity to medieval pagans. She is seen as the personification of the winter and death.

The name used in Poland is Marzanna, the version of it used in both language versions - Morana - is found in the Czech, Slovene and Serbo-Croatian languages. It is also used most often in English.

- Svarog (Swaróg)

Svarog is another name of the God Dazhbog. We have mentions of him from the brother of emperor Henryk II and Thietmar. As Pełka (2021) [own translation] writes, the worship of Svarog was mostly known in the tribes living between the rivers of Odra, Vistula and Łaba however there is a possibility that he was a God amongst all Slavs. Svarog is a personification of the sun, a God of fire, the beginning of life and goodness.

The rune names in both versions of the game are a translation of the God's name.

- Triglav (Trygław)

We know about the existence of Triglav thanks to Otton from Bambergia who, in 1124-1128, was responsible for sharing christianity amongst people in the Pomeranian region. He is thought to be a God only worshiped in Pomerania as we have no sources mentioning him in any other region. We do not know his function. The name comes from the fact that he was described as having three heads.

The rune names in both versions of the game are a translation of the God's name.

- Weles (Veles)

A God of riches, cattle, arts and the underworld. He is the one that guards Nawia, a Slavic place for the souls of the dead. Mentions of Veles can be found in the chronicle of Nestor and early-feudal Rutherian work *Słowo o pŕlku Igora*. Many historians have different conceptions of which domains he actually had a power over based on different texts and interpretations.

The rune names in both versions of the game are a translation of the God's name. In Poland the version of the name 'Wołos' can be sometimes used but 'Weles' is heard most of the time.

In the *Hearts of Stone* expansion, we can find two runestones with the name of traditional Polish foods:

- Pyerog (Pieróg)

Pierogi are one of the most recognizable dishes from Polish cuisine. They are dumplings that can be filled with a variety of products,

- Tvarog (Twaróg)

Tvorog (or in Polish twaróg) is a solid fermented milk eaten not only in Poland but other Northern and Eastern European countries.

Both of the names are a pun on the names of the Gods usually used for the runestones. Pyerog and Tvarog are not the actual translation used in everyday English but were written as such to parody the way the names of Slavic deities are written. It is a joke that might not be understood if the player is not knowledgeable in Polish cuisine or does not know what the usual runes reference.

3.4 LANGUAGE AND DIALECTS

3.4.1 Archaization

Archaization was used in the translation of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* largely to shape the atmosphere and style of the game. As a result of it, despite the game not being set in Poland nor any Slavic countries the player can feel as if they are walking through the streets of Polish villages.

Translators may choose to use archaization by means of preserving the original atmosphere. *The Witcher* books, created by Sapkowski, were written with the use of old, archaic expressions. To retain consistency between the two mediums it was decided by the translators to use archaisms. It can also be used as a tool to create an atmosphere of a fantasy world. The use of archaic language helps in creation of the medieval atmosphere often associated with the fantasy genre which helps the player with the immersion. Additionally, using old language that is not typically heard in the modern times gives the impression that the story is set in the distant past.

Character	Original text	Translation
Temerian Merchant 01	Gods, that was close! I was sure I'd end up like my mare.	Na bogi... Mało brakowało, a skończyłbym jak moja kobyłka
Geralt	It was the soot the man needed.	Właśnie sadza była temu jegomościowi potrzebna.

Tab.16 "Archaization"

Redanian Noble 02	Yet he cannot distinguish them from landscapes at five crowns apiece.	Ale nie odróżki ich od landszaftów pięć koron za sztukę
-------------------	--	--

Tab. 17 "Another Archaization"

In Polish language, the use of plural ‘you’ (‘wy’) instead of singular when talking to one person was treated as a sign of respect and an honorific, notably in formal situations, when talking with someone older and with officials. As Bączkowska (2022) mentions, formal you is not a typical form used in contemporary Polish. Bączkowska also points out that it was “present in the past, specifically from the middle of the 18th century till the first world war, and later when it was unsuccessfully reintroduced in the communist times in official language”.

Mislav	Ah, I see... You a witcher?	Ach, już rozumiem... Wyście wiedźmin?
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Tab. 17 “*Plural*”

Mislav	Watch out for yourself, now	Uważajcie na siebie.
--------	--------------------------------	-----------------------------

Tab. 18 “*You*”

3.5 POLISH INTERNET MEMES

Memes are a dynamic part of the culture, usually with very little life-spans. Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) explains them as “an idea, image, video, etc. that is spread very quickly on the internet”. Shifman (2013, p. 367) broadens the definition by describing them as “units of popular culture that circulate, are imitated and transformed by individual Internet users, creating a shared cultural experience”.

Memes became one of the main ways of communication on the wide web. They have many functions; Thanks to the wide and quick spread they help with shaping trends, sharing important political information; They reflect societal attitudes and in charge help us understand pop culture from the past. Most importantly, they are a source of entertainment.

Character	Original text	Translation
Toussaint Boy 01	A far-fetched conspiracy theory, sirs...	Nie moja wina, taki mamy klimat...

Tab.20 “*Taki mamy klimat*”

“*Sorry, taki mamy klimat*” is a quote from an anti-drug campaign made by the Polish Chief Sanitary Inspectorate in 2015. Thanks to the bad acting and effects used, the video gathered a massive amount of views subsequently creating a meme as many internet users started quoting the campaign to poke fun at the unserious script.

The English version of the game omitted the reference, the translators decided against quoting any well known international meme and made a simple translation fitting the context of the boy’s answer.

Character	Original text	Translation
Olgierd Bandit 04	What a pickle...	Taka sytuacja...

Tab.21 “*Taka sytuacja*”

“*Taka sytuacja*” is a direct quote from another popular old Polish internet meme. The sentence comes from a video posted on YouTube in the 2010s. In the video we can see a street interview taking place. A man was asked about what angers him the most, his response consisted of random words, including water, soil and hemoglobin, he concluded his statement with “*Taka sytuacja*” (“Such situation”).

People responsible for the English version once more did not use any internet memes and opted to take the literal path and translated the meaning of the meme.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

4.1 ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.1.1 The decision to translate cultural references needs to be based on their importance to the story.

Translating cultural references is an important aspect of a translator's job and requires the inclusion of many factors. One of the main arguments for it is the improvement of text comprehension. When cultural references are translated or explained, the media becomes more accessible for those people who are not familiar with the source culture as shown in the example used in tab. 10. *The Wedding* is not a story commonly known outside of Poland meaning most people playing the game would have not gotten the joke. Furthermore, the translation facilitates the reception of the text. If the translator adapts the references to the target culture, the reader does not have to stop engaging with the text to search for additional information.

However there are arguments against the translation of cultural references, one of them being the preservation of the text's authenticity. As a result of that the reader is able to experience the media in a way that is closer to the author's vision. Additionally by leaving the references as they are the text may be perceived as educational, it can teach people about a culture they have never heard of. The Slavic culture in the *Witcher 3* is an important part of the world, many locations, enemies and quests are inspired by it. Removing it completely would ruin the experience and make it complicated to learn more about the cultures used if any player was curious about it.

The question is impossible to answer with a simple yes or no as it depends on the story and what the author had in mind by using the cultural aspects.

4.1.2 The translation of cultural aspects requires a deliberate approach which includes the specificity of the original text and the audience's expectations.

This process starts with a precise analysis of the source text, it is vital that the translator reads the text and identifies all cultural references e.g. idioms, proper nouns, historical references, traditions. Afterwards it is important to understand how those references function in the original context and their significance.

If the translator does not come from the source or target culture they should consult a native speaker with a good understanding of it which ensures that the culture is properly represented and comprehensible.

4.1.3 The translation has a significant impact on the reception of the medium.

Above all, the translated references may make the text more comprehensible for the audiences that are not familiar with the source culture. Thanks to them they can understand better the context of the story which can be the key factor for the full appreciation of the text. In turn adapting the references to the local culture can help the readers resonate with the story more as it will become closer to their own lived experiences.

However translating such cultural references can bring the risk of distorting the original message. Some references can lose their specific cultural meaning which will influence the authenticity of the translation. Sometimes the cultural aspects used can be an important part of the world, for example certain religious practices mentioned in 3.3, that are in some way based on a specific culture so the change may ruin it.

4.1.4 Leaving the original cultural references may help keep the authenticity of the medium.

The audience will have a chance to experience the text in a way that is closer to the author's vision and learn more about the source culture which in turn can broaden their knowledge and understanding of the world.

4.2 IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this study are especially significant for the practical field of translation. The findings suggest that in the translation of cultural items, it is important to understand the significance of the culture found in the source text and its effect on the fictional world. Understanding how important the cultural references are is a critical factor in ensuring that the translation feels authentic and does not erase important aspects of the story. Companies should invest in proper cultural analysis and possibly hire people from cultures being represented in the text to ensure proper localization and possible lack of plot holes if the references are being changed for the local audience.

4.3 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to find Polish references in *The Witcher 3* and assess the importance of their translation. The *Witcher* games as the books they are based on are known for their inspiration on Slavic culture and the translators who worked on both English and Polish versions of the game understood it well. The study results show that to keep the authentic feel of the game many references were left untranslated because they kept the proper atmosphere of the game.

Proper names were only changed stylistically to help English speakers with the pronunciation, a lot of religious and folk references were not changed unless they did not impact the story in any way. The translation team wanted to keep the word true to the original vision and possibly kept many of the cultural references as a way to interest the player in Slavic culture.

Despite the findings there were certain limitations of the study. It is not known which language version is the original and there is also a possibility that both versions were developed at the same time as the studio that created the game, CD Projekt Red, is based in Poland. It makes it harder to evaluate if certain references began as referencing English culture or were adapted later as such. Additionally there was a time limitation, there are three games in the *The Witcher* series in total, the other two also contain many Slavic references that can be useful in proper evaluation.

4.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To get more definite findings it may be valuable to analyze the rest of The Witcher games. The Witcher 1 and The Witcher 2 were created and translated in different times, it can be interesting to check how different the translations were in the past and how much the quality progressed during the years. Furthermore it might be beneficial to conduct an interview amongst people from the source culture to see various opinions on the importance of translating cultural references and their preferences as people who come from one culture are not a monolith. The interview could help the game industry in deciding what should and should not be localized.

There is a possibility that translating cultural references might not be actually as important in terms of open world role-playing games, many games nowadays pay homage to the cultures they are taking inspirations from and leave the references untranslated so the players can get familiar with them and appreciate the differences. For example, in the game Cyberpunk 2077 the cultures seen are an important part of the game lore. One of such cases is Jackie who is from Mexican descent and by interacting with him we learn about certain traditions and behaviors that are a result of his upbringing thus localizing all references pertaining to his culture would erase an important aspect of the character.

APPENDIX

X Witcher 3 Dialog.xlsx

Witcher 3 Dialog .XLSX

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Help

Menu 100% 123 Default... 11 B I A

A1						
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2	dlc/bob/data/gameplay/community/dialogues/chats/chat_barrens_children_01.w2scene:					
3						
4						
5	7	Toussaint Boy 04: Now I shaw sway you, fiend! Fow my wady wuff! Fow honow!				
6	8	Toussaint Boy 05: For... a knoll?				
7	9	Toussaint Boy 04: HONOW! Don't petwend you don't undastand, poo-bwains!				
8	10	Toussaint Boy 05: Watch what you say! Knights errant never swear!				
9	11	Toussaint Boy 04: And foww bandits don't mock knights - they cowah in feaw and beg! En gawde!				
10						
11						
12	dlc/bob/data/gameplay/community/dialogues/chats/chat_barrens_guards_01.w2scene:					
13						
14						
15	6	Beauclair Bastard 03: That Filibert von Wittan, Fourfingers - how did he wind up with the moniker?				
16	7	Beauclair Bastard 06: He had four fingers.				
17	8	Beauclair Bastard 03: Well, that's a bumload of help. I know he was missing one. What I don't know is how he lost it.				
18	9	Beauclair Bastard 06: He didn't talk about it, nearly ever, didn't like to. Once he claimed some wench had bit it off. But he was drunk, so it was probably wishful thinking.				
19						
20						
21	dlc/bob/data/gameplay/community/dialogues/chats/chat_barrens_workers_01.w2scene:					
22						
23						
24	6	Toussaint Worker 05: I've seen a great many things in my life, but cattle dropping from the sky? That's a first.				
25	7	Toussaint Worker 04: Who knows, maybe a whole bovine downpour's next.				
26	8	Toussaint Worker 05: Bovine downpour - foolish notion. What would the clouds have to be like to carry that much cattle?				
27	9	Toussaint Worker 04: Huh, I didn't think about that.				
28						
29						
30	dlc/bob/data/gameplay/community/dialogues/chats/chat_beauclair_bard_01.w2scene:					
31						
32						
33	7	Toussaint Bard Man 01: Toussaint, Toussaint, where folk are gay and merry.				
34	8	Toussaint Bard Man 01: In Toussaint, in Toussaint, life is a ripe strawberry.				

Witcher 3 Dialog

.XLSX

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Help

100%

123

Default...

11

B I A

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STRESZCZENIE

Celem niniejszej pracy dyplomowej jest przedstawienie wartości prawidłowo przetłumaczonych odniesień kulturowych oraz ich analiza z wykorzystaniem nawiązań do kultury polskiej występujących w grze *Wiedźmin 3: Dziki Gon*. Badanie opiera się na źródłach użytych nawiązań kulturowych oraz określeniu i analizie sposobów użytych do ich przetłumaczenia. Pod uwagę zostało również wzięte prawdopodobieństwo zrozumienia wymienionych odniesień a co z tym idzie kontekstu wypowiedzi bądź żartu przez odbiorców spoza Polski.

Do napisania pracy wykorzystano dane z gry oraz licznych tekstów kultury m.in. książek i filmów. Zastosowaną metodą badawczą była kontrastywna analiza jakościowa przy użyciu angielskiej oraz polskiej wersji językowej gry.

Z wniosków, które ukazały się po analizie fragmentów gry, wynika iż tłumaczenie elementów kulturowych nie jest czymś prostym, nie ma również żadnego schematu na podstawie którego jesteśmy w stanie uznać kiedy powinniśmy takie tłumaczenia wykonywać oraz jakim sposobem. Tłumacz, któremu przyznane jest takie zadanie powinien zrozumieć tłumaczony tekst jak i kulturę, którą będzie się zajmować by określić konieczność takiego tłumaczenia oraz jego konsekwencje na świat przedstawiony.

SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis is to present the value of correctly translated cultural references and the analysis of Polish culture present in the game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. The study is based on identifying the sources of aforementioned cultural references and establishing the methods used to translate them. The possible level of comprehension by the foreign audience was also taken into consideration.

The thesis is based on the data taken from the game and cultural texts including books and films. The research method used was a contrastive qualitative analysis using the English and the Polish language versions of the game.

The conclusions that emerged after analyzing the game fragments indicate that the translation of cultural elements is not something simple, and there is no scheme to follow indicating whether such translations should be done and what technique should be used. The translator assigned to such a task should have an understanding of the source text as well as the culture they will be dealing with in order to determine the necessity of such translation and its consequences on the world presented.

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