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**Polish translations of non-binary genders in fantasy as  
seen in *Nimona*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *The  
Owl House*, *The Sandman*, *Hades* and *Hades II***

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**Polskie tłumaczenia rodzajów niebinarnych w fantastyce  
na przykładzie *Nimony*, *She-Ry* i *księżniczek mocy*, *Sowiego  
Domu*, *Sandmana*, *Hadesa* i *Hadesa II***

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# 1. Introduction

The term *non-binary* (as well as *genderqueer*) functions as an umbrella term encompassing a great number of identities beyond the traditional Western male-female gender binary. It includes the possibility to identify with other, more specific terms, such as *genderfluid*, or the feeling of fluidity between genders; *bi-* or *pangender*, that is identification with two or more genders; *other genders*, that is an identity completely beyond the male-female dichotomy; and *agender*, *non-gendered*, *genderless*, and *neutrois*, that is not identifying with any gender (Richards et al., 2016, p. 95). Itself being an umbrella terms, it also falls under the umbrella of the term *transgender*, which pertains to people whose gender identity or behaviour socially associated with a gender are expressed in a way that undermines the social constructs and expectations of a gender identity being a reflection of one's biological gender, that is a gender based on corporal factors that is divided binarily and commonly assigned at birth (Bojarska & Klonkowska, 2014, p.69).

All the fictional, fantasy works discussed in this thesis feature at least one character whose identity goes beyond the binary, and hence these characters will be referred to as non-binary. This thesis discusses translations from English, a language in which all the media mentioned were originally created, into Polish, and the consequences translation has for the perceived gender identity of the non-binary characters, which include eliminating the non-normative identity, preserving the gender identity of the individual, and linguistically highlighting a non-binary gender.

## 1.1. The media discussed

### 1.1.1. *Nimona*

The science fantasy comic book *Nimona*, created by the American cartoonist and animation producer N.D. Stevenson, first started appearing online in 2012 in the form of a webcomic. The print edition was released in 2015. The graphic novel tells the story of the supervillain cyborg knight Ballister Blackheart<sup>1</sup> and his new sidekick, a shapeshifter named Nimona, and their struggle to oppose and ultimately defeat the oppressive Institution of Law Enforcement and Heroics, a police-like organisation that at least partially controls the Kingdom that they

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<sup>1</sup> In the film adaptation he is given the name Boldheart when obtaining knighthood which is used instead of the more villainous Blackheart.

live in. The comic book has been praised for playing with the conventions of a binary opposition between good and evil (Patton, 2018) since although the two main characters, Ballister and Nimona, both call themselves villains, as does the Institution, their actions are stereotypically heroic – they steal from the rich to give to the poor, Ballister refuses to kill and their true goal is never a selfish pursuit of wealth or fame, but rather the freedom and happiness of all the residents of the Kingdom. Therefore, the presumed villains, dubbed so due to their (bodily) difference in comparison to the rest of the supposedly perfect Kingdom, expose “and dismantle exclusionary cultural institutions that other non-normative identities” (Barnewitz, 2016, p. 51).

Ballister’s whole identity as a villain is the result of the false good vs evil dichotomy pushed for by the Institution. Previously working for the Institution as one of the knights, after an incident that resulted in the loss of a limb he was rejected and expelled as the Institution “had no use for a one-armed hero” (Stevenson, 2015, p. 7). The disability, together with the blurring of the binary boundaries between a human and a machine performed by Ballister by constructing himself a robotic arm, was despised by the Institution, which forced him to play the role of the villain. In his conversation with Ambrosius Goldenloins, the presumed hero and, at the same time, the person who is directly responsible for Ballister’s disability, when told he was the one who made the choice to become a villain, Ballister answers: “Choice? I never had a choice! The Institution needed a villain. That lot fell to me. I never chose it. And it could just as easily have been you, had that ‘accident’ happened differently!” (Stevenson, 2015, p. 69). Despite his many heroic actions and his faith in rules and order, he still calls himself a supervillain – a label given to him for his non-conformity, which further exposes the false binary and strict limitations of the Institution (Wright, 2018, p. 23).

The other character forced to conform to the label of a villain is Nimona, Ballister’s sidekick. Her identity and function in the story can be understood better when looking at Legacy Russell’s *Glitch Feminism Manifesto*, first published in 2013, which examines the potential ways of glitching, or disappearing from the online world. One of the proposals of avoiding invigilation and control is ghosting, abandoning a solid identity and embracing fluidity (Russell, 2020, p. 63). In accordance with Russell’s proposals, Nimona’s unique ability to change her shape and form and thus remain unknowable is precisely what aids in the revolt against the Institution in the graphic novel. It is Nimona’s fluidity, a crucial part of her identity and shapeshifting abilities, that at first leads to her alienation, but later on to the liberation of not only her, but the entire Kingdom. She is perceived as a threat and as a

monster by the Institution specifically because she is an other, unknown, her abilities undermine everything the science of the Kingdom has ever seen before: “Every time she changes form, every single cell in her body is destroyed and new ones are generated in their place. She’s not molding herself into new forms, it’s like every time her whole body dies and a new one grows in its place” (Stevenson, 2015, p. 192). The question of her *natural form*, posed several times by the other characters, is, therefore, always misplaced, as despite being usually seen as a human girl, her *natural form* is constantly changing, evolving and fluid. According to both Barnewitz (2016, p. 65) and Wright (2018, p. 27), the question of the *natural form* evokes the theories Judith Butler presented in *Gender trouble*, as it points to the process of naturalisation of the gender binary and thus makes the deconstruction of it possible. Nimona’s identity, including gender identity, has never been fixed, which allows her not only to thwart the Institution’s attempts to keep track of her, but also to anonymously investigate the Institution, disguising herself thanks to her many possible forms.

The film adaptation of *Nimona*, released in 2023 and distributed by Netflix, takes the themes of binary oppositions, fluidity and queerness even further. This could be partly due to the fact that the author of the graphic novel, already recognised as a queer author before, came out as transmasculine a year prior (Stevenson, 2022), which prompted the further exploration of the topics of transness and non-binarity in his work. Although there are many changes to the plot, most notably the story of why Ballister was excluded from the Institution, the main themes and characters remain mostly unchanged. Furthermore, some of the themes, such as the connection between queerness and monstrosity as perceived by the Institution, are amplified in the film adaptation, especially in the Polish version.

The story has always been queer and it was originally written by a queer author, just as Nimona’s identity has always been unknown and fluid. The Polish translation of the film adaptation, however, adds another dimension to that queerness and fluidity. Nimona’s gender identity is rendered as explicitly non-normative and the character uses a variation of non-binary Polish, which is why Nimona will be assigned the label of non-binary in this thesis.

### **1.1.2. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power***

*She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* is an American animated TV series that was released on the streaming platform Netflix from November 2018 to May 2020. This reboot of a 1985

series and toy line of the same name was developed by N.D. Stevenson, the same author that created *Nimona*. It follows the tale of Adora, a teenager who finds a sword that allows her to transform into a magical princess named She-Ra. Adora leads a group of other princesses with magical powers, known as the Princess Alliance, who, together with the various kingdoms and independent people of Etheria, the planet the characters are from, form the Rebellion. The story focuses on the Rebellion's fight against Hordak and his Horde, which is a division of an intergalactic empire that tries to conquer all of Etheria. After four seasons of struggles on Etheria, the planet is moved from Despondos, the empty dimension it was previously located in, into the wider universe. Thus, in the fifth and final season the characters have to face all of the Horde's power in the hope of remaining independent and uncontrolled by the absolute ruler of the empire, Horde Prime.

Similarly to *Nimona*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* features a shapeshifter whose gender identity can be described as non-binary. Double Trouble is a recurring character that appears in the fourth and fifth seasons of the show. They are a mercenary, an actor and, for the duration of season four, a spy sent by the Horde to infiltrate the Rebellion, gather intel and thwart the princesses' plans. They thrive in chaos and would seemingly do anything for money, which they confirm stating: "I live to serve, for a price" (Stevenson, 2018-2020) after rescuing Catra, at the time Hordak's second-in-command, who is responsible for recruiting them as a spy. They utilise their powers to avoid recognition and gather information. Their ultimate goal, however, is usually financial gain, which is why their powers are most often used as a tool helpful to whoever pays more. When infiltrating the Rebellion, Double Trouble poses as Flutterina, a "tooth-achingly cute and pink" (Stevenson, 2018-2020) forest elf, a role chosen to gain the princesses' trust. After successfully derailing a number of the Rebellion's missions, Double Trouble is finally captured and taken prisoner as the princesses start suspecting that there is a spy among them. At first, Double Trouble refuses to give the Rebellion any information, but they end up doing so due to a truth spell cast on them by Glimmer, a member and leader of the Princesses Alliance, who is also the queen of Bright Moon, the last stronghold of the Rebellion. At the end of the fourth season, the shapeshifter decides to switch sides, providing Glimmer with all the information necessary to win the war against Hordak. Their final scenes in the season feature them confronting Catra and explaining that they chose to stand on the side of the conflict most likely to win.

In the fifth season, the viewers learn that Double Trouble spent the beginning of Horde Prime's invasion posing as one of his clones, however, they found the task too boring and



unfulfilling, therefore they decided to start impersonating Prince Peekablue, known for his “farsight”, that is the ability to look further into the universe, trying to earn some money. They are exposed as a fraud by the princesses, who are looking for the real Prince Peekablue. In the subsequent fight, Double Trouble helps the princesses flee from a territory filled with enemies. The shapeshifter is last seen in the series’ finale, once again disguising themselves as one of Horde Prime’s clones in order to remain unrecognisable in a fight against the invaders.

As Misiek (2020, p. 176) notices, Double Trouble’s gender identity is never openly discussed in the show, the other characters just simply refer to them with the singular *they/them* pronouns, however, the character earned some publicity as one of the very first non-binary individuals in children’s media. It is also worth noting that they are voiced by a non-binary actor, Jacob Tobia.

### **1.1.3. *The Owl House***

*The Owl House* is an American animated fantasy series that aired three seasons from January 2020 to April 2023. It was produced by Disney and the first two seasons are currently available in Poland through the streaming platform Disney+. The main character, Luz Noceda, is a teenager who finds a mysterious door which leads her into the Demon Realm, a world inhabited by a plethora of magical beings, including witches. She befriends a wild witch, Eda Clawthorne, also known as the Owl Lady, and King, later discovered to be the last surviving titan, both of whom live in the titular Owl House. The series follows Luz’s attempts to learn magic as a non-magical human being and, later on, her struggle to oppose the oppressive Emperor Belos who rules over the Boiling Isles, the land where most of the series takes place. The final season introduces the Collector, a powerful being who tries to take control of the Realm and its inhabitants, and who is finally defeated by Luz with the help of her friends.

Raine Whispers is a non-binary witch introduced in the second season of the show. They are the Head Witch of the Bard Coven as well as the founder of Bards Against the Throne (BATs), an organisation that opposed the compulsory incorporation of wild witches into the coven system, that is forcing them into choosing a singular branch of magic that they could practice while blocking all their other magical abilities. They are subsequently arrested for their activity connected to BATs and are supposed to be brainwashed in order to be kept in check and continue working for the emperor. Nevertheless, Raine manages to fake the brainwashing and proceeds to spy on Belos and rebuild the rebel cell, now operating under the

name Covens Against the Throne (CATs). After Belos is removed as the emperor and the Collector takes over the Boiling Isles, Raine is turned into a puppet and possessed by Belos in order to manipulate the Collector. Finally, Raine manages to break the spell and regain control over their body, helping the main characters permanently defeat Belos. Later, they move into the Owl House and get back together with Eda, their high school sweetheart. In the epilogue of the series, which takes place four years after the final demise of Belos, Raine is seen working together with the other former Coven Heads to remove the Coven Sigils, the magical tattoo-like barriers blocking witches from practicing magic other than the branch they were assigned to.

Raine is, therefore, another non-binary character referred to with *they/them* pronouns, who, just like Nimona and Double Trouble, infiltrates the structures of an oppressive system and aids in the battle that the outcasts fight against such a system. They, however, have different powers than the two shapeshifters. As a bard, Raine's abilities include manipulating the world with soundwaves and their instrument/weapon of choice is a violin. Similarly to Double Trouble, their non-binary identity is never openly touched upon in the show and they are voiced by two non-binary actors, Avi Roque (most of the series) and Blu del Barrio (flashbacks to a young teenager version of Raine).

It is worth noting that Raine is not the only character in *The Owl House* that uses *they/them* pronouns and that might be labelled as non-binary. There is a non-binary background character, Masha, that is most likely fully human as they inhabit the Human Realm and there is no indication of them coming there from any other realms, nevertheless, since they are never addressed in the show, neither by name nor any pronouns and the only indicators of their gender identity are their nails painted in the colours of the non-binary flag and a plaque with *they/them* pronouns that is worn on their work uniform, they will not be discussed in this thesis. The other two characters, that is the Titan and the Collector will not be discussed since any doubts about the gender identity of either of them only appear properly in the third season of the show, which, while it aired on television with Polish dubbing, is not available on any streaming services in Poland at the time of writing this thesis nor has it ever been physically released.

#### 1.1.4. *The Sandman*

*The Sandman* is an American comic book series published by DC Comics and written by Neil Gaiman. The original series ran from January 1989 to March 1996 and consists of 75 issues, later grouped into ten collected editions. This thesis will focus on the first two of the collected editions, that is *Preludes & Nocturnes* (which collects issues #1–8) and *The Doll's House* (collecting issues #9–16), since those are the ones that have, at the time of writing this thesis, already been adapted into the Netflix TV series version of the story, which will also be discussed here<sup>2</sup>.

The titular main character, around whom all of the graphic novel revolves, is also known as Dream, Morpheus and under many other names. He is one of the seven Endless, the anthropomorphic representations of metaphysical entities such as Death, Desire, Delirium and Despair. In *Preludes & Nocturnes*, Dream is captured by a mortal and imprisoned for around a hundred years. After he finally escapes, he begins a search for his totems of power, taken from him back when he was captured, a quest which leads him, among others, to Hell. In order to retrieve his Helm, he has to face Lucifer Morningstar, a fallen angel who became the Ruler of Hell, as well as his two co-rulers, Beelzebub and Azazel. Thanks to winning a battle of wits he manages to get his Helm back from the demon Choronzon and gets to leave Hell, continuing his quest elsewhere.

The TV series adaptation of the graphic novel features minor tweaks in the story. In the series, Lucifer Morningstar is the sole Ruler of Hell who is later on named as Choronzon's champion in the battle of wits and therefore Dream has to face the Lightbringer in order to get back his possession, not Choronzon, as was the case in the comic book. Additionally, the gender identity of Lucifer Morningstar is made less obvious. They are played by the English actress Gwendoline Christie and any gendered references to them are omitted.

Since the gender of the character in the graphic novel and especially in the TV series is rather ambiguous and they use the plural number when referring to themselves, the plural *they/them* pronouns will be used in reference to them in this thesis. Moreover, the writer of the graphic novel and one of the executive producers of its adaptation, Neil Gaiman, stated that any pronouns can be used in reference to Lucifer (Gaiman, 2022).

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<sup>2</sup> The eleventh, bonus episode of the first season features the stories “Dream of a Thousand Cats” and “Calliope”, which are collected in the third book, *Dream Country*, however, those stories will not be discussed in this thesis since they do not feature any overtly non-binary characters.

*The Doll's House* focuses on the story of Rose Walker, a dream vortex. Despite seeming like an ordinary girl, Rose can in fact unravel the imaginations and dreams of everyone around her, a power that will only grow and thus cause more and more chaos and destruction if Dream does not kill her. In the end, Rose is spared as the vortex is assumed by her grandmother, Unity Kinkaid, who dies of natural causes, thus destroying the vortex. Dream realises the whole event was a plot by one of his siblings, Desire, who impregnated Unity knowing her bloodline would end up creating the dream vortex, which Dream would then be forced to destroy. However, the Endless are forbidden from killing their relatives, and such an action would result in the ultimate destruction of the Endless that dares to commit such an act. Therefore, if Dream had killed Rose, he would have sealed his fate and been destroyed, which was exactly what Desire was hoping would happen. The interaction ends with Dream warning Desire against ever plotting against him again.

Similarly to the two shapeshifters discussed earlier, that is Nimona and Double Trouble, Desire can change their form and gender, after all “Desire has never been satisfied with just one sex” (Gaiman, 1990, p. 40). This is how they were able to father a child with a mortal, thus mixing the genetic line of Unity Kinkaid, a dream vortex with the bloodline of the Endless. As the personification and anthropomorphisation of all human wanting, craving, lust, and attraction, Desire can appear as a man, a woman, both and neither, “Desire’s perceived gender never sticks” (Brisbin & Booth, 2013, p. 29). When visiting the human realm, Desire appears as the gender most appropriate to the situation, which often leads to a heteronormative relationship with a human. However, in their own realm, Desire usually appears as androgynous. The aforementioned rivalry between the siblings has started eons ago, when Desire made Dream fall in love with a human woman who finally left him for another. In the graphic novel, Desire is referred to with *it/its* pronouns and Dream calls Desire his sibling, as well as sister-brother. In the TV show adaptation, similarly to Lucifer Morningstar, Desire is never addressed with any gendered forms or pronouns. Additionally, they are played by an American non-binary actor Mason Alexander Park.

In 2021 the author of *The Sandman*, Neil Gaiman, stated on Twitter that “Desire's pronouns have been he, she, it, he/she, and (in the unbelievably successful audiobook version of the first 3 books) them since the beginning” (Gaiman, 2021). Additionally, in 2017 he answered a question on Tumblr, where he stated that if the graphic novel was written today, he would give Desire *they/them* pronouns (Gaiman, 2017). For those reasons Desire will be referred to with *they/them* pronouns in this thesis.

Both Lucifer and Desire are entities which might (and will, at least in this thesis) be labelled as non-binary. They are both powerful beings who rule their own realms and are rather antagonistic towards Dream. Moreover, the language used in reference to them is gender neutral, which emphasises their non-human identities, and the fact that the human language might not be able to adequately express the existence of beings that cross far beyond the human. In contrast to the three non-binary characters introduced previously, that is Nimona, Double Trouble and Raine, they are not the ones opposing the institutions of power, but rather the ones who rule over them, at least in their own view. Nevertheless, neither of them is really in control of their own destiny. Lucifer has been forced to co-rule Hell, losing their control over the realm that they have been cursed to guard and which they finally and inevitably abandon in favour of living on Earth. When it comes to Desire, Dream reminds them: “We of the Endless are the servants of the living – we are NOT their masters” (Gaiman, 1990, p. 226), thus once again underlining the fact that the anthropomorphisations of human concepts cannot function without humans.

Gaiman’s approach to the fluidity and fragility of gender identity in *The Sandman* is also worth pointing out. Brisbin & Booth have praised this genderqueer approach, claiming that the graphic novel can be seen as a practical illustration of Butler’s theory presented in *Gender trouble*: “Indeed, Gaiman’s work, written around the same time as Butler published her [*sic*] influential treatise on gender performativity, illustrates the notion that sex and gender are social constructs which inherently lead to ideological oppression” (2013, p. 21). The gender identity of most of the characters, especially the supernatural ones, such as the Endless, is rather unstable and in the state of constant flux. Additionally, all angels, including the fallen ones, are said to be sexless. When it comes to linguistic markings of non-binary gender, however, only the gender identity of the two characters, that is Desire and Lucifer, is seen as non-normative, which is why those are the only entities appearing in *The Sandman* that will be discussed in this thesis.

### **1.1.5. *Hades and Hades II***

*Hades* is a roguelike video game published and developed by the American independent video game developer Supergiant Games. It was released for personal computers first in 2018 as an early access release, that is the unfinished version of the game was made available for players with regular updates as the game development process progressed, with the full version

appearing in 2020 and the version for gaming consoles being released in 2021. Additionally, a mobile phone version of the game was published in March 2024 through Netflix Games. The game follows Zagreus, the son of Hades, as he tries to escape the Underworld, uncovering the truth about his past, his father's realm and family with each of his escape attempts. *Hades II* is a sequel of the game, released for personal computers for early access in May 2024, set some time after the events of the original game. The plot of *Hades II* focuses on Melinoë, the daughter of Hades, and her struggle against Chronos, the Titan of Time. Since the second game has not been fully released as of the time of writing this thesis, the focus of this analysis will be primarily the original *Hades*.

As the games are based on Greek mythology, they feature a number of gods, heroes and creatures known from that system of myths and beliefs. One of those characters is Chaos, also known as the Primordial Originator, possibly the first creature to exist in the entire universe that the game takes place in. Chaos is also the embodiment of the primeval void that such Chthonic Gods and creatures as Nyx and the Titans come from. Chaos himself is also labelled as a Chthonic God in the codex that serves as a guide for Zagreus, who wants to learn more about the residents of the Underworld, the Olympians and other characters important to the story. It is possible to encounter Chaos when entering through the Chaos Gates which can be found within the chambers that Zagreus has to pass through in order to escape his father's realm. Chaos resides in a realm in between the world and the Underworld, and cannot leave, as their presence elsewhere might destabilise the entire existence of the universe, which is why they decided to just watch the events happening in other realms from afar. The mechanism of meeting Chaos seems to be the same in the sequel, that is Melinoë is able to meet them if she passes through one of the Chaos Gates on her way to defeat Time.

While all the other gods' forms seem human, or at the very least human-like, Chaos' form, as encountered in *Hades*, is only partly anthropomorphic. They immediately look out of this world, with their multiple eyes, heads, bones and plants melted into their abdomen. Their voice is monotone and emotionless, but it seems to contain a multitude of voices of different genders and age groups speaking in unison. In *Hades II*, on the other hand, Chaos looks much more human-like, appearing as a pale, androgynous being with long hair and a suit jacket worn on top of a looser, ancient Greek tunic, under which the entire universe is to be seen, still suggesting something unusual about the character. Moreover, the outfit suggests that Chaos is beyond time, as the game seems to be set in the ancient world and Chaos is wearing partly modern clothing. They also hold their previous form known from the original game in

their hand, with a foetus floating above said form, possibly suggesting some regeneration. Their voice is the same as in the original game, that is it is a symphony of voices of distinct genders and ages.

Chaos seems to help Zagreus out of boredom and curiosity, as they do not get many visitors in their realm, as well as out of their disdain towards the Olympians. Because they have been watching everyone for all of eternity, Chaos is also the keeper of secrets, which they sometimes hint at during their meetings with Zagreus. The most important relation of Chaos is their daughter, Nyx, whom they had abandoned, which is said to be their greatest regret. During the course of the game it is possible to reunite the two, for which Zagreus will be thanked by both Nyx and her parent.

Chaos is referred to with *they/them* pronouns and gender neutral language throughout the games, which emphasises their status as not only a non-human being, but also an outcast whose form is completely different than that of creatures that came after them. Moreover, this gendering, or lack thereof, showcases that they were possibly the first creature in all existence, created long before there ever was a division into genders. They also seem to contain multitudes and it is difficult to label them as just a singular creature, they are, to a certain extent, unknowable and remain on the outskirts of the world presented in the games, only accessible for brief interactions, only if the player chooses to go and see what lies on the other side of the Chaos Gates.

## **1.2. Non-binary in fantasy**

The Twelfth incarnation of the Doctor, the main character of *Doctor Who*, one of the most well known British science fiction TV shows, stated, referring to his alien race of Time Lords: “We’re the most civilized civilization in the universe. We’re billions of years beyond your petty human obsession with gender and its associated stereotypes” (Moffat & Talalay, 2017). The genres of fantasy and science fiction allow for the creation of complex characters whose identities cross the boundaries of what is classified to be human. Thanks to that, both of those genres give the viewers, readers, or players the unique opportunity to explore characters which might be vastly different from the people one meets every day. In fact, they might not even be “people” at all. Additionally, fantasy gives the creators, including the translators, an unique opportunity for playing with the language and designing innovative linguistic

solutions. Since the events of the story rarely take place in a realistic setting, the authors can create a great number of neologisms that allow them to linguistically express their creation or even construct whole new inflectional paradigms or languages. The neologisms created for fantasy media may then be adapted into every-day life, as was the case of the postgender gender, constructed for his fantasy novel *Perfekcyjna niedoskonałość* by Jacek Dukaj, which is nowadays used by the Polish non-binary community to reflect their non-binariness.

The non-binary characters that will be discussed in this thesis are all non-human or at least not fully human; instead, they are shapeshifters, witches, fallen angels, embodiments of natural forces, and gods. For this reason, it might be argued that their non-binary gender is partly an emphasis on their status as beings that are not only beyond the human social construction of gender, especially binary gender (Butler, 2002, p. 19), but beyond being human altogether. However, except for *Nimona*, all the media discussed feature characters of a similar ontological status to the non-binary individuals who use binary gendered forms, be it the magical princesses, other witches, the remaining six of the Endless, the other angels and rulers of Hell or other chthonic gods. For this reason, while their non-binariness does emphasise a status of those characters that crosses beyond the human division into a binary gender, it is also just a part of their identity.

Those characters function as a representation of non-binary identities also for human beings, thus increasing the visibility of real-life non-binary individuals. It is important for non-binary characters to be present in media, since representation is necessary to be visible, and humans, especially children, require this reflection in media both in the process of identity-formation and accepting other identities (Smolkin & Young, 2011, p. 217). Additionally, the presence of diverse characters in media might aid in the search for confirmation of identity, including an identity contrary to the gender norms set for by the culture one lives in (Garner, 1999, pp. 104-106). Therefore, those characters' existence, both in media directed at children and those that are supposed to be consumed by an older audience, should be helpful not only for real-life non-binary individuals, who can see themselves represented and can discover who they truly are thanks to the exposure to said media, but also to others, whom exploring such media might aid in the breaking of learned gender norms and understanding other human beings. Moreover, from the linguistic point of view, using forms which are not incredibly popular, such as the different forms of non-binary Polish, enriches the language as well as making those specific forms using more recognisable and thus more likely to be accepted by the general population.



Besides being non-binary, all the characters discussed have a similar position as an outcast and a loner, at least to a certain degree. Nimona is despised by the ruling system, which sees her as a monstrous flaw, and thus she has to either stay in hiding forever, or take up the task of dismantling said system herself. Double Trouble does not truly belong to any of the warring factions they join – they are a mercenary, after all. Even after choosing to help the Princess Alliance, they do not become a part of the Rebellion, instead wandering about and looking for other ways to make money. Raine is the Head of a Coven in a system which they are trying to dismantle, which ultimately leads to their exclusion and punishment. Lucifer Morningstar is a fallen angel, cast out of Heaven, never truly belonging to the realm of demons they are forced to rule over, which leads to them escaping Hell and choosing to pursue life on Earth later on. Desire has six siblings who perhaps should share their struggles, but instead some of them disappeared, some decided against talking to Desire and others, like Dream, are their rivals. Chaos is trapped in a realm of their own, separate from all other beings, without a possibility to visit any of their relations, forced only to watch.

The language used to refer to these characters in the original works in English usually reflects their identity beyond the binary – they are referred to with singular *they/them* pronouns, mixed pronouns, the royal *we* or any gendered references to them are skipped altogether. These solutions present the Polish translator with difficulties, since Polish is a more gendered language and obstructing the gender of a character might prove problematic. However, both highlighting a non-binary identity and hiding the gender of a character is not impossible, as made evident by the myriad of ways in which the Polish-speaking non-binary community has moulded the language to establish gender neutral and non-binary forms.

Moreover, research has proven the positive mental health effects of both using the correct forms of address (Russell et al., 2018, p. 505) and showcasing a more gender-inclusive language (Ivy, 2016, p. 63). Thus, the real individuals that might encounter the media should be taken into account when translating non-binary identities, including those of fantasy characters.

The variety of media chosen in this thesis – graphic novels, animated TV shows and an animated film, a live-action TV show and a video game – showcases the ubiquity of this particular translational problem. What all of the pieces of media discussed in this thesis have in common, except for portraying a non-binary character is the visible difficulties the translators had when translating the non-binary language used. Additionally, all those pieces of media can be described as queer media, breaking down boundaries, questioning the norms

and featuring also other members of the LGBTQ+ community, often as the main characters – Ballister gets to renew his relationship with Ambrosius, Adora sees a future with Catra as her partner, Luz and Amity start dating during the second season of *The Owl House*, *The Sandman* features queer characters rather casually and quite often and in order to complete all of the plot of *Hades* the player has to romance both Megaera and Thanatos and thus they both end up in a polyamorous relationship with Zagreus. Moreover, in all the fantasy realms described, homophobia and transphobia either do not exist or do not play any important role in the lives of the characters, the latter being the case only in *The Sandman* and the graphic novel variation of *Nimona*<sup>3</sup>.

Fairly recent technological developments have deeply influenced all the media discussed in this thesis, perhaps with the exception of the graphic novel version of *The Sandman*. *Nimona* was first released as a webcomic, thus allowing N.D. Stevenson to change the previous chapters before releasing new ones, which was exploited by the creator before the whole graphic novel was released in a print version, as this final version includes some revisions, especially in the art style of the early chapters. Nevertheless, this mode of publication did not influence the translation of the text, which was completed years after the full graphic novel was released. This situation is, however, different when looking at all the other media mentioned in this thesis. Due to the TV shows and film presence on streaming services, they can be changed at any time. Similarly, as a modern video game, *Hades* continues to be updated, with some changes and fixes to technical problems being introduced as time goes on. *Hades II* is still a work in progress, therefore it will surely be changed and revised as time goes on, especially before the final version of the game is released. The same goes for the translation of those pieces of media, which can and sometimes is revisited and revised.

### 1.3. Constrained translation

What this thesis focuses on is how the non-binary genders of characters created in Anglophone media have been translated into Polish – whether the characters remained non-binary or their gender identity was changed, as well as how other characters address them. Due to this diversity of media discussed, distinct types of translation had to be applied

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<sup>3</sup> The Institution, and especially the Director being homophobic is hinted at during a confrontation between Ambrosius and the Director about Ambrosius' past relationship with Ballister, when she says: "I know what the nature of your relationship was. I made it clear at the time that I disapproved" (Stevenson, 2015, p. 125).

in order to make the texts intelligible to a Polish-speaking receiver. Both comics and audiovisual translation are constrained translation types, which might prove challenging for the translator.

### 1.3.1. Comics translations

A comic can be defined as “a form of visual narration which results from both the mixing and blending of pictures and words” (Zanettin, 2008, p. 12). Because of the highly visual nature of comics, it is crucial to translate the verbal text in the context of the visual (Borodo, 2015, p. 23). The words themselves might be a part of the visual as well, thanks to lettering, different colours and layouts. Their placement in the visual image might indicate speech or thought when the words appear in the so-called speech balloons, narration or background noises, such as music, when they are contained in captions, and other noises, including bodily and animal sounds, which are often conveyed using onomatopoeic words (Zanettin, 2008, p. 18). Moreover, as is the case with *The Sandman*, speech balloons might graphically vary between characters, for example Dream’s speech balloons, as well as captions of his narration, have a black background with white frames and text and irregular borders, all of which reflects his non-human status, since they are the opposite of what standard ones look like. They also indicate what Dream’s voice sounds like – it is dark in tone and abrasive.

Besides their part as a graphic component, words form the verbal text of the comic book, which is what is usually translated into other natural languages. Nevertheless, the nonverbal text present in the comic book is equally important while translating. As Borodo (2015) notes, “nonverbal interactions are (...) a crucial component of communication, possessing a considerable meaning-making potential activated by the reader/viewer in the process of interpreting comic book panels” (p. 24). Not only are the translator’s choices controlled by what is drawn as happening on a given page, they also have to work in a restricted space – the text contained in the speech balloons and other captions has to be of similar length in both the source and target languages (Zanettin, 2008, p. 20). Some researchers, however, deem the visual aspect not a constriction or obstacle, but rather a resource; for Borodo (2015, p. 25), the visual becomes “the element that may also potentially reinforce the textual, clear up confusion, offer clues, inspire and generally facilitate the process of translation.”

Comics are closely related to other media which rely on image, especially animation, a relationship which is evident in the English usage of the word *cartoon*, which might denote both comics and animated shows/films (Zanettin, 2008, p. 11). For this reason, they are often adapted or translated into cinematic forms, such as animated films (as is the case of *Nimona*) or TV shows (*The Sandman* being an example).

### **1.3.2. Audiovisual Translation**

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is also a type of constrained translation, as when translating one has to take into account not only what is happening in the text and the words spoken, but also the time it takes to utter or read them. In this thesis, three types of audiovisual translation will be discussed, that is dubbing, voice-over and subtitles. The main constriction in all those types is that the text produced by audiovisual translation has to be brief yet understandable and the translator cannot use paratexts such as footnotes to clarify the meaning (Garcarz & Majewski, 2008, p. 103).

Dubbing, that is replacing the dialogues with their equivalents in the target language, is not very common in Poland; the films that are dubbed are chiefly productions aimed at children and whole families (Surdyk, 2021, p. 400). The text of the translation has to be matched to the lip movement of the actors and synchronised with such elements as the intonation, gestures and posture of the characters speaking (Dore, 2008, p. 58), which is why dubbing is one of the most difficult and constrained types of translation.

Voice-over is the most common form of translation in Poland when it comes to television productions (Surdyk, 2021, p. 400). The translated text is read by a singular reader over the original soundtrack of the production, which often forces the translator to shorten the text so that the reader is able to read naturally, clearly and at a steady pace (Garcarz & Majewski, 2008, p. 103).

Subtitling consists of presenting on the screen a written text that renders the utterances spoken in the piece of media, as well as other elements that appear in the soundtrack and the written text that is shown on the screen (Malenova, 2015, p. 2892). In the case of subtitles translation, the translator has to take into account the physiological restrictions of the viewer, including the average reading speed as well as the pace of the film, show or game, since the duration of the subtitles should correspond to both the rhythm of reading and dialogue (Carrol

& Ivarissson, 1998). In accordance with the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation's *Code of Good Subtitling Practice*, subtitles should also use simple syntactic structures and omit superfluous information, such as repeated character names, each subtitle should be syntactically self-contained, grammatically correct and no longer than two lines (Carrol & Ivarissson, 1998).

## 2. Being non-binary in Polish

All the media analysed in this thesis have originally been created in English, a language in which the gender of the speaker or person spoken about is revealed mostly in pronouns, and it is therefore relatively easy to obstruct the gender of the person by replacing the pronoun with other referents, such as names or titles (Misiak, 2020, pp. 166–167). Moreover, as Hord's research (2016, p. 17) indicates, the Anglophone non-binary community has largely overcome the linguistic problem of a gender beyond the binary, with most respondents stating they prefer to use the singular *they* pronoun, although many use other pronouns, such as the neopronouns *ze/hir*.

The Polish language, on the other hand, reflects gender not only in personal pronouns, but also in nouns, adjectives, numerals, and verbs in many tenses, most notably the past tense (Hansen & Żółtak, 2022, p. 2027). Due to it being a heavily gendered language, expressing one's non-binary identity is more complex for Polish speakers than it is for those speaking languages with less gendered expressions. Nevertheless, it is possible to indicate being non-binary in Polish with the usage of neologism and gender-inclusive language, as well as such constructions as special passive voice or by inflecting verbs for non-standard gender. Walkiewicz (2022, pp. 89–90) notices that linguistically Polish-speaking non-binary people might obstruct their gender, deliberately highlight a gender outside the binary system or stay within the binary paradigm.

### 2.1. Hiding the gender in Polish

In order to hide the gender of the person speaking/spoken about, one might employ such constructions as *neutratywy* (neutral gender nouns), *osobatywy* (constructions using the noun *person*) or a specific form of passive voice. In writing, *iksatywy*, graphic forms with either the

letter *x* or other placeholders, are frequently used (Walkiewicz, 2022, p. 96). Grammatical neosemantisation of archaic forms might also yield gender neutral results.

*Neustratywy*, or neutral gender nouns, are supposed to be a neutral alternative to the gendered nouns present in Polish, similarly to recent changes in English, where terms including the gendered form *man* “can be ‘nonsexed’ by simply substituting *person* for the word *man*; *chairman* becomes *chairperson* [...]. Other forms require more creativity, such as *postman* becoming *mail carrier*” (Ivy, 2016, p. 68). *Neustratywy* are created analogously to normative words in the Polish neutral gender, using such endings as *-rze*, *-cze*, *-o* and *-um*, the latest being borrowed from Latin (Walkiewicz, 2022, p. 96). Accordingly, the gender neutral equivalent of *mail carrier* would be *listonoszcze* or *listonoszko*. Other, normative gender neutral nouns already exist in Polish and do not need to be constructed with the use of the aforementioned ending. They refer, among others, to familial relations, for example *rodzic* (parent) can be used instead of the gendered *matka* (mother) or *ojciec* (father).

The main drawback of those constructions is that they are often homogenous with the grammatical forms of gendered nouns in other cases, for example the nominative case of the aforementioned neutral *listonoszko* is the same as the vocative case of the feminine version of the noun. As Gębka-Wolak (2022, p. 110) states, this exponentially increases the difficulty of language communication and leads to confusion. Additionally, despite their proposed function, *neustratywy* might also be perceived as highlighting a gender beyond the binary due to their innovative character. Nevertheless, they are an interesting example of a linguistic innovation that is currently gaining traction, partly due to their connection with the feminine forms known as *feminatywy*. They are used, for example, by the writer Anouk Herman, who describes herself as “*Katowiczańcze, autorze*” (a person for Katowice, an author) (Herman, 2023).

*Osobatywy* are normative constructions which employ the noun *person* (PL: *osoba*) with other parts of speech, such as adjectives. They are often applied when one is addressing a group of people or a person of unknown gender, for example in public announcements. When speaking about oneself, a person might adopt this construction as well: “a non-binary person may say *jestem osobą psychologa* (I am a psychologist person) or *jestem osobą profesji psychologicznej* (I am a person of psychological profession)” (Hansen & Żółtak, 2022, p. 2028). Since the noun *osoba* is of feminine gender in Polish, the verbs that follow this construction are also in the feminine form – this, however, is a grammatical consequence of using the noun, not an indication of the gender of a person. Nevertheless, it is worth noting

that the Polish noun *profesja* is not stylistically neutral, as it is classified in dictionaries (for example in *Wielki słownik języka polskiego PAN*) as *książkowy*, therefore belonging to a higher register associated with literature. For this reason, constructions with the noun *profesja* might be perceived as overly formal and not fit for most everyday contexts. Additionally, employing this form of *osobatywy* might provoke an adverse reaction as it can be seen as condescending towards the receiver, which might prove detrimental to the doctor-patient relation established in Hansen & Żółtak's example. Moreover, constructions such as *jestem osobą psychologa* might have negative outcomes in communication due to them being possibly understood as a declaration of belonging to or having a relationship with someone, in analogy with a sentence like *jestem siostrą Zośki* (I am Zośka's sister). Gębka-Wolak (2022, p. 115), argues that it is *osobatywy* that might become the most accepted gender neutral forms, as they copy a mechanism that has already been known to Polish speakers and they seem to be more official than *neutratywy*, which are mainly present online, especially on social media. It is worth noting, however, that the mechanism she describes is most often used when talking about or to a group of people, which is why it might be harder to form sentences with *osobatywy* when talking in the first person or to a singular person. Moreover, the constructions which employ *osobatywy* tend to be longer than more personal grammatical constructions, which might prove problematic when using them in constrained translation.

Another option enabling the possibility of hiding the gender of the speaker that is used by Polish-speaking non-binary individuals is described in a study by Hansen & Żółtak (2022, p. 2028). This form of passive voice is analogous to the English construction *to have (got) something done*, an example in Polish given in the study is *czytało mi się książkę* (I've got my book read). This form emphasises the action and the object, thus making it possible to omit the gender of the speaker. In standard Polish, this form of passive voice is accepted as normative only in certain instances, for example *zrobiło mi się słabo* (I've got dizzy). Nevertheless, according to the study, in which participants had to evaluate two versions of the same text, one gendered and one written in passive voice and thus gender neutral, it is problematic as it is “unfamiliar to most listeners or readers<sup>4</sup> and perceived as less comprehensible than gendered and active language. Furthermore, non-binary people using such language are evaluated more negatively and are socially less accepted than women and men” (Hansen & Żółtak, 2022, p. 2033). Similarly to *neutratywy*, the specific form of passive voice might also be perceived as an indication of a gender beyond the binary (as evident in the

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<sup>4</sup> 81% of the participants of the study claimed to be unfamiliar with the language used in the gender neutral version of the text.

quote from Hansen & Żółtak's 2022 study), despite the intention being to hide the gender of the speaker.

Gender neutral forms using *x* or other placeholders for letters that distinguish between gendered forms are quite popular on social media, nevertheless, they are nearly impossible to pronounce, which is why they are primarily used in writing. For this reason, however interesting and creative they can be, they are largely ineffective when translating speech.

When it comes to employing archaisms, anachronistic forms of adjectives such as *jestem szczęśliw* (I am happy) can be used to express one's non-binary identity. The website *zaimki.pl* claims that, despite these adjectival forms being masculine in the past, their current infrequent appearance warrants their reinterpretation into gender neutral ones. However, Walkiewicz (2022, p. 95) argues that, even if grammatical neosemantisisation is applied, those forms will nevertheless remain masculine to most people as the ending *-o* in nouns and adjectives is emblematic of the masculine gender. Therefore, despite the intention of hiding the gender of a speaker, the usage of those anachronistic forms might be perceived as an indication of the masculine gender.

## 2.2. Highlighting the gender in Polish

Highlighting a gender beyond the binary can be accomplished in Polish through the usage of the neutral gender or neopronouns (and forms created analogously). A Polish-specific instance of neopronouns are *dukaizmy*, forms created for genderless beings in Jacek Dukaj's fantasy novel *Perfekcyjna niedoskonałość* and later on adopted by the Polish non-binary community. Plural number and the genders associated with it are also used by non-binary individuals who speak Polish in order to showcase their gender identity.

There is seemingly no consensus as to how many grammatical genders Polish has or what terms should be used to refer to them (Wierzbicka, 2014, pp. 157–159). According to Swan (2015, p. 86), “(a)lmost everyone approaching this question has applied a different criterion to the exclusion of other criteria in order to obtain an answer, and answers have ranged from every number from three though nine, or even more.” Nevertheless, the neutral grammatical gender<sup>5</sup> (*rodzaj neutralny*, in other contexts unrelated to gender-inclusivity also

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<sup>5</sup> Since the Polish non-binary community prefers to call the grammatical gender *neutralny*, the closest English equivalent, that is *neutral* gender will be used here (Vos, 2022).



called *nijaki*) is one of the traditionally recognised three grammatical genders of the singular number. Nowadays, when it comes to animate nouns in standard Polish, it refers primarily to young animals and children (Swan, 2015, p. 84), however, non-binary people have also adopted it to refer to themselves. The neutral pronouns *ono/jego* are the closest equivalents of the English *it/its*. Using the Polish neutral gender to refer to adult humans, especially non-binary people, has been deemed grammatically correct by *Rada Języka Polskiego* (2003), the council which is the most authoritative institution on the Polish language. Professor Bralczyk, a member of the council and one of the best known Polish prescriptive linguists, agreed and recommended the neutral gender as the best, most normative option for non-binary individuals seeking to express an identity beyond the binary (Vos, 2022). Nevertheless, due to its traditional connotations with being used in reference to children and inanimate objects, the neutral gender is regarded as infantilising and objectifying by some non-binary individuals and has also been used in a derogatory, transphobic way (Derecka, 2019, pp. 115). For those reasons, Polish-speaking non-binary people might prefer to use different forms.

Neutral gender is already often applied in Polish-language fiction about non-binary characters, for example Anouk Herman's *Nigdy nie będziesz szło samo*, and, according to the 2024 non-binary census, is the most popular non-binary grammatical gender to be used by Polish-speaking non-binary individuals (Misiak et al., 2024). It is also frequently used in translation, for example Darren Rivers, the non-binary character in the 2022 Australian television series *Heartbreak High*, is translated as using the neutral gender.

A plural form of the neutral gender with *ona/ich* pronouns is used as well. The pronoun *ona* is borrowed from other Slavic languages, such as Croatian, where it is a gender neutral plural form (zaimki.pl). This form has been proposed as a direct translation of the English *they/them* and might be used when referring both to an individual and to a group of people, especially if they are of unknown or mixed gender (Vos, 2021). For this reason, this form can be used to either hide or highlight the gender of a person, depending on the circumstances. It is, however, important to note that the pronoun *ona* is also syncretic with the third person singular feminine pronoun, which is why it might create confusion.

Out of the many possible neopronouns which might be applied by non-binary speakers of Polish, *dukaizmy*, also called *formy dukajowe*, that is *Dukaj's forms*, are the most popular ones (Misiak et al., 2024). The pronouns *onu/jenu* have been created by Jacek Dukaj for his fantasy novel *Perfekcyjna niedoskonłość*, together with a new inflection of verbs for gender (Dukaj, 2022). In the book, *dukaizmy*, named later on after the writer, are used by genderless

post-human beings known as *phoebe*. As it was created to describe beings that function in the world in which gender has ceased to exist, this grammatical gender is dubbed postgender gender. *Dukaizmy* can be supplied with the usage of *dukatywy*, nouns that are created analogously, that is with the suffix *-u* for singular and *-y* for plural numbers, but are not present in the novel itself. However coherent this system is, for many it might still sound foreign, as it is not often present in the mainstream discourse nor is it standard Polish. Nevertheless, it has been created for a purpose of a fantasy/science-fiction piece of media and therefore its usage to translate the gender or the non-gender of beings in other fantasy texts might yield interesting results. Additionally, the creation of a form of genderless gender might serve as a precedent for creating other neo-forms when translating various types of media, especially fantasy.

According to the website [zaimki.pl](http://zaimki.pl), both neutral and postgender genders are also used by Polish-speaking non-binary individuals in connection or interchangeably with other forms, such as elements of the normative masculine and feminine genders. The pronouns *onu/jegu* may be chosen while operating with *dukaizmy*. Other neopronouns, such as *ne/nego* can be chosen while inflecting for the postgender gender as well.

Although the number of individuals using those forms is significantly dropping<sup>6</sup> (Misiak et al., 2024) some non-binary people also use the plural number to refer to themselves. It is often seen as the equivalent of the English *they/them* pronouns and can be divided into masculine personal gender, used in reference to any group of people which includes at least a singular individual that uses masculine gender, and non-masculine gender, that is a gender that encompasses a group in which no one is using the masculine gender. Out of those two, the masculine personal gender is a more frequent choice, as it encompasses people (and beings) of all genders (Misiak et al., 2024).

### 2.3. Holding onto the binary system

To remain gender neutral and inclusive while holding onto the binary system of the Polish language, one might use so-called splitting, that is double the forms, for example use *on/ona* (he/she) instead of a singular pronoun or *zrobiliśmy/zrobiłyśmy* (masculine and feminine variants of we've done it) in the past tense (Walkiewicz, 2022, p. 88). This hides the gender of

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<sup>6</sup> Only 18,1% of the people who took part in the 2024 non-binary census reported using plural number, which was a decline of almost 2 percentage points in comparison to the year before.

the person speaking/spoken about, however, it is rather long and might be argued to actually exclude non-binary people, as it employs only the binary forms. Gębka-Wolak (2022, p. 115) argues that splitting is a form that might be the easiest gender neutral alternative to accept in official communication, since it is already popular in official documents and statements. Nevertheless, due to the length of the results it produces, splitting is rather unlikely to be used in everyday communication, especially in speech.

As in most languages, non-binary individuals might also continue using the normative, binary language (Ivy, 2016, p. 89). In this case, they might conform to using either masculine or feminine forms or use them interchangeably. In fact, 76,3% respondents of the 2024 non-binary census claimed to use binary forms, however, only 18% of them use exclusively binary forms and 29% alternates between the binary forms (Misiak et al., 2024).

## **2.4. Choosing a form**

In sum, Polish-speaking non-binary individuals have a plethora of ways to communicate their identity. According to both Walkiewicz (2022, p. 98) and Gębka-Wolak (2022, pp. 114–116) this variety is the reason the more innovative ideas could not be accepted by the rest of the population, as there are simply too many of them to remember and use them all, a view which undervalues the human willingness and ability to learn new things as well as the linguistic possibilities of the Polish language. They both also seem to suggest that only one of the solutions listed should be picked and used by all non-binary individuals. However, Misiak (2022) disagrees and aptly points out that since it is an umbrella term, not all non-binary people identify in the same way – some identify more with feminine or masculine qualities, some with both or none, the gender of others might be more fluid. Correspondingly to a nonhomogeneous identity, not every Polish-speaking non-binary individual will use the same forms, as evident in both the most recent non-binary census (Misiak et al., 2024) and earlier investigations (Misiak, 2021, p. 293). To reiterate Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s famous first Axiom: “People are different from each other” (2008, p. 22), and, therefore, the forms of address and speaking that are preferred by one non-binary individual might not be the preference of another.

Additionally, familiarity with Polish non-binary language, its variety and how it is used is essential when translating a character whose gender identity lays outside the binary

division. When translating, one should not rely only on the forms that are used in the English text, as it helps subvert “the expectations (...) that the ‘retarded Other’ [Poland/Eastern Europe] will follow the same teleological line as the West in the search for local equivalences of the “original/universal” events/concepts, instead of investing in local narratives, recognizing their particularity, plurality, and heterogeneity, and then building sexual theory/politics that are not exclusive and self-explicatory” (Kulpa et al., 2012). That is to say, Polish queer linguistics, as well as Polish queer theory and community in general should not blindly follow the sequence of events that allowed more visibility of and acceptance for LGBTQ+ people in the Western countries, especially the United States, and take the concepts and language developed there to be the only possible way of expressing an identity that does not conform to the cisheteronormative society. Instead, one should turn to the local culture and language and develop systems, including linguistic systems, that are based on what is already known, and oftentimes used in the culture. A good example in translation might be choosing a more Polish variant of non-binary language, such as neutral gender or *dukaizmy*, instead of trying to mimic the English *they/them* pronouns by using one of the Polish plural genders.

In the case of constrained translation, such as AVT or comics translation, it is also crucial to think about the physical constraints that the translated text will encounter. *Osobatywy* can be rather lengthy, which is why their frequent usage might be problematic in all kinds of constrained translation, however, they can be used to supplement other forms. Similarly, passive voice tends to be longer than the active equivalent, which is why it would be hard to make it the only construction that is used by a character in a medium that constrains the translator; nevertheless, it can be employed as one of the constructions used in order to render a translation gender neutral. *Iksatywy*, on the other hand, cannot be used to translate speech, as they are either extremely hard to pronounce or unpronounceable. For this reason, it is impossible to use them in dubbing and voice-over and they might look out of place in the speech bubbles of graphic novels and subtitles that transcribe what is said by the characters. Using neosemantisation with archaisms such as *szczęśliw* might be problematic when not explained in any paratexts, the addition of which is, unfortunately, impossible in audiovisual translation (Garcarz & Majewski, 2008, p. 103). Splitting is just simply too long to fit within the constraints, both in the physical space allowed for subtitles and in speech bubbles. Moreover, due to the length of splitting, the time it would take the dubbing actors or the voice-over reader to actually say both forms would far exceed the time the source text

takes in the soundtrack. Therefore, it seems that the best options for constrained translation are the two non-binary gender forms, that is neutral and postgender gender with the other word forms being created analogously, as well as the genders characteristic of the plural number. Nevertheless, the employment of other forms, such as other neopronouns, as well as varying the forms used, for example by adding *osobatywy* when they do not significantly extend the text or hiding the gender of the character might also be the solution to the constrained translation of non-binary genders.

In sum, it is not possible to choose a singular non-binary form that would be always used whenever translating a text with a non-binary character. The choice should rather be made based on individual cases.

### **3. Translations**

#### **3.1. Non-binariness and monstrosity – the Polish translations of *Nimona***

##### **3.1.1. Graphic novel**

The fluidity of Nimona's form and gender identity is not reflected linguistically in the graphic novel. Nimona uses and is generally referred to with *she/her* pronouns and feminine forms of words. An exception is a scene when Nimona transforms into a boy in order to attend a science fair with Ballister, where she insists on being called Gregor. A shopkeeper who sells Gregor churros first calls the character *young man*, and then, taking Ballister for Gregor's father, continues: "He really takes after you, you know?", to which Ballister replies: "I suppose he does" (Stevenson, 2015, p.104). Nevertheless, this conversation is about the character Nimona is disguised as rather than Nimona herself. Even in the Gregor scene when using gendered words other than the name, Nimona opts for feminine gender, for example when Ballister complains about having to carry Gregor and asks her to turn into something lighter, she replies with the statement that "it's rude to comment on a lady's weight" (Stevenson, 2015, p. 106).

In the Polish translation by Agata Cieślak, Nimona is gendered as a girl, similarly to the source text, and uses the feminine gender, which is also used by other characters when referring to her. Interestingly, the translation is more gender neutral in the Gregor scene.

While the shopkeeper still uses “młody człowieku” (young human, with *human* being a masculine gender noun) to refer to Nimona, she addresses both Ballister and Gregor when taking them for a father and son, using the masculine personal gender: “Jesteście podobni jak dwie krople wody!” (you’re as alike as two drops of water, the Polish equivalent of the idiom “like two peas in a pod”), to which Ballister replies: “Chyba tak” (guess so) (Stevenson, 2023, p. 110). Because the masculine personal gender can be used in reference to a group of people of any gender which includes at least one individual that uses the masculine gender, it can be perceived as more gender neutral. This exchange is also more inclusive, as the shopkeeper addresses both main characters, not just Ballister. Therefore, despite the fact that it is generally easier to mask one’s gender in English, it is the Polish version of the graphic novel that uses less gendered forms. It is also worth noting, however, that the translation appeared in 2023, over a decade after the original graphic novel started being published, presumably to accompany the release of the film adaptation. Agata Cieślak is also named as a consultant in the credits of the film, which might signify that she was aware of the translatorial decisions made in the adaptation, which could have influenced her choices concerning the more neutral gendering of Nimona<sup>7</sup>.

### 3.1.2. The film adaptation

In the film adaptation, Nimona never refers to herself<sup>8</sup> in any gendered form, but is consistently referred to with *she/her* pronouns as she is perceived as a girl, despite their own insistence on not being labelled as one: “But I’m not a girl. I’m a shark” (Bruno & Quane, 2023). Nevertheless, given no other alternative, the viewer also sees her as a girl or otherwise as a feminine individual. In the Polish translations, however, Nimona uses neutral gender to refer to themselves, which suggests a gender identity beyond the binary. Nevertheless, the other characters, friend or foe, still refer to Nimona with feminine gender.

Nimona never protests when referred to with the feminine forms, or rather every time the viewers think they will finally make a comment and correct somebody (usually Ballister) about their gender, the statement does not concern specifically the gendered language used,

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, I was unable to contact Agata Cieślak in order to confirm this conjecture.

<sup>8</sup> As the gender identity of Nimona is rather fluid, especially when discussing the translations of the film, in order to better reflect linguistically the shifting identity, the character will be referred to with *she/her* pronouns primarily when discussing the graphic novel and the English version of the film and mostly *they/them* pronouns in the discussion of the Polish translation of film adaptation.

but rather a word, such as *girl* (“But I’m not a girl. I’m a shark” [Bruno & Quane, 2023]), their perceived age (“Little girls? Okay, how old do you think I am?” [Bruno & Quane, 2023]) or the status of girls in society (“Easier to be a girl? You’re hilarious” [Bruno & Quane, 2023]). None of those utterances refer overtly to their gender identity, which might be interpreted as Nimona’s indifference when it comes to how they are addressed or them being so used to misgendering, that is “referring to a person with incorrect gendered pronouns or other gendered terms” (Misiek, 2020, p. 166), that they no longer care or have the mental and emotional energy to correct people.

In the English text, any pronouns other than *she/her* are used in reference to Nimona only when the intention is to dehumanise her and showcase her monstrosity. Two of the characters, both being the representatives of the Institution use *it* referring to Nimona during the final battle scenes of the film. Todd, that is the overconfident, cruel and not incredibly intelligent knight, does so when interrogating Ballister as to Nimona’s whereabouts, while the Director, the leader of the Institution and the power behind the throne, dehumanises Nimona when commanding her knights to attack the shapeshifter. The reasoning of the powerful representants of the hegemonic Institution is crystal clear: they simply do not see Nimona as human, she is just a monster to find, target and defeat. This perception of Nimona as a non-human, monstrous entity is highlighted by Todd’s usage of the pejorative phrase *that thing* in relation to the shapeshifter, which objectifies her further, denying her humanity and equating her to an inanimate object.

### 3.1.2.1. Subtitles

The usage of neutral gender by Nimona herself is not consistent throughout the whole film. In the subtitles, Nimona uses feminine gender in one scene, which could be an explanation as to why Nimona never tries to amend the way they are spoken about and addressed. Nimona uses the feminine gender to refer to herself in a scene in which, significantly, they have a conversation with Ballister about their abilities and the impossibility of living without shapeshifting. This interchangeable usage of two grammatical genders might signal that in fact, Nimona accepts both neutral and feminine gender when referring to herself. The practice of using more than one grammatical gender, either depending on the social environment one is in or using them interchangeably is quite a common practice among non-binary Polish-speaking individuals (Misiek et al., 2024).

Paradoxically, in the Polish subtitles, the acts of dehumanisation performed by Todd and the Director are the only instances in which Nimona is actually gendered in the same way they gender themselves. Todd assigns Nimona the pronoun *ono*, which is both the animate and personal pronoun compatible with the neutral gender as well as the inanimate pronoun used when referring to objects, when he asks Ballister “gdzie ono jest?” (where is it?) (Bruno & Quane, 2023). Despite the harmful intentions, Todd is the only character throughout the entire film that genders Nimona correctly, even if it is not to their face. Nevertheless, in the later utterances made by both Todd and the Director they switch to calling Nimona *to* (that) and *to coś* (that thing), which are much more dehumanising, since they imply only a reference to an inanimate object, which once again highlights their perception of Nimona as monstrous and unacceptable to live in the supposedly perfect society the Institution has envisioned. The usage of the pronoun *ono* can also be seen as an objectification of Nimona in this instance, as it is also the inanimate pronoun, meaning that Todd’s most probable intention was to compare the shapeshifter to an object, not to gender them correctly for the first and final time in the film.

### 3.1.2.2. Dubbing

In the case of the dubbing, neutral gender is used by Nimona invariably, except for Nimona choosing to call themselves the feminine variant of sidekick, that is *pomagierka*. Looking at Nimona’s preference of *feminitywy* over *neutralitywy*, although the latter would have suited her usage of neutral gender better, one might reach a conclusion that Nimona’s gender identity is unstable and while she prefers to use neutral gender themselves, they have no objections when it comes to being referred to with the feminine gender as well.

In the final scenes of the film, the same method of dehumanisation of Nimona through language is present in the dubbing, although it could be labelled as a more gender neutral variant, since the Director overtly calls Nimona *potwór* (a monster), changing the grammatical gender used to refer to the shapeshifter to masculine, that is the gender of the noun, similarly to how it would have been done in the case of *osobatywy*.



### 3.1.2.3. Possible solutions

The change of grammatical gender used by Nimona also influences the relationships that are not laced with violence. Especially the relationship between Nimona and their employer and subsequently best friend, Ballister, as well as the viewer's perception of him are negatively impacted due to his apparent misgendering of Nimona. In spite of Nimona's usage of neutral gender and refusal to be called a girl ever since their first meeting, Ballister consistently refers to them as if they were a little girl. At first, Ballister is terrified by the abilities of his new sidekick and keeps his distance, which could potentially be an explanation as to why exactly he never asks about the rather obvious usage of a non-binary forms of language. With time and due to his many conversations with Nimona, however, he starts to understand what the rest of the Kingdom would call monstrosity, that is the shapeshifting nature of his sidekick and their otherness, which Nimona puts as follows: "I'm not a people" (Bruno & Quane, 2023). He finally shows his full acceptance of his sidekick when they are playing a Monopoly-like board game, during which Nimona gets angry, partially transforms into a dragon and burns the game board. Ballister, who had always been shocked whenever his sidekick showed new abilities, now smiles and continues playing the game. He also comments on the event, saying: "Nie mówiłaś mi, że ziejesz ogniem"<sup>9</sup> (Bruno & Quane, 2023), that is he states that Nimona never told him that *she* can breathe fire. The pronoun here is important, as Ballister once again uses the feminine gender to refer to Nimona. Thus, the Polish viewer sees that Ballister's acceptance is not at all full; while he accepts the shapeshifting abilities, he still does not see, and definitely does not respect, Nimona's gender identity. Ballister is therefore the only character that tries to see in Nimona something else than the monstrosity decried by the Institution and the entire Kingdom, nevertheless, he cannot notice the other aspect that makes his sidekick so exceptional, their non-binariness.

The lack of reflection and ignoring the way Nimona speaks about themselves and their open resistance to the word *girl* seem to be rather unnatural, especially when they come from a character who was also othered, labelled a monster and forced into a role of the villain. Moreover, the blatant ignorance of Nimona's usage of neutral gender by the other characters is not only unaddressed, but also seemingly unnoticed. From the point of view of constrained translation, the ignorance could be explained by the fact that there is no scene overtly discussing Nimona's gender identity in the original film. This issue, however, could have been

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<sup>9</sup> In the subtitles: "Nie mówiłaś, że potrafisz ziać ogniem." (Bruno & Quane, 2023), which means roughly the same.

addressed differently. Firstly, the other characters could have been portrayed as using the more proper, neutral gender when referring to Nimona from the very start of the film, in which case Nimona would still have been correcting Ballister's usage of the word *girl*, but the viewers will still be able to notice that he makes an attempt to gender his sidekick correctly and even eventually gets better at being consistent in such gendering, as he finally abandons the form *girl* towards the end of the film. Another possible solution is to vary the language Ballister uses to refer to Nimona and, for example, translate his references to them at first using the feminine gender and then gradually, as the film and his acceptance progress, translate them with the neutral gender. If Ballister is seen making attempts to gender Nimona correctly, both the shift into acceptance in the relationship of the two main characters and their shared alienation are underlined, which is why this variation in language might be the best solution to the translatorial problem. Nimona's opponents' usage of the feminine gender, on the other hand, could be kept to signal their ignorance of Nimona's shifting form and their opposition to all forms of otherness, as well as a sign of their disdain for the character. The third possible approach is to translate Nimona's speech using the feminine gender, which is an approach where an element of fluidity of identity is lost, together with some of the queerness of the text. For those reasons, it seems that the best way to approach Nimona's gender identity through language is to translate them as speaking with neutral gender and gradually being accepted by the other characters, especially Ballister, in whose case the use of non-binary Polish can be a manifestation of his acceptance of his sidekick.

Moreover, in the case of the subtitles, the paradox of Todd gendering Nimona correctly but with the intention of dehumanising the shapeshifter, which stems from the fact that *ono* can be both the inanimate and the neutral gender pronoun could be avoided if instead of *ono*, Todd is translated as using a different reference to Nimona, such as their name or even the demonstrative pronoun *to*, which is also present in his later utterance.

*Nimona*, with the themes of oppressive systems, defying institutions, but also shapeshifting and the pure joy it brings Nimona, can be easily read as a metaphor for queerness and transness. For this reason, it seems even stranger that no other character respects the way Nimona chooses to speak and refer to herself. While the translational decision to make Nimona use neutral gender and thus cement their identity as a non-binary individual is justified, not changing the form other characters refer to them not only results in a shift in the relationships between Nimona and others, but might also be interpreted as a

legitimation of transphobia and thus impacts not only the world represented, but the real world as well.

As Derecka (2019, p. 105) points out: “transphobic behaviours do not need to be deliberate and conscious acts in order to have a negative effect on the person at whom they might be directed, and to be classified as transphobic” and, moreover, transphobic behaviours affect not only the singular person at whom they are directed, but also others, who might encounter such transphobic utterances and other forms of abuse. The real-world consequences of the misgendering present in the film, whether it was an intentional choice to include it or not, stem from the fact that it might be interpreted as legitimising using the wrong form of address despite one’s clear preferences. Therefore, while the change in the translation adds another dimension to Nimona’s identity, especially gender identity, it proves problematic, as the decision to keep all the other characters’ references to them in the feminine gender might be interpreted as the film’s approval of transphobia. Additionally, this misgendering in the fictional world might be sending a signal to the young viewers in the real-world to whom the film is addressed, who might have decided to watch the adaptation for its queer contents as they are just discovering their own identity, that they might be non-binary and might use whatever forms they like, but will nevertheless not be accepted by the rest of the society and all that awaits them is a life of constant misgendering. The fact that neither Nimona’s gender identity nor their repeated misgendering by others are overtly addressed in the film might as well result in the erasure of transgender identities, as they might be interpreted as non-existent and not worthy of respect, which, in turn, could lead to abuse.

The best solution to this problem and its negative consequences both for the world depicted in the story and the real-life would be to translate the language other characters, in particular Ballister, use to refer to Nimona as shifting together with their acceptance of the titular character, that is to gradually change the way they refer to Nimona into neutral gender. This way, true acceptance and improvement of the knight is shown not only on the plot level, but also through the language used in the Polish translation of the film adaptation.

### 3.2. Double (Gender) Trouble – the Polish translations of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*

In the English original, Double Trouble usually uses *they/them* pronouns as their “true gender is chaos” (OfficialSheRa, 2020), however, due to their abilities, the way other characters refer to them shifts according to the form they take. When spying on the Rebellion during the fourth season of the show, they pose as Flutterina, who the princesses refer to with *she/her* pronouns. In the fifth season, Double Trouble impersonates Prince Peekablue, who is referred to with *he/him* pronouns<sup>10</sup>.

The Polish translators, however, seemed to completely ignore the genderqueerness of the character and used the male forms when referring to Double Trouble. Additionally, the name of the character has been translated as Kłopotowski, that is the masculine form of an adjectival surname characteristic of Polish, which is rather inconsistent with the overall translation of the series, since none of the other characters’ names, even if they are telling (e.g. Netossa for a character that tosses nets, Catra for a cat-like persona), were translated. Although a strange irregularity when looking at the series as a whole, Kłopotowski is derived from the noun *kłopot* (trouble), which is partially appropriate considering the English name of the character, yet the form of the name leaves the viewer with few doubts about its’ owner’s gender, thus further misgendering the character.

While the name Double Trouble refers to the shapeshifter switching sides in the cartoon itself, it was first given to the character of the original *She-Ra* back in the 1980s. The original Double Trouble first appeared in one of Mattel’s toy lines and the name highlighted the unique property of the doll, that is the fact that it had two faces, meaning that the doll’s facial expressions could be changed by turning one of the faces inside of the helmet (VeeBee, 2014). Moreover, the name, meaning a greater deal of misfortunes than usually, is a highly intertextual one. The phrase originates from a fragment of a spell cast by the three wicked witches in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*: “Double, double toil and trouble” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 119), and it has been used in many pieces of media since then, including being the title of a great number of feature films, episodes of TV shows, video games, and songs. The name Kłopotowski, on the other hand, does not hold similar intertextual significance. On

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<sup>10</sup> Peekablue’s gender identity in the show is unknown. He never officially appears in the show; he is mentioned in the eighth episode of season one, “Princess Prom”, where he figures as a princess on a guestlist. Therefore, it could be presumed either that he is a trans man or that the title of princess falls to one regardless of their gender identity. Nevertheless, neither theory has been confirmed.

the contrary, it might be seen as a reference to a Polish Catholic priest who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ignacy Kłopotowski, which is rather inappropriate in the context of the cartoon.

The translational decision to change Double Trouble's identity into a more normative, binary version, was met with a lot of criticism. It can be seen as a form of ciswashing, that is the transgender identity of the character being erased and replaced with a cisgender (that is one agreeing with the gender identity assigned to one at birth) identity. While noticing that it was most likely the fault of the translators' unfamiliarity with non-binary language, Michał Ochnik, the author of the pop-culture Facebook page *Mistycyzm Popkulturowy* (2019) called the decision to ciswash the character a form of discrimination, despite any potential intentions. Similarly, other news sources published pieces about the issue, including a *Noizz.pl* article by Korzeniowski (2019), which expresses doubts about whether this outcome stemmed from conformism or was a result of a translatorial mistake. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, one of the main Polish newspapers, published an interview with the Polish translator of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, Agnieszka Wagner, in which she stated that a new version of the subtitles will be prepared (Dłużewska, 2019). As of 2024, the time this thesis was written, it seems that both the subtitles and the dubbing have been slightly adjusted, however, Double Trouble's gender identity in the Polish translation remains male. The only change that regards this character seems to be replacing the translated name Kłopotowski with the name taken from the source text, that is Double Trouble. It is, however, the dubbing, not the subtitles that contains most of the changes, as all traces of the translated name have been erased from the spoken text. In the subtitles, most of the fourth season of the show still refers to the character as Kłopotowski, with only the last two episodes incorporating the English name. This inconsistency can be quite disorienting for the viewer, as there is no plot justification or explanation for the character's name to suddenly change in the middle of the season. The one episode in the fifth season that Double Trouble speaks or is spoken about in, that is episode seven, also uses the English name in both dubbing and subtitles.

It is worth noting that not just the erasure of a non-binary identity of the character can be seen as transphobic. The masculine character impersonating a female one (Flutterina) and infiltrating a female-dominated space (The Princesses Alliance) can be interpreted as an awful stereotypisation of trans women as impostors infringing on female spaces, typical of the rhetoric of many transphobes (Howansky et al., 2019, p. 485).

### 3.2.1. Subtitles

From the very introduction of the character in the second episode of the fourth season of the show, Double Trouble (still referred to as Kłopotowski at this point) is gendered as male, even before revealing their true form. Catra tells them all she wants is: “żebyś przestał być mną” (for you to stop being me, with the verb *stop* being inflected for masculine gender) (Stevenson, 2018-2020), despite them taking her form, therefore theoretically being in a feminine disguise. The first time the viewers hear them speak, the text that appears in the subtitles is: “Przepraszam. Zapomniałem.” (I’m sorry. I forgot. The verb *forget* is likewise inflected for masculine gender) (Stevenson, 2018-2020), which cements their identity as male in the minds of the Polish viewers, at least if they do not understand the English soundtrack. The masculine gender in reference to Double Trouble (in their normal form, not taking into account their various disguises) is used invariably throughout the subtitles, with there being seemingly no attempt to make it more gender neutral or use any form of non-binary language.

When in disguise, the forms used usually correspond to the gender identity of the character they are impersonating, that is when Double Trouble is impersonating Flutterina, they use and are referred to by the Princesses with feminine gender. When taking the form of Adora to taunt Catra during the season’s finale, they speak using feminine forms (e.g. *wiedziałam*, the feminine form of *I knew*) up until they reveal their true form, at which point the utterance changes to masculine forms. Likewise, in the fifth season, masculine gender is used by and in reference to Double Trouble, this time both in their true form and in their disguise as Prince Peekablue.

Therefore, in the Polish subtitles for *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* currently available on Netflix, Double Trouble is (mis)gendered as masculine and hence all reference to their non-binariness is removed; the character has been ciswashed. There are reasons to believe that this situation might change in the future (Dłużewska, 2019), however, considering that at the time of writing this thesis it has been almost five years since the subtitles were first published and there have been barely any changes, it seems doubtful that the Polish viewers will get to experience Double Trouble as a non-binary character, at least in the subtitles.

### 3.2.2. Dubbing

According to Misiak’s investigation of the changes that took place between the release of the fourth season on the streaming platform on 5 November 2019 and 26 January 2020 (2020,

p. 178), not only the name, but also parts of the dubbing were changed to hide Double Trouble's gender. It is already visible in the introductory scene of the character. Catra tells Double Trouble: "masz przestać być mną" (you have to stop being me) (Stevenson, 2018-2020), that is she uses the imperative in the second person singular, which is a gender neutral form that obscures the gender identity of the character she is referring to. Similarly, Double Trouble's response is gender neutral, as they do not use any gendered forms: "O, sorki. Niedopatrzenie." (Oh, sorry. An oversight.) (Stevenson, 2018-2020). Additionally, this response is much less formal (*sorki* is an informal, altered and diminutive form of the borrowed English *sorry*), which is perhaps more fitting in the context of an animated series aimed at children, as well as more expressive and thus more proper for the character who is a drama-loving actor. When they pose as Flutterina, they are still referred to with feminine forms, which is true also for the original text. During the confrontation between Double Trouble and Catra in the season's finale, while impersonating Adora, Double Trouble uses feminine forms, however, once they change back to their previous form, their language becomes gender neutral. In the fifth season, all gendered references to Double Trouble are skipped or replaced with gender neutral ones, only the references to Prince Peekablue have a masculine form.

Nevertheless, not all instances of gendered language used in reference to the shapeshifter were removed from the show. For example, in the fourth episode of the fourth season, after Double Trouble rescues Catra, she thanks them, saying: "Nie wiem, co bym zrobiła, gdybyś się nie pojawił." (I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't showed up, with *show* being inflected for masculine gender) (Stevenson, 2018-2020). Therefore, Double Trouble is still sometimes referred to with masculine gender, and thus the Polish viewer will most likely perceive them as a man, a perception which might be amplified by the fact that the voice actor who dubs them is also a man, Waldemar Barwiński. Moreover, as Misiek (2020, p. 178) points out, the simple avoidance of gendered language does not yield the same results that actually gendering the character as non-binary would have, and thus "the great potential the series had (especially in Poland, where there had been no non-binary characters in children's media before) is lost".

While obstructing the gender of the character, which has been attempted by the Polish dubbing of the show, is a possible solution to the problem of translating non-binary characters into a gendered language, such as Polish, it can also be seen as an erasure of the gender identity of the character, especially when done perfunctorily, as in the case described, where

certain references to a normative, binary gender identity were still present. Moreover, some of the utterances produced as a result of the obstruction seem rather unlikely to be used in everyday speech, for example, during their final confrontation, Double Trouble tells Catra: “My wiemy, że nie tego tak naprawdę chciałaś” (We know that’s not what you really wanted) (Stevenson, 2018-2020). The usage of the pronoun *my* here is rather strange, as in Polish personal pronouns are rarely used since the inflection of the verb already indicates the pronoun that would be used and, therefore, it can be skipped. Additionally, the form used by Double Trouble might indicate their preference for using the plural number in reference to themselves, since there is no clear indicator that what they mean is that both them and Catra know something. In the subtitles, the utterance starts with the collective numeral *oboje* (both), which is used when referring to two people of different genders or two children, and which is arguably a better reflection of the English line: “We both know this was never what you really wanted” (Stevenson, 2018-2020). It is gendered, and yet it simply indicates that Catra’s and Double Trouble’s gender identities differ, which is true whether one sees the latter as a non-binary individual or a man.

One of the solutions employed in order to obscure the gender identity of Double Trouble was to use passive voice. This has consequences for the viewer’s perception of the agent of chaos, as much of their agency is thus taken away. For example, “I posed as a clone” (Stevenson, 2018-2020) becomes “dało mi szansę sprawdzić się w roli klona” (it gave me the opportunity to see myself in the role of a clone) (Stevenson, 2018-2020), which does not indicate Double Trouble’s own decision to pose as a clone in order to gain an advantage, rather that it was just an event that happened to them. Moreover, while it did work in this particular instance in the dubbing, such lengthening of utterances in constrained translation might be problematic, as the text that is supposed to be spoken by the actor might become too long when considering the duration of the scene it is meant to appear in.

### 3.2.3. Possible solutions

In order to preserve the non-binary identity of Double Trouble, other solutions besides just obstructing the gender of the character should be taken into account. The employment of postgender gender might be interesting in this case, since they are a shapeshifting being living in a fantasy world on a planet in a universe completely different from the one experienced by the viewers of the show. The usage of Dukaj’s forms in the case of *She-Ra and the Princesses*



*of Power* would highlight the genre that the show belongs to and build continuity with the different expressions of said genre in the target language, such as *Perfekcyjna niedoskonałość*. Moreover, the employment of forms many viewers might not be familiar with might emphasise the fact that the character is an alien, as well as familiarise a wider audience with this form of non-binary Polish.

Another possible solution is the usage of forms of grammatical genders characteristic of plural number. Since it encompasses all possible (grammatical) genders, masculine personal gender could be a possible solution to the problem of translating *Double Trouble*'s gender identity into Polish. As they take on multiple forms, posing as characters of different genders, the usage of a plural number could highlight their abilities and the variety of personas they are shown to represent throughout the series, all of which become in some sense a part of their own identity as an actor. Additionally, using a grammatical gender characteristic of plural number can be seen as a reference to the name of the character – it is *Double Trouble*, after all, and since the dual grammatical number is very rare in the modern Polish language, plural number might be the closest the translator can get to linguistically reflecting the duplicity of the character.

Neutral gender could be used in this particular translation as well. In this case, it would both highlight the non-binary gender of the character, and serve as an educational tool, making viewers more aware of this form of non-binary Polish.

To summarise, simply obstructing the gender of the character, especially if done inconsistently, is not enough to render *Double Trouble*'s gender identity into Polish as non-binary. In order to preserve the non-normative gender of the shapeshifter, additional forms of non-binary Polish, such as postgender or neutral gender, should be added into the translation. The supplementation of *Double Trouble*'s language with forms belonging to plural number, such as masculine personal gender can also be an interesting solution, which would additionally highlight the multitude of forms they can take.

### **3.3. Witches and whispers – the Polish translations of *The Owl House***

Similarly to *Double Trouble*, *Raine Whispers* is referred to throughout the English original of *The Owl House* with singular *they/them* pronouns. When it comes to their gender identity

being translated, the Polish translations available on Disney +, that is dubbing and subtitles, vary significantly.

Firstly, their name, just as was the case of Kłopotowski, was translated into Polish, however, it is worth noting that most names in the series were translated, whether to better reflect the Polish pronunciation (e.g. Eda became Ida) or because they were telling names (e.g. the surname Blight was translated as Plaga, that is *plague*, and the name Willow was rendered as Witka, meaning an *osier twig* or just a *twig*, thus connecting the character who practises plant magic to the natural world). When Raine's full name, Raine Whispers, appears in the text, it is usually translated as Szeptucha. A *szeptucha* is the one of the names given to magic practitioners, usually healers, living in the Podlasie region of Poland, who heal by the power of words and prayers (Weber, 2014, pp. 210-11). Although Raine rarely uses their magic to heal and practises magic thanks to music, not words, the name forms a connection to actual Polish folklore and witch-like entities. This domestication can also have negative consequences, as it alludes to some potential ties between the magical Demon Realm and the region of Podlasie. It could be argued that *szeptucha* is not a word commonly used outside of the region<sup>11</sup>, so it would not be recognisable as anything other than the name of a fictional character<sup>12</sup> for most Polish speakers, however, for people familiar with the word and the healers that it describes, the name might create confusion, since the character does not have much in common with the magic practitioners in Podlasie. The name is also a reference to Raine's surname in the English original, since *szeptucha* can be roughly translated as "she who whispers". The form of the name used in the translation suggests a feminine grammatical gender due to the feminine ending *-a*, however, neither the subtitles nor the dubbing genders Raine as feminine.

In the instances that only Raine's first name is present in the text, it is usually rendered as Szept, that is *whisper*, which, since the magic practitioners usually whisper the words of a prayer/spell above the head of their patient (Weber, 2014, p. 211), is also where the name *szeptucha* most likely comes from. Importantly, *szept* is of masculine grammatical gender in

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<sup>11</sup> The word *szeptucha* appears as a regionalism for example in the *Słownik języka polskiego pod red. W. Doroszewskiego* (PWN, n.d.) and is classified as a *kresowizm* (that is a regionalism coming from Kresy, the previous Eastern border region of Poland) in the *Kresowizmy – słownik polszczyzny kresowej* (Olczyk, 2019). However, not all dictionaries list this word as a regionalism.

<sup>12</sup> One of the evil witches, the secondary villains in the Polish video game *Wiedźmin 3: Dziki Gon* has a similar name, that is Szepciucha. The game and the animated TV show discussed, however, are not aimed at the same audience, so it is rather unlikely that the two could be confused.

the Polish language, which creates some linguistic difficulty and inconsistency since the full name of the character is rendered in a form that suggests a feminine grammatical gender.

### 3.3.1. Subtitles

The viewers are first introduced to Raine in the seventh episode of the second season of the show, via a television-like transmission of their confirmation as the new Head of the Bard Coven which is viewed by Eda. In the Polish subtitles, all gendered references to Raine during this transmission seem to be in masculine gender (e.g. *następca* – the next, which could, however, just be meant to be a gender neutral noun), even though their name is translated as Szeptucha and inflected according to the feminine gender paradigm. This might be seen as an attempt of creating a fluid, unstable gender identity of the character in the minds of the viewers.

Once Raine and Eda are reunited, she refers to them with the pronoun *mu*, which is used both in the masculine and neutral gender, however, she still uses masculine gender nouns, such as *przewodniczący* (leader). Additionally, she uses the name Szept to refer to Raine, which once again suggest the masculine gender. Nevertheless, this illusion of a masculine gendered Raine is broken once they themselves get to speak about their past. Describing their time with Eda during their high school years and their subsequent life choices, Raine uses the neutral gender (e.g. *myślałam*, that is the neutral gender version of *I thought*). This usage of neutral forms is not consistent throughout the scene, as when recounting their decision to rebel against the emperor and destroy the coven system from within, Raine employs masculine gender (*wziąłem*, that is the masculine version of *I took*). This was most likely a mistake, as the very next sentence spoken by the character is once again in neutral gender, nevertheless, it might also be read as pointing towards a more masculine identity of the character, who also uses masculine versions of nouns instead of *neutrality* or *femininity*.

In the eighth episode of the season, some unconventional forms of neutral gender are used as well, potentially also as a result of a mistake. During Eda's flashback to the couple's breakup, Raine is heard saying: "myślom, że powinniśmy widywać się z innymi" (I think we

should see other people) (Terrace, 2020-2023)<sup>13</sup>. The verb *myśleć* (to think) is used in this instance in the first person and in present tense, in which gender is typically not shown via noun forms, as all singular genders use the same form, that is *myślę*. Here, however, a new form, *myślom*, was employed. This form seemingly corresponds with the neutral gender, considering that the verb endings most commonly used in this gender are *-lom*, *-łoś*, but those endings also signal the past tense. Although it is most likely a mistake, probably stemming from the translator's unfamiliarity with the neutral gender and just adding the ending *-om* to most verbs<sup>14</sup>, it creates an interesting new form of linguistically expressing one's non-binary gender identity even in places in which the gender of the speaker would normally not be revealed. Unfortunately, it is used only in this episode, which suggests that it was simply a mistake.

When it comes to the other characters, all of them refer to Raine using the neutral gender supplemented with usually masculine gender nouns. Masculine gender nouns are most likely used due to them still being perceived as the most gender neutral nouns in the Polish language. The only feminine gender nouns used in reference to the bard are the name Szeptucha as well as *wiedźma* (witch), which can however be seen as a name of the species, since all witches, male, female or non-binary are referred to with this particular noun. The grammatically female name Szeptucha, nevertheless, leads to a curious instance in which Raine is gendered as feminine, mostly due to their name. In the twentieth episode of the second season of *The Owl House*, while discussing the CATs' plan of overthrowing emperor Belos, Eda reassures everyone, stating that: "Szeptucha będzie mnie ochraniała" (Szeptucha will be protecting me, the verb *protect* is inflected for feminine gender) (Terrace, 2020-2023). This could have been easily avoided if the form of the verb was made gender neutral, for example by using the form *ochraniać* instead, which is employed regardless of the gender of the person.

The pronouns that are used in reference to the bard also become clearly non-binary the further the season progresses. In the beginning of the season, other characters use the pronoun *mu*, which is both neutral and masculine. During the aforementioned flashback to Eda and Raine's breakup, Eda, talking to a younger version of herself, first uses this particular pronoun in reference to Raine: "Po prostu mu powiedz" (just tell it/him) (Terrace, 2020-2023). Later

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<sup>13</sup> It is also noteworthy that the sentence was translated literally and the phrase "widywać się z innymi" sounds in Polish more like an invitation to open up the relationship or meet in a greater group of people rather than breaking up.

<sup>14</sup> And not only verbs, as in the same utterance the adverb *przykro* (sorry) is also changed into *przykrom*.

on in the same scene she employs also a different pronoun: “Przestań je odpychać” (stop pushing them/it away) (Terrace, 2020-2023), which cements the language used to refer to Raine as non-binary, definitely declaring that the usage of *mu* is not supposed to reflect a masculine gender of the character, but rather is in this case one of the pronouns used with the neutral gender.

Therefore, except for a few instances, most likely mistakes, Raine’s non-binariness is linguistically reflected in the Polish translation of the subtitles. The usage of masculine gender nouns, however, points the gender identity into one falling closer to a masculine identity, which is also supplemented with the fact that Raine uses the masculine gender in one sentence.

### 3.3.2. Dubbing

Raine’s non-binary gender identity is, however, not preserved in the Polish dubbing of the series. The first references to the character in the dubbing are very similar to those in the subtitles, that is the feminine name Szeptucha is inflected according to the feminine paradigm, but masculine gender nouns, e.g. *szef* (chief) are used in reference to Raine. Nevertheless, contrary to the subtitles, once they start speaking about themselves, Raine continues using masculine gender: “Myślałem, że tylko żartujesz” (I thought you were just joking, with the verb *think* inflected for masculine gender) (Terrace, 2020-2023).

Although most of the episodes continue with the usage of the masculine gender in reference to the character, the translation of episode fifteen of the second season poses some doubts about the gender identity of Raine. Through Eda’s flashbacks, the viewers get to know the story of how Raine and Eda first met during a high school contest with high stakes for both of them – if Eda had won, she would have been able to continue studying in Hexside with her sister, Lilith, while Raine had to win in order to keep their scholarship from the prestigious St. Epiderm. Introducing the story, Eda already uses an *osobatyw* to refer to her high school sweetheart, stating that this will be the history of how: “poznałam najlepszą, najfantastyczniejszą osobę wszech czasów, czyli Szeptuchę” (I met the best, most fantastic person of all time, that is Szeptucha) (Terrace, 2020-2023). This phrase signals a change, as previously in the dubbing Eda simply referred to Raine with masculine forms, never opting

for gender neutral solutions. In those flashbacks to a younger Raine and Eda, however, gender neutral forms are employed and the character is never gendered as masculine<sup>15</sup>.

In order not to have to use a gendered reference to Raine, the subject of the utterance is sometimes changed, for example, when handing Eda a cup of juice with the taste improved by their bard magic, they say: “Spokojnie, nie ma tu mojej śliny” (No worries, there’s none of my spit in there) instead of “Don’t worry, I didn’t spit in it”, which is present in the English original (Terrace, 2020-2023). Although it might sound less natural and even signify Raine’s failed attempt to spit into the mixture, the Polish gender neutral version manages to convey more or less the same meaning while also keeping the gender identity of the character hidden. Other shifts include changes from adjectives to adverbs, since they do not carry a gendered reference in Polish, for example, “you’re cool” becomes “jesteś spoko” in the dubbing, instead of the (neutrally) gendered “jesteś fajne” (Terrace, 2020-2023) present in the subtitles, all sentences meaning the same.

This avoidance of gendered references, nevertheless, also makes some information more vague. After the contest is settled without any winners, Raine loses their scholarship, which means they have to transfer to Hexside, the school that Eda goes to, since they cannot afford the tuition. Commenting on this turn of events, they state that “I wanted to transfer out of Epiderm anyway” (Terrace, 2020-2023). In the Polish dubbing, however, their reasoning, which is also meant to comfort Eda, who feels guilty about her contribution to Raine’s loss of scholarship, is less clear: “Ten święty Naskór zrobił się strasznie staroświecki” (That święty Naskór became very old-fashioned, *święty Naskór* being the translation of the name of the school) (Terrace, 2020-2023). The fact that this was the reason they wanted to transfer out of the school has to be inferred by the viewer.

After this episode, the Polish dubbing comes back to the usage of masculine forms in reference to Raine. Nevertheless, the fact that the younger version of Raine avoids gendered references raises questions about the gender identity of the character. Since this hiding of the gender might signify an identity beyond the cisgender, it can be interpreted as a signal that Raine in the Polish dubbing is, in fact, transmasculine, using less gendered language when younger and transitioning into a fully masculine language once older<sup>16</sup>. Additionally, the actress that voices Raine in the Polish dubbing, Agnieszka Matysiak, uses a higher-pitched

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<sup>15</sup> The masculine pronoun *go* is only used when it is used in reference to the grammatically masculine word *bard*.

<sup>16</sup> This view that Raine Whispers is in fact transmasculine is shared by their English voice actor, Avi Roque, who stated so in a private conversation with a fan, later made public on Twitter (@ilikegaycookies, 2021).

voice than usually in those flashbacks, partly to signal that this was a younger version of Raine, however, this can be also interpreted as the character having a higher voice pre-transition. Moreover, the fact that Raine is voiced by an actress while being translated as using the masculine gender might raise some questions about their gender identity as well, especially considering the fact that this mismatch of genders is not visible in any other voice actor choices.

### 3.3.3. Possible solutions

While the Polish subtitles gender Raine as non-binary, they do so inconsistently<sup>17</sup>. Especially the masculine gender used by Raine in one sentence stands out as a possible mistake. The employment of a new form of non-binary Polish, while it is an interesting idea, should have been done more consistently or, if it was also just a mistake and the forms were supposed to reflect the neutral gender, those instances where the ending *-om* was unwarranted should be changed.

The usage of masculine gender nouns in reference to the character could also be reconsidered. While it is the form of nouns currently most likely to be perceived as gender neutral, the employment of *neutratywy* could be better in the case of Raine Whispers. Firstly, *neutratywy* were constructed to be gender neutral (in contrast to *maskulatywy*, which are masculine gender) and thus they would fit the context of the show better. Even if they will not be perceived and interpreted as gender neutral and rather as indicating a non-binary person being the referent, their usage in reference to a non-binary character would still be warranted. Moreover, showing *neutratywy* in this show would make the form more recognisable for the viewers and thus enrich the target language.

Additionally, the translations of Raine's name, both of which are gendered, could be reconsidered, for example to better reflect the fact that Raine Whispers is a first name and a surname. The reference to Polish magic practitioners in the word *szeptucha* might prove problematic, which is why it might be better to keep the name Szept, although it is still generally gendered as male, and add a surname. Perhaps the surname *Deszcz* (rain) would be fitting, as the name of the character would keep the original English meaning, only the words will be inverted. Nevertheless, it might be argued that due to the consonant clusters and sound

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<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that the Polish subtitles of *The Owl House* are generally not very consistent, for example, after they get together, depending on the episode, Luz and Amity are either called girlfriends or just friends. The same is true also for the dubbing version of the translation.

quality of the two words, they might be difficult to pronounce, especially together. While it is true that in the case of *The Owl House* a lot of the names, most importantly the telling ones, were translated, some remain unchanged (e.g. Hunter, Lilith and Philip), therefore keeping the name Raine Whispers in the Polish translation is also a possibility.

When it comes to the Polish dubbing, Raine's gender identity is changed into a masculine one, similarly to the case of Double Trouble in the subtitles of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*. There is some doubt about whether they are cisgender, so this particular instance of misgendering the character in translation is less likely to be a case of ciswashing. Nevertheless, Raine is still gendered as a man, not a non-binary individual. In order for them to be gendered correctly, the translation could be changed for example into a neutral gender, making it more consistent with the choices visible in the subtitles, while also fulfilling an educational role, showcasing this variation of non-binary Polish to a wider audience and thus possibly making it more recognisable and enriching the target language. Postgender gender would also be fitting in this case. The avoidance of gendered references present in the fifteenth episode of the second season of *The Owl House* can be used as an aid in creating a language that genders Raine correctly.

### **3.4. Fallen Angles and Desires – the Polish translations of *The Sandman***

#### **3.4.1. Lucifer**

##### **3.4.1.1. The graphic novel**

Lucifer is first mentioned in *The Sandman* when Dream ponders upon his bag of sand, the falling grains reminding him of the fall of Lucifer: “I watched him even then as he fell, his face undefeated, his eyes still proud” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 107). The character is therefore referred to with *he/him* pronouns, at least at the beginning of the graphic novel. Later on, once Dream reaches Hell, he talks to the demon Squatterbloat and asks for a meeting with Lucifer, again gendering the fallen angel with the pronoun *him*: “Take me to him immediately” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 110), which continues until the two rulers finally meet face to face.

Once Lucifer speaks, however, the plural number is used: “We hear you were caught by mortals (...), sweet Morpheus” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 115). Since the Morningstar is the Ruler of Hell, this usage can be emblematic of the royal *we* used by a monarch or it could possibly



signal a gender that crosses the human binary categories. Another interpretation is that Lucifer is speaking for the triumvirate that rules over the realm, not only in their own name. However, even before Dream (and the readers) learn that Hell is no longer ruled by a single monarch, Lucifer responds with the plural forms to the questions that Dream asks the Lightbringer specifically. Nevertheless, when asking Dream about more social matters, Lucifer uses the first person singular: “Your family are well, I trust?” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 115), which could signify that they use the plural number only in official matters, preferring a more personal approach while discussing other topics. This theory is corroborated by Lucifer’s very next utterance: “We assume that this is no social call” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 115), where they quickly return to the royal *we* once they notice that Dream visited Hell on official business. When introducing the other monarchs, Lucifer also uses the plural form to refer to themselves: “This is our co-monarch, Beelzebub” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 116). Once Azazel shows to the meeting, he claims that the triumvirate are: “Three kings in darkness” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 117), which again genders Lucifer as masculine. In the final panel of the story, Lucifer looks at Dream, who, having won back his helm, is leaving Hell and promises to take revenge, once again using the singular number: “One day I shall destroy him” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 129). This is spoken out of the official context, as the Lightbringer seemingly utters the words only for themselves to hear. Moreover, the character is overcome with anger and other emotions, as Morpheus leaves the realm victorious, having defeated Choronzon and humiliated Lucifer.

Therefore, although there could be some doubt about Lucifer’s gender in the graphic novel, linguistically speaking the character is usually referred to with masculine pronouns and nouns, while Lucifer themselves use the royal *we* when speaking on official matters and the singular first person pronoun *I* in less formal contexts and when angered.

The Polish version of the graphic novel, translated by Paulina Braiter, is slightly more ambiguous about the gender of the Ruler of Hell. In the first scene when Dream mentions Lucifer, he claims that the falling sand reminds him: “o kimś z bardzo odległej przeszłości. Widziałem, jak spadał – niepokonana twarz, jaśniejące dumą oczy” (Gaiman, 2021a, p. 107) (of someone from a long time ago. I watched as he fell – undefeated face, eyes glowing with pride). The masculine gendering of the verb *spadać* here can be interpreted as a consequence of the usage of the pronoun *kimś*, and therefore the passage might be regarded as gender neutral. Additionally, the Polish translation of the name Morningstar is Gwiazda Zaranna, which is of feminine grammatical gender and therefore further complicates the gendering of Lucifer, e.g. when Dream states that he needs to meet with the character, he uses a feminine

form of the name: “Muszę pomówić z Gwiazdą Zaranną” (Gaiman, 2021a, p. 107) (I need to talk with Gwiazda Zaranna). Nevertheless, once he reaches the gates of Hell, he request an audience with Lucifer, telling Pokurczarz (the Polish translation of the name of Squatterbloot): “Chcę mówić z twym panem. Zaprowadź mnie do niego” (Gaiman, 2021a, p. 110) (I want to talk to your master. Lead me to him), clearly gendering Lucifer as male, which continues also later, as Dreams starts inflecting the name for the masculine gender. Additionally, the name Lightbringer is rendered as Świetlisty, that is an adjective inflected for the masculine gender that means “full of light”.

Lucifer at first uses plural forms: “Słyszeliśmy, drogi Morfeuszu, że schwytali cię śmiertelni” (Gaiman, 2021a, p. 115) (We heard, dear Morfeusz, that you’ve been captured by the mortals, Morfeusz being the Polonised version of one of the names of Dream). Since the Polish royalty also used the royal *we*, this usage can be interpreted similarly to that in the original English text – Lucifer is using the plural form to assert their position as the Ruler of Hell and/or their gender is more ambiguous than that of mortals, which is more pronounced in Polish, as some Polish non-binary individuals use plural number to refer to themselves. Nevertheless, later on the forms shift between the first persons of both the plural and the singular numbers, similarly to the English text: “Tak, znamy je. Liczę, że twa rodzina miewa się dobrze” (Gaiman, 2021a, p. 115) (Yes, we know that. I hope your family is well). This might again signal that the Ruler of Hell only uses plural number in official matters. Just like in the English version, Lucifer is also gendered with the male noun *król* (king) by Azazel and in their final utterance they promise to take down Dream while using the first person singular form, additionally gendered masculine by the usage of the word *sam*: “Pewnego dnia sam go zniszczę” (Gaiman, 2021a, p. 129) (One day I will destroy him myself, *myself* being gendered masculine).

Thus, while being more ambiguous in some parts, the Polish translation of Lucifer’s gender in the graphic novel is similar to the English original, that is, the Morningstar is generally perceived as a masculine being who uses the plural number to assert their dominance over their realm. In the English version, however, Lucifer never genders themselves, which does happen in the Polish translation, where the character uses an adjective inflected for the masculine gender in reference to themselves.

### 3.4.1.2. The TV adaptation

In the English version of the TV adaptation of *The Sandman*, Lucifer is never gendered by any character and the language used to refer to the (sole) Ruler of Hell is gender neutral, with all possible pronouns being skipped and replaced with either one of the multiple names of the Morningstar or one of their titles. Additionally, the character always uses the royal *we* when speaking on official matters, unmistakably referring only to themselves, since they do not share the throne of Hell in the adaptation with anyone. When it comes to the less official business, the character uses the first person singular number as well, which Neil Gaiman, the creator of this interpretation of the fallen angel, names an intentional choice to separate the private and the official spheres also linguistically (Gaiman, 2022). Nevertheless, both of the Polish translations gender Lucifer with seemingly binary genders.

#### 3.4.1.2.1. Subtitles

The first gendered reference to Lucifer in the Polish subtitles appears when Dream is asking for an audience with the Ruler of Hell, stating to the demon guarding the gate of the realm that he wants to speak with: “twoją panią” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (your lady, in the English original: “your sovereign”). Therefore, the first impression that the viewer gets is that Lucifer will be gendered as feminine. This impression is not completely obliterated by the next reference to the character, which is gendered as masculine, however, this can be explained by the masculine grammatical gender of the word *władca* (ruler): “Władca Piekieł pomści zniewagę szacownego gościa” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (the Ruler of Hell will take revenge if an honoured guest is insulted, with take revenge being inflected for masculine gender). Similarly to the graphic novel, the title/surname Morningstar is translated as *Gwiazda Zaranna* and inflected in accordance with the feminine gender paradigm, which amplifies the feminine gendering of the character in the Polish subtitles. Moreover, when the fallen angel is referred to with the full name, Lucifer Morningstar, in English, the Polish translation, due to the time and space constraints usually uses just the equivalent of the latter title, that is *Gwiazda Zaranna*, further gendering the character as feminine. Due to the feminine grammatical gender of the name, Dream refers to Lucifer with feminine forms, e.g. when he says “Bądź pozdrowiona, Gwiazdo Zaranna” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (hail/be greeted, *Gwiazda Zaranna*, a very formal greeting, with the participle *greeted* being inflected for the feminine gender). Lucifer themselves use the plural form, similarly to the English text:

“Powiedz, to go sprowadzimy” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (say and we will bring him here, with *bring* being inflected for the plural number), therefore not revealing any gender preference.

The perception of the Ruler of Hell as feminine changes, however, once Choronzon names them as his champion: “Wybieram ciebie, panie” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (I choose you, sir). The employment of the word *panie* (sir/liege, a masculine noun) stands in stark contrast to the previous usage of the feminine equivalent of the word that can be used to title one’s sovereign, that is *pani*. From this moment, the character is gendered as male and even Lucifer uses the masculine gender when speaking about themselves: “bym stanął za niego do walki” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (to stand to fight instead of him, with *stand* being inflected for the masculine gender). The name Gwiazda Zaranna also starts to be used as simply a surname and its feminine grammatical gender no longer impacts the gendering of the character, which becomes consistently masculine: “Lucyfera, Gwiazdę Zaranną, by reprezentował mnie” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (Lucyfer, Gwiazda Zaranna to represent me, with both the name *Lucyfer*, that is the Polonised version of *Lucifer*, and the verb *represent* being inflected for masculine gender). This masculine gendering of the character continues for the duration of the episode. Notably, also the other one of the names of Lucifer, Lightbringer, is translated as masculine, as it is rendered with the phrase *Niosący Światło* (bringing light, with *bringing* being inflected for masculine gender).

Thus, although the Lightbringer is at first referred to as more of a feminine character, their gendering changes as the plot of the episode progresses. Once they are chosen to confront Dream, the Polish translation starts to gender them as masculine, therefore altering the perception of the character that the viewer might have. This might partly be the result of the masculine gendering of the character in the graphic novel, as many lines in the TV adaptation are direct quotes, for example, after the battle of wits is won by Morpheus, Lucifer threatens that Dream will never be able to leave Hell, to which the Endless replies that dreams do have immense power even in Hell, one of his lines being: “Powiedz mi, Lucyferze Gwiazdo Zaranna...” (Gaiman, 2021a, p. 129) (Tell me, Lucyfer Gwiazda Zaranna), which is later quoted in the Polish translation of the TV show with only some slight changes in punctuation. It is additionally worth noting that the first gendered line mentioned is not a direct quote from the graphic novel, as there Dream asks Squatterbloot to see his “master” (Gaiman, 1991, p. 110), while in the TV adaptation it is his “sovereign” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present). For this reason it might be assumed that this line was translated without relying on

the preexisting translation of the graphic novel, which could be an explanation for the different gendering of Lucifer at the beginning of the episode. Additionally, this feminine gendering of the character could have simply been a mistake, later on amplified by the grammatical gender of the name Gwiazda Zaranna. However, the gendering of the character that goes from one of the binaries into the other destabilises the perceived gender identity of the character in the minds of the viewers, thus making it as elusive and ambiguous as it is in the original English text. Nevertheless, the less queer interpretation that this inconsistent gendering is a result of a mistake is, unfortunately, more likely. Moreover, this interpretation leads to the perception of Lucifer as masculine, which is also supported by the traditional view of the biblical character.

#### 3.4.1.2.2. Voice-over

Contrary to the gendering in the subtitles, the Polish translation of *The Sandman* in the form of voice-over first refers to Lucifer in a way that can be interpreted as both masculine and gender neutral. Dream asks the demon guarding the gates of Hell for a meeting “z twoim władcą” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (with your master), which is perhaps closer to the English “sovereign”. While the noun *władca* is of masculine grammatical gender, it can also be interpreted as a gender neutral term for a person that rules. The next reference to the Lightbringer is inflected for masculine gender, however, just as in the subtitles, this is due to the masculine grammatical gender of the noun *władca*: “Władca Piekieł nie oszczędzi kogoś, kto znieważa czcigodnego gościa” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (The Ruler of Hell will not spare the one who disrespects an honourable guest, with *spare* being inflected for the masculine gender). While the name Morningstar is translated in the same way as in the subtitles, the feminine reference to Lucifer that would be a consequence of the grammatical gender of the name Gwiazda Zaranna is avoided by the employment of a more personal, yet slightly less official form of greeting: “Pozdrawiam cię, Gwiazdo Zaranna” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (I greet you, Gwiazda Zaranna). Thus, any reference to the gender of the character besides the name is skipped.

Similarly to both the English text and the Polish translation of the subtitles, the Polish voice-over also uses the plural number when Lucifer speaks, for example, they call Hell “nasze królestwo” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (our kingdom) and when talking about Choronzon, the demon who has Dream’s helm, Lucifer says: “sprowadzimy go tu” (Gaiman et

al., 2022-present) (we will bring him here). However, in contrast to the subtitles, this plural reference is sometimes replaced with a gender neutral form, for example during a conversation about Dream's imprisonment Lucifer says: "Rozczarowujące, słodki Morfeuszu" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (it's disappointing, sweet Morpheus), while the English text employs the royal *we*: "We expected better of you, sweet Morpheus" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present). This could be a consequence of constrained translation, as the reader had to have enough time to read the entire utterance produced by the character, which might have led to the shortening of some fragments.

All the references to the character as well as the way Lucifer speaks remain gender neutral until the moment Choronzon picks the Ruler of Hell as his champion, which is when the gendering of the Morningstar changes, just as in the Polish subtitles. This time, however, the gendering becomes feminine: "wybieram ciebie, pani" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (I choose you, my lady). The gendering continues to be feminine for the rest of the episode, with Lucifer also using the feminine gender to refer to themselves: "bym była jego czempionem" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (for me to be his champion, with the verb *be* inflected for feminine gender). Curiously, the character does not use *feminitywy* but rather opts for the masculine gender nouns, such as the aforementioned *czempion*, which is also repeated later on by Choronzon when talking about Lucifer. The phrase *Władca Piekieł* (Ruler of Hell) is also kept in the masculine grammatical gender, which results in the inflection of words according to the masculine gender: "Władca Piekieł jest zaiste honorowy" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (the Ruler of Hell is truly honourable, with *honourable* being inflected for the masculine gender). The name Lucifer is, on the other hand, inflected for feminine gender, which is rather unusual in the Polish language, since most depictions of the character, biblical and otherwise, typically gender the character as male. Additionally, the equivalent of the name Lightbringer is also rendered in the feminine gender as *Niosąca Światło* (bringing light, with *bringing* being inflected for feminine gender). Another feminisation of the character occurs when Matthew, Dream's raven, calls Lucifer a *diablica*, that is a she-devil, thus amplifying the perceived feminine gender of the fallen angel. Interestingly, the English text uses here simply the name Lucifer, therefore the gendering is added in the Polish voice-over.

Due to the previous gender neutral references to the character, this change into the feminine gender is not quite as shocking as the change from feminine to masculine in the Polish subtitles, therefore it does not destabilise the perceived gender identity of the character quite as much as the other form of audiovisual translation does. Nevertheless, gendering

Lucifer as feminine itself can be interpreted as a rather revolutionary act, since there are hardly any other examples of the fallen angel being referred to as anything else than a male entity. However, it can possibly be the result of the character being played by a female actor in this particular adaptation, which led to the interpretation of Lucifer themselves as being female.

### 3.4.1.3. Possible solutions

On the one hand, the feminine gendering of Lucifer in the voice-over is an interesting break from the convention. On the other hand, the fact that the English text is much more gender neutral and any gendered references to the character as well as any pronouns are omitted was planned and is a part of Neil Gaiman's vision of the show and the character (Gaiman, 2022). In both the graphic novel and, consequently, the TV show, angels, fallen or not, are sexless. While this was not present on the linguistic level in the graphic novel, which is why the usage of the masculine gender in the Polish translation is probably the best solution when it comes to the gender of Lucifer in the comic book version, it is done in the TV adaptation. Therefore, the language used to refer to Lucifer as well as the language used by the Ruler of Hell should be translated in a gender neutral way.

This gender neutral language has already been partially achieved in the translations, for example with the replacement of gendered, indirect forms with more direct ones, as was the case with Dream's greeting in the voice-over. Another example is the usage of base forms of verbs instead of inflected ones in the voice-over: "Ale mówić, że sny nie mają mocy w Piekło?" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (But to say that dreams have no power in Hell?), which was rendered in a gendered way in the subtitles: "Ale stwierdziłeś, że..." (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (but you said that..., with *say* being inflected for masculine gender). Additionally, since the Morningstar uses the plural number to refer to themselves, the masculine personal gender could be used throughout the entire translation, including the informal matters, thus changing phrases such as "bym była jego czempionem" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) to a version that can be seen as gender neutral, for example "byśmy byli jego czempionem".

The audiovisual translation, due to it being constrained translation, already skips some superfluous information, such as the names of the characters. This feature could also be used to skip some gendered words when it is clear that the utterance is directed at Lucifer, for

example when Choronzon chooses his champion and the camera shifts to the Ruler of Hell who proceeds to smile and accept the nomination.

Despite them being one of the aids that helped the English text stay gender neutral, Lucifer's many names and titles might paradoxically be the hardest obstacle to overcome in order to create a gender neutral Polish translation of the character. The most obvious solution seems to be to render them all in the nominative case, which, however, oftentimes requires changing the entire sentence and might yield results that would sound unnatural. On the other hand, the language spoken by the characters, especially by Dream and Lucifer, is stylised as very official and slightly archaic, thus it is not everyday speech, which is why the translation does not have to be very natural. When it comes to the grammatical gender of the Polish equivalents of Lightbringer and Morningstar, one could be kept in the feminine gender (most likely Gwiazda Zaranna) while the other in the masculine one (Niosący Światło), as such a solution would not clearly point to the gender of the character, but rather to the grammatical gender of the name itself. This grammatical gender of the names could be further exploited to yield a result that would not uncover the gender identity of the character, but rather focus on the linguistic possibilities of the language. The title of the Ruler of Hell is problematic as well. Since this form is supposed to be gender neutral, one of the solutions might be to employ a *neutratyw* in the form of Władcze Piekła, nevertheless, this form might be interpreted as pointing towards a non-binary gender rather than being gender neutral. Although it would point to more of a shifting identity rather than a stable, genderless one, the interchangeable usage of all: a *neutratyw*, a *feminatyw* (Władczyni Piekła) and a *maskulatyw* (Władca Piekła), might also be an interesting idea. Otherwise, the option that can be interpreted as a gender neutral solution is to keep the form masculine. This last possible solution holds some historical significance, since the first Polish female monarch, Jadwiga of Poland (1373 or 1374 – 17 July 1399), while traditionally being called a queen, was crowned as the masculine equivalent of the position (and word) – her official title was that of *król Polski*, that is a king of Poland (Duczmal, 1990, p. 306), which could be interpreted as the names of the position of power in Poland being gender neutral, at least in the Middle Ages. This historical fact might help the Polish viewer accept the title that signifies a ruler as gender neutral.

In sum, it is possible to render the Polish translation as gender neutral using a variety of structures. Some features of Lucifer's speech, such as the usage of plural number, can also be exploited to add ambiguity to the gendering of the character. Moreover, the grammatical



gender of the many names of the Lightbringer can help with hiding the gender identity of the character in the Polish translation.

### 3.4.2. Desire

#### 3.4.2.1. The graphic novel

Desire's gender identity is shown as destabilised and multifaceted from the very first words of the graphic novel that introduce the character and the Threshold, their fortress: "It is a statue of Desire – him-, her-, or it-self" (Gaiman, 1990, p. 40). In the introductory scene the references to the character are kept gender neutral, with all pronouns being simply replaced with the name, Desire. At the end of the story, after discovering the mixed bloodline of the Kinkajids, Dream visits Desire in their Threshold. He addresses them in a rather gender neutral manner, calling them his sibling and then sister-brother, which establishes Desire's gender identity as lying beyond the binary. The only gendered reference is Dream claiming that Desire fathered a child with Unity Kinkajid, which can be interpreted, however, as a reference to the form that Desire has taken when meddling with the affairs of a different Endless and that allowed him to mix the bloodline of the dream vortex and the Endless. After the conversation, the readers get to know more about Desire's thoughts and plans. Here, the narratorial voice that describes Desire's actions uses *it/its* pronouns to refer to Desire, once again amplifying the fact that the gender of the character is non-binary. The narrator also uses a multitude of pronouns at the end of the story: "And Desire walks the endless pathways of its body, certain that he, or she, or it, is in the sole and only control of its destiny" (Gaiman, 1990, p. 227). Therefore, linguistically, Desire's gender identity is shown to be crossing far beyond the traditional human binary divisions, with the language being accepting of all pronouns and gendered nouns, with a slight preference for the singular, neuter, third-person pronouns.

The Polish translation of *The Sandman* created by Paulina Braiter uses gendered language to refer to Desire, or Pożądanie, as the name is translated, from the very beginning. The narration about the character uses neutral gender: "Pożądanie zawsze lubiło przekraczać granice" (Gaiman, 2021b, p. 40) (Pożądanie always liked to cross boundaries, with *like* being inflected for the neutral gender). This makes sense not only because of the non-binary gender identity of the character represented in the graphic novel, but also because the very name of the character is a neutral gender noun, therefore, this usage of neutral gender is grammatically

warranted by the gendering of the name of the Endless. The translation does not, however, employ any pronouns that cross the binary division of gender: “To posąg Pożądania – jego, a może jej” (Gaiman, 2021b, p. 40) (This is the statue of Desire – him or perhaps her). Considering that the neutral gender is used throughout the graphic novel to refer to Desire, it is rather curious that the corresponding pronouns are not used, despite their equivalents being present in the English text.

The nouns used to refer to Desire are not *neutrality*, which might be expected when dealing with the neutral gender, but rather the masculine versions of nouns (*maskulatywy*), for example *mieszkaniec* (resident) instead of a gender neutral *mieszkańcze*. Nevertheless, since *neutrality* are not widely accepted, it can be presumed that this translatorial decision to keep the nouns referring to Desire other than the name of the character in the masculine gender was supposed to be an indication of a gender neutral language.

In the final confrontation between the two siblings, Dream uses gender neutral language when talking to Desire. This is achieved mostly thanks to the employment of the present tense and the second person and plural number forms of address, which do not showcase the gender of a person in the Polish language. Due to the constrained translation type, it was also possible to omit some possibly gendered references, therefore Dream never calls Desire his sibling, as the equivalent word, *rodzeństwo*, only exists as a *neutrality* in the singular person, otherwise it is a plural number word. He calls Desire his *siostró-brat*, the equivalent of sister-brother present in the English text, thus the non-normative gender identity of the character is still highlighted. At the end of the story, once again the neutral gender is used in reference to Desire and the neutral gender pronoun is again skipped: “I krąży nieskończonymi korytarzami swego ciała, pewne, że on sam bądź sama rządzi własnym przeznaczeniem” (Gaiman, 2021b, p. 227) (And circles the endless corridors of its body, sure that he himself or herself rules his/hers own destiny). This double omission of the neutral gender pronoun might occur because it is considered less normative (although grammatically correct) to use the neutral gender in reference to human beings and, although Desire is of course not a human being and rather an anthropomorphisation of all human desires, the pronoun *ono* was deemed too controversial to be put in the translation. Nevertheless, the multitude of pronouns and the usage of the neutral gender ensure that the gender identity of Desire in the Polish translation remains beyond the conventional division into binary genders.

### 3.4.2.2. The TV adaptation

In the TV adaptation of *The Sandman*, any gendered references to Desire are skipped and Dream calls them his sibling, the gender neutral variant of describing this familial relation. When Unity describes the father of her child, she calls that person her “golden-eyed man” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present), however, at that moment no one knows that it was Desire who fathered the child, therefore the noun *man* here is used in reference to a particular form that the character took in order to trick their older brother. Similarly to the graphic novel, Dream also uses the phrase “fathered a child” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) when describing the actions of Desire in the past, once again in reference to the form taken by his sibling rather than their gender identity. Therefore, the gender identity of Desire in the TV adaptation remains hidden, although it might be interpreted as masculine if one was to take into consideration only the fact that the character begot a child.

#### 3.4.2.2.1. Subtitles

The Polish translation in the form of subtitles remains gender neutral. Although the reference that Unity makes before the true identity of the father of her child is known is still *mężczyzna*, that is a man, the later utterances produced by Dream about his sibling’s actions in the past are more gender neutral. In the subtitles, Dream says: “ktoś (...) spłodził z nią dziecko” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (somebody [...] conceived a child with her). The verb *spłodzić* is gender neutral and does not point towards the gender or function of the person in the same way that *fathered* does. In this particular utterance it is inflected for the masculine gender, however, this is a grammatical consequence of the usage of the indefinite pronoun *ktoś*, which warrants the employment of the masculine gender in the subsequent words.

In order to solve the problem of a gender neutral word for a sibling in Polish, the word *sibling* uttered by Dream is simply replaced with the Polish equivalent of Desire’s name, that is Pożądanie. Another gender neutral solution employed in this translation is the replacement of past tense constructions with those that include the present tense, for example: “Doskonale zacierasz ślady” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (You cover your tracks well) whereas the English text uses the past tense of the verb *cover*: “You covered your tracks remarkably well” (Gaiman et al., 2022-present). Arguably, this change shifts the meaning of the sentence, as in the English version Dream means precisely Desire’s meddling with Unity Kinkaid and the Polish translation is more broad and might be taken as referring to all the actions of Desire.

Nevertheless, looking at the context of the utterance, that is it coming right after Dream accuses Desire of fathering Unity's child, it is clear in both cases that this past action is exactly what Dream means. Other gender neutral solutions include rendering some phrases the translation of which would normally warrant the usage of gendered adjectives in a completely different way that matches the meaning of the utterance, but not the form. For example, the adjective is replaced by a base form verb in one of Desire's utterances: "Tak łatwo mnie rozczytać?" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (Am I that easy to read?) which is used to translate the English text: "Was I really that obvious?" This shifts the focus of the utterance, as in the English version Desire is describing a feature of their own, while the Polish translation of the subtitles places the emphasis more on Dream's ability to decipher his sibling and their actions.

To conclude, the Polish translation of *The Sandman* in the form of subtitles uses gender neutral forms to refer to Desire, even more so than the original English text does. The gender identity or lack thereof of the character is thus hidden, which corresponds to the solutions concerning the gender identity of Desire employed in the English text.

#### 3.4.2.2.2. Voice-over

The Polish voice-over translation of *The Sandman*, on the other hand, uses gendered language to refer to the character. Neutral gender is employed in this version of the translation, thus giving Desire a more pronounced, non-binary gender identity, which corresponds with the solutions present in the translation of the graphic novel.

When Desire is described by Unity, the word *mężczyzna* (man) is used, similarly to the translation of the subtitles. Likewise, the translation of Dream's utterance when he says that somebody fathered Unity's child is almost identical to that in the subtitles: "Ktoś (...) spłodził z nią dziecię" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present), the only difference being the usage of the more archaic noun *dziecię* (child) instead of the more common *dziecko* in the voice-over.

Once Desire themselves speak, the neutral gender becomes visible as the neutral gender inflection of adjectives is used: "Jestem aż tak oczywiste?" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (Am I that obvious, with *obvious* being inflected for the neutral gender). Dream genders their sibling accordingly, employing a neutral gender verb: "Znakomicie zatarłoś za sobą ślady" (Gaiman et al., 2022-present) (You covered your tracks very well, with *cover* being inflected

for the neutral gender). Additionally, the word *rodzeństwo* (sibling) is used by Dream in the neutral gender singular number form, that it is becomes a *neutratyw*.

Therefore, in the Polish voice-over, the non-binary gender identity of Desire is showcased linguistically by the usage of the neutral gender. Moreover, their gender identity is possibly slightly different than in the English version – whereas the English text hides the gender of the character, the Polish voice-over features an overtly non-binary Desire.

### **3.4.2.3. Possible solutions**

While the graphic novel uses the neutral gender in reference to Desire, the pronoun that is associated with that grammatical gender, *ono*, is skipped, which could be corrected, thus further showcasing the non-binary status of the character and their gender identity as something more than just operating between two binaries. Additionally, this could legitimise and popularise the usage of this pronoun in reference to non-binary individuals.

When it comes to the translations of the TV adaptation, both solutions, that is a gender neutral translation and one that uses the neutral gender, have their merits. The gender neutral text of the subtitles reflects what is shown in the first season of the show, namely that the gender identity of Desire remains unknown in the TV show. Rendering the character as non-binary by the usage of neutral gender in the case of the voice-over is also a warranted approach, considering both the clear genderqueer identity of the character in the graphic novel that is being adopted and the paratexts surrounding the release of the show, including the comments of the creators (Gaiman, 2021). It will be interesting to see what is linguistically done with the character's gender identity in the subsequent seasons, especially if Desire's gender identity is further established as non-binary in the English version of the show.

## **3.5. Chaos of the Underworld and community translation – the Polish translations of *Hades* and *Hades II***

Supergiant Games is a small, independent game development studio, which is why their games, even those as popular as *Hades*, are oftentimes not translated into many languages, if they are translated at all. *Hades* itself was translated into ten languages, including Polish,

however, none of those localisations, which is a term most often used when talking about rendering video games into other languages, includes dubbing; only subtitles for the dialogue and the in-game text as well as the game interface were translated into Polish. Moreover, the translation was not done by professional translators but rather by the fans of the game in a process known as community translation – that is it was done by a group of people interested in the topic, with no professional background required, usually for free (Olszar, 2021). This approach has consequences for the quality of the translation, which is then often full of mistranslated utterances, ungrammatical constructions and other inaccuracies (Witoszka, 2021). This is the case with *Hades*, the translation of which has been described by a Polish translator of video games, Ryszard Chojnowski, as absolutely awful, most likely done only with Google Translate and having a negative impact on the quality of the video game as perceived by the Polish audience (Cieślik, 2020). Additionally, after the game was fully released and the many mistakes, including the misgendering of Chaos, were noticed, the game developers decided that the translation will not be changed or corrected as this was the final version and they only accepted feedback during the early access stage of game production (Olszar, 2021).

The translatorial situation changed with the sequel to the game, *Hades II*, the localisation of which, including a Polish translation, was allocated to independent translators, who have some previous experience in the field of video game localisation and will be paid for their work (Supergiant Games, 2022). The interface and subtitles for the game are currently available in fourteen languages, including Polish. The Polish translation of *Hades II*, at least thus far, is of a visibly better quality, reflecting the antiquated and elevated language spoken by the characters. Such linguistic jokes as puns are also kept, e.g. Hestia’s allusions to her being a fire goddess through language connected with heat and fire are reflected in the Polish translation, for example when she calls Melinoë “hot stuff”, the Polish text reads: “aleś gorąca, dziewczyno” (you are so hot, girl) (Supergiant Games, 2024). This contains both an allusion to the powers of the goddess as well as archaization, since the form *aleś*, that is the combination of the exclamation *ale* and the present tense of the verb *być* inflected for the third person singular (*jesteś*), can be interpreted as archaic.

### 3.5.1. Subtitles

When discussing the subtitles of this particular video game it is worth noting that in both *Hades* and *Hades II* the subtitles do not appear as they normally do, that is only at the time of the utterance. Instead, once the entire bit of text is uttered, the subtitles remain on the screen until the player decides to move forward with the story and presses a button. Additionally, the subtitles are displayed in a box-like graphical element which appears next to a portrait of the character speaking<sup>18</sup>, thus often allowing for a longer stretch of text to be present all at once. Therefore, while the space is still constrained, the translator can possibly work more freely than in the case of other audiovisual media, including other video games.

#### 3.5.1.1. *Hades*

Chaos's speech as well as all references to the character were translated using male forms, thus linguistically removing any indication of the non-binariness of the chthonic god. Nevertheless, Chaos's gender identity is still somewhat ambiguous in the text, as a form of crossing the gender binary can be inferred from the utterances of the other characters which were translated more or less correctly. For example, Nyx's explanation of her relation to Chaos, given to Zagreus: "You should know they are my mother and my father, child" was rendered with the use of both Polish gendered nouns meaning either of the parents, that is *matka* and *ojciec* accordingly (Supergiant Games, 2021). Thus, despite not being linguistically marked, the character's genderless or genderqueer status is still present in the game, even though the Polish audiences have gotten a ciswashed, masculinised version of the Primordial Originator.

### 3.5.2. Possible solutions

This decision to remove any linguistic indications of non-binariness was explained away by the fan translators of the game with the arguments that Chaos' gender identity was impossible to translate into Polish and that non-binary Polish is not well-known enough to be understandable for the game's audience (Olszar, 2021). Of course, neither of those views is true. As a number of examples above illustrate, it is absolutely possible to render a character

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<sup>18</sup> Or a placeholder for such a portrait in some cases in *Hades II*, since the full portraits of some characters are yet to be released and put into the game as of writing this thesis.

non-binary, genderless or agender in the Polish translation. After all, non-binary people exist also in real life and they have found and invented a great number of solutions to the linguistic problems concerning gendered language. The claim that the game's audience would not understand non-binary language seems to doubt the audience's intelligence and ability to seek information if needed as well. Moreover, if those forms are not known well enough, should the task of the translator not encompass enriching the language and expanding the linguistic horizons of the target audience, for example by introducing them to the forms of language that they might otherwise not encounter? Another argument for misgendering the character in translation given by the fan translators was that the game was not meant to introduce the audience to the existence of non-binariness (Olszar, 2021). Nevertheless, a non-binary character already exists in the text and thus *Hades* features non-binariness. Whether the aim was to educate the audience on the existence of non-binary people or not and regardless of the fact that *Hades* might introduce some to the concept of non-binariness, Chaos is a non-binary character who functions as such in the world represented in the game and whose gender identity should be rendered as non-binary also in the translation of the game, regardless of any educational aims. After all, not all information about each character is served to the player overtly and those players who wish to further explore the characters, most of whom are heavily inspired by Greek mythology, need to seek information outside of the game itself. Not all cases of such additional research have to include gender identity, for example the fact that Zagreus and Dionysus are sometimes thought to be two versions of the same god is only alluded to and joked about in the game and if one wishes to understand the joke further, they need to find information about that matter on their own.

Many solutions are possible when it comes to the gendering of Chaos in the Polish translation. The translation could be done using gender neutral forms, thus reflecting the lack of gender of the creature from before time. However, that is perhaps not the best reflection of the forms that are used in reference to Chaos in the English version of *Hades*.

Since the character intentionally, visibly and audibly contains a multitude of different forms, including a multitude of genders, plural forms might be the best reflection of their identity. The masculine personal gender can be used in this case, thus showcasing the plurality of Chaos, as it is traditionally used in order to address a group containing all genders. The non-masculine gender, on the other hand, might be an interesting solution considering the masculine gendering of the character visible in the present version, as it would go against it, since this gender encompasses all but the masculine gender.



A different solution would be to use either the neutral or postgender gender. Both of those solutions are viable since they would highlight a non-binary gender identity of the character and, at the same time, remain close to the usage of the Polish language that is present in the real-life non-binary community. Moreover, this employment of either of those forms in the video game could make them more recognisable for the players of the game, thus having also an educational function.

Whichever form of non-binary Polish is chosen, a bit of explanation as to the forms that are used by Chaos can be added to the codex, which is possible to be scrolled through and thus can be expanded more liberally by the translator. In this case the codex could be supplemented with a little note, e.g. “Chaos używa form dukajowych (onu/jenu)” (Chaos uses Dukaj’s forms [onu/jenu]), which is quite short, yet explains the matter to anyone not familiar with this form of the language.

### 3.5.3. *Hades II*

Chaos speech and all the instances in which other characters refer to them have been rendered in a form of non-binary Polish in the sequel to the game. They were translated as using a plural number masculine personal gender, which is one of the solutions previously proposed in this thesis. During their first interaction with Melinoë, they tell her: “Mamy dla ciebie pewną propozycję” (we have a proposition for you) (Supergiant Games, 2024). Recognising who she’s speaking with, Melinoë responds: “Wszechmogący Chaosie...! To dla mnie wielki zaszczyt móc was poznać. Jaka... jakaż to rozterka mogłaby postać<sup>19</sup> [sic] w umyśle prapoczątku wszechrzeczy...?” (Almighty Chaos...! It’s a great honour for me to meet you. What... What quandary could form in the mind of the proto-beginning of all things...?; the plural number is used, so the *you* is a plural *you*) (Supergiant Games, 2024). Interestingly, all the nouns and adjectives used to describe Chaos are in the masculine form, that is however most likely due to the grammatical gender of the words *chaos* and *początek* (beginning) being masculine in Polish. The usage of a plural number gender can be also interpreted as an

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<sup>19</sup> This is most probably a spelling mistake, the word was most probably supposed to be *powstać* (emerge, be created), instead the letter *w* is missing and thus the translation contains the word *postać* (a character, form, etc. or a verb meaning *to spend time standing, to survive, to not wither, to be put away or to be unused*). This will most likely be fixed, since this mistake is seen in the very first draft of the game in the early access version, and not the final form of the game.

employment of the royal *we*, which is fitting in the context of the game as well, since Chaos is a ruler of their own realm speaking to a (temporarily dethroned) Princess of the Underworld.

Therefore, in the sequel game, the translatorial problem of the game containing a non-binary character has been linguistically resolved with the usage of a form of non-binary Polish, more specifically the plural number masculine personal gender. This showcases that this solution has always been available and possible to implement in the game. This different translation also poses the question as to whether the translation of the original *Hades* will now be updated so that the forms used to describe Chaos are the same in both games and thus build a consistent image of the gender identity of the Primordial Originator, which is clearly non-binary in the Polish translation of the sequel.

## 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is possible to both translate the non-binary gender identity of a character and to hide the gender identity of a character in the Polish translation. Polish non-binary language exists and can be used not only by the Polish non-binary individuals and other people who created this variety, but also in translation of fictional characters, including characters in fantasy media. The same goes for hiding the gender of a character, which can be done in Polish, despite the language being a much more gendered one in comparison to English, that is the language in which all the media discussed above was originally created. Additionally, it is important to linguistically retain the non-binary gender identity of a character, as a change in the gender identity of non-binary characters has consequences not only for the world presented in the fantasy media, but also for the real world. Nevertheless, the gender identity of a non-binary character is not always kept the same in the translation as it was in the source text, and the translator has three choices when translating a non-normative gender identity: keep the character clearly non-binary, create a (linguistically) genderless character by obliterating any gendered references to them or to render the character's gender as binary, which is often accompanied by ciswashing.

From the point of view of linguistics, the Polish-speaking non-binary community has three choices when it comes to choosing a way to refer to themselves, that is to either hide their gender identity, highlight the non-binary identity or to stay within the binary paradigm (Walkiewicz, 2022, pp. 89–90). Each of those three ways of approaching one's gender identity

encompasses a great number of distinct forms, all of which are used by the Polish non-binary community (Misiek et al., 2024). Since the term *non-binary* is an umbrella term, not every non-binary individual identifies in the exact same way, which is why this linguistic variation is necessary in order to be more precise about one's particular identity and to be able to express it better linguistically. For this reason, Polish, like many other languages, has a great number of non-binary forms, all of which should be considered when looking at possible translatorial solutions to the problem of translating the gender identity of non-binary characters. Moreover, it is impossible to choose just one linguistic form that could be applied regardless of the text being translated, as both the context of the piece of media as well as the particular identity of the character in such a piece of media are important and can be expressed better using particular forms.

When applying those solutions to the constrained translation of such media as graphic novels, video games, TV shows and films, there are, however, some that seem to be more feasible than others. Especially the two singular number non-binary genders, that is neutral gender and postgender gender are useful whenever rendering a non-binary gender identity of a character in the Polish translation. Postgender gender is of notable importance when looking at fantasy media, since it was created for a fantasy novel and thus its usage builds a connection with the Polish fantasy genre, situating a translation firmer within the genre in this particular language and culture. The two plural number genders, that is masculine personal and non-masculine genders are also possible solutions since they can be reinvented and used in reference to a singular individual, specifically in cases in which the identity of the character already encompasses multitudes. Other forms, for example of gender neutral language, are also useful. Gender neutral forms can help render the gender identity of a character as more ambiguous, which proves fruitful especially in those cases where the English text also obstructs the gender identity of a character. One of those forms are *neutratywy*, the employment of which can be incredibly compelling, since they were coined as gender neutral nouns, but are widely recognised as forms of non-binary Polish, which is why they can be interpreted in both ways.

Out of the fifteen translations of a character whose gender identity can be deemed as non-binary discussed in this thesis, in six of them, that is almost half of those cases discussed, the translators opted to use the masculine gender to render the gender identity of the character. In some cases, such as that of *Double Trouble* in both dubbing and subtitles, and *Chaos in Hades*, this resulted in a complete obliteration of the non-binary identity of the character,

which was instead rendered as a cisgender, masculine identity. Although the dubbing of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* has been partially changed to a more gender neutral version, some masculine references to Double Trouble were kept, thus rendering the character as masculine. When it comes to *Hades*, the Primordial Originator's masculine gender identity might be questioned due to Nyx's utterance about them being both her mother and father, however, linguistically, Chaos' gender identity was rendered as wholly masculine. The other cases of masculinisation include Raine, whose gender identity was nevertheless kept at least partially ambiguous and transgender due to the usage of gender neutral language in one episode that shows the character's early adolescence, thus opening up the possibility of interpreting the character as transmasculine. Still, the gender identity of the overtly non-binary character in the English-language media was rendered as masculine in the Polish translation. Lucifer's genderless identity was not linguistically reflected in the graphic novel, which is why the Polish translation of the graphic novel uses the masculine gender in reference to this particular character, similarly to what the Anglophone original text does. The TV adaptation, however, employs gender neutral language in reference to the character, which was not used in the Polish translations of the audiovisual media. Instead, the subtitles gender the fallen angel as mostly masculine, with some other references being most likely the result of a mistake. Therefore, the Lightbringer is gendered as masculine in the Polish subtitles of *The Sandman*.

The other binary option used in the translation of non-binary gender identities into Polish is to use the feminine gender. This was the case only in two of the translations discussed. Similarly to Lucifer in the comic book version of *The Sandman*, the shifting and unstable gender identity of Nimona is never reflected linguistically in the graphic novel and thus the Polish translation uses binary forms of language, since they are also used in the English original text. The second case is that of Lucifer Morningstar in the TV adaptation of *The Sandman*, whose gender identity was rendered as feminine in the voice-over of the show, the original, English version of which uses gender neutral language in reference to the character.

Thus, the most popular form of translating non-binary gender identities of Anglophone fantasy characters into Polish seems to be changing their gender identity into a normative, binary one in the translation. This impoverishes not only the text itself, leaving out a part of both worldbuilding and the character's identity, but also the real world. Linguistically, the target language is not expanded via this normative translation, as the target text does not

include any forms which might be considered less standard and which might thus enrich the language and showcase the existence of non-binary Polish. The other real-life consequence might be the erasure of non-binary people, the legitimacy of whose existence is put into question when all traces of them are linguistically removed from the text. This might be especially visible and harmful when considering the transphobic view that non-binary people are just the gender they were assigned at birth and the genderqueer identity is just a whim, which is partly perpetuated by the binary gendering of the non-binary characters in translation (Misiak, 2020, p. 179). Therefore, erasing a non-binary gender identity of a character in translation and replacing it with a binary identity seems at first to be the easiest (and most often employed) solution, however, it is harmful not only for the translated text, but also for the evolution of the Polish language and the non-binary community as a whole. Moreover, it can be seen as a transphobic act, as the translation thus misgenders the character through the usage of a grammatical gender which does not match the actual gender and preferences of a character (Derecka, 2019, p. 105).

While only attempted in the case of the dubbing of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, using gender neutral constructions and thus obstructing the gender of the character has been done successfully in one case out of the fifteen described. In the TV adaptation of *The Sandman*, the Polish subtitles use gender neutral constructions in reference to Desire, therefore hiding the gender identity of the character. The same is done in the original English text. This example showcases that it is indeed possible to completely obstruct the gender identity of a character even in Polish, that is a heavily gendered language. Thus, any claims that this gender neutral language is impossible when translating into Polish are rather unwarranted. On the other hand, however, Desire is a character that has only a few scenes in *The Sandman* and thus it might have been easier to obstruct their gender identity in the translation as there was not much text that relates to them to translate in the first place. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that obstructing a character's gender identity in translation is a viable option only when such an obstruction takes place also in the original. When translating a text with a character whose gender identity is overtly non-binary, simply obstructing their gender does not yield correct results, as it often leaves the gender identity of the character for the interpretation of the audience of the piece of media instead of establishing a gender identity that is not binary.

In six of the cases presented in this thesis, the non-binary gender identity of a character in fantasy media was rendered in the Polish translation as overtly non-binary through

linguistic means. In five cases it was done through the usage of the neutral gender. In both the subtitles and the dubbing of the film adaptation of *Nimona*, the titular character employs the neutral gender to talk about themselves, while all the other characters refer to them with the feminine gender. In the English original text, on the other hand, Nimona never uses any gendered references to themselves, and others gender them as feminine, the latter of which is reflected in the Polish translation. Raine Whisper also uses neutral gender in the Polish subtitles of *The Owl House*, which is also employed by the other characters when talking about the Head of the Bard Coven. Thus, despite some potential mistakes in the translation, the character is gendered as overtly non-binary. In *The Sandman*, Desire is referred to with neutral gender both in the Polish translation of the graphic novel and in the Polish voice-over translation of the TV adaptation, which underlines the genderqueerness of the anthropomorphisation of all human desire.

Employing neutral gender in the translation of non-binary gender identities of fictional characters is absolutely warranted, as it is the most popular form of non-binary Polish among the real-life Polish non-binary population (Misiek et al., 2024). It is, however, curious that it was the only form of highlighting a non-binary identity with the usage of a gender paradigm that belongs to the singular number that was used in all the examples analysed. Especially considering the fact that all the media analysed in this thesis belong to the fantasy genre, it is interesting to note that the postgender gender, created originally for a fantasy novel, was never used. Moreover, most of the translations do not use neutral gender nouns, that is *neutrątywy*, which would best supplement the neutral gender. Instead one of the binary gender nouns are chosen and employed. This might show that the novel form of *neutrątywy* is still unfamiliar to the general public or simply unknown to the translators, who prefer to use the more conservative forms. Additionally, the fact that the most common form of nouns to be used in translation of non-binary identities is still *maskulątywy* showcases the perception that masculine gender nouns are still understood as the most gender neutral variation.

The final translation discussed in this thesis, that is that of *Hades II*, uses plural number to highlight a non-binary gender identity of one of the characters, Chaos. This usage of masculine personal gender seems to be warranted as the Primordial Originator is seen to contain a multitude of forms, genders and other identities, and exist somewhat outside the laws of the world, including the laws of time. It is also a welcomed change from the ciswashing that was present in the original game.

The translatorial choices pertaining to the gender identity of the non-binary characters have an impact on the world shown in each of the stories discussed. This is perhaps most visible in the film adaptation of *Nimona*. The Polish translation of the film changes the relations between the characters, as every single one of them is seen misgendering Nimona. Even Ballister, the only person who becomes accepting of her powers, never accepts the non-binary identity of his sidekick or the language used by them. Additionally, the fact that the neutral gender can also be used to refer to inanimate objects has been exploited by one of the antagonists of the story in order to dehumanise Nimona, which paradoxically meant that this dehumanisation was the only instance in which the shapeshifter was gendered according to their own wishes by anyone else than themselves. The whole story of *Nimona* can be seen even clearer as a metaphor for queerness, and especially transness thanks to the employment of the neutral gender.

The masculinisation of *Double Trouble* in the Polish translation also impacts the story, as the shapeshifter's identity is seen as more stable and normative. The masculine identity of Raine Whispers present in the Polish dubbing of *The Owl House* affects also Eda, as the relationship of the two is rendered as heteronormative. When it comes to *The Sandman*, the gender identity of Lucifer is rendered as binary in all translations. In the TV show adaptation, however, this perceived binarity results in a lowering of the status of the character, as Lucifer becomes more knowable and human-like by no longer being transcendent of the human category of a binary gender. Likewise, the binary, masculine gender identity of Chaos in *Hades* no longer highlights the primordiality of the character and their multitude of forms, as in the Polish translation they are reduced to being yet another binary deity, linguistically homogenous with the rest of the creation. This has been fortunately amended in the translation of the sequel of the game, which keeps the non-binary gender identity of the Primordial Originator.

The choices of the translators have consequences in the real world as well. The Polish translation of the film *Nimona* changes the way in which both Nimona and other characters are perceived. Nimona is more overtly genderqueer, which further highlights their changing form and identity, brought about by their shapeshifting powers. Nevertheless, the usage of feminine forms in reference to Nimona by all other characters despite Nimona's employment of neutral gender can be interpreted as the film's approval of transphobia, especially in the form of misgendering. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the film showcases queerness, it can

also be seen as a piece of media that might potentially be harmful to the transgender and especially non-binary community.

Double Trouble being translated as a masculine individual might likewise be interpreted in a way which would be negative for the transgender community. The masculine character pretending to be a feminine individual and spying on the organisation composed of (chiefly) women can be read as a gross stereotypisation of trans women. Moreover, this erasure of the non-binary gender of a character impoverishes both the media for children in the Polish language, which have never before contained non-binary characters (Misiak, 2020, p. 178) and the Polish language, since the language used by the character and in reference to them was rendered in a well-known gender. Using a form of non-binary Polish would have, on the other hand, enriched the language, including expanding the linguistic knowledge of the audience of the show and popularising non-binary Polish. The dubbing of *The Owl House*, which also rendered the gender identity of Raine Whispers as masculine, as well as the subtitles of *Hades*, which did the same to the gender identity of Chaos, can be said to have the same linguistic consequences for the target language.

To summarise, it is absolutely possible to translate a non-binary gender identity of a character as non-binary in the Polish translation and likewise, it is possible to avoid gendering a character by the usage of gender neutral forms. Nevertheless, it is not always done. The most popular form of translating a non-binary gender identity of a character seems to be to translate the language used by that character and in reference to them into one of the binary forms, most often the masculine gender. This erasure of the overt non-binary identity of a character has consequences for both the world presented in the piece of media and the real-life world. It changes the perception of both the (no longer) non-binary character as well as other characters, especially if they are shown misgendering the character discussed. When it comes to real-life consequences, the erasure of non-binary identities in fiction can lead to the erasure of the same identities in real life and thus make the claim that non-binary people do not exist and do not have a language in which they can express their identity even more prevalent. It might also legitimise such forms of transphobia as misgendering and therefore lead to other forms of abuse. Moreover, the translation of non-binary forms using binary genders impoverishes the target language by inhibiting the spread and popularisation of other linguistic forms.

All the audiovisual media discussed in this thesis can be changed due to them being either produced by one of the many streaming services and consequently being available on



them or being a game that can be updated, as is the case with the original *Hades*, or a game that is currently in development and thus will most definitely be updated, such as *Hades II*. Therefore, the translation of all of those media can be changed, updated and improved, as shown on the imperfect example of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*. Arguably, the translation of most of those pieces of media, especially the ones that either blatantly ignore the non-binary identity of the characters within the texts or might be seen as transphobic, should be changed and updated. The aforementioned *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* might additionally greatly benefit from being updated in general, as the version currently available on Netflix uses the deadname of the author, that is it credits N.D. Stevenson by his previous name, which no longer matches his gender identity.

The above analysis encompasses only five stories, three of which were told across multiple media, and fifteen translations, therefore it does not include every non-binary character ever created, not even those created within the fantasy genre. Moreover, all the media analysed were either graphic novels or would fall under the audiovisual media category, and thus the translators were constrained. In the cases of audiovisual media the translators could not, for example, employ such paratexts as prefaces to explain their decisions, which is possible in other forms of translation, for example in most types of literary translation. Additionally, not all pieces of media that meet the criteria described above were analysed in this thesis. Other fantasy media which contain non-binary characters and the translation of which could be analysed in a similar way include the TV show adaptation of Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens*, David Jenkins' TV show *Our Flag Means Death*, Rebecca Sugar's cartoons *Steven Universe* and *Steven Universe Future*, and Radford Sechrist's cartoon *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*.

This selection does not encompass other types of media, the translation of which is not constrained, such as novels, which also contain non-binary characters whose gender identities have to be somehow rendered into Polish. Therefore, further research is required in order to arrive at a fuller picture of the translatorial landscape when it comes to the translations of non-binary gender identities from English into the Polish language in fantasy.

Moreover, this thesis focuses only on fantasy media, barely mentioning other genres, such as teen dramas (*Heartbreak High*). Research into other genres, especially the ones that might not be as welcoming towards linguistic change as fantasy tends to be, is also necessary to create a full picture of the Polish translations of non-binary gender identities.

It is noteworthy that all the media analysed can be additionally classified as queer media and homophobia and transphobia do not overtly exist in the worlds described, and thus the attitude to all queer characters, including non-binary ones, presented in the texts is rather positive. Therefore, this thesis does not focus on transphobic acts against non-binary individuals which were supposed to be read as such in the context of the story, only on those that emerged as a consequence of the (mis)usage of language. The translation of stories which include overt transphobia against non-binary characters is yet another area that could be researched further, especially considering Derecka's findings (2019) about the unique possibilities of expressing harmful, transphobic sentiments through the usage of languages which possess grammatical gender.

All of the translations discussed have been created in the past five years and a change in the usage of more proper forms of non-binary Polish is already visible, especially on the example of Chaos, ciswashed in *Hades*, but translated using a form of non-binary Polish in the sequel of the game. This observation signifies that there is hope that non-binary Polish will be used more frequently when translating the non-binary gender identities of characters, most preferably across all media and not only within the fantasy genre. Furthermore, non-binary Polish might become more popularised and recognisable, thus enriching the language and equipping the audience with adequate tools to refer to non-binary individuals also in real life.

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## Abstract

This thesis analyses the Polish translations of Anglophone fantasy media containing characters whose gender identity can be labelled as non-binary. It contains a description of the forms of Polish which might constitute a solution to the translatorial problem of rendering a character's non-binary gender identity linguistically. Those forms are divided into three categories: highlighting a gender identity beyond the binary, obstructing a gender identity and creating a binary gender identity. The analysis of the solutions employed in translation focuses on such characters as Nimona in N.D. Stevenson's graphic novel *Nimona* and the film adaptation of said comic book, Double Trouble in N.D. Stevenson's animated show *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, Raine Whispers in Dana Terrace's cartoon *The Owl House*, Lucifer Morningstar and Desire in both Neil Gaiman's graphic novel *The Sandman* and its TV adaptation, as well as Chaos in the video game *Hades* and its sequel, *Hades II*. In most cases the characters were (mis)translated using a binary gender and thus their non-binary identity was erased, an error which could be corrected via one of the methods suggested in the thesis. The (mis)translations have an effect on both the worlds depicted in the pieces of media discussed, especially on the relations between the characters, as well as on the real world. The real world consequences include linguistic impoverishment of the target language, since the novel non-binary forms are not employed and instead replaced with more conservative solutions to the translatorial problem. Those (mis)translation also negatively impact the real-life non-binary individuals and their visibility and can be seen as forms of transphobia.

*Keywords:* non-binary language, gender neutral language, non-binary Polish, translation, fantasy, N.D. Stevenson, *Nimona*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, Dana Terrace, *The Owl House*, Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman*, *Hades*, *Hades II*

## Abstrakt

Niniejsza praca analizuje polskie przekłady anglojęzycznych tekstów kultury z gatunku fantasy, które przedstawiają postaci niebinarne. Zawiera opis różnorodnych form obecnych w polszczyźnie, które mogą być pomocne w oddaniu niebinarności postaci w przekładzie na język polski. Formy te podzielone są na trzy kategorie: podkreślające niebinarność, maskujące tożsamość płciową, oraz tworzące binarną tożsamość. Analiza rozwiązań wykorzystanych w przekładzie obejmuje takie postaci, jak: Nimona z powieści graficznej *Nimona* N.D. Stevenson oraz adaptacji filmowej tegoż komiksu, *Double Trouble* (Kłopotowski) z serialu animowanego N.D. Stevenson *She-Ra i księżniczki mocy*, Szeptucha z serialu animowanego Dana Terrace *Sowi Dom*, Lucyfer Gwiazda Zaranna i Pożądanie z powieści graficznej *Sandman* Neila Gaimana oraz jej serialowej adaptacji oraz Chaos z gry *Hades* i jej sequele, *Hades II*. Niniejsza analiza pokazuje, że najczęściej stosowanym rozwiązaniem jest (błędne) przełożenie identyfikacji płciowej postaci za pomocą binarnego języka, co skutkuje wymazaniem niebinarności danej postaci. Błąd ten możliwy jest do naprawienia za sprawą rozwiązań proponowanych w niniejszej pracy. Konsekwencje (błędnych) przekładów widoczne są zarówno w świecie przedstawionym w tekstach kultury, w których zmienione zostają relacje między bohaterami, jak i w prawdziwym świecie. Skutki widoczne w prawdziwym świecie obejmują zubożenie językowe, gdyż nowatorskie formy niebinarnej polszczyzny nie są używane, a zastępują je bardziej konserwatywne, binarne rozwiązania. Opisywane (błędne) przekłady mają również negatywne następstwa dotyczące postrzegania i widoczności osób niebinarnych oraz mogą zostać zakwalifikowane jako przejawy transfobii.

*Słowa kluczowe:* język niebinarny, język neutralny płciowo, niebinarna polszczyzna, przekład, fantastyka, N.D. Stevenson, *Nimona*, *She-Ra i księżniczki mocy*, Dana Terrace, *Sowi Dom*, Neil Gaiman, *Sandman*, *Hades*, *Hades II*