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Citation: Smith, J. (2024). Welsh voices and the magical localization. Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies, 9(1), pp. 49-61. doi: 10.1386/jivs_00091_1

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Permanent repository link: <https://city-ref-test.eprints-hosting.org/id/eprint/35296/>

Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1386/jivs_00091_1

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Welsh Voices and the Magical Localization

Introduction

Video game localizations are the act of adapting a game for an international audience, aiming to create an accessible, familiar, and/or local game through adapting audio, visuals, and game design. Localizing games draws on the technological and economic elements of video games, as well as the literal translation of games and media for audience benefits, as Bernal-Merino explains:

Due to the high costs involved in the development of Triple A titles, a budget “in excess of £20 million” (Wilson 2011: online), and the competitive nature of today’s global market, it has become almost mandatory to release all new games in as many countries as possible in order to cover the investment and to maximise profits. This approach calls for a full I18n (internationalisation) of the product, signifying that attempts must be made to incorporate within the game design itself all the potential changes importing countries might require. This customisation, which is made in order to accommodate different national tastes and preferences, is normally referred to as ‘localisation’. (Bernal-Merino 2014: 101)

Alongside the internationalisation of video games, caused by the industry’s successful market value of over \$200 billion (and expecting to grow as of writing this paper), products draw on aural and visual polysemic identifiers from familiar and influential mediums, such as film and television. These signifiers can affect the localisation of a video game as publishers aim to create an immersive world for myriad players of different cultures and backgrounds. Although publishers can localize games to provide understandable signifiers - for example, the use of open fifths in music to signify space, whether in film, tv, or video games – there are cultural nuances of a game’s heritage that can be lost, generalised, or reduced through this process. The cultural erasure of localizations are discussed within ludomusicology through the lens of music:

At its best, localizing music can help a diverse range of players connect with games in a personally meaningful way; at its worst, it obscures the artistic achievements of composers and sound designers across the globe, and homogenizes musical culture in a potentially detrimental way. (Gibbons 2021: 360)

Drawing on William Gibbon’s framework of localization - ‘Basic’ (essential localisation that may ‘emphasis cultural origins’), ‘Complex’ (internationalising video games that may change elements to appear ‘local’), and ‘Blending’ (complete alterations) (2021: 361) - it is clear some video games are homogenized through a number of factors, including music, alongside translations of the original language.¹

¹ The *Tales of* series (Bandai Namco Entertainment 1995-) localizes the introductory cinematics of their games between the Japanese region (NTSC-J) and the North America (NTSC-U) and Europe (PAL) regions. The music of several *Tales of* opening cinematics incorporates a J-Pop style song. The lead melody of the opening is sung in the Japanese version (sometimes with both Japanese and English lyrics) but is changed to a guitar on the lead melody in the western localization (i.e., *Tales of Zesteria* 2015). The *Tales of Series* is defined by Gibbons as a ‘complex’ localization through its internationalization of the music.

The translation of language is paramount to localizations but can also erase cultural nuances found in Japanese voice acting. Across different regions and languages, character identities can be effectively changed or adapted to suit different audience types, as voice actors must be recast; voice types and tropes, bodiliness, accents, and dialects are amongst some of the elements of the voice that can affect characterisations and meaning making. Alongside the localized ‘grain of the voice’ (Barthes 1977: 179), scripts are adapted, and colloquialisms are added to games so that each localization can build an organic world across various cultures and experiences.

The complex nature of localizations, as highlighted by Gibbons, can affect the use of voices and accents as the localization process aims to create international games that appear to audiences as a local product. Therefore, vocal tropes from across Western media are incorporated to provide understandable audio experiences for audiences, using aural connotations and stereotypes to identify characteristics such as character origins, environments, and time of place. The Welsh voice specifically has seen erasure within British history, as the language was becoming extinct until the Welsh government focused on its preservation and resurgence. There has been an increased use of the stereotypical (Southern) Welsh accents within multimedia which have been introduced to localizations of Japanese video games. However, the Welsh accent is frequently used to portray the occult, supernatural, and magic. In this paper, I identify the role of British accents in highlighting character tropes from localized Japanese role-playing games, and the consistent use of the Welsh accent to portray magical creatures. The concept of Welshness and the Welsh accent in Britain and western media will be examined before showcasing how these tropes are used within English localizations of Japanese role-playing games, especially as Gibbons makes the distinction that ‘JRPGs must be somehow both Japanese and not-Japanese, regional and universal.’ (2021: 367)

Welshness and Celticisms

To understand why the Welsh accent is used in video game localizations, acknowledging the history of Welshness in literature and moving image is key. Firstly, Welsh accents are often used amongst Celtic narratives and identifiers in moving image because the ‘Celtic’ contains an amalgamation of various British cultures and countries; Simon Nugent defines Celticisms as something which ‘connotes a distinct culture and race of people, primarily located in Ireland and Scotland, but also in Cornwall, Galicia, Brittany, and Wales.’ (Nugent 2018: 107)

In video games, Celticisms are often used in conjunction with the faux visual and auditory northern medievalism and historicisms which have been curated from film and television. Filmic northern medievalism draws on the Celtic as the ‘other’, the folkish occult that has links with magic, as Rachel Collyer highlights:

The conflation of Celtic sound with medieval music is comparatively new, with Haines observing that Irish-Celtic music invaded the scores of medieval-themed films in the 1990s. Filmic Celtic medievalisms have been identified in recent game scores.

Even within the musical opening here, the localization of the game has erased and changed the Japanese language and voices, preferring a guitar solo.

[...] Celtic sound offers a fresh, if incongruent, dynamic with its overlays of druidic magic and spiritual connection to the natural world. (Collyer 2023: 7-8)

As Collyer surmises, there was a Celtic revival in film, especially in aesthetics, and music in the 1990s as it grew in mainstream popularity, following the initiative from Europe to create an historical past that was independent of North America, East Asia and the Soviet Union:

The European Union [...] had to face becoming an alternative world market capable of competing with its two rival giants, and it was then that European ideologists started looking for a communal identity that could support supranational unity. [...] In this geopolitical context the almost unknown Celts of the Iron Age appeared—once more—as the perfect ethnic myth, both inclusive and exclusive, to sustain the consciousness of a rooted past and an attractive metaphor for the move toward political and economic unity within Europe. (Campos Calvo-Sotelo 2017: 369)

The attraction of a grounded past for Western Europe influenced the osmosis of the Celtic into modern culture. Musical spaces further developed the Celtic influence as ‘music moved from being a rather successful genre into becoming both the beneficiary of and spokesman for the push to a united Europe.’ (Campos Calvo-Sotelo 2017: 379) The resurgence of Celticisms counters the erasure of Welsh culture and language that has been occurring since the British parliamentary act, ‘The Act of Union’, in 1536. ‘The Act of Union’ stopped the speaking of Welsh, in favour of English, in public office especially as the upper classes began to intermingle with English ruling classes (Davies 2014: 33–5); the accumulation of seemingly "lesser" cultures under British imperial rule became a natural occurrence. As such, the erasure of these “lesser” cultural languages became popularized in works from problematic authors like H.P. Lovecraft, who specifically uses a 'degeneration' of language in *The Rats in the Walls* (1924) A short story set on the border of Wales, during the narrative a character goes mad and thus their language devolves ‘down an imagined evolutionary ladder from modern English to Renaissance English, to Middle English, to Latin, to Irish, before finally settling on gibberish as he chews away on his neighbour’s face.’ (Jones 2009: 41) Although Welsh is not specifically noted here, the demotion of the characters speech to Irish, right before gibberish, shows Lovecraft’s attitudes to Celticisms and problematically highlights Irish as a degenerative language.

Although the revival in the 1990s brought Celticisms and languages into a less degenerative state than Lovecraft, in the literary and filmic fantasy genre Celticisms and folk traditions are used to portray the 'other' and the occult. Celticisms have been drawn into the fantasy genre through what Leppälahti identifies as ‘the fantasy process’ which creates a 'shared fantasy pool' (Leppälahti et al. 2018: 182-184). ‘The fantasy pool’ contains the myriad influences that have formed the state of fantasy over decades of successful literature and media (i.e., J.R.R. Tolkien, Robin Hobb, Robert Jordan). An author may take inspiration from the ‘fantasy pool’ and, if fans and readers accept any new motifs from a writer, they will eventually become part of this 'shared fantasy pool.’ (2018: 182-184) When Celticisms as fantasy became familiar, if not accepted within the ‘fantasy pool’, film soundtracks like Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) helped popularized the Celtic, rather than continuing to erase it, through end credit music such as Enya’s ‘May it Be.’ As the fantasy world grows larger with each accepted iteration of content, we begin to see tropes and

commonalities in audio, like the use of the Scottish accent to connote Dwarves. However, *The Lord of the Rings* film series (Jackson 2001-2003) seemingly missed the opportunity to draw on Welsh accents along with other stereotypical Celtic characteristics. Especially, Dimitra Fimi argues, that Tolkien drew upon ‘interpretations of the Anglo-Saxon, Middle-English and Norse Elves’ in the portrayal of Elves in *The Silmarillion* (less so in *The Lord of the Rings*) through an ‘internal folklore’ of Tolkien’s creation, with a self-aware use of ‘romantic misapplication’ of Celticisms (Fimi 2011: 87–8); however, Fimi continues to address the disparities between the literature and films and argues that ‘the reason is not the film creators’ awareness of Tolkien’s real Celtic sources, but that in popular culture and folklore Elves and fairies would bring “Celtic” connotations to mind.’ (Fimi 2011: 88)

The connotation of the ‘Celtic’ in popular culture began to be influenced by and reflect the use of British accents in medieval, fantasy, and ‘historic’ film worlds, and these accents are often attributed to *The Lord of the Rings* film series – accents included London Orcs, West Country Hobbits, Scottish Dwarfs, and received pronunciation Elves. Although a defining chapter within the fantasy genre, *The Lord of the Rings* omits Welsh accents. *The Lord of the Rings* draws on folklore and Celticisms in its British accents through its relationship with the books, and Tolkien’s writings, but misses the opportunity to introduce Tolkien’s relationship between the Elves and Wales. Welshness, however, appears in many localized video games to identify witches, fairies, and other occult beings.

The Border Between

Wales and Welshness has a connection with the occult and magical other, which have been cemented in media and literature, intersecting with its Celtic routes. Writers may, as Darryl Jones argues, draw on tropes of the Welsh Celtic as a way ‘to slip easily across the border between these two worlds, the occult universe and the political nation.’ (Jones 2009: 32) With the ‘shared fantasy pool’ outlined by Leppälahti, it is likely that Welshness has become a border for the ‘other’, as Jones suggests, alongside its magical relationship with Tolkien’s Elves.

The use of borders and portals between the real world and the magical, or general ‘other’, is a common theme in the modern horror film genre. Media such as the Netflix miniseries *The Haunting of Hill House* (Flanagan 2018), and the film *Ju-On: The Grudge* (Shimizu 2002) use houses as a border or trap that contain occult beings, such as ghosts and demons, who haunt any person who enters that realm. Larger geographic landscapes are also borders between reality and the occult, such as ‘the upside down’ in the Netflix series *Stranger Things* (The Duffer brothers 2016-2025), which acts as a mirrored but perilous world to reality. The border between the real ‘political’ world and the ‘occult’ is popular within modern literature and film that uses the occult to fashion horror. In film studies, K.J. Donnelly defines the occult as meaning ‘hidden or unapparent; it should not be equated with sinister or evil characteristics.’ (Donnelly 2014: 2) The occult in film usually situates itself in the horror genre, i.e., Ari Aster’s *Hereditary* (2018), but its meaning is that of something hidden, or magical, rather than sinister; the occult is the hidden or unapparent, supernatural and magical but modern film has coded the word negatively.

Drawing upon the use of the Welsh border as a break between the “modernised” world and the supernatural, the pastoral is also implemented:

Edward Williams (1747– 1826) [...] claimed that the Welsh bards were the heirs of the ancient Druids. Welsh antiquarians rediscovered the connections between the Welsh and the ancient Celts. Wales came to be constructed as a 'land of song' (an image constantly exploited by the BBC). Welsh music proliferated, and wealthy patrons organized harp societies. (Hajkowski 2010: 169)

The Welsh accent and voice subsequently become linked with the 'the land' and 'the pastoral' alongside the occult. Donnelly further relates the occult with the hidden meanings and connotations of synchronised sounds to visuals. Donnelly argues synchronous sound is a 'psychological' process in creating 'an unapparent and 'magic' manner, yielding startling results from the product of sound and visuals that do not succumb to easy explanation.' (Donnelly 2014: 2) Drawing on this relationship between the occult and sound, accents can subsequently create hidden meaning through various connotations set up over decades of film and television. For example, synchronised accents to visuals can portray real world meanings and connotations from that culture and people. Accent as meaning can be seen amongst a variety of regional accents that portray British stereotypes within fantasy. The *Game of Thrones* television series (Benioff et al. 2011) uses northern British (Yorkshire/Lancashire) accents to portray northern areas of the world which have cold and hardy characteristics, especially by the world's 'southern' inhabitants; there are direct correlations here between how the south of England views northern England, which is supported by identifiable northern voices, such as Sean Bean's iconic Sheffield (South Yorkshire) accent.

The Wolf Man and the Welsh Witch

The Welsh accent follows similar connotations to the northern British accent and its removal from the 'civilizedness' of the Southern population, as Welshness is often removed from the general populous of a literary or filmic world. In various localized video games, the Welsh accent is reserved for the occult or a magical being that can be characteristically good, neutral, or evil.

Welshness often acts as an identifier for the mythology and history of man-wolves (werewolves) and the feminine witch. *The Wolf Man* (Waggner 1941), screenplay by American-German Hollywood writer Curt Siodmak, uses Wales as a border between the supernatural other and the real world; 'the film demonstrates this by imagining Wales in much the same way as Universal horror films had imagined Transylvania – the two places seem to border each other in the film's cultural imaginary.' (Jones 2009: 34) Where Wales is placed as a tool for bordering between the supernatural and real world, Welsh culture is erased, as even though *The Wolf Man* is set in Wales, there are no Welsh people:

Llanwelly is in fact a fantasy Welsh village where Englishmen, Russians, Hungarians and Americans happily coexist, but where there are no actual Welsh people – even Ralph Bellamy plays the local police chief, a boyhood friend of Larry's who has lived in Llanwelly all his life, with an accent that sounds as if he has never left Bellamy's native Chicago. (2009: 34)

Where the male Welsh wolf appears in fiction and amongst borders, the feminine witch has a unique position in history as they were treated well in Celtic communities, as the witches of

Wales were not burned at the stake or taken to court, ‘nor did the Irish or the Gaelic-speaking Scots.’ (Aaron 2013: 141) The significance of this is the subsequent treatment of witches within video game translations. The English localization of the Japanese role-playing video game *Elden Ring* (FromSoftware 2022) incorporates both the Welsh witch and wolf man in its main story line. The player meets Ranni the Witch, who has a Welsh accent performed by Welsh actress Aimee-Ffion Edwards. There are many situations in which the player can meet Ranni for the first time, and the player can react to the quests she gives in different ways. The player can work with Ranni’s wolf man guardian Blaidd (‘blaidd’ translating to wolf in Welsh). Blaidd has a human figure with a wolf’s head and speaks with a Welsh accent. The player can work with Blaidd throughout the narrative, however Blaidd is destined to go mad because of Two fingers (a manifestation of powers).² The player has a choice to make with Blaidd, either to slay him or imprison him forever - a choice unique to each player and which depends on their personal preference. Regardless of the player’s decisions on Blaidd’s fate, the man-wolf inevitably loses his sanity, directly mirroring the curse of the werewolf in western and Celtic fiction. The narrative outcome of beast-like characters, like Ranni and Blaidd, in video games are often related to their physicality, and vocal Welshness; the use of the Welsh language to make references to witches and wolves is not unique to *Elden Ring*.

The Polish role-playing game, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (Red 2015), highlights the link between welsh leaning characters and their unfortunate outcomes. The player character, Geralt of Rivia, is signified by wolves as he originates from the witcher school of the wolf and is referred to as ‘the white wolf’ by some characters in the game world; ‘the white wolf’ is translated from its original Elder Speech version, an ancient language influenced by Welsh, ‘Gwybliedd’ which originates from the original witcher book series by Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski (1986-2013). Although Geralt is referred to as a white wolf, and certainly endures hardship as a witcher (a societal outcast in the world), he does not speak with a Welsh accent and thus avoids the madness and doomed fate which afflicts Blaidd and appears in *The Wolf Man*. Avoiding the insanity attached to the Welsh accent, Welshness is reserved for the witches of the game world but, unlike the player’s introduction to Ranni in *Elden Ring*, it is entirely unpleasant.

The Welsh language represents the ancient and disappearing culture and language of the world, Elder Speech, which draws parallels on Welsh’s real-world history of loss and erasure by outside colonial influences:

Elder speech takes influence not only from welsh [sic] but also Irish and Scottish Gaelic. Where môr is considered the word for sea, the similar Scottish Gaelic and Irish word muir also refers to sea, and the Irish word mór, translating to large, can be attributed to the mor in Morhen. The accumulation of languages to symbolise the aesthetics of Kaer Morhen, an ancient, large white fortress which used to be adjacent to a sea, shrouds the language in a sense of the historic. [...] the limited use of Elder Speech, because of the persecution of non-human races, mimics the loss of the Welsh language after the Middle Ages. The anglicisation of Wales, after an era of prosperity in the Middle Ages, eroded the use of the Welsh language by the landed gentry as England attempted to unify Wales. (Smith 2020: 172)

² A greater explanation of the quest lines and intersections between NPCs can be found on the *Elden Ring* Wikia: <https://eldenring.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Characters>

I highlight here the erasure of Welsh and the correlation between it and the Witcher world of Elvish persecution. The lead localizers of *The Witcher 3* argue, in a YouTube documentary, that there was no ‘original language’ for the game, as they developed each language simultaneously. They also discussed the flexibility of naming practices across languages, as they would ask translators to not directly translate but to find words in their languages that suit localizations. (Noclip - Video Game Documentaries 2017) Developing language simultaneously is a positive direction from lead localizers in creating an international video game where colloquialisms, accents, and voices are treated with equal weighting. The act of not having an ‘original language’ of the game does not stop any stereotypes or idiosyncrasies that could be incorporated into various translations, however. In the documentary Borys Pugacz-Muraszkiewicz talks about the English localization and the myriad British accents that worldbuild the different nations and people. In this identification of the various accents, Pugacz-Muraszkiewicz states that they felt comfortable using the Welsh language for the supernatural and ‘If it’s weird, it’s Welsh.’ The reduction of Welsh to ‘weird’ is due to the accent representing the people of Aedirn in *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings* (CD Projekt Red 2011) which the player does not visit in *The Witcher 3*.

The connotation of Welsh as ‘weird’ helps to engage the unpleasantness of the player’s first interaction with the accent; the player’s initial introduction to the Welsh accent is when meeting the Crones of Crookback Bog - three grotesque witches who harass the main character, Geralt (and the player), and belittle his manhood. The Crones of Crookback Bog draw on themes of the monstrous feminine that have arisen from what Sarah Stang identifies as ‘the fear within patriarchal culture of empowered women. In popular culture and mythology, these women commonly take the form of the femme fatale or the castrating woman.’ (Stang 2018: 26) Furthermore, the musical representation of the Crones increases the discomfort of the witches. James Cook identifies that when moving to the witches’ area, instruments change from ‘Northern medievalism, instead drawing on the otherness of a host of non-western, folk, or otherwise unusual instruments, including the kemenche, electric cello, hurdy-gurdy, bowed gusli, gheychak, and the bowed yaylı – most of which only enter the soundscape in this area.’ (2020: 231-232) When the player talks to the witches for the first time, the music is in a constant state of repetition with no respite, and the ‘use of microtonal inflection increases, giving the performance an uncomfortably out-of-tune feel.’ (Cook 2020: 232) Music and accents combine to signify the monstrous feminine, further othering Welshness from the masculine nature of the more dominant cultures in the game world, who have responsive music to player action. These ancient and magical witches are visually grotesque visually but also isolated from others in this world through their relationship with Elder speech through their Welsh accents; Welsh is so interlinked with Elder speech that the quest involving a mad werewolf does not provide the beast with a Welsh accent - the werewolf keeps their original west-country accent from before turning. With Geralt avoiding insanity through his lack of a Welsh accent, and general Welshness, we begin to see some erasures of Welsh accents and languages in video games outside of the occult - drawing on the historic obliteration of the Welsh language.

The degeneration of the Welsh accent from representative of a nation to horrific, and weird creatures, is unflattering and mirrors some of Lovecraft’s attitudes. Japanese role-playing video game localizations also use Welsh accents to highlight the magical but do not erase the

culture in later games. The following case studies highlight where the Welsh accent becomes the magical stereotype in Japanese role-playing game localizations.

Xenoblade Chronicles: Feline Phenomenon

The supernatural being and the Welsh accent is drawn on during the localization of the Japanese role-playing series *Xenoblade Chronicles* to characterize the feline characters of Nia and Mio. *Xenoblade Chronicles* is a series of role-playing games that follow a set cast of characters across large worlds made from enormous god-like entities. The first *Xenoblade Chronicles* (Monolith Soft 2010) has a cult following of players as the game was reviewed well in Europe and Japan but was not released in America. Due to the lack of an American release, the localization focused on British talent for the voice actors and the decision was made to incorporate myriad British accents. The popularity of British accents in *Xenoblade Chronicles* are disputed on forums and have confused some gamers who are used to hearing American accents in the English dubbing and localization of Japanese games. However, British voices defined the series, and so in later iterations other English-speaking accents (such as American) are representative of different races.

Xenoblade Chronicles 2 (Monolith Soft 2017) followed suit with British voices and introduced further accents like Scottish and Welsh to highlight unique races and civilizations. The Welsh accent is attributed to the Gormotti race, a race of characters with feline attributes, such as cat ears. We first meet a Gormotti character named Nia who is also accompanied by a talking Blade companion (a weapon race which the player uses to fight battles) who is a white tiger named Dromarch. The accent here is attached to the bestiality of Nia, especially as this is the first time the player and player character have met a Gormotti. The Gormotti are also a naturalistic race which draws on the tropes of Wales being of the land and ‘pastoral’. Not quite a man-wolf, the feline draws on the same origins of the Welsh beast by using the Welsh accent. *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* (Monolith Soft 2022) further draws attention to the border between the Welsh accent and the occult. *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* is a combination of the previous two iterations and, again, draws on the accents to populate its world and characterizations. The game is set in a border between the two realms of *Xenoblade Chronicles 1* and 2, a combination of the two through an in-game natural disaster. The characters and races of *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* represent the races from 1 and 2, who are opposed to each other in a perpetual war. Each race uses the accent attached to them in their respective games, and thus the feline race continues to have Welsh accents in the most recent iteration of the game. The occult and bestial nature of Nia (and Mio in *Xenoblade Chronicles 3*) and others of her race draws and attaches the Welsh accent to the fantastical, yet again.

Ni No Kuni: Fairy Standup

The history of Welsh accents in media show a connection with Celticisms and the pastoral, alongside the mysterious, occult, and magical environment. Whether these tropes have been accepted by the Welsh population, it has transcended across fantasy and international communities. Welsh accents in Japanese video games are consistently attributed to witches,

and other magical or occult beings, such as Blaidd and Rani in *Elden Ring*. Wales as a border to the supernatural, and the Welsh accent as the magical, intersect in the localization of the fairy population in the Japanese role-playing video game *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch*. (Level-5 2013) Unlike *The Witcher 3*, an international game where the localizations are created simultaneously, Japanese is the original language for *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch* (*Ni No Kuni*) and the English version is the only audio-based localization.

Ni No Kuni was developed by Level-5 and animated by the film studio Studio Ghibli, with music composed by Joe Hisaishi. The game follows the magical and otherworldly nature that often occurs in Studio Ghibli films like *Spirited Away* (Miyazaki 2001), as *Ni No Kuni* translates to 'second world'. The game begins in a 1950s style American town, Motorville, with a young boy named Oliver (the player character). After being targeted by the white witch from the 'other world', so that Oliver cannot fulfil a prophecy of saving the world, Oliver is saved from drowning by his mother who subsequently dies of a weak heart. Depressed by his mother's death, Oliver sheds tears onto a doll created by his mother and unwittingly revives Mr. Drippy, the Lord High Lord of the Fairies. The accents in this initial part of the English-speaking localization reveals hidden messages in the plot. Although everyone in Motorville speaks with an American accent, Oliver's mother has a soft received pronunciation. This is one of the first hidden plot points in the game as the narrative explains later that Oliver's mother may have a connection with the 'other world', the magical world. The accents of the 'other world' are British, rather than American, which provides a distinction between the two worlds. As Oliver brings Mr. Drippy back to life, the player is confronted by a strong Welsh accent. During an insensitive first meeting, as Mr. Drippy berates Oliver for being a 'cry-baby bunting' and staying in his room for three days mourning his mother, we learn that Oliver's tears have broken a curse placed on Mr. Drippy.

Eventually, after being transported through a supernatural border, the player is in a magical world. One of the locations in the game is the fairyground, in which we learn that Mr Drippy's Welsh accent defines the fairy race. There are no other characters in the game world, outside of fairies, who have a Welsh accent and thus Wales connotes these magical creatures.³

The localization of the fairies, however, does not solely use the Welsh accent, but incorporates colloquialisms found in Wales, like 'tidy.' During a cutscene in which the player watches two fairies enact a traditional Japanese *manzai* comedy routine (with two performers; a 'straight man' and 'funny man'), we hear general colloquialisms within the act: 'mun', 'en't it, though', 'youer', and a reference to 'Widow Twankey' the female character typically played by an older man in the pantomime *Aladdin*. This localization draws on regionality and culture to 'other' the fairies, but also draws on niche British theater like 'Widow Twankey.' Playing the game in Japanese with English subtitles, the words mirror the English vocals although the Japanese comedy routine is tailored to Japanese audiences; on translating Nintendo video games in 2006, Bernal-Merino highlights the importance of creating meaningful jokes that represent the original language in the localization:

³ The English localization of Mr. Drippy is voiced by Welsh actor Steffan Rhodri, and the original Japanese Mr. Drippy is voiced by Arata Furuta who has an Inner Kansai, Kobe, accent. Where anime characters are often played with standard Tokyo accents, the Kansai accent offers a distinction between Mr. Drippy's magical nature and Oliver in the Japanese version. The distinction between the Kansai and Tokyo accents is not dissimilar to the difference between an American English and Welsh accent.

On a related note, Swan (in VV.AA.2006: 77), from Nintendo of America, explains how they tackle the translation of jokes that appear in video games: “Our first goal is to make sure that we’re capturing the spirit of the original game, so if there is a joke which has a certain meaning in Japanese we give that to our creative writing team, and they try to write a new joke which has the same effect as the original”. (2014: 68)

In this moment of localizing jokes from a Japanese comedy style to the English version, the race of faeries and the culture of Wales have been combined. Visually, the fairy village contains traditional Japanese festival stylings, such as red lanterns and market stalls typically found in an *ichiba* (market) or *matsuri* (Japanese festival). The music continues to highlight the difference and jovial nature of the fairys through its Studio Ghibli stylings composed by Hisaishi. ‘The Fairyground’ musical cue performs a swing style of Mr. Drippy’s theme, and the music doubly highlights the ‘otherness’ of the fairies in this world through the music. The still magical, but non-fairy city of Ding Dong Dell (like the English Nursery rhyme ‘Ding Dong Dell’ or ‘Ding Dong Bell’) follows Western medieval tropes in the music by incorporating recorders and bodhrán style drums. As Daniela Fountain describes, ‘the sixteenth century musical world in film, however, manifests itself through the extensive use of the lute and, perhaps less frequently, of the recorder and the viol in a consort setting.’ (2018: 60) Ding Dong Dell follows this manifestation of music which is also imposed by the leader of Ding Dong Dell, a cat King dressed in a Tudor style with a royal accent. Unlike the city of Ding Dong Dell, the Fairyground is set in the forest which mirrors the similar placements of Wales and the Welsh language in a natural or ‘rugged’ landscape (which also occurs in the placement of Welsh accents in the rural Crookback Bog of *The Witcher 3*).

Where *Ni No Kuni* uses the Welsh accent as a border for another, magical, world (we meet Mr. Drippy before entering or knowing of the ‘other world’), other uses of the Welsh accent highlight just the magical or a specific race that is not entirely human in appearance.

Conclusion

The Welsh accent is used within various localized Japanese video games to portray the occult, whether this is through magical or bestial representations. These localizations draw on tropes and stereotypes of sound, music, and voices that have been prevalent across multimedia and literature. However, although the Welsh accent appears within these localizations, it is still mostly removed from the general populous of a game world, to be sectioned to identify a border between worlds (*Ni No Kuni*) and the magical being (*Elden Ring*, *Xenoblade Chronicles*, *Ni No Kuni*). Welsh accents as the signifier of the supernatural border and the magical being is influenced by various literature and media from the west, especially Tolkien’s drawn relationship between Elves and Welshness.

There are many more voices and accents that are meaningful within the Celtic, and multimedia Celtic, space that may influence these localizations which are outside the scope of this article. Furthermore, this research outlines some relationships between media and the Welsh voice and how it may have influenced localizations, but further investigations into the general effect of this, and audience/player engagement with the accent, is still to be uncovered. However, the resurgence of Welshness and Welsh voices in fantasy media is significant, especially combined with the resurgence effort of Wales to protect the language

from extinction. Whether contained within the occult, the consistent use of Welsh accents within Japanese video game localizations is influential to fantasy video games.

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