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THERE AND BACK AGAIN: THE PUBLIC MEDIEVALISM OF JAPANESE AND AMERICAN CONSOLE VIDEO GAMES DURING THE 1980'S

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Abstract

This paper looks at an oft-forgotten era in gaming history in order to provide the fundament for a historically rooted approach to video game medievalism. Looking at the transfers of medievalist Nintendo video games between Japan and North America in the 1980's, this paper showcases how political and social controversy in North America resulted in the creation of an emergent global medievalism: one which utilized metanarrative elements in its narrative, drew its structure and narrative from Japan, and was deeply influenced by North American medievalist works. The first chapter analyses the creation of these games in Japan and notes their similarities and differences from *Wizardry*, a popular roleplaying game at the time. The second chapter analyses the state of public medievalism in the United States, the most economically influential member of the North American technoregion, in order to discuss the Satanic Panic and the controversy surrounding the representation of religion in medievalist media like *Dungeons and Dragons*. The final chapter provides a brief explanation of the economic relations between the United States and Japan during the latter half of the 1980's and an explanation of the content changes which occurred during localization in the games discussed in chapter 1. These North American localizations would eventually serve as the basis for their European localizations, and alongside the developing global video game industry, formed the basis for a new form of global medievalism.

Acknowledgements

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For Clare, who was a true friend when one was needed.

For Sita, an incredibly bright and empathetic scholar whose work is of the utmost importance. May your light never fade and your humanity never waver.

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Introduction: On Medievalism and Globalization

The Middle Ages have had a long and varied legacy. It is a distinctive and popular era of history, occupying an important space in global popular culture and popular memory. The academic field dedicated to studying representations of the Middle Ages is referred to as Medievalism Studies. One of the primary ways in which contemporary people engage with the memory of the Middle Ages is through video games. This paper aims to provide a history of an early development of medievalism in video games by looking at the early globalization efforts of the industry. Central to this globalization was localization, or changes made to a product in order to improve its ability to sell in foreign markets. Namely, this paper looks at the formative impact on this popular memory of the Middle Ages made by Nintendo video game developers in Japan during the 1980's and the process of localization which eventually determined the global dimensions of their medievalism.

This paper will primarily look at games produced for the Famicom/ Nintendo Entertainment System because it was the first successful Japanese video game console on the North American market. The original console released in Japan is called the Famicom, short for family computer. The North American version of the console is called the Nintendo Entertainment System, often referred to as the NES. Both of these consoles were intended to be played on a home television. Games for these consoles were sold as cartridges which would be plugged into the console. Subchapter 0.2 will discuss the regional differences between these consoles and cartridges.

Due to the lack of acceptable academic historiography on the topic, the author was forced to re-describe a handful of existing terminology and authors in order to fit the function which they desired. The following sub-chapter describes the author's position on medievalism within the context of this paper; the second sub-chapter describes the technical aspects of console localization and technoregions within the context of globalization theory; the third sub-chapter explicates the author's methodology; and the fourth states the goals of this thesis and provides a summary of its argument.

0.1 Hyperreal European Medievalism: Provincializing Medievalism, Global Medievalism, Public Medievalism

It is not an exaggeration to say that there is a wide breadth of literature about what medievalism is. While this reflects the broad manner in which the Middle Ages is remembered in contemporary society, it provides conceptual challenges for the scholar of medievalism who is constantly forced to redefine the term for their monographs. What follows is an explanation of how the author has arrived at the term 'hyperreal European medievalism,' a term which appears frequently in this paper. This term has been coined in order to provincialize the depiction of the Middle Ages within the media discussed herein, but also to indicate how these depictions refer to and reinforce the idea of 'Europe' and the 'Middle Ages' as things which exist and are not historically constructed.

0.1.1 Hyperreal Europe- Provincializing Medievalism and Comparison

The term "hyperreal Europe" is borrowed from Dipesh Chakrabarty's landmark book *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. In it, Chakrabarty combats a dominant legacy of a Europe in which it is positioned as the universal subject, rather than provincialized and historicized. This legacy is due to the advent of modernity as a periodization and the "'first in Europe, then elsewhere,' structure of global historical time," in which European historical developments are presented as the pinnacle of progress and patterned as universal developments which non-European countries would adopt in the course of history.[1] This creates a hyperreal Europe, or an idea of Europe which can only reference itself; it is a *mythical* Europe which does not account for its heterogeneity or provide a historicization of the concept. As Thomas Keirstead has detailed in his work on the Japanese historiographical adoption of the Middle Ages, this paradigm has a reflexive dimension, in which non-European historians adopted elements from European historiography in order to articulate their nation as being coeval with Europe and thus within the mainstream of history.[2] Particularly, this can be seen in the Japanese adoption of the European tripartite periodization: ancient, medieval, modern.

[1] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 1-7.

[2] Thomas Keirstead, "Inventing Medieval Japan: The History and Politics of National Identity," *The Medieval History Journal* vol. 1 no.1 (1998). https://doi.org/10.1177/097194589800100104. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

This transfer of the Middle Ages as a periodization is based in a comparative analysis between Japanese and European history. 19th and 20th century Japanese medievalist Katsuro Hara, in his English language monograph on medieval Japan, drew upon and reacted to European metanarratives of the Middle Ages when he argued that Japan also had a Middle Ages,

> "This chaotic period of Japanese history has been generally considered as the retrogressive age of our civilisation, quite in the same sense in which the medieval age in European history has come to be designated as the Dark Ages. It is a great mistake, however, to stigmatise the Ashikaga period as having witnessed no progress in any cultural factor, just as it has been a fatal misconception of early European historians to think that medieval Europe was indeed dark in every cultural respect. Though the classicism of the former ages might seem a civilisation of a far higher stage when compared with the vulgarised culture of the later, or so-called Dark Age, yet the vulgarisation should not be necessarily branded as a backward movement of civilisation."[3]

Hara concludes his periodization with the beginning of the Tokugawa era, in which "Japan was ready to be transformed into a solid national state, and at the same time to emerge from a chaotic medieval condition to enter the modern status."[4] This concept of 'medieval Japan' has had a lengthy and varied afterlife, to say nothing about the term 'feudal Japan.' Mikiso Hane's classic text, *Pre-Modern Japan*, which remains in circulation to this day under the editorship of the American historian, Louis G. Perez, provides an interesting case study. A comparative analysis of the original text and the revised edition by Perez reveals some interesting similarities and differences. While the original and revised editions use the term 'medieval' to refer to the periodization of Japanese history outlined by Hara, only the original edition uses the term "feudal" to refer to the social organization of medieval Japan.[5] In contrast, Perez's revised edition is explicit that Japan did not have a feudal system, but it did have a medieval era.[6] On this topic,he writes,

> "These personal contractual relationships have previously been characterized in earlier histories as 'feudal.' This misconception has its foundations in two historical

[3] Katsuro Hara, *Introduction to the History of Japan*, (Yamato Society Publication, The Knickerbocker Press, 1920), p. 224. The author is aware that Hara first coined this periodization in his 日本中世史「History of Medieval Japan」in 1906, but the author has unfortunately misplaced their copy of the text. If the author recalls correctly, Hara is even more direct about the relationship between medieval metanarratives: referring to Japan's Middle Ages as a golden age in which the core elements of the nation were formed, in contrast to Europe's dark ages. He seems to have iterated upon this idea quite a bit in the above passage. It might also be worth noting that passages from *History of Medieval Japan* seem to be copied completely into *Introduction*, particularly the elements where he compares medieval Japan to medieval Europe.

[4] Hara, 267.

[5] Mikiso Hane, *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Westview Press, 1991).

[6] For more resources on Japan and feudalism, see footnote 18.

> interpretations. First, when the Portuguese Jesuits came to Japan in the sixteenth century, these men thought that the Japanese system closely resembled the feudal systems of medieval Europe. Their letters and reports back to Europe mark the beginning of this misinterpretation. Other Europeans who followed them, particularly the Dutch after 1640, continued to characterize the Japanese system as feudal. Second, most Japanese historians who sprang to the fore after World War II were Marxists (those historians who had supported the militarist government were purged and discredited). For them, the Japanese medieval system fit nicely into their ideas of Marxist economic determinism."[7]

Perez, however, does not see a need to defend his use of the term, 'medieval,' a term which was also derived from a comparative analysis of European and Japanese history.[8]

A similar comparative movement can be found in Gary Gygax's controversial sourcebook for *Dungeons and Dragons, Oriental Adventures*. Here the scale of comparison is larger and the terms are more hyperreal. The sourcebook enables the player to use the *Dungeons and Dragons* rulebook to substitute their 'European' setting with an 'Asian' setting. In Gygax's words,

> "When *Dungeons and Dragons* game system was envisioned and created, it relied very heavily upon…medieval European history, and myth and mythos commonly available to its authors… What's this? Is the creator of this whole system about to state that Oriental character-types are unsuitable adventurers? Never! The fact of the matter is that the admixture of the Occident and Orient was an unsuitable combination. [*Dungeons and Dragons*] stressed a European historical base and mythology. Even though the AD&D [*Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*] game monster roster ranges far afield, it is still of basically European flavor. The whole of these game systems are Occidental in approach, not Oriental- at least not in the sense of what is known as the Far East: China, Korea, Japan, and Mongolia… In fact, this new book is aimed at providing players and Dungeons Masters with the material they need to develop the 'other half' of their fantasy world, the Oriental portion… Similarities will certainly serve to highlight the vast differences…The purpose of *Oriental Adventures* is to bring a new facet to the overall game. It offers what is essentially a whole new world for development of different AD&D game campaigns. The mechanics and rules are basically the same. How could they be different? We are all humans. The professions are fairly similar, but different enough to be exotic. On[c]e the exotic becomes mundane, the time has arrived for cross-cultural adventuring. This single volume brings you not

[7] Mikiso Hane and Louis G. Perez, *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey*, ebook, (Westview Press, 2012). A better historiography of both the Japanese Middle Ages and Feudalism can be found in John Whitney Hall's "Terms and Concepts in Japanese Medieval History: An Inquiry into the Problems of Translation," *Journal of Japanese Studies* vol.9(1), (1983): p. 1-32; Thomas Keirstead, "Medieval Japan: Taking the Middle Ages Outside Europe," *History Compass* 2 (2004); p. 1-14. It is also worth noting that Hara extensively uses the term 'feudal' to describe both European and Japanese medieval social systems.

[8] The author will not begin to broach the debate about whether or not the Tokugawa period was medieval, modern, or somewhere in between. Following Hara's line of authorship, Perez seems to confirm his thesis that the Tokugawa period represented the preservation of the medieval social system within an emergent modern society.

only the world of the Far East, but also the meeting of East and West when the fullness of time warrants such contact."[9]

There is much that the author could comment on about this passage, but for the sake of brevity, they would like to bring the reader's attention to the various regionalities in Gygax's statement. Specifically, we can see how 'fantasy' provides a diegetic opportunity to both connect and compare 'the Occident' and 'the Orient.' Rules and systems exist as an objectification of reality, through which the two can interact and be compared within the game world. In essence, this comparison creates the hyperreal categories which are thus used in its own comparison; comparison becomes a tool which constitutes the ideas of 'the Occident' and 'the Orient' as being real for the sake of comparison.

The representation of Europe in these games is 'hyperreal' in the Baudrillardian sense because it refers to an idea of Europe which precedes a description of its contents; the historical contingencies and differences within Europe are overlooked in order to represent a single image of Europe which is uniform. Likewise, in the Baudrillardian paradigm, representations of this hyperreal Europe serve to reify its existence ("rejuvenate the fiction of its reality") because these representations are derived from an idea which lacks material existence. [10] Representations are thus the only reference for the existence of the idea and thus any change in one can produce a change in the other.. As will be discussed in the next sub-section (and throughout the rest of this paper, especially chapter 1), fictional representations of the European Middle Ages are composed from a database-like inventory of smaller representations which frequently recur in medievalist media (knights in shining armor, dragons, etc.). These smaller representations are referred to as database elements.

0.1.2 Public Medievalism and Hiroki Azuma's Database Media Theory

In *Otaku: Japan's Database Warriors,* media critic Hiroki Azuma utilized the concept of a database to explain the selective proliferation of certain elements of popular culture with regards to fan engagement and information technology.[11] The subject of Azuma's book is the

[9] It is also worth noting that one of the other authors, David "Zeb" Cook, is explicit that "The bulk of this material [in the book] deals with Japan." Gary Gygax, David Cook, and Francois Marcela-Froideval, *Oriental Adventures,* Wisconsin: TSR, 1985, p.4.

[10] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacra,* trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, (University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 13.

[11] Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals,* trans. Johnathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (University of Minnesota, 2001). Its also worth noting that Azuma draws from Deleuze's concept of the assemblage for his idea of the database, and that Deleuze's initial concept of the assemblage in *Difference and Repitition* is the simulacra. "As a simulacrum, then, the false claimant can no longer be said to be false in relation to a supposedly true model; rather, the "power of the false" (pseudos) now assumes a positivity of its own, and is raised to a higher power… The true world is no longer opposed to the false world of simulacra; rather, truth now

'otaku,' a term used in Japanese fan communities to refer to a hyper-consumer of fictional media who lacks a solid grasp on the external world (the term itself means one's house, and it is the internal and private space where the otaku is suggested to be shut-in). One of the more notable aspects of the otaku is that they are members of communities composed by others with similar interests. In these communities, the information which they acquire from media has a greater social value for them than information about reality, leading them to prioritize its acquisition. Information becomes a source for social adhesion, and, despite its fictionality, it acquires real social qualities in the life of the otaku. It should also be noted that Azuma does not limit the potential of the otaku to Japan, but insists that, as media consumption grows and dominates the sociality of its consumers, we will all become otaku. In this statement, we should not understand Azuma as saying that we will all become this particular cultural-historical figure of the otaku, but rather, as digital media proliferates and continues to mediate between us and the real, we are undoubtedly interpellated, or addressed as a subject, in narratives of both the past and the present which inescapably contain elements of fictionality which are often presented to us through mass media and commodities.[12] We are constantly addressed in the present as the subject of a historical narrative, and although we may consider ourselves keen enough to divorce the narrative from a scientistic understanding of history, we are still subjected to these narratives.

Azuma's ontology of media is deeply indebted to the ontology of the market. An element of a piece of media which becomes popular is be copied throughout multiple derivative media, operating as both a reference to the source media, but also as the representation of an idea. This representation becomes categorized alongside other elements and future media draw upon it as an idea with existing cultural value that their audience recognizes. Over time, it becomes represented so frequently that its reference is forgotten or obscured and it only exists

becomes an affirmation of the simulacrum itself, falsity affirmed and raised to a higher power." Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (Columbia University, 1994), Also see Daniel W. Smith, "The concept of the simulacrum: Deleuze and the overturning of Platonism" *Continental Philosophy Review* (2006): p. 89-123.

[12] I am, of course, using the term 'interpellate' in the manner that Louis Althusser uses it, "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects…ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," translated by Ben Brewster, transcribed by Andy Blunden, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press, 1971, from marxists.org, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm. (Accessed June 28, 2022).

as an idea. In essence, it becomes hyperreal. At this stage, Azuma considers the media utilizing this representation to be produced from a database.

As the consumer consumes this media, they are also consuming the database- the storage house for these representations which have lost their referent, but frequently recur together. This database is explained as "the grand non-narrative," a structure of information from which the contents of certain types of media are derived. The consumption of the database grants the media consumer a deeper insight into the fundamental elements of the media from which derivatives are produced (see Fig. 1). In this way, the consumer understands the source from which derivative media is produced as constituted by various representations divorced from their original use; it becomes an idea.

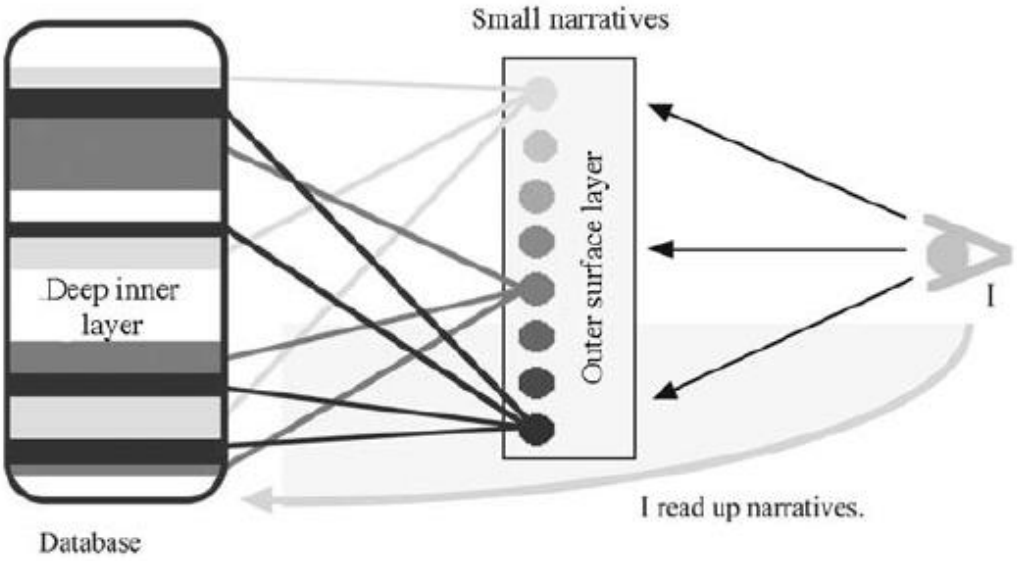

Figure 1: The Database Model of Media Consumption. Hiroki Azuma, Otaku: Japan's Database Animals, trans. Johnathan E. Abel and Shion Kono, University of Minnesota, 2001, p. 33.

This database has a public dimension to it because it represents the image of the Middle Ages which is communicated through mass media. It contains the associations between these representations and an idea of the Middle Ages. It indexes and evidences the elements which have become associated with the Middle Ages through media. It is simultaneously a function of memory and media, through which media assigns certain 'medieval' elements a position within the database and public memory, thus constituting a public medievalism. To this end, I have lifted the term "public medievalism" from Paul B. Strutevant, which he defines as "the

historical consciousness of the medieval world that is the origin of instances of medievalism."[13] The database is a manner of expressing the organization of this public medievalism and provides a method for explaining how media influences public perception of the Middle Ages.

This database also has a hyperreal function, in that it serves to reify the existence of concepts such as 'Europe' and the 'Middle Ages' as seemingly obvious, stable, and internally consistent concepts. In reality and without needing to reference too broadly, both of these concepts are historically constructed and controversial, especially around what can be called their conceptual (or in the case of Europe, their very literal) 'borders.' While it would be far beyond the function of this paper to illustrate the contingencies and interrelations of the concepts 'Europe' and 'the Middle Ages,' the author would refer the reader to Patrick Geary's *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* and John M. Ganim's *Medievalism and Orientalism*.[14] With regards to how the borders of these concepts are formed, the author invites the reader to refer to Constantin Iordachi's use of the term "mental maps" in his "The Quest for Central Europe: Symbolic Geographies and Historical Regions," in order to illustrate how the maps of these concepts are drawn and redrawn- namely, as a topic-oriented and often memory-influenced exercise.[15] 'Europe' and 'the Middle Ages' are never entirely one stable thing, but are continually being reconstituted through their representations- especially fantastical representations because, to paraphrase Baudrillarrd again, the hyperreal rejuvenates the reality of the fiction.

0.1.3 Global Medievalism- An Honest Approach to the Global Middle Ages

Likewise, as mentioned in the first subsection, it would be a mistake to view the Middle Ages as an entirely European phenomenon. As demonstrated in *Medievalism and Post-Colonialism*, many other historiographical traditions have adopted or receoved the concept of the Middle Ages.[16] Acknowledging this provides the scholar of medieval studies and

[13] Paul B. Strutevant, *The Middle Ages in Popular Imagination: Memory, Film and Medievalism* (Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 3.

[14] Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe,* (Princeton, 2001). John M. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity,* (Palgrave, 2008). Also of interest is Amy Kaufman and Paul B. Strutevant, *The Devil's Historians: How Modern Extremists Abuse the Medieval Past*, (University of Toronto Press, 2020).

[15] Constantin Iordachi, "The Quest for Central Europe: Symbolic Geographies and Historical Regions," *Regional and International Relations of Central Europe*, ed. Zlatko Sabic and Peter Drulak, (Palgrave, 2012): p. 40-61.

[16] Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, "Introduction: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' Outside Europe," *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of "The Middle Ages" Outside Europe*, ed. Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, (John Hopkins Univeristy Press, 2009): p. 1-24.

medievalism with a refreshed and honest perspective towards the possibilities of their discipline- a discipline whose academic popularity seems irreversibly on the decline. Namely, it reframes the lens through which the scholar can approach the idea of a 'Global Middle Ages.' In Catherine Holmes and Naomi Stranden's seminal article for *Past and Present*'s special issue on the topic, "Towards a Global Middle Ages," the authors painstakingly provide a prescriptive formula through which historical societies outside of Europe can be considered to be 'medieval.'[17] The article is reminiscent of the feudalism debates within developmentalist non-European historiography during the mid-20th century and inherits all of the conceptual problems outlined in the previous subsections.[18]

A solution to this, which recognizes the constructed nature of the Middle Ages, would be a descriptivist approach to the Global Middle Ages in which the scholar investigates the appearance and transfer of an idea of the Middle Ages, both within 'Europe' and without it. This is a task which is well suited to the scholar of medievalism who is already aware of the historically constructed nature of the Middle Ages and is professionally invested in understanding the memory of the era. There is no need to invent a Global Middle Ages by redefining the concept of the Middle Ages to be more inclusive of areas outside of 'Europe,' but rather, to study the Middle Ages as it currently exists in those areas. This is even more relevant for the European chauvinist and prescriptivist approaches to writing about the Middle Ages outside of Europe, through which the medieval polity is denied the legitimacy of their own historiographical tradition because they aren't within the borders of 'Europe' or don't adhere to a euro-centric definition of the Middle Ages. A descriptivist approach to a Global Middle Ages is a unique methodology for the scholar of medievalism; the more traditional scholars of medieval studies who wish to dismiss our field as 'post-modernist' or 'unconcerned with the actual Middle Ages,' should be reminded of this. Just as memory studies is a critical

[17] Catherine Holmes and Naomi Stranden, "Introduction: Towards a Global Middle Ages," *Past & Present*, vol. 238, issue supplement 13, (December 2018): p. 1–44. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gty030. (Accessed June 28, 2022)

[18] The author will abstain from commenting too much on the feudalism debates. They will, however, provide some resources for the interested reader. For a critical perspective at a glance, the author recommends the reader see the public-historical text designed for educators: Diana Marston Wood, "Using the Concept 'Feudalism' to compare Japan with Europe: Words of Caution," *Education About Asia*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2000. For a brief historical understanding of the debates which recognizes its terminological complexity, see Hideo Aoki, "Marxism and the Debate on the Transition to Capitalism in Pre-War Japan," *Critical Sociology*, vol. 47(1): p. 17-36. Lest the reader be convinced that this feudalism debate concerned Europe vs. the rest of the world, the reader should take note of Jenö Szűcs "The Three Historical Regions of Europe: An Outline," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientarium Hungaricae* vol. 29, no. 2/4, (1983)*:* p. 131-184.

component of historical studies, medievalism studies is a critical component of medieval studies.

This paper aims to illustrate such a methodology. It is the author's deep regret that this study cannot be longer or more comprehensive than it already is.

0.1.4 Conclusion

The Middle Ages is a concept that is continuously being redefined as people in different times and spaces represent it. As different representations are made, the idea changes. Each of these representations contain smaller elements that are derived from the idea. As the idea is represented throughout space and time, these elements change and thus the idea symbiotically changes. This idea should not be misunderstood as having no basis in material reality; it is the container of all past representations and is the basis for all future representations of the idea. It has the agency of the virtual in that preserves and organizes the possibilities for future representations. The repetition of these elements in different pieces of media legitimates the idea as representing reality. The extent that these ideas spread can be evaluated by the medium which contains the representations. Thus, mass media representations of the Middle Ages constitute a public dimension and are representative of a public idea of the Middle Ages. In order to understand the idea, it becomes necessary to have an accurate understanding of the distribution of the media through which it is communicated.

0.2 Beyond the Borders of Technoregions: Nintendo Kids, Famicom Localization, and Roleplaying Games

Kenichi Ohmae, in his 1996 *The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of Regional Economies*, writes enthusiastically about the post-national trends exhibited by the upcoming generation of "Nintendo Kids" who have been raised on medievalist "*Dragon Quest*-like games."[19] This subchapter is couched within his book on globalization, in which regional economies, its borders defined by transnational companies, make the traditional nation-state redundant in the global economy.[20] These Nintendo Kids are positioned as the globalized people of the future, whose communities are not bound by nationality, but by shared interests and experiences. Identifying a deep generational divide between these children and their

[19] Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (London: Harper Collines, 1995), p. 35-7.

[20] Ibid. 5.

parents, Ohmae claims that games like *Dragon Quest*, through their ludic ontology, produce a "new way of thinking" in these children which is "completely alien to traditional Japanese culture and education,"

> "The implicit message in all this… is that it is possible to actively take control of one's situation or circumstances and, thereby, to change one's fate. Nothing need be accepted as an unalterable fait accompli. Everything can be explored, rearranged, reprogrammed. Nothing has to be fixed or final. Everything, finally, is open to considered choice, initiative, creativity- and daring." [21]

The experience of playing these games from a young age not only "sever(s) both the vertical linkages across age groups and the relationships of authority that have long held Japanese society together," but constitutes "new connections… with the tens of millions of kids everywhere else in the world who have learned to play the same sorts of games and have been so exposed to the same implicit lessons."[22]

Contemporary reception to Ohmae's work has been rather cold. John Tomlinson in *Globalization and Culture* uses Nintendo Kids as an example of the follies inherent in a conceptualization of globalization which analyzes the phenomenon of globalization as "uni-dimensional" or only derived from one source (in this case, a globalized world market) and treats all other phenomena of globalization (such as culture) as epiphenomenal.[23] He criticizes the values which Ohmae claims are nurtured by playing games as "pretty plainly those of enterprise capitalism."[24] Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson critique Ohmae's notion that a globalized world market exists as a pro-consumer competition between corporations, and argue that these corporations strive to create an oligopoly with other agents (nation-states, etc.) which enables them to control the market.[25] Hirst and Thompson's critique calls attention to the mediation between competing agents in a globalized market, and there is some salience to this in the international distribution of video games during the 1980s and 90s.

In "Console Video Games and Global Corporations: Creating a Hybrid Culture," Mia Consalvo utilizes Timothy Luke's concept of a 'technoregion' to describe the regions created by video game corporations to regulate the flow of capital and commodities.[26] Within the context of 1980's Nintenndo video game production and distribution, there were three primary

[21] Ibid. 36.
[22] Ibid. 36-37.
[23] John Tomlinson, *Culture and Globalization* (University of Chicago, 1999), p. 12-17.
[24] Ibid. 15.
[25] Ibid. 15-16. Tomlinson is referencing Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Polity and Blackwell, 1996).
[26] Mia Consalvo, "Console Video Games and Global Corporations: Hybrid-Culture" *New Media & Society* vol. 8 no. 1. (2006): p. 131.

technoregions: Japan, North America, and Europe. Each of these regions are unique and deserves explanation: Japan is the only technoregion that is a single state; North America is composed of both the United States and Canada. Europe is a complicated technoregion and its explanation is not especially relevant for this paper.[27] These technoregions were enforced by both hardware and software design. For hardware, the two most important elements to consider are video format standards and Nintendo's proprietary solution to keeping their products within their intended technoregions; for software, localization is the primary factor for regulating technoregions

One of the foundations for these three technoregions can be found in hardware- amongst the various video format standards common amongst televisions of the time: NTSC (North America, Japan) and PAL (non-Soviet Europe with the exception of France).[28] Essentially, these video format standards determined how detailed the image is displayed on the television, how frequently the image is displayed, and how much electricity is used to display it. For example, NTSC North American televisions display their image at 525 lines of detail 29.97 frames per second at 60Hz, while PAL televisions display 625 lines at 25 frames per second using 50Hz. This required external hardware (such as video game consoles) to be designed to output their video specifically for each video format. If a video game console designed for a PAL television is played on a North American NTSC television, there will be notable visual errors that may prevent play. The above description of video format standards should be considered a very brief explanation of the topic that provides the reader with necessary

[27] See David Sheff's classic text, *Game Over, Press Start to Continue: How Nintendo Conquered the World,* (Wilson, Connecticut: GamePress, 1999), p. 412-417. It is especially worth noting that popular games, such as *Pokémon* for the Gameboy, would receive multiple translations in order to be best localized to Europe.

[28] Lest we forget about the SECAM video format standard, an iteration upon PAL used by France and the post-Soviet countries (up until about 2000 when they switched to PAL), Nintendo actually produced Nintendo Entertainment Systems with SECAM compatibility. The author is unsure if any SECAM NES was sold or distributed in post-Soviet Europe because, despite Sheff's insistence that the post-Soviet countries were seen as a lucrative market for Nintendo, median wages in 80's and 90's Soviet and post-Soviet Europe would not have supported middle-income consumers of official Nintendo product. However, there was quite an expansive piracy scene in region and the hardware for these pirate consoles were derived from the Famicon. With regards to video format standards, a team of researchers has discovered something very unique about these consoles: they were designed to be generally compatible with all video format standards. This suited the wide distribution of these pirate consoles, where they equally found home in South Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Although these consoles could play official Japanese Famicon games, the market for pirated games often included games which required little to no language knowledge in order to play. Unfortunately, the author is not aware of a good academic source discussing these pirated consoles (often called Famiclones) in general, but the reader is invited to refer to many of the numerous enthusiast blogs and websites on the topic, of which Wikipedia is often a good place to start. For information on video format standards, see Eugene S., "Differences between PAL Famiclones/Dendy and official NES/Famicom timings (F.A.Q.)" *NESDev.org*, forum post, September 25, 2020. https://forums.nesdev.org/viewtopic.php?t=20931. (Accessed June 29, 2022)

information for understanding how these video format standards create hardware limitations that enforce technoregions.

0.2.1 Localization- Hardware

One of the primary agents who sought to mediate the global distribution of products was often the company itself. When a product would be distributed in a different technoregion, the company would either contract localizers or localize it themselves. Often, localizers provided more than a simple translation of games when they imported them to other regions; certain content was changed to fit the producer's understanding of what would be successful in that market. Hardware was also localized.

Following the North American video game crash of 1983-4 which knocked Atari out of the home console industry, Nintendo moved swiftly to bring their Famicom console to North America. Retitled the Nintendo Entertainment System, the Famicom also underwent some hardware revisions. Nintendo identified the plethora of poor, third-party games (games that were not produced or licensed by Atari) for Atari's consoles as one of the primary reasons for the crash of 1983-4. To ensure the quality of the Nintendo Entertainment System's library, Nintendo included a chip called the CIC chip in the console which would prohibit it from playing games which were not licensed by Nintendo. There was a matching chip in each licensed North American/ European game and these two chips (the chip in the cartridge and the chip in the console) functioned as a lock-and-key mechanism which needed to be resolved before any gameplay could begin. Atari, now a game producer instead of a hardware producer, discovered the code for the CIC chip and began producing unlicensed games for the Nintendo Entertainment System. Nintendo swiftly took them to court for infringing on their copyright, arguing that the data on the CIC chip was protected by copyright. The case concluded with an appeals court ruling which said that Nintendo was trying to "maintain a monopoly" on cartridges compatible with the NES.[29] In response, the lockout chip built into Nintendo's next console, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, was much more complex.

The CIC chip also prevented the North American NTSC console from playing any games in the PAL (European) format.[30] To accommodate this additional chip, North American/European and Japanese cartridges had a different number of pins, making it

[29] Atari Games Corp. v. Nintendo of America Inc., 975 F.2d 832 (1992).

[30] It was later discovered that there was an easy bypass around this region-locking. Snipping a specific cable connecting the CIC chip to the NES motherboard would prevent it from checking the chip. This technique is performed today by North American retro game enthusiasts who wish to play Japanese games on their console.

impossible to play Japanese cartridges on non-Japanese systems. Interestingly, third party manufacturers such as Spica (a Taiwanese chip manufacturer heavily involved in distributing pirated NES cartridges) produced adapters which enabled Japanese games to be played on North American/European consoles, and Nintendo, who was famously litigious by the end of the 1980s, did not press charges against them.

In this, we can see that Nintendo tried to play a large role in determining which games players could play on their system, particularly games which would be played outside the technoregion of their distribution. Some technoregional 'borders' were more permeable than others, such as North America – Japan, while others such as Europe – North America/ Japan were stricter. While it was possible to modify a Nintendo Entertainment System or purchase accessories in order to play games outside of the console's region, Nintendo did not sanction these efforts. When certain games were sanctioned by Nintendo to cross these technoregional 'borders,' they usually underwent serious localization procedures that were overseen by Nintendo's headquarters within the region.

0.2.2 Localization- Software

Japanese video games, like *Dragon Quest*, underwent serious localization before they were brought to the North American and European market. Japan, Europe, and North America were the three main regions where video games were officially sold by Nintendo sold during this time, and, with the exception of specific translation for many Western European countries, European and North American localizations often shared the same localization.[31] Like most games made in Japan which are set in a hyperreal 'European' medieval fantasy, these games exhibited explicitly Christian imagery which were replaced when they were localized to North America and Europe. The paratextual material (manuals, posters, box art, etc.) for the games were also modified during localization. For example, *Dragon Quest*'s cover art was modified from Akira Toriiyama's iconic anime style to fit with contemporaneous trends in North American and European fantasy art (see Fig. 22 and 23). Koichi Iwabuchi in *Recentering Globalizaton: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* claims that Japanese companies localizing their products aimed to make them appear in North American and

[31] Gary Cross and Gregory Smits, "Japan, the U.S. and the Globalization of Children's Consumer Culture," *Journal of Social History* vol. 38, no. 4 (Summer, 2005): p. 888-890. It is also important to note that there was widespread piracy of Nintendo's products outside of these three regions, particularly in the post-soviet world and the global south.

European markets as "culturally odorless," or lacking any "Japanese-ness"[32] However, I argue in this paper that the localization of medievalist games went further by attempting to make these games appear to be derived from the North American technoregion.[33]

It is interesting to note that none of the rules or systems within these games were changed during localization. Players in North America and Japan would interact with the same system of mechanics (i.e. perform the same gameplay) within *Dragon Quest*, regardless of the localization that they played.[34] Ohmae uses the systems in *Dragon Quest*, common throughout all roleplaying games, to reflect the ideals which Nintendo Kids are being nurtured with. Ohmae says that these games have given Japanese children a direct sense,

> "of playing multiple roles in the same context, of asking the 'what if questions they could never comfortably ask before (because of the Shinto superstition that saying a thing would make it happen), of making different complex trade-off decisions and then having the chance to observe contingent sets of outcomes, and perhaps most important- of revisiting basic 'rules of the game' and, when necessary, even reprogramming them."[35]

The traits which Ohmae identifies with *Dragon Quest* provides evidence that he was at least rudimentally familiar with the systems of *Dragon Quest*. Deriving from their tabletop counterpart, roleplaying video games are very explicit about their rules and competent gameplay requires a thorough understanding of them. Decisions can be made without a timed stressor so the player can weigh certain decisions, evaluate the outcome, and then approach the next situation in a controlled manner in order to produce a more favorable outcome. It is interesting that Ohmae remarks upon traits common to the medievalist roleplaying game genre, a globalized genre that was imported from the US and then adapted in a myriad of ways for a Japanese audience with *Dragon Quest*, in a manner which reflects his understanding of a globalized culture.

While there are a number of problems with Ohmae's concept of "Nintendo Kids," such as his non-reflexive explication of Japanese national identity, its related traditions, and the 'Japanese mindset,' the basis of his argument has some validity. Kids in Japan who played *Dragon Quest* interacted with the same game system that kids in the North America did, even if the aesthetics of the system were different.

[32] Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 24-27.

[33] *Dragon Quest* was not localized to Europe until 2014.

[34] The 2014 version of *Dragon Quest* which became the first European localization used an updated version of the game which made it faster and easier to play. This is due to shifts in game design, rather than a consideration of localization.

[35] Ohmae, 36.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the validity of Ohmae's claims during the time of his writing, particularly those remarking upon the Nintendo Kids' radical break with Japanese tradition through interactive technology, it is undeniable that the transnational video game industry and its players have produced a more globalized world. Transnational communities of players and the culture produced by them have influenced the initial design of games, supplanting a narrower focus on local consumers. Consalvo, in "Convergence and Globalization in the Japanese Video Game Industry," draws on the work of Henry Jenkins to note that the convergence of the Japanese and US games industry in the 90s produced a perception of games made in Japan as "cool" and having a distinct cultural capital in the US and thus localization criteria became less strict.[36] Likewise, Consalvo argues that it is impossible to conceive of the games industry in strictly national terms, preferring the term "hybrid," because game studios now design their games with an international audience in mind, as opposed to the 1980's and early 90's when foreign markets were an afterthought.[37] Game studios in Japan now identify North America and its significantly larger population of players as a more lucrative market than their domestic market. The result is a more symbiotic relationship between the cultural and economic aspects of globalization. In light of these two articles and the large transnational fan communities which exist for these games, Ohmae's Nintendo Kids deserves a second look.

Even though Ohmae's Nintendo Kids is flawed, especially during the time of its writing, it is prescient of later developments in the video game industry and its players. Ohmae missed the mediation that translated and localized games abroad, particularly the attempts made by Nintendo to prevent players from playing game not licensed for their region. While these changes were often strictly aesthetic, they provide much of the context for the player to interact with the game's system. We are closer to Ohmae's vision nowadays, where, contemporary localization and international release are now a critical facet of design, often occurring at the earliest stages. Ohmae is correct in stating that video games and its players have contributed to a more globalized world, but perhaps not in the way that he outlined.

[36] Mia Consalvo, "Convergence and Globalization in the Japanese Video Game Industry" *Cinema Journal* vol 48 no. 3. (2009): 135-141.

[37] Consalvo, "Console Video Games and Global Corporations," 117-137.

0.3 Methodology

This paper analyzes the localization changes which occured in medievalist Famicom video games when they were brought to the North American market. It will begin by analyzing the role of race and religion in a selection of popular Famicom games, then it will describe the public medievalism in the United States via the *Dungeons and Dragons* satanic panic, and finally it will describe the content changes in the localization of the same selection of Famicom games discussed in chapter 1. Fundamentally, the paper is interested in a transfer history of an idea of the Middle Ages which has its origin in the United States, moves to Japan, and then returns to the United States. The conclusion will briefly discuss how Japanese localization practices changed following the Famicom, in which console games, especially roleplaying games, began to be designed for international markets during the production, rather than post-production.

As a result, this paper demonstrates the symbiotic and reflexive nature of transfer histories in a manner inspired by Michael Werner and Benedicte Zimmerman's influential "Beyond Comparison: *Historie Croisee* and the Challenge of Reflexivity."[38] This paper is both a transfer and a comparative history, with the tension between the two resolved through the reflexive dimensions of the *historie croisee* which notes how the transferred object was transformed through its transfer. Furthermore, any transformation implies a comparison with its previous state, and this paper makes the comparison explicit. Werner and Zimmerman, in their critique of comparative and transfer histories, notes that the reflexive nature of inter-crossings in a transfer history requires, above all, a reflexive constitution of the 'borders' through which the transferred object passes (technoregions) and an understanding of the transferred object as an already-heterogenous object. While it would be a laborious task to provide a complete genealogy of the medievalisms at play in this paper, it is worth noting that both the 'North American' and 'Japanese' medievalist databases are fundamentally the results of cultural transfers (obviously, from Europe in particular), and that the contents of these databases changed during and after transfer- a part of which is described in this paper. Although the author refers to concepts such as 'North American' and 'Japanese' throughout this paper, this is intended to be referential to the technoregional location of these games and their creators unless otherwise stated (such as chapter 1.2 and 2). The author is very aware that globalized

[38] Michael Werner and Benedicte Zimmerman, "Beyond Comparison: History Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* vol. 45. (2006): p. 30-50.

commodity production, especially the video game industry, is never an entirely nationally or regionally homogenous affair.

The author should also note that their methodological approach has been informed by an understanding of Deleuzian ontology (see Azuma's database), and has been likewise inspired by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's concept of "transformative encounters" from her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins.*[39]

The Famicom has been chosen as the console whose medievalist games are analyzed due to its widespread international popularity, its situation at the birth of the modern commercial video game industry, and the informal (yet mostly consistent) system of localization changes. Being the first major Japanese console which succeeded in the North American market, the Famicom would provide the pattern from which future companies would pattern their console's North American deployment. Its popularity is worth noting, especially because it was the platform through which many people in Japan and North America engaged with roleplaying games and the medievalism depicted therein. This suggests that the games on the console had a transformative impact on public medievalism through their content. Likewise, due to this medievalism's function as a commodity, the transformative nature of localization should be understood in relation to this medievalism's need to function within a new market and to adapt to a new database. To this extent, the author has also analyzed paratextual materials: manuals, box art, etc. included with the game. These paratextual materials are important because games of this era did not often have enough graphical fidelity to represent characters and scenery; the player was encouraged to use the manual in order to help contextualize and imagine the world in which they played.

0.4 Thesis Aims and Statement

The 1980's saw the emergence of a new form of medievalism in Japanese video games. Influenced by the trends of medievalism in North American tabletop and roleplaying video games, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, this medievalism iterated upon various elements of medievalism, such as religion and race, in a manner distinct from the North American tradition which inspired it. This occurred during the *Dungeons and Dragons* satanic panic, in which the religious elements of *Dungeons and Dragons* received public controversy due to their assumed potentiality to create violent children. This satanic panic had an influence in the manner that

[39] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in the Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, 2015), p. 27-34.

games published by Nintendo were localized for the North American technoregion, where the localizers attempted to evade controversy. They did this by changing the religious elements within these games in order to remove references to Christianity and by reinstating whiteness as the default racial depiction of medievalist characters. The result is that this emergent form of medievalism from Japan was localized in order to better help these games sell in the North American market.

This paper looks at medievalist games produced in the Japanese technoregion for the Famicom/Nintendo Entertainment System in order to 1) suggest that the medievalism expressed in these video games constitute a public medievalism due to the popularity and ease of access provided by console gaming and 2) to clearly analyze the trends of localization in order to understand how this very important medievalism was shaped through localization.

Chapter 1: 'There…:' Race and Religion in 1980's Japanese Medievalist Video Games

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will explore the depiction of race and religion in a handful of prominent medievalist video games from the 1980's which were created within the Japanese technoregion. It will argue that the medievalism depicted in these games were both derivative and departed from previous representations of the medieval: in particular, the North American medievalist tradition as seen in *Wizardry*. These developments represent a globalization of medievalism through mass media, and thus constitute a form of public medievalism.

1.1 Christianity and Medievalism, Provincialized and Global

Christianity is utilized in medievalist Japanese games from the 1980's in order to provincialize the games within a hyperreal version of Europe or to represent this hyperreal Europe. These representations of Christianity are a unique element of games from this era, and as many authors have noted, serve a primarily aesthetic purpose.[40] In these games, Christian symbolism accompanies the hyperreal European medievalism of the game in order to provincialize the fantastical territory of the game within an imagination of European. However,

[40]. This is not to say that the aesthetics are not grounded or influential. In the process of writing this thesis, the author met with a Japanese Christian who said that his first experience with Christianity was with *Dragon Quest III*; this encounter caused him to become interested in the religion. Despite the recent interest in religion within Anglophone game studies, there is a significant lack of research in this area. There are, however, quite a lot of non-academic writings on the topic in both English and Japanese on the internet. Given that the majority of these posts are on internet forums, the author will provide links which are hopefully more stable, to blogs and the like: (in English) Clyde Mandelin, "Religious Content Changes in Game Localizations," *Legends of Localization*, Blog, July 26, 2019, https://legendsoflocalization.com/religious-content-changes-in-game-localizations/. (Accessed June 29, 2022); Drew Cohen, "How One Man Stopped Square-Enix From Letting Gamers Kill Yahweh," *Kotaku*, April 22, 2011, https://kotaku.com/how-one-man-stopped-square-enix-from-letting-gamers-kil-5794922. (Accessed June 29, 2022); (in Japanese) Unknown Author, "ドラゴンクエスト「ロトの由来」 [*Dragon Quest*: Origin of Loto], " *スープ de スパンク*, [Spank with Soup], Blog, http://spank999.blog101.fc2.com/blog-entry-99.html. (Accessed June 29, 2022); Unknown Author, 海外「善であるべき！」日本のゲーム・アニメでキリスト教が「悪」な本当の理由を海外が大論争[Overseas debate about why Christianity is evil in Japanese games and anime], *どんぐりこ* [Donguriko], Blog, http://dng65.com/blog-entry-9195.html. (Accessed June 29, 2022). The final link is quite interesting, even though it primarily concerns itself with the tradition (in the author's opinion) of representing organized religion, particularly Catholocism, during the 90's and onwards as an evil organization. The author found quite a lot of interesting Japanese language forum posts on the topic, but refrained from providing them here due to concerns about the stability of the links. Once again, the author laments how severely understudied such a massive topic is in both Anglophone and Japanese academic literature.

as evidenced in *Dragon Quest III*, in provincializing the fantasy of these games within Europe, it creates the space for a vision of religiosity outside of Europe, against which the default Christianity is compared. *Dragon Quest III's* 'Jipang' is an example of this, where the island nation is shown to be suffering under the despotic rule of Himiko, who is actually the xenophobic demon Orochi. The player, with the assistance of a Christian missionary, defeats the demon and Jipang is returned to peace. Accompanying the medievalist aesthetics which are common to the RPG genre, Christianity is used to provide a provincializing aesthetic to these games. Doing so builds upon the hyperreality of its depiction of Europe while opening up the category of religion for aspects of the game which are distinctly set outside of this fantasy of Europe and thus symbiotically constitutes the hyperreality of this depiction of Europe.

As mentioned in the Introduction, medievalist fantasy video games of this era are indebted to concepts of the Middle Ages and Europe. It rejuvenates the fiction of these concepts through the representation of database elements, thus legitimating the database by constituting it as 'real.' The consistent and public representation of these database elements provides a real quality to these databases and because these databases utilize historical elements, this positions the knowledge of this database as insightful into the knowledge of history. Likewise, the medieval and the Europe databases are inseparably intertwined, with each one providing a legitimating function for the other. Due to the mass distribution of these video games and their representation of medieval European database elements, it can be said that these video games both contribute to and are a reflection of public medievalism. In both Japanese and North American video game markets, Christian symbolism remained a central aspect of this public medievalism, but whereas it was censored in North American markets, it flourished in Japan.

Christianity occupies a peculiar place in the overlap between both the European and medieval databases, and this is evident in many popular culture representations of each.[41] It is

[41] The majority of the literature which the author is familiar with on this topic concerns Christian fundamentalists and extremists who idealize the Middle Ages in Europe as a 'Golden Age' of the faith. As evidenced by my discussion of Hyperreal European Medievalism, there are substantial terminological problems which need to be resolved before an adequate study of the topic can take place. The debates which the author is familiar with concerns an imagination of medieval Europe as a 'mono-cultural' place, with that culture being 'Christian.' While there is debate on the topic in these terms, a monograph on the topic is sorely needed which can cut through this Gordian knot of terminology. At this stage, it decisively a database element shared by both the European and medieval database, but it finds particular animation in the writings and actions of Christian fundamentalists and extremists. See Marianne O'Doherty, "Where were the Middle Ages?" *The Public Medievalist*, Blog, March 7, 2017, https://www.publicmedievalist.com/where-middle-ages/. (Accessed June 29, 2022); Kathleen Davis and Paul Strutevant, "Medievalism and Religious Extremism," *The Devil's Historians*, (University of Toronto, 2020) p. 127-149; Mattias Gardell, "Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe," *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 26 (2014): p. 129-155. If the author had to take a single guess at the origin point for this terminological confusion, they would point to the storied legacy

far beyond the focus of this study to map its rhizomatic spread throughout each of these databases, so the author will be forced to limit themselves to the topic at hand. However, doing so is also an incredibly problematic affair, given that Christianity first spread to Japan during the era which is widely considered to be the most iconic in its medieval period, the Warring States era (戦国時代).[42] Again, lacking space to give a history of Christianity in Japan, the author is forced to focus on its representation within video games of the 1980's, where it is found to occupy a prominent place within the medievalist fantasy game worlds.

As mentioned earlier, Christian imagery in Japanese medievalist games from this era is not intended to be understood in relation to Christianity, but it rather serves as a database element within the medieval database. In these games, Christian imagery often serves two purposes: 1) to aestheticize the use of magical powers (often found in churches, on items, or in spell descriptions), 2) to sanctify or provide motivation for the player to complete romantic narrative elements of the game. The first use is much more common, and it can be estimated that this usage of Christian imagery is derived from games that were localized to Japan which are derivative of early North American *Dungeons and Dragons* material (see 1.1). Prior to the Satanic Panic of the mid 1980's which resulted in TSR removing material related to religion from their game manuals, it was not uncommon to see literal depictions of Christian imagery within their game manuals.[43]

Wizardry: *Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord*, one of the many games created by American amateur programmers inspired by *Dungeons and Dragons* and cited by Japanese game designers as a major influence on their medievalist games, depicts clerical figures within the game manual in medievalist attire and adorned with crosses. (See Fig. 2, 4, 5) Early Japanese translations of Wizardry utilized similar art in their manuals and official Japanese localizations of the game provided new art along the same lines.(See Fig. 7, 8).[44] Medievalist games produced in Japan utilized Christian imagery in a way which was both derivative from

of Charles Martel and the popular story that he created Europe after defeating the Umayyad Caliphate at the Battle of Tours. For a brief summary of Charles Martel's memory in modern European far-right politics see, Iskander Rehman, "The Sword and the Swastika: How a Medieval Warlord Became a Fascist Icon," *War on the Rocks*, News Blog, November 26, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2016/11/the-sword-and-the-swastika-how-a-medieval-warlord-became-a-fascist-icon/. (Accessed June 29, 2022).

[42] Mikiso Hane and Louis G. Perez, "Chapter 6: The Restoration of Order," *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey*, ebook, (Westview Press, 2012).

[43] See 2.1 The Satanic Panic and Dungeons and Dragons

[44] The North American localization of the Japanese produced version of Wizardry for the Nintendo Entertainment System did not include any Christian imagery. See 3.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, NES

and iterated upon the way it was used in North American medievalist games like *Wizardry.* This resulted in a transformed depiction of Christianity in Japanese medievalist games, in which Christianity engaged with the narrative of the game and was used to aestheticize magic. This is in addition to the North American use of Christianity for aestheticizing priestly characters and institutions. Through this, Christianity was built into the medievalist database with characteristics distinct from its North American counterpart.

What follows is a descriptivist analysis of the representation of Christianity in the Apple II version of *Wizardry* and five prominent Japanese medievalist games: *Wizardry* (the Famicom version), *The Legend of Zelda*, *Dragon Quest*, *Dragon Quest III*, and *Final Fantasy.*[45]

1.1.1 *Wizardry* and the Transfer of Christianity in Medievalist Fantasy

(For the Famicom version, see 1.1.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, Famicom.)
(For the NES version, see 3.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, NES)

As mentioned before, *Wizardry* appears frequently in lists of Japanese roleplaying game developers' inspirations.[46] The first *Wizardry* game, *Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord* is a very challenging dungeon-crawling roleplaying game developed by young US American role-playing enthusiasts and released for various computers (notably the latest Commodore and Apple computers) in 1981. It might be an understatement to say that this game is deeply gothic. The plot of the game centers around an undead wizard, Werdna, who pursued immortality and power and the expense of his sanity and humanity. He has locked himself away in a dark, trap-filled dungeon and the player controls a group of adventurers who risk their lives seeking Werdna's wealth and power.

[45] The localization of these games and the removal of these elements will not be discussed here, but rather in Chapter 3, 3.2 Another Transformation of Christianity

[46] The reader should not form the opinion that *Wizardry* was the first roleplaying game in Japan, nor should they form the opinion that *Dragon Quest* or other console roleplaying games were the first games of its type created in Japan. The reader recommends Sam Derboo's wonderful "*Ultima, Wizardry,* and issues of video game historiography," and "Dark Age of JRPGs" series: Derboo, "Dark Age of JRPGs (1): The Dragon & Princess (1982)," *Hardcore Gaming 101*, Blog, April 8, 2013, http://blog.hardcoregaming101.net/2013/04/dark-age-of-jrpgs-dragon-princess-1982.html. (Accessed June 29, 2022); Derboo, "*Ultima, Wizardry,* and issues of video game historiography," *Hardcore Gaming 101*, Blog, May 20 2011, http://blog.hardcoregaming101.net/2011/05/ultima-wizardry-and-issues-of-video.html. (Accessed June 29, 2022). This is one of the many reasons why the other considers a database approach to medievalism to be the most valid when discussing video game history- there is simply too much that has been obscured by both memory and the loss of information to construct clear causal relations between one piece of media and another. Rather, it is more useful to investigate how a piece of media, through its popularity, configures a set of ideas and analyze how those ideas are found in other pieces of media.

Jimmy Maher, in his excellent series on *Wizardry* at his blog *The Digital Antiquaraian*, describes the creation of the manual for Wizardry.[47] Maher writes that much attention was paid to make *Wizardry* look professional in contrast to the amateurish roleplaying software of the time. To this extent, the producers of *Wizardry* employed veteran *Dungeons and Dragons* artist Will McLean to provide it with a sense of authenticity to the games which inspired it. It was a success, as Maher, drawing from sales figures printed in the magazine *Computer Gaming World*, describes *Wizardry* as one of the top-selling games on the Apple II.[48] While there would not be an official Japanese PC release of *Wizardry* until 1985, it can be reasonably assumed that there were copies of the North American version of *Wizardry* in Japan prior to its release, given that it was entirely possible to play *Wizardry* on any Apple II computer.[49]

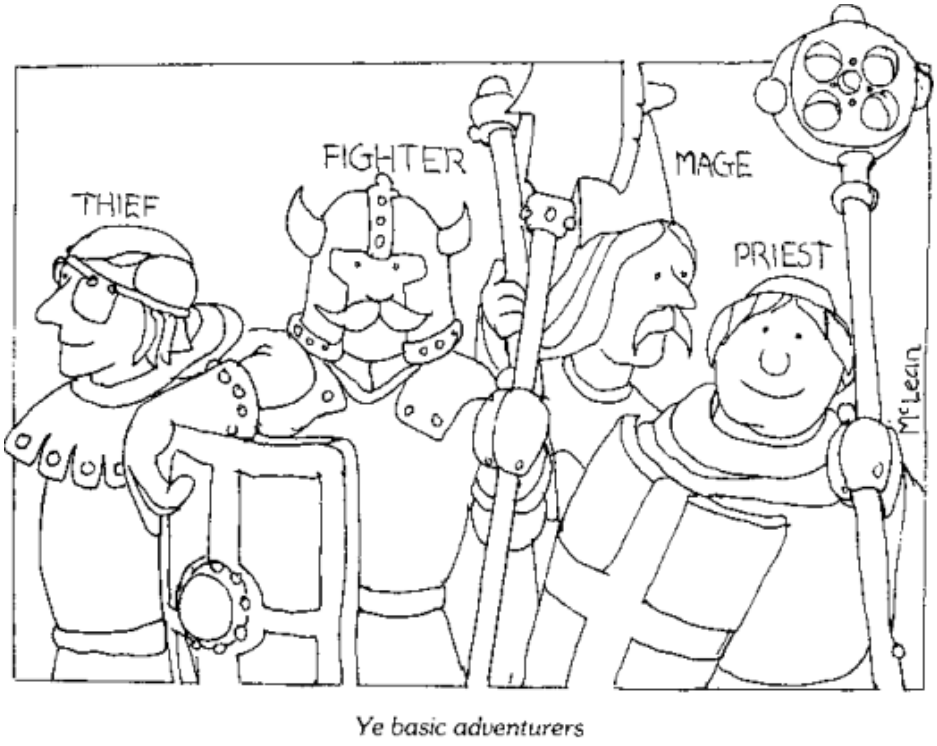

Figure 2: Will McLean, "Ye basic adventurers," Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord *Manual, Apple II, 1981, pg. 7.*

[47] Jimmy Maher, "Making Wizardry," *The Digital Antiquaraian*, Blog, March 20, 2012, https://www.filfre.net/2012/03/making-wizardry/. (Accessed June 29, 2022)

[48] Jimmy Maher, "The Wizardry Phenomenon," *The Digital Antiquarian*, Blog, March 26, 2012, https://www.filfre.net/2012/03/the-wizardry-phenomenon/. (Accessed June 29, 2022)

[49] Some of these copies may have even been pirated or localized by enthusiasts themselves. For more information, see . Martin Picard, "The Foundation of *Geemu*: A Brief History of Early Japanese video games," *Game Studies* vol. 13 no. 2. (2013), http://gamestudies.org/1302/articles/picard. (Accessed June 29, 2022).

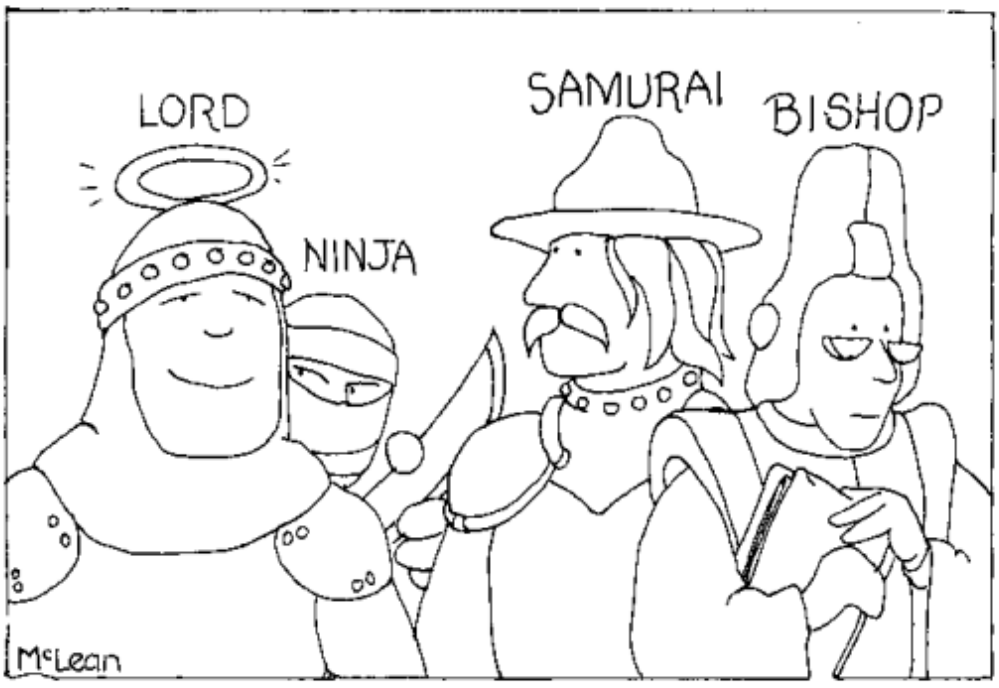

Figure 3: McLean, "Ye elite adventurers," Wizardry Manual, *Apple II, pg. 8. Also of note are the samurai and the ninja. The samurai is more representative of the common 'spellsword' archetype (i.e. the function that the class provides in the game), than a database depiction of a samurai, unlike the ninja.*

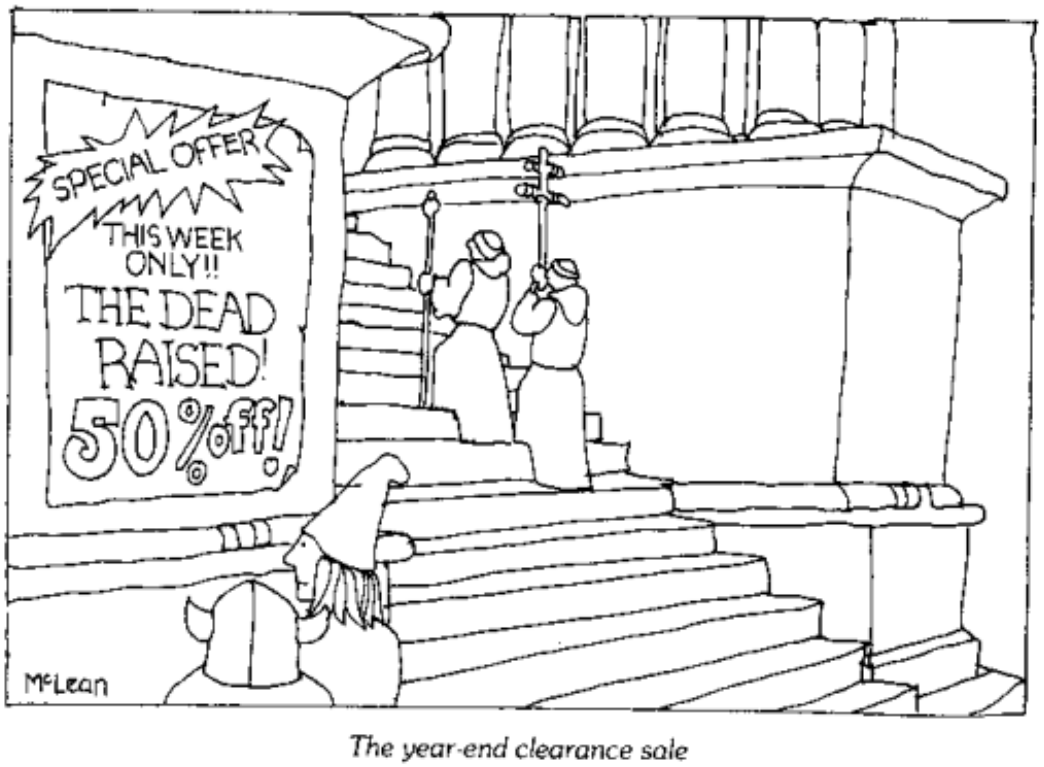

Figure 4: McLean, "The year-end clearance sale," Wizardry Manual, *Apple II, 1981, pg. 19.*

Figure 5: McLean, Wizardry Manual, *Apple II, 1981, pg. 37. Matu is a spell which improves the defense of other characters, with the joke being that it sounds like the priest is sneezing.*

McLean, an artist who frequently provided illustrations for *Dungeons and Dragons* material such as *Dragon* magazine, was undoubtedly participating in the medievalist database of the time and his work provides a unique window into the state of religious illustration in *Dungeons and Dragons* material prior to the Satanic Panic (see chapter 2). In his art for *Wizardry*, the 'priest,' or 'bishop' class are dressed in medievalist clerical attire (the headwear on the bishop is resembles a mitre) and are shown bearing crosses (see Fig. 2 and 3). These classes utilize healing and protection magic, a type of magic which is often associated with Christian imagery in both North American and Japanese medievalist games. Likewise, the 'lord' class (See Fig. 3) has a halo above their head and also utilizes healing magic.[50]

In Figure 4, two adventurers are a purveying an advertisement for resurrection services posted on a (neo-classical?) church and we can see two clerical figures in medieval habits proceeding up the steps. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the primary game function which accompanies the depiction of Christian imagery in Japanese games are resurrection services. Resurrection services are a common and necessary component of many games, both North American and Japanese, in this era. As will be discussed in chapter 3, the vast majority of changes which occurred as a result of North American localization concerned the removal of Christian imagery from places which offer resurrection services, often referred to as

[50] The American localization of the Japanese version of Wizardry for the Nintendo Entertainment System has a depiction of the lord which is more reminiscent of the depiction of saints in medieval manuscripts. This version of the manual, more generally speaking, is clearly inspired by medieval manuscripts. In this version of the manual, the lord is depicted with a gold circle behind his head, a common form of representing saints in medieval manuscripts. (see 3.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, NES)

churches [教会] in the original Japanese version. McLean's work is analyzed here, not to suggest that there is a direct transfer of his work to Japan which began this trend of representation of Christian imagery, but to suggest that his work is indicative of broader, database trends in North American fantasy medievalist artwork, any of which could have transferred and been an inspiration.

1.1.2 The Transformation of Christianity in Japanese Medievalist Games

This subsection details the presentation of Christianity in five popular Japanese games on the Famicom, *Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord*, *The Legend of Zelda*, *Dragon Quest*, *Dragon Quest III*, and *Final Fantasy*. While they are mostly consistent with the trends of representing Christianity outlined in *Wizardry*, they go further. Rather than just being used with healing and protection magic, Christian imagery is also associated with offensive magic and occasionally, references to God are used as a diegetic tool of the game's narrative to congratulate or motivate the player to complete the game. This is especially the case with games utilizing a 'romantic' narrative, leading to the impression that one is questing to serve God.

1.1.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, *Famicom*

(For the NES version, see 3.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, NES)
(For the Apple II version, see 1.1.1 Wizardry and the Transfer of Christianity in Medievalist Fantasy)

Wizardry evidences the smallest change from the US American original. Owing to the success of the game on the computer and its influence on the industry, *Wizardry* received a Famicom release. The names of the classes remain the same as the original release, but the samurai class has been given a character portrait reminiscent of a Warring States era samurai (see Fig. 6). The priest is depicted with a cross around their neck and a cross is positioned behind the altar in the Temple of Cant (see Fig. 8). Also notable in the image are the pseudo-gothic windows with roses.

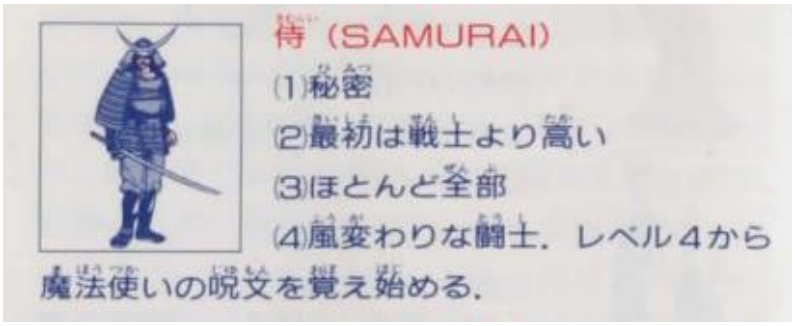

Figure 6: Samurai, Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord *Manual, Famicom, 1987, p. 20.*

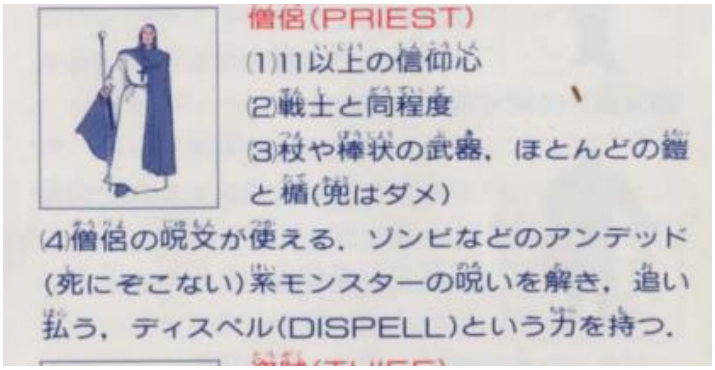

Figure 7: Priest, Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord *Manual, Famicom, 1987, p. 19.*

Figure 8: Temple of Cant, Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord *Manual, Famicom, 1987, p. 12.*

1.1.2.2 Final Fantasy, *Famicom*

(For the NES version, see 3.2.2 Final Fantasy, NES)

In *Final Fantasy*, the player controls the four heroes of light in their quest to gather the four crystals and defeat Chaos. The narrative is clearly in the romantic vein; the player travels throughout the world and defeats monsters in order to accomplish their quest. The Famicom release of *Final Fantasy* draws heavily on *Dungeons and Dragons* for its monster design, with the 四天王 [4 Generals] drawn directly from the *Dungeons and Dragons Monster Manual*.[51]

Characters who die can be resurrected at churches, which are marked by a distinctive cross above their door (see Fig. 9); the priest inside the church wears a mitre (see Fig. 10). Bahamut's Lair, a critical area in the game where the player can advance their character classes, is littered with crosses (see Fig. 11). Finally, some in the fan community have speculated that the design of the arch villain Chaos is inspired by Gustave Dore's illustrations of Lucifer (see Fig. 12).[52] While it is impossible to know exactly if this is the case, it is more apt to understand it as a database representation of a demon (which, of course, Dore influenced), a representational paradigm which *Final Fantasy* shares with *Dungeons and Dragon*'s *Monster Manual*.[53]

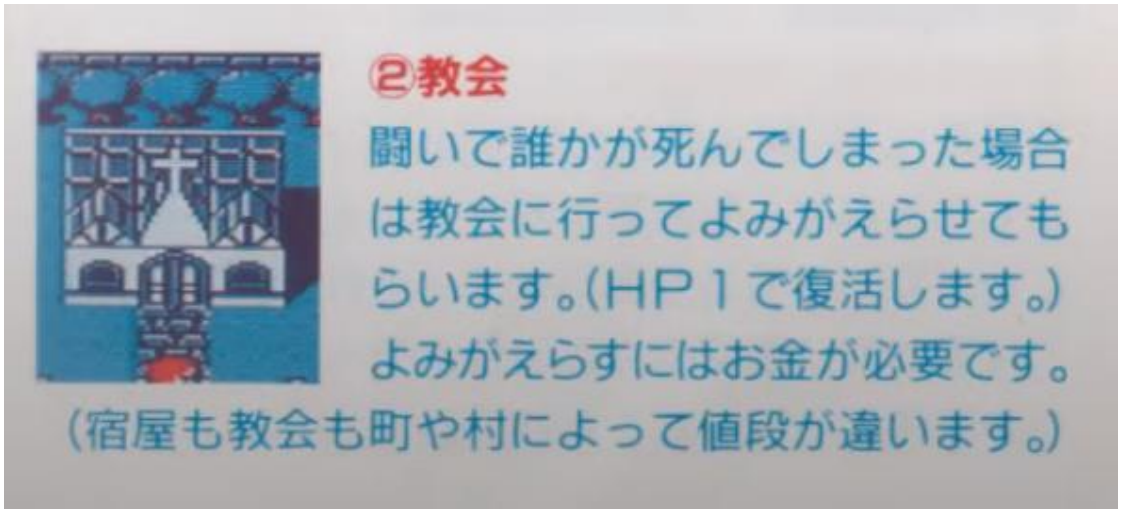

Figure 9: Church, Final Fantasy *Manual*, *Famicom*, *1987, p. 24. "In the event that someone has died in battle, they can be resurrected at a church (they are resurrected at 1HP). It is necessary to pay in order to resurrect a character (the cost for using the inn or the church is different depending upon the city or village)."*

[51] Gary Gygax, *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Monster Manual* (TSR, 1979).

[52] Jmanghan, "FF1 Compilation," *Nexus Mods*, forum post, May 30, 2020, https://www.nexusmods.com/starwarsjediknightjediacademy/mods/8. (Accessed July 1, 2022).

[53] Gygax, *Monster Manual*, p. 16-23. See Oakes Spalding, "Demons in Early D&D" 2 part series looking at the depiction of Demons in *Dungeons and Dragons* material from 1974-1979. Oakes Spalding, "Demons in Early D&D pt. 1" *Save Against All Wands*, Blog, November 16, 2017, https://saveversusallwands.blogspot.com/2017/11/demons-in-early-d-part-1.html. (Accessed July 1, 2022).

Figure 10: Inside a Church, Final Fantasy, *Famicom, 1987. "Church. "It seems that no one is in need of saving… Go on in high spirits."*

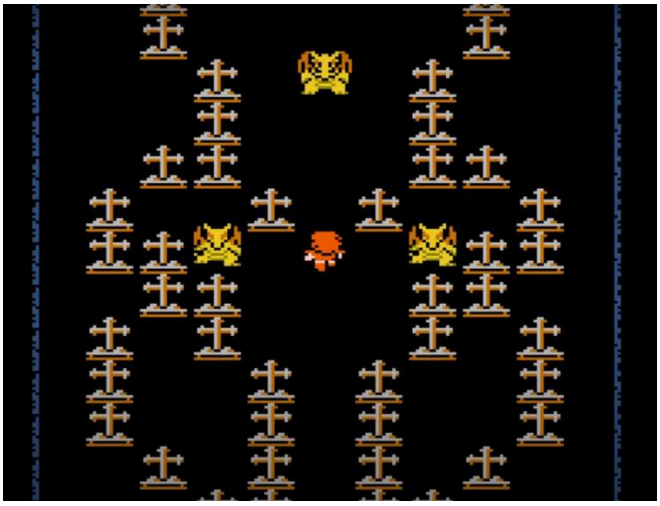

Figure 11: Bahamut's Lair, Final Fantasy, *Famicom, 1987.*

Figure 12: Chaos, Final Fantasy, *Famicom, 1987.*

1.1.2.3 The Legend of Zelda, *Famicom*

(For the NES version, see 3.2.3 The Legend of Zelda, NES)

Along the same romantic lines as *Final Fantasy*, in *The Legend of Zelda*, the player controls Link as he gathers the eight fragments of the Triforce of Power in order to defeat Ganon and rescue the Princess Zelda. In the Famicom Disk System release of *The Legend of Zelda*, the player obtains an item called a Bible [バイブル] (see Fig. 13). Both the in-game artwork and the artwork in the manual depict a cross on the cover of the book, but the cross on the in-game artwork is significantly less pronounced. The entry in the manual also includes a description of the Magical Rod [マジカルロッド] because both the Bible and the Magical Rod enable the player to use magic. Specifically, the player can use the Bible to cast fireballs at their enemies, something which would not conform to the fantasy medievalist database in North America; the name for this item was likewise changed to the 'magic book' on localization (see Fig. 37). Additionally, a cross appears on the shields of both the protagonist, Link, and an enemy called a Tartnuc (standardized in English localization as a Darknut). (See Fig. 15 and 38).

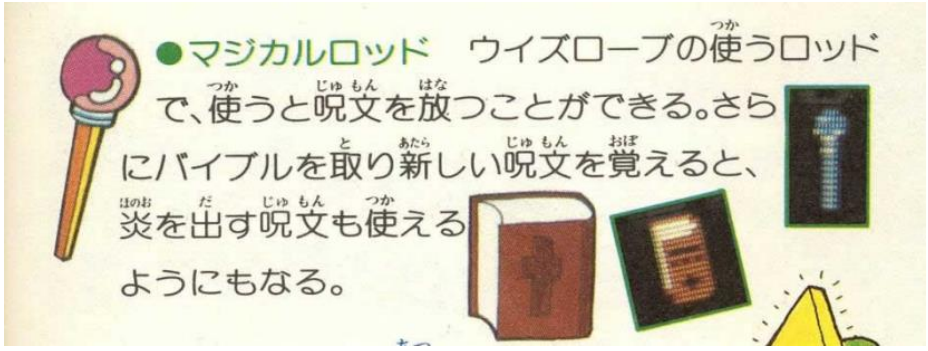

Figure 13: "Magical Rod," Legend of Zelda Manual, *Famicom, 1986, p. 25. Both the Magical Rod and the Bible are included in the same description because they relate to casting magic. The text reads, "If you use the magical rod, you can cast spells. Additionally, you memorize new spells by using the bible and can use magic to throw fireballs."*

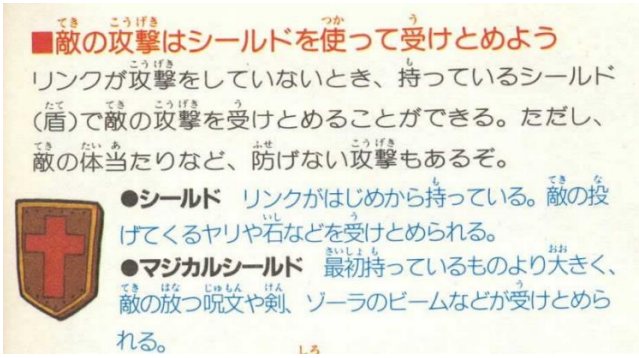

Figure 14: "Use the shield to stop enemy attacks," Legend of Zelda Manual, *Famicom, 1986, p. 18. The text describes how to use a shield.*

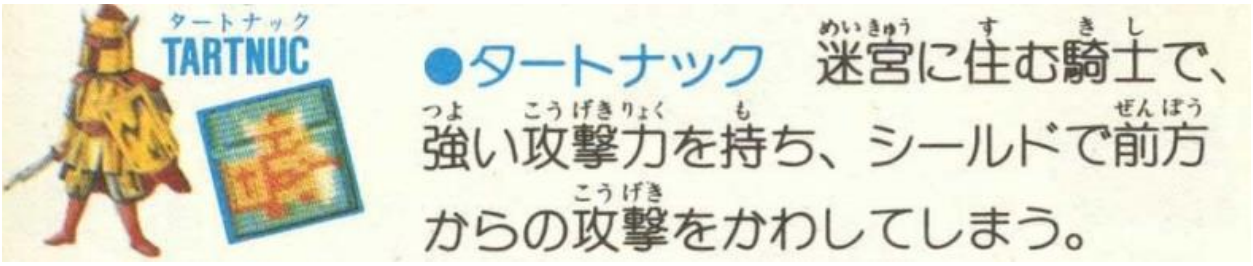

Figure 15:,"Tartnuc" Legend of Zelda Manual, Famicom, 1986, p. 35

1.1.2.4 Dragon Quest, *Famicom*

(For the NES version, see 3.2.4 Dragon Warrior and Dragon Warrior III, NES)

Dragon Quest has one of the most notable uses of Christianity within Japanese games. *Dragon Quest II* uses crosses on churches to indicate places where the player may resurrect party members, cure poison, and lift curses. From *Dragon Quest IV* onwards, players may save their game (i.e. temporarily record their progress in the game to a memory chip within the cartridge so that they can return to playing it later) by 'confessing' to the priest. When asked in an interview with gaming publication Polygon in 2018 about this decision, Yujii Horii says that, "because we decided to make [the save point] the church, it just made sense that you'd need to confess to save your data."[54] What is obvious to Horii might require a bit of explanation, presumably hinging around the double meaning of the word 'save' in Christianity. When the player approaches the priest in the temple at the castle which they begin in, the priest tells them, "Visit the churches throughout the land. There you can be properly saved."[55]

When pressed about the question of religion in *Dragon Quest*, Horii responded,

> "Obviously there are people around the world who believe in various types of religions, but in Japan, there isn't the same kind of overarching system. In that sense, religion is more of a lighthearted addition to the game. It's more to generate an atmosphere. In the world of Dragon Quest, there is no specific religion that it associates with in any way, shape or form, whether it's Catholic, Protestant or Muslim, whatever it may be. The world is just protected by this overarching entity."[56]

In response, Takeshi Uchikawa, the director of *Dragon Quest XI*, describes his reception to the game's representation of religion,

[54] Justin Haywald, "Yuji Horii on the legacy of *Dragon Quest*: Religion, storycrafting and making cute monsters," *Polygon*, September 20, 2018, https://www.polygon.com/features/2018/9/20/17876714/yuji-horii-dragon-quest-11-interview. (Accessed June 29, 2022). The article says that since *Dragon Quest II*, you needed to visit a Church to save your game. This is not the case. From Dragon Quest IV onwards, the player needed to visit a church in order to save. From *Dragon Quest I* to *Dragon Quest III*, the player needs to visit a King in order to save their game.

[55] いくさきざきの教会を訪なさい。きっと助けになることでしょう。*Dragon Quest*, Famicon, 1986.

[56] Haywald.

> "As a player myself back in the day, and going back slightly to the swords and sorcery influence, Dragon Quest felt very fresh and new to me as a child. And there was probably a lot of children like myself who felt like they were tapping into and experiencing this different culture through Dragon Quest. The whole act of confessing at a church, that's something that I admired. It made me want to try it myself. It was like getting a feel for the culture from somewhere far from where I lived. Also, it really helped build up my imagination, to a certain degree, of what Western fantasy could be like."[57]

Whatever Horii's intention for representing religion in *Dragon Quest* was, it's clear that it was read by those who played it as having a distinct Christian (in this case, Catholic) element. Uchikawa's connection between the representation of Christian elements, 'western fantasy,' and a faraway culture are indicative of how Christianity is both provincialized and globalized within the context of Japanese medievalist gaming. Despite the consistent and historical presence of Christians within Japan, Christianity finds itself linked to representations of a hyperreal European Middle Ages. With a certain stroke of irony, these specific elements of the game would not find themselves into the North American localization, and thus would not appear in the Western European localization; they would remain solely in the original Japanese version.

While globalization brought this specific depiction of Christianity to Japan, the transformation undergone as these games produced a more globalized Middle Ages also produced a new version of Christianity in medievalist fantasy which would never receive official publication outside of Japan. As will be discussed in chapter 3, the market for medievalist media in North America demanded that these games assimilate into the tendencies of their market, and this required the removal of these Christian elements in both the North American and Japanese games. The game concludes with the text, in English, "May God be always with you!" (see Fig. 16) This was removed in localization (see Fig. 39)

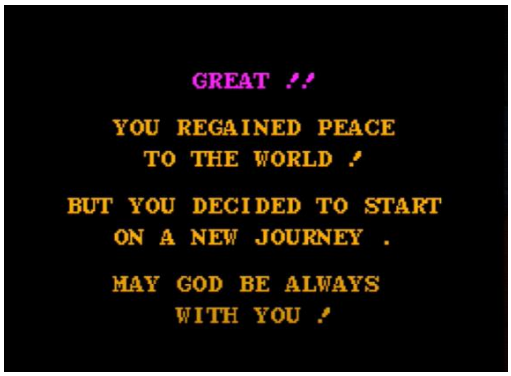

Figure 16: Dragon Quest *End Screen,* Dragon Quest, *Famicom, 1986.*

[57] Ibid.

1.1.3 *Dragon Quest III*, Japan, and Missionaries

(For the NES version, see 3.2.4 Dragon Warrior and Dragon Warrior III, NES)

Dragon Quest III remains one of the most popular medievalist roleplaying games released for the Famicom. It has received numerous re-releases throughout the years, and is scheduled for a remastered release in 2022. Utilizing a world map which resembles our world, *Dragon Quest III* provides an excellent example of trends discussed in this chapter. In the game, the player visits the town Yamato on an island called Jipang where its inhabitants are ruled by a demon named Orochi who pretends to be the queen Himiko. The demon is eating the children of the island, and this causes distress to both the inhabitants of the island and a 'European' missionary from to Jipang. In order to progress with the plot in the game, the player must defeat the demon and liberate the island. While this game deserves an analysis of its own with regards to how the Christianity depicted in this game reflects both the historical and remembered experience of Christianity in Japan, this analysis is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, this subsection will be descriptive account of how the idea of Christianity and Europe are handled within *Dragon Quest III*.

Dragon Quest III's world map (Fig. 17) provides an overview of how the game conceptualizes space and regions. The player is the descendant of the legendary hero Ortega, and they must travel to a series of shrines guarded by priests. These shrines were once used by the player's kingdom, Aliahan, to maintain their global empire. The player must travel to these shrines and collect a series of orbs which will allow them to defeat the demon Baramos.

Figure 17: ドラゴンクエスト III の世界 [The World of Dragon Quest III*]* Dragon Quest III *Manual, Super Famicom, 1996. Although this map is from the Super Famicom release of the game, the world map remains unchanged in the Famicom release. This map is chosen due to its quality.*

Each piece of text on the map above represents a city which the player can visit; most of these have real-world analogues. 'Europe' is given an outsize representation in this map and hosts 5 cities: Portoga, Romalia, Ejinbea, Noaniiru, and Kazappu. Romalia is the player's first destination after they leave their starting island of Aliahan (center south). Located to the immediate north of Aliahan are the comparatively tiny islands of Jipang which hosts only one city: Yamato. The player can travel to Jipang after they receive a ship from the King of Portoga as a reward for bringing him pepper from Aslam (located in this map's equivalent of the Middle East).[58]

[58] It should be noted that this is not the only 'historical' event which the player performs. Notably, they can leave a merchant in the town of Soo (presumably a reference to the Native American Sioux tribe) who will 'develop' the town throughout the game. As the player progresses in the game, Soo will increase in size and

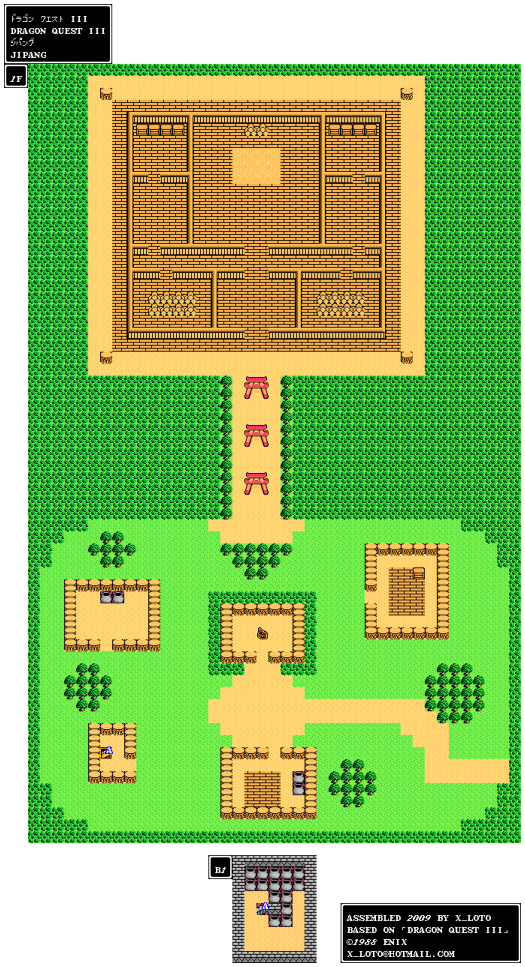

Figure 18: Jipang In-game map, Dragon Quest III, *Famicom, 1989. Note the Torii leading to Himiko's palace*

Upon reaching Jipang, the player learns that the demon Orochi is eating the children of the village and they are tasked with stopping them by an elderly man in the village and a missionary. The missionary resembles the priests found in churches throughout the game: wearing blue robes and holding a cross. Strong attempts are made to tie the religion of the missionary to Catholicism. Speaking to the missionary in the village during the daytime, he says, "I came to this country to spread the word of God, but here Himiko is god!" (See Fig. 19) During the night, he can be found in a hut with a village elder. The village elder despairs that his child has been selected as a sacrifice and the missionary impels the player, "Oh, our Lord in heaven! You need to save this man's daughter. Amen!"[59]

infrastructure and gain more inhabitants. Eventually, your merchant declares themselves king. The story of Soo concludes with the inhabitants of Soo overthrowing your merchant king and governing the town themselves.

[59] 天にましますわわれらが神よ！この男の娘を救い給え。アーメン！It is notable that the honorific used to refer to God resembles that which is found in the Lord's Prayer. In later releases of the game, the missionary does not say "Amen!." *Dragon Quest III,* Famicom, 1989.

Figure 19: Speaking to the Missionary in Yamato, Daytime. Dragon Quest III, *Famicom, 1989.*

Asking around the town, the player learns that Himiko has attained god-like powers recently. Upon visiting her, she remarks, "Are you the foreigner called [Player's name]? I hate foreigners." (See Fig. 20) Traversing through the dungeon next to the town, the player confronts the monster Orochi. Defeating the monster, the player discovers a secret entrance into the town's castle and following it, they find a wounded Himiko. She implores the player to keep their demon form a secret, but then attacks the player. Upon defeating her, the player is told that Himiko's true form has been learned by the townsfolk. Returning to talk to the missionary, he remarks, "Himiko is dead, but now you are treated like gods! I give up!"[60]

Figure 20: Visiting Himiko. Dragon Quest III, Super Famicom, 1989.

[60] ヒミコさん　死にました。　でも　今度　あなたたち　丸で　神様！やっぱり　お手上げね. Ibid.

In *Dragon Quest III*, we see one of the most remarkable uses of Christianity: its use as a narrative component pushing the player towards the completion of the game. This comes in the form of the priest who provides the player with necessary information for progressing in the game. Despite Horii's comment that the religion of the *Dragon Quest* does not reflect real-world religions, this priest is undoubtedly given a Catholic image. The author cannot adequately speculate why Horii made his comment in the interview that the religion in his games is non-specific, but it is worth noting that later releases of *Dragon Quest III*, in Japan and North America (and eventually Europe) removed some of the explicit references made by the missionary to Catholicism.[61]

Dragon Quest III has one of the most unique visions of medievalism in the roleplaying games of this era, and its representation of both Christianity and Japan extend beyond what is common in games of this genre. In it, we see a vision of Europe which both extends beyond its borders and is historically constituted; It is the central reference point of the medieval world, but its influence is felt beyond the territory which resembles it. This is accomplished through the game's use of religion and its reflection of real-world Catholicism. Like other games in its genre, Christianity and medievalism are entertwined in their hyperreality and serve to legitimate a concept of the Middle Ages as both provincialized and global. The player's kingdom, Aliahan, once used the shrines and their priests to connect their global empire, and the player must travel to these shrines in order to save the world. The priests of this fictional kingdom are intended to resemble real-world catholic priests, suggesting that the religion of this fictional kingdom is the religion of the priest in Jipang.

Jipang is positioned as a hyperreal Japan outside of this hyperreal European Middle Ages. It achieves this representation due to its absence of prior contact with Christianity and the myriad of references which the games makes to a pre-medieval Japan: Himiko is the name of a well-known ancient Japanese empress; the town is named Yamato (the name given to the era in reference to the name of the capital of the polity to which Japan traces its ancestry); and the name of the child to be sacrificed, Yayoi, is the name of the people who migrated to the islands of Japan during this period.[62] Like database medievalism, all of these historical references are taken out of their original context and are used to create an image of a historical

[61] For example, in the Super Famicon localization, the priest does not conclude his statement with "Amen!" Unsurprisingly, the North American localization was the strictest in its removal of Christian references. (see 3.2.4 Dragon Warrior and Dragon Warrior III, NES)

[62] Mikiso Hane and Louis G. Perez, "Chapter 6: The Restoration of Order," *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey*, ebook, (Westview Press, 2012).

era. The arrival of the missionary to Jipang reflects its coming entwinement with the medieval world. Likewise, Jipang's relationship with the outside world is portrayed as a mix of xenophobia and religious xeno-philia (although it is notable that the only description of this that we receive is from the priest who's goal was to spread the word of God). The player is reviled as a foreigner by Himiko and is positioned in the same category as the priest, from whom the player is provided with a narrative impetus to save the town and advance towards completion of the game. After they defeat Orochi, the missionary laments that Yamato now worships the player. While it is difficult to understand how this is to be interpreted by the player (as a serious statement or with comedic value), it should be noted here. Further study should be done to note how the hyperreal quality of Jipang relates to the hyperreal Europe, but for the purposes of this study, the author considers it sufficient to note that it is positioned outside of the game's hyperreal medieval Europe through its handling of Christianity.

In conclusion, this subchapter outlines how an image of Christianity, reflected in a popular US American game of the time (*Wizardry*) compares to 5 games produced for the Nintendo Entertainment System in the Japan technoregion. While there is significant diversity amongst the games described, Christianity can be ultimately found to occupy 1) a general magical position and 2) a narrative position. While it inherits a portion of the first position from its North American influences, these developments can be considered to be innovations on the database, thus constituting a separate Japanese database which is linked to the North American database.

1.2 Race and the Medieval: Hyperreality in Japanese Medievalist Video Game Paratext

1.2.1 A Juxtapositional Anecdote: Race in Natsume Soseki's Medieval Fantasies

Figure 21: Lancelot and Guinevere, illustrated by Goyo Hashiguchi for Natsume Soseki's Kairo-ko . Medievalisms in the Postcolonial Worrld, *ed. Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, (John Hopkins Univeristy Press, 2009), Cover Art.*

In Haruka Momma's "Medievalism-Colonialism-Orientalism: Japan's Modern Identity in Natsume Soseki's *Maboroshi no Tate* and *Kairo-ko,"* Momma presents the above image (Figure 21) of Lancelot and Guinevere by Goyo Hashiguchi in *Kairo-ko* as an illustration of the popular early 20th century Japanese author's complicated relationship with his love of the medieval, its pre-supposed whiteness, and his own Japanese-ness.[63] Momma says that these figures "look sufficiently 'Western'… and yet, these characters exhibit subtly Asian facial features such as the gentle slant of her nose and the squareness of his jaw, her *ukiyoe* eyes and

[63] Haruka Momma, "Medievalism-Colonialism-Orientalism: Japan's Modern Identity in Natsume Soseki's *Maboroshi no Tate* and *Kairo-ko," Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World*, (John Hopkins University Press, 2009): 153-4. It should also be mentioned that Hashiguchi was reportedly inspired by the Pre-Raphaelite movement in Britain at the time.

his *kabuki* mouth."[64] In Soseki's writing, intended for a Japanese audience, Momma places a strong emphasis on the black hair and eyes of the characters as a method through which the audience can relate to them,

> "Soseki repeatedly foregrounds the darkness of his knights… In *Kairo-ko,* Lancelot's abundant black curls are contrasted with the ill-matched paleness of his cheeks; his illicit love for Guinevere is confirmed when he casts the gaze of his black eyes onto her face. In *Maboroshi no Tate,* William's 'coal-black' eyes are unambiguously racialized in Clara's comment that 'boys with black eyes are mean and bad-natured; only Jews and gypsies have black eyes... In Soseki's medieval fiction, then, the color black is not so much an indicator for European ethnicity- whether Celto-British, French, or Mediterranean- as a racial marker: in the discourse of modern Europe, both Jews and gypsies[sic] may have been registered as non-European, and, more specifically, as 'Oriental.'"

Earlier in the article, Momma notes how the expatriate Soseki sarcastically compares his own complexion to the British in his midst, "'Yellow people, how apt a name! We really are yellow. When I was in Japan, I knew I was not that fair, but I thought my skin was at least close to an ordinary human color. In this country, however, I realize that mine ought to be called a way-beyond-human color."[65] For Soseki, Momma claims that both modern London and the Middle Ages were sites where his Japanese-ness existed in tension with dominant and normativized paradigms of whiteness as the authentic subject of these two ideas, European modernity and the Middle Ages. However, in contrast to contemporary Britain, the Middle Ages existed as "less a politicized space than a landscape filled with dreamlike images… a generic Middle Ages for the narrative: his medieval Britain is a dehistoricized space where he could freely explore a psychological theme."[66]

1.2.2 'YOU': Whiteness, Medieval *Mukokuseki*, and the Japanese Player

The above example presents one paradigm through which Japanese artists have positioned themselves and their raciality within a European Middle Ages. It is presented comparatively to the topic of this sub-chapter, namely, the representation of race in Japanese medievalist video game advertisements from the 1980's. These games and their accompanying illustrations utilize the representational technique of 'mukokuseki,' where racializing characteristics are absent for light-skinned characters. Mukokuseki functions in Japanese medievalist media to elide the differences between whiteness and a racialized Japanese

[64] Ibid. 153.

[65] Ibid. 144 From Natsume Soseki, *Rondon Shosoku ('Hotogisu' Shoshu) [News from London: The 'Hotogisu Version]* (1901), *Soseki Zenshu* 12:14.

[66] Ibid. 149-151.

nationality by collapsing them into the same representational paradigm of light-skinned characters. Doing so enables the presentation of a Middle Ages which is simultaneously rooted in a hyperreal medieval Europe while pushing at its borders. This racial ambiguity presents a globalizing Middle Ages without challenging whiteness as a default feature of medieval hyperreality. This is reflected by the near-interchangeability of white and Japanese actors, clad in medievalist garb, in Japanese live-action advertisements for these games. I describe this condition as one of near-interchangeability because, in the advertisements for games discussed in this sub-chapter, Japanese protagonists are far more common than white protagonists. It should be noted that this representational paradigm did not extend to the North American localizations of these games, where these characters were depicted as being unmistakably white.

The Middle Ages exists as one of the most prominent and effective ideas of Europe. Representations of the Middle Ages, both popular and academic, function in order to realize the idea of both the Middle Ages and Europe. As previously mentioned, these two ideas have long been attached to each other, with scholars both claiming and critiquing the idea that the Middle Ages are the site of the birth of Europe.[67] In popular culture, whiteness exists at the intersection of these two ideas by providing a racialized subject for both Europe and the Middle Ages.[68] As Helen Young remarks about J.R.R. Tolkein and Robert E. Howard, the two main progenitors of modern medievalist fantasy, "the medievalist worlds they imagined were both strongly influenced by modern discourses around race which developed through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly Anglo-Saxonism…[their medieval worlds] became the default setting for Fantasy, making race the conventional framework around which difference is built in the genre."[69] Later works would continue this trend because medieval fantasy was identified by publishers as genre fiction and, citing Gary K. Wolfe, "'tended to define itself in terms of works that bore at least a surface resemblance to Tolkein," thus producing a "habit" in medievalist fantasy where whiteness was the default. [70]

In his 2002 book, *Recentering Globalization,* Iwabuchi discusses the representation of *mukokuseki* (無国籍) (lit. trans.: without nationality) characters in Japanese popular culture.

[67] Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, (Princeton, 2001).

[68] Of especial note here is the 2001 film, *The Black Knight*. See K.A. Laity, "Medieval Community: Lessons from the Film *Black Knight*," *LATCH: A Journal for the Study of the Literary Artifact in Theory, Culture, or History*, vol. 1 (2008): p. 147-157.

[69] Helen Young, *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of* Whiteness, (Routledge, 2015), p. 34-35.

[70] Ibid. 58.

For Iwabuchi, *mukokuseki* is a Japanese method of representing characters which implies "the erasure of racial or ethnic characteristics or a context, which does not imprint a particular culture or country with these features."[71] However, the name is somewhat misleading because this representational style is typified by light-skinned characters. This creates a representational paradigm where whiteness and Japanese-ness are dissolved into the same representation. Iwabuchi argues that this method of representation plays an important role in the international dissemination of Japanese popular culture where, "the international spread of mukokuseki popular culture from Japan simultaneously articulates the universal appeal of Japanese cultural products and the disappearance of any perceptible 'Japaneseness.'"[72] However, Iwabuchi notes that this method of representation, despite its desire to erase cultural odor, is still distinctly Japanese.[73]

As will be discussed in chapter 3, this is reflected in the North American localization of Japanese medievalist games, where mukokuseki art was changed to reflect dominant representational paradigms of North American medievalist fantasy (see Figures 22 and 23). In the North American localization, the medievalist characters are unambiguously white. This change, along with many other content changes in these localizations, were performed in order to enable the Japanese product to assimilate into the North American game market as a commodity without a 'foreign' cultural odor.[74] These changes are also reflected in the differences in these game's paratextual materials (manuals, etc,). This paradigm would last into the 1990's, when it was recognized that Japanese products had a "cool" factor amongst their intended audience (and thus, a Japanese cultural odor becomes a desired quality), and mukokuseki art would become common in North American localizations.[75] Likewise, it is important to note that mukokuseki art was not always universal in Japanese medievalist game advertising, but this trend was mostly solidified following the meteoric success of *Dragon Quest* in Japan when the illustration paradigm of the well-known manga artist, Akira Toriiyama, became commonplace. Prior to this, it was not uncommon for Japanese medievalist game

[71] Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 28.
[72] Ibid. 33.
[73] Ibid. 53.
[74] For a brief summary of content changes in North American localizations of Japanese video games, see Clyde Mandelin, "Religious Content Changes in Game Localizations," *Legends of Localization*, Web, July 26, 2019. https://legendsoflocalization.com/religious-content-changes-in-game-localizations/. (Accessed January 14, 2022). and Clyde Mandelin, "Game Localization and Nintendo of America's Content Policies in the 1990s (NSFW)," *Legends of Localization*, Web, September 10, 2018. https://legendsoflocalization.com/game-localization-and-nintendo-of-americas-content-policies-in-the-1990s/. (Accessed January 14, 2022).
[75] Marie Thorsten, *Superhuman Japan: Knowledge, Nation, and Culture in US-Japan Relations,* (Routledge 2012), 117-143.

advertisements to be illustrated with the same representational paradigm that North American medievalist games were illustrated (see Figure 24). Changes to the representational paradigm within the games themselves were virtually non-existent due to the ambiguous nature of pixel-art at the time. There was simply not enough graphical fidelity (and where there was, perhaps a lack of desire to modify it, since the game had already been purchased) in the hardware of the time to distinguish racial characteristics (see Figure 25).[76] The result is a *mukokuseki* manner of representation within the game, but stark localization changes in the North American paratextual material depicting characters who are designed to be relatable to the intended audience (white, male- to say nothing of the male gaze and the depiction of women) in a representational style which is familiar.

[76] It could also be suggested that dominant paradigms of game design (gameplay occurring from a distant, removed perspective from the characters) also rendered the need to represent more detailed characteristics of the character moot.

Figure 22: Cover art for Dragon Quest III.. *It could certainly be argued that the protagonist for the game (center) occupies a similar representational as Soseki's Lancelot and Guinevere (black hair and dark eyes). Given that this game takes place in a world that is intended to be analogous to the real world, a strong case could be made that this represents a Japanese medieval subjectivity as central to the play experience, but that it still fundamentally operates on mukokuseki principles This is part of the ambiguity inherent in the mukokuseki paradigm..*

Figure 23: Dragon Warrior II, *Nintendo Entertainment System, 1990.*

Figure 24: Dragon Slayer, MSX, 1984.

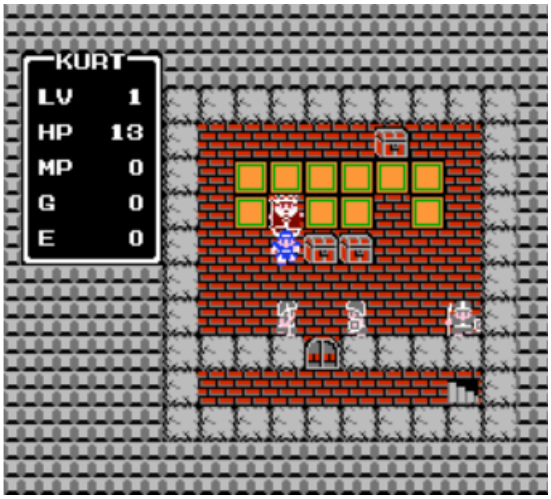

Figure 25: Dragon Warrior, *Nintendo Entertainment System, 1989. The aesthetics of the Japanese release are not fundamentally different for the purposes of this paper.*

Live-action advertisements provide an interesting wrinkle to these discussions on mukokuseki. In these advertisements, both Japanese and white actors are clad in medievalist garb. In Michael Prieler's "Othering, Racial Hierarchies and Identity Construction in Japanese Television Advertising," Prieler argues that Japanese national identity is "not only constructed based on national characteristics, but also on difference *from* Others." Prieler suggests that this is related to a historical conception of Japan as racially homogenous and culturally exceptional, drawing on a familiar "distinction between 'Self' and 'Other'- between Japanese insider and foreign outsider."[77] This paradigm is built upon (and builds) a racialized national Japanese subject, citing Kosaku Yoshino's *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, "despite being basically indistinguishable from, and having common origins with, for instance, Koreans."[78] According to Prieler, whites are the most represented non-Japanese racial group in Japanese commercials, where they are represented as "a typical 'citizen of the world,'" who functions to provide a positive affirmation of the quality of the product.[79] Citing Karen Kelsky, Prieler continues, "whiteness functions in Japan as the transparent and free-floating signifier of upward mobility and assimilation in 'world culture'; it is the primary sign of the modern, the universal subject, the 'citizen of the world.'"[80] I argue that the mukokuseki representational paradigm is implied to extend into live-action advertisements through the default whiteness of medieval hyperreality and the interchangeability of white actors with Japanese actors. Through this, the Japanese self (the target of these advertisements) is positioned as a 'citizen of the world' through their inclusion in medieval hyperreality, while remaining consistent with the racialized criteria of Japanese national identity. This is done in order to better sell the product of a global medieval fantasy to an audience who has been racially excluded from it without challenging the default whiteness of the genre.

It is worth noting that white actors appear in other television commercials for the Famicom game system, but they are normally presented in the manner above: as demonstrating the quality of the product. In advertisements for medievalist video games, white actors are positioned as representatives for the characters in the game.[81] *Dragon Quest III*'s commercials

[77] Michael Prieler, "Othering, Racial Hierarchies and Identity Construction in Japanese Television Advertising," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 13 no. 5 (2010): p. 512.

[78] Ibid. 512. Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: A Sociological Inquiry*, (London: Routledge, 1992): p. 24-25.

[79] Ibid. 515.

[80] Ibid. 515.

[81] An notable exception to this would be games which are explicitly set in North America or Europe, such as *Mother* and *The Goonies*. An interesting example here is the commercial for *Famicom Wars*, a military strategy game where 2 factions resembling the United States and the Soviet Union fight. The advertisement depicts mostly white soldiers in American fatigues, led by a black sergeant, training. Kidshoryuken, "Battallion Wars," *1*

feature a group of Japanese heroes preparing to combat a white evil wizard.[82] The commercial for *Fire Emblem Gaiden* features a pair of white protagonists, one of whom fights a dragon.[83] The commercial for *Final Fantasy I & II* features a multi-racial cast of characters, but the commercial clearly frames a Japanese character as the protagonist.[84] *Dragon Buster 2* features a white protagonist who is captured by a dragon.[85] The rest of the commercials from this era that the author is familiar with contain exclusively Japanese actors, or actors whose ethnicity is presented as ambiguous. A notable example for the latter is the first *Dragon Quest* commercial, where there is only the silhouette of the protagonist shown, with the text (in Roman script) "Anata" [lit. trans. You] appearing in the center of the screen.[86] Notable commercials with Japanese actors include *King's Knight*, where a Japanese child is blinded by a flash from the television and becomes clad in medievalist armor.[87] The first *Fire Emblem* commercial is also quite remarkable, where large cast of Japanese actors, dressed in medievalist armor, perform an operatic version of the game's theme.[88]

In conclusion, the representation of race has always been an important factor in representations of the medieval. From Natsume Soseki to the 1980's boom in Japanese medievalist video games, Japanese subjects have had to grapple with the default whiteness of the Middle Ages. This whiteness provides a subject for a hyperreal European medieval and it is situated as the default for characters in the medievalist fantasy genre. The popularity of medievalist fantasy video games in Japan led to the employment of a representational system where Japanese audiences could position themselves within this medieval fantasy without displacing the default whiteness of the genre. This was expressed through mukokuseki art, in

Hour of Nintendo Famicom Commercials, 45:35-46:05, YouTube, August 24, 2019. https://youtu.be/p0_CQhTaLXg?t=2735. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

[82] Toaker, *Dragon Quest III Japanese CSM*, YouTube, August 27, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSF46S94LAs. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

[83] Puriko San, "Fire Emblem Gaiden," *Fire emblem (Toda la saga) CM (TV Commercials) collection 1990-2019 ファイアーエムブレム TV CM.*, 0:30-0:58, YouTube, August 10, 2020, https://youtu.be/QfqZ3mHSFP4?t=30. (Accessed January 14, 2022). The commercial for Fire Emblem: Genealogy of the Holy War also features white protagonists prominently, although it is slightly outside of the scope of this paper.

[84] Game Payne, "Final Fantasy 1 & 2 Famicom Commercial (Japan)," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klMUgXgwihE. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

[85] "1 Hour of Nintendo Famicom Commercials," 52:47- 52:58. https://youtu.be/p0_CQhTaLXg?t=3166. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

[86] Ibid. 17:28- 17:42. https://youtu.be/p0_CQhTaLXg?t=1048. (Accessed January 14, 2022). The commercial for 戦いの挽歌 [Elegy of Battle] also has a similar technique. Ibid. 28:12- 28;27. https://youtu.be/p0_CQhTaLXg?t=1692. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

[87] Ibid. 22:18- 22:32. https://youtu.be/p0_CQhTaLXg?t=1338. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

[88] FallenDeviil, "Original Fire Emblem Commercial," YouTube, April 11, 2007. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-2kf1VKM1U. (Accessed January 14, 2022).

which Japanese and white characters were represented as the same. This style transitioned into live action commercials for these games, where white and Japanese actors both represented characters in a medievalist fantasy, while these commercials often retained a Japanese protagonist. The result was a more global Middle Ages in which Japanese players were interpellated as a subject in their own Middle Ages. However, this was changed during the North American localization, in which the characters were presented as unambiguously white.

1.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated that race and religion were two facets which were adopted and adapted by Japanese video game developers in their representation of a hyperreal European medievalism. This happened through an expansion of the function of Christianity within Japanese medievalist games and the inclusion of Japanese identities within medievalist settings. Both of these aspects represent a considerable iteration upon the North American medievalist fantasy tradition. Thus, it can be said that the Japanese adaptations represent a considerable globalizing development in the image of the Middle Ages.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the situation of public medievalism within the United States during this same time period. It will focus on the representation of a hyperreal European Middle Ages typified by *Dungeons and Dragons* during the same era, looking at how media, both mass and evangelical, responded to a series of high profile violent crimes which were said to be inspired by *Dungeons and Dragons*. In the third chapter, I will demonstrate the that content changes which were made to the games discussed in this chapter were influenced by the events described in the next chapter, namely, the *Dungeons and Dragons* Satanic Panic.

Chapter 2: 'The Barbarization of Our Children:' The Public Medievalism of the US Dungeons and Dragons Panic in the 1980's

2.0 Introduction

Public Medievalism in the United States during the 1980's was strongly influenced by emergent trends in popular children's media which utilized pseudo-medieval settings. Some of the most notable medievalist media from this period were derived from the popular tabletop roleplaying game, *Dungeons and Dragons*. *Dungeons and Dragons* is a collaborative storytelling board game in which each participant plays the role of a fictional character in a pseudo-medieval world. The game is facilitated by the Dungeon Master, a player who plays every other character and is the ultimate authority in the game world. Although *Dungeons and Dragons* was originally published 1974, its popularity dramatically increased during the next decade due to various media controversies and vocal criticism from evangelical advocacy groups. In particular, these critics claimed that a number of well-publicized suicides and murders were influenced by the 'satanic' and 'occult' elements of the game. These concerns initially emerged in news media, but quickly gained traction in entertainment media and burgeoning evangelical media circles. While *Dungeons and Dragons* would cease to be a flashpoint of moral panic by the end of the decade, many of the discourses about the relationship between violence and interactive media would carry into the 90's and beyond. Although there was a similar satanic panic in Canada, this chapter will solely focus on the most profitable member of the North American technoregion in order to 1) fully explicate its situation within the limited format of this paper and 2) emphasize the economic dimension of the localization changes in Chapter 3 as a significant factor.[89]

In the media produced by critics of *Dungeons and Dragons*, the medieval is used to aestheticize their anxieties about the effects of violent children's media. For these advocacy groups, especially evangelical groups, children's media which utilized 'Satanic' or 'occult' imagery were dangerous because they exploited children's inability to distinguish reality from fiction by infiltrating the occult into their imagination.[90] In their metaphysics, imagination

[89] See 3.1 Introduction.

[90] It should be noted here that the 'occult' is used by critics of *Dungeons and Dragons* to refer a depiction of any non-Christian religious or spiritual elements, including fictional ones. The latter is especially prominent in

exists as a liminal space between reality and fiction, and they claim that it is necessary to protect a child's imagination by regulating their media consumption. As Phil Phillips states in his audio cassette series published by evangelical publishing outlet Eagle's Nest Ministries, "I want to state the danger right from the beginning, that many of the players have a hard time separating reality from fantasy, and this game becomes the reality in their life and the world around us, the real world, becomes the fantasy to them."[91] Following a description of teenage players who (allegedly) shot indiscriminately at passing cars, he claims that, "Did you know that children today are totally into imitating what they see? They imitate what they see on television, they imitate what their parents do, and they imitate the role they play in their fantasy games."[92] This concern is often expressed in media depicting the social harm of *Dungeons and Dragons*, in which the medieval is used to aestheticize the violence which occurs when media-influenced violence erupts from imagination into reality.

fantasy medievalism, but prominent evangelical figures like Gary Greenwald and Phil Phillips were quick to identify the influence of "eastern, oriental mystical religious practices" in various children's media. Gary Greenwald and Phil Phillips, *Deception of a Generation*, directed by Paul Crouch Jr., (USA: Eagle's Nest Ministries, 1984).

[91] Gary Greenwald, *Dungeons and Dragons*, (USA: Eagle's Nest Ministries, c. 1981). The author is unable to determine the exact date of publication, but estimates 1981. The version to which the author has access is an .mp3 of the cassettes purchased from Inspirational Media. https://www.inspirational.org.nz. (Accessed JULY 6, 2021)

[92] Ibid. I say "allegedly" because he does not provide specifics on this case, nor does he provide substantial evidence that *Dungeons and Dragons* motivated these attacks.

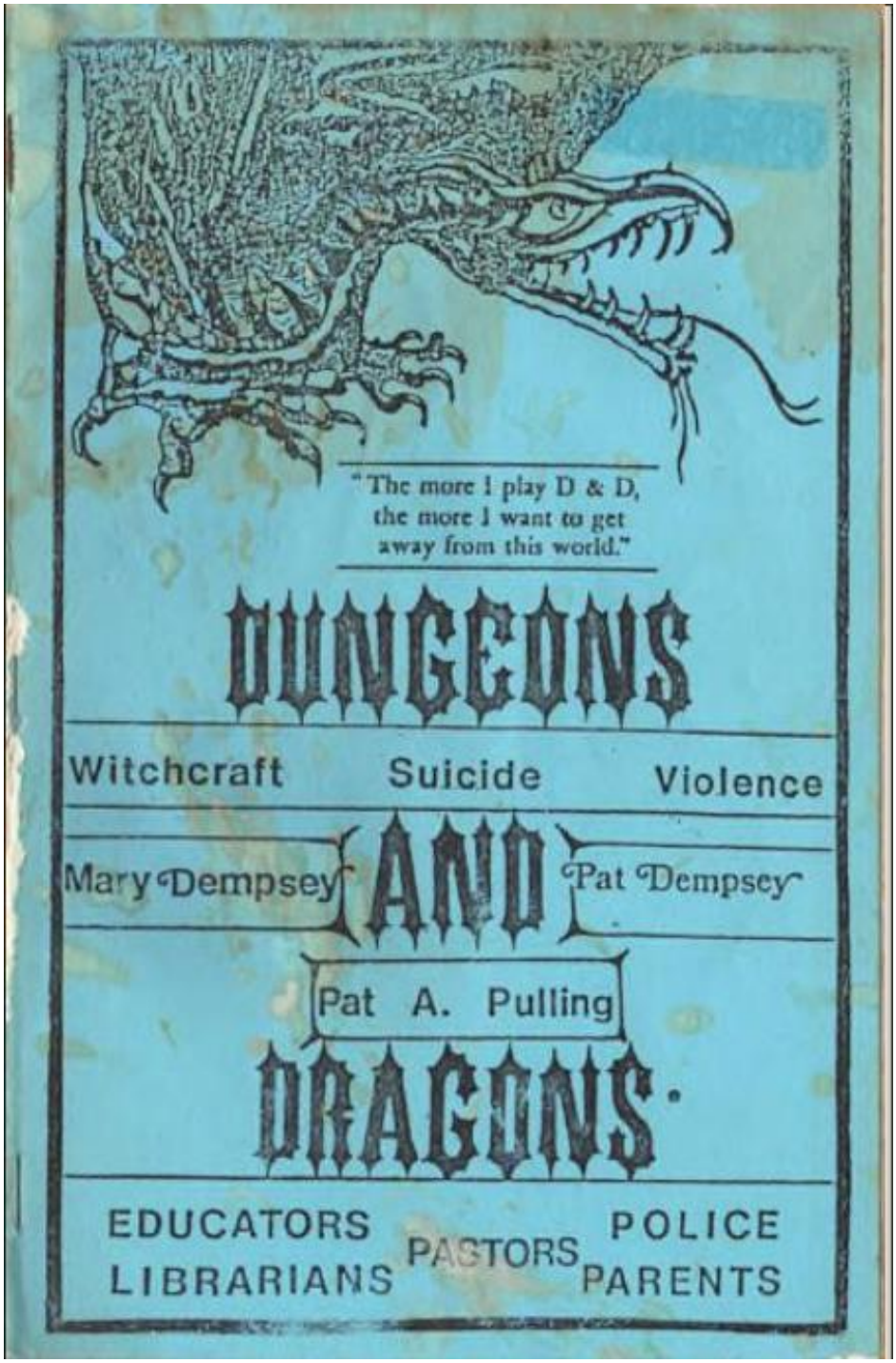

Figure 26: Mary Dempsey, Pat Dempsey, and Patricia Pulling, Dungeons and Dragons, *(Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons, publication date unknown ca. 1985). https://archive.org/details/dungeons_and_dragons-witchcraft_suicide_violence/mode/2up. (Accessed March 23, 2022). Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons was one of the many small evangelical publishing outfits which produced material warning parents about Dungeons and Dragons. Patricia attributed her son's suicide to Dungeons and Dragons, and this pamphlet argues that the game teaches witchcraft, destroys "traditional values," and a catalyst for depression.*

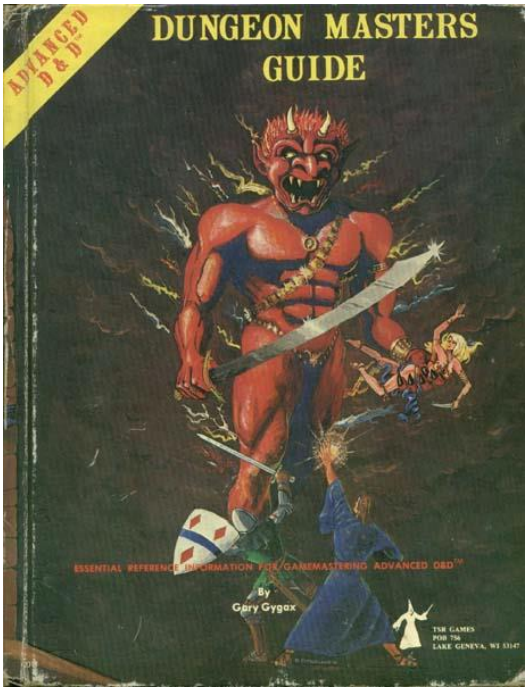

Figure 27: The controversial cover of Gary Gygax, Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Dungeon Master's Guide *(TSR, 1979). This image of a devil provoked severe criticism, alongside other similar images within the book. The updated volume did not contain such imagery and evaded mention of demons and devils.*

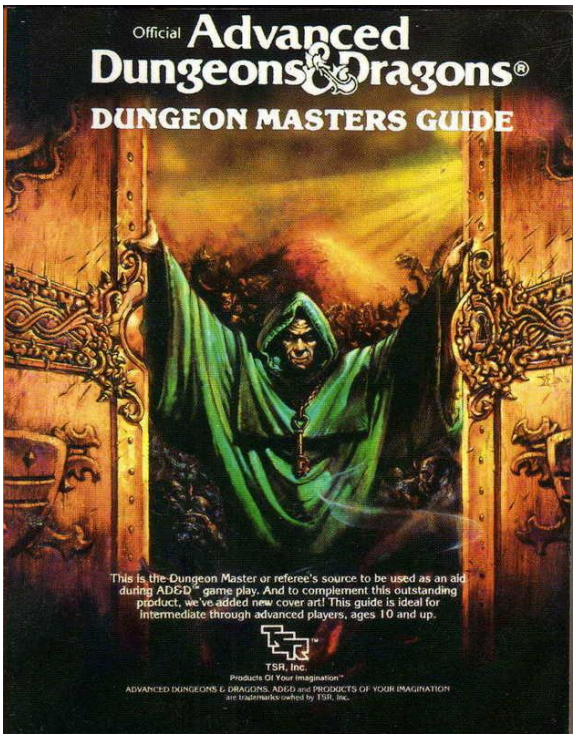

Figure 28: The 1983 replacement cover for Gary Gygax, Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Dungeon Master's Guide *(TSR, 1983).*

Joseph Laycock's book, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds,* argues that both role-playing games and religious practitioners construct a shared fantasy, "in which tragedy is rendered sensible, and if the forces of chaos cannot be annihilated, we can at least fight them as heroes."[93] In each of these fantasies, the medieval occupies different positions. This paper is primarily interested in analyzing the medievalism of those who criticized *Dungeons and Dragons* because their media established a public medievalism which has yet to be scrutinized. However, some attention should be paid to the medievalism of the game itself. While discussing the appeal of medieval roleplaying games to its players, Daniel Dayan, in his review of Gary Alan Fine's 1983 text *Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds,* provides an interesting perspective,

> "Medieval Europe as a fantasy world is not only situated in a conveniently other time and on a distant continent, but it is read (according to a now obsolete paradigm) as a dark interval, an interruption between two periods of enlightenment. The Middle Ages are perceived here as that chaos that comes when civilization has collapsed, a parenthesis open to the rule of violence (and to the imperative of using it first). This chaotic universe suggests at least a double metaphoric dimension. It allows adolescents to come to terms with their uncertainty, with the internal chaos inherent in their transitory status. It also translates- projects into a 'historical' elsewhere- the interruptive, 'liminal' character of the gaming session itself."[94]

Dayan's reading of the medievalism of *Dungeons and Dragons* through a metanarrative of the 'dark age' is only one way of understanding it. Other medieval metanarratives, particularly the medieval as the 'romantic pre-modern,' also constitute the public reception of the medieval and are likewise expressed through *Dungeons and Dragons*.[95] Laycock's call to investigate the shared fantasies of those engaged in the *Dungeons and Dragons* panic requires us to also investigate the medievalism of its critics, which starkly resembles the tradition of the Suburban Gothic as defined by Bernice M. Murphy.

The Gothic is a well-known medievalist literary genre which is often characterized in Freudian terms by the return of a repressed (or hidden) element which undermines the protagonist and imperils them.[96] The medievalism of the Gothic is too long to state here, but

[93] Joseph Laycock, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds,* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), p. xiii. Laycock claims that these attacks on *Dungeons and Dragons* originated in the Christian Right, but there is strong evidence that it began in secular news and entertainment media.

[94] Daniel Dayan, "Review Essay: Copyrighted Subcultures," *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 91 no. 5 (1986), p. 1220.

[95] David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History,* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), p. 13-16.

[96] I am particularly referring to Sigmund Freud's essay, "The Uncanny" here, where the majority of the texts he references are Gothic texts. The reader is advised to consult the following text for an overview of the

the European branch of the genre frequently utilizes medieval settings, aesthetics, and narratives in order to challenge what Kimmi Bowers considers to be,

> "the Enlightenment idea of historical progress; people were letting their minds move backward to a 'dark' time of history rather than moving forward… Indeed, the authors of Gothic novels idealized, twisted, stretched, and imagined the truth of the medieval past. They are historical novels, but historical accuracy of fact was not the primary concern of the authors.[97]

The Gothic also has a strong tradition in US American literature and media, evidenced by the works of Edgar Allen Poe, Shirley Jackson, and William Faulkner. For Murphy, the Suburban Gothic is squarely in the US American tradition of the Gothic, and,

> "is a sub-genre concerned, first and foremost, with playing upon the lingering suspicion that even the most ordinary-looking neighbourhood, or house, or family, has something to hide, and that no matter how calm or settled a place looks, it is only ever a moment away from dramatic (and generally sinister) incident.[98]

Murphy aptly describes the narrative surrounding the *Dungeons and Dragons* panic, in which a seemingly innocuous game enters a family household and could potentially produce a violent child. As I will explain later, this narrative was explicitly realized in the media coverage of James Dallas Egbert III's disappearance and suicide. This media coverage would function as an ur-text for critics of *Dungeons and Dragons*, but there were numerous other incidents during the decade in which *Dungeons and Dragons* was blamed for instigating youth violence.[99]

Murphy also briefly questions the lack of medievalist aesthetics in the US American Gothic tradition, "The imaginative appropriation of Europe's feudal past had provided many of the important props, characteristics, and settings of the genre. How could it then be adapted to suit a nation in which 'white' history went back less than 200 years?"[100] While she finds her answer in the 'newness' of suburbia, this paper identifies that the medieval also emerged in the US American Gothic tradition vis a vis the medievalist database and was used to aestheticize

genre: David Putner, *A New Companion to the Gothic*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Detailing the medievalist tradition of the gothic is outside the scope of this paper, but some recommended texts for the interested reader are: *Medievalism: A Critical History*, p. 7-8, 15-24; Dale Townsend, *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760-1840*, (Oxford, 2019); Herman Raphael, *The Medievalism of Horace Walpole*, (Loyola University, 1942).

[97] Kimmi Bowers, "Medievalism and the Gothic Novel," *Be a Beautiful Soul*, Blog, April 30, 2015. https://beabeautifulsoul.wordpress.com/2015/04/30/medievalism-and-the-gothic-novel/. (Accessed JULY 6, 2021).

[98] Bernice M. Murphy, *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture*, Hampshire and NewYork: Palgrave, 2009, p. 2

[99] For an incomplete list in an excellent primary source, see: Mary and Pat Dempsey, Pat A. Pulling, *Dungeons and Dragons: Witchcraft, Suicide, Violence*, Richmond: Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons, p. 1.

[100] *The Suburban Gothic*, p. 10.

the concern that the innocence of childhood is not a given, and that without regulation, violent media could produce a violent child.

2.1 The Satanic Panic and Dungeons and Dragons

The controversy surrounding *Dungeons and Dragons* emerged as a flashpoint amongst various moral panics of the decade; the most salient features of the panic were a renewed interest in the public presence of the occult and a concern over youth violence.[101] Stanley Cohen defines a moral panic as,

> "A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to, the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible." [102]

In this definition, it is important to note the role which mass media plays in disseminating the controversy.[103] Although there were both public and less public media (specialty evangelical programming) which expressed this controversy and furthered this medievalism, there is only a minor difference between their narratives. Public media, or media designed for public consumption, evaluated these claims against *Dungeons and Dragons* with slightly more skepticism than evangelical media and often omitted reference to the game's 'occult' elements. Evangelical arguments against *Dungeons and Dragons* unsurprisingly amplified the spiritual dangers of the game, and identified *Dungeons and Dragons* as a part of a broader effort by

[101] In various media, claims are sporadically made that the game promotes drug use, homosexuality, 'transvestitism,' and the sexual objectification of women. In the media of the time, these claims received less emphasis than concerns about Satanism and violence, but there are various poignant contemporary critiques of *Dungeons and Dragons*' misogyny. Aaron Trammel, "Misogyny and the Female Body in *Dungeons and Dragons*," *Analog Game Studies*, vol. 8 no. 2 (2014). Web. https://analoggamestudies.org/2014/10/constructing-the-female-body-in-role-playing-games/. (Accessed July 6, 2021)

[102] Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 1.

[103] Likewise, it is important to remember moral panics do not accurately represent social reality. A renewed concern on youth violence does not correlate with a significant increase in youth violence. A 2001 study on youth violence by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine which drew on data from various government sources found that while youth violence (both arrests and reporting) increased from the late 1980's to the mid 90's, such trends either represented a broader increase in violent crime amongst all age groups or resulted from "changes in police policies regarding whether to consider specific types of assault as aggravated assaults rather than simple assaults and an increasing willingness to arrest for assault." Rather than accept the moral panic as an accurate representation of social reality, a more apt question would be, 'why were youth perpetrators presented as the face of this reported increase in violent crime?' National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Juvenile Crime, Juvenile Justice*, "Patterns and Trends in Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice," (Washington: National Academies Press, 2001), p. 25- 65, esp.62-3.

Satanists to corrupt children through media.[104] Phil Phillips, author of *Turmoil in the Toybox*, worked with Greenwald to produce the 1984 *Deception of a Generation* video cassette for the evangelical media organization The Eagle's Nest with the goal of explaining, "the vast movement toward the occult within the cartoon and toy industry… which has a vast effect on the whole United States and other countries around the world…."[105]

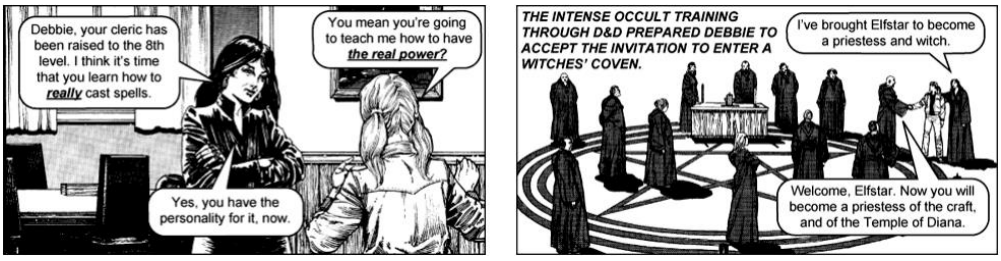

Figure 29: Jack Chick, Dark Dungeons, p. 4-5. https://www.chick.com/products/tract?stk=0046. (Accessed March 23, 2022). In this notorious comic tract, a player becomes a member of a witch's coven through their experience with Dungeons and Dragons. Her experience with Dungeons and Dragons is provides here with experience of a simulated version of real power, which her induction into the coven grants her.

Phillips and Greenwald's identification of the novel interrelation between the cartoon and toy industry is noteworthy. Mark Fowler, Ronald Reagan's 1980 appointment to chair the Federal Communications Committee, reversed recent efforts by the Action for Children's Television (ACT) to limit the frequency of advertisements during children's programming and he substantially deregulated children's television.[106] Fowler contended that regulations on children's media diminished both the First Amendment rights of broadcasters and the "'listener's rights to receive and hear suitable expression,'" and that a balanced solution would be through a free-market imperative in which "'the public's interest, then, defines the public interest' and that competition in the free, unregulated market would best identify and

[104] See particularly: William Schnoebelen, "Straight Talk on Dungeons and Dragons," *chick.com*, https://www.chick.com/Information/article?id=Straight-Talk-On-Dungeons-and-Dragons. (Accessed July 6, 2021). Schnoebelen claims to be a reformed Satanist who was consulted by the authors of *Dungeons and Dragons* in order to "make certain the rituals [in the game] were authentic." Needless to say, the authors of *Dungeons and Dragons* have denied these allegations.

[105] *Deception of a Generation*, 3:30-4:45. For Greenwald and Phillips, it was irrelevant that the protagonists in these media were often opposed to the antagonists who wielded this occult power because they were concerned that the occult was depicted in children's programming. In instances where the protagonists wielded 'occult' power against their antagonists, the pair reference Anton La Vey, a prominent Satanist at the time, who claimed that there was no distinction between 'white magic' and 'black magic,' and thus indict the protagonists in the same occultism as the antagonists. It is also very likely that *Deception* was also broadcast, but the author does not have any information on this.

[106] Fowler's approach to deregulation and the resulting controversy underscores a principal irony in Republican politics since Reagan: signaling their commitment to the cultural interests of conservative Christians while also appealing to the financial interests of market fundamentalists. The conflict between the two should be evident here. Conservative Christians, particularly evangelicals organized into Pat Robertson's Moral Majority, played a large role in the election of Reagan and many of the evangelical media organizations discussed in this paper either emerged from the leaders of the Moral Majority or established their success in its cultural wake. Unsurprisingly, perceived 'Satanists' are a more suitable antagonist for a conservative culture war than the economic policies of the president whom they elected.

serve those interests."[107] This provoked a rise of programming which critics such as the ACT referred to as "program length advertisements" or "30 minute toy commercials," in which the program functioned as advertising for the toy.[108]

Notable medievalist examples of this programming would be *He-Man: Masters of the Universe*, and *Dungeons and Dragons*; both programs feature prominently in Greenwald and Phillips' criticism of the cartoon and toy industry. While *Dungeons and Dragons* had originated as a 'toy' and was utilizing its animated series to capitalize on its popularity, *He-Man* followed the 'program length advertisement' model more closely. For both of these media properties, Phillips and Greenwald comment primarily on their troubling use of violent and 'occult' imagery, which they claim can influence a child to repeat the behaviors they see on television,

> "Phillips: I see a real trend towards what I call as the barbarization of our children, where through these violent movies and these violent cartoons, they are teaching our children that the way to handle problems is through violence."
> Greenwald: Also, the violence is helping sell cereal… and what we're really concerned about is not selling cereal, though. We're concerned about the trend towards teaching the children to have violent attitudes."[109]

Toys play an important role in their understanding of the relationship between a child's media ecosystem and their imagination, where the toys enable them to use their imagination in order to play the television show away from their screens. As Phillips says,

> "All this stuff links together. When a child watches the cartoon…they've been programmed by the cartoon to play with the toy in certain manner. So if the cartoon says the character has occult powers, when the child plays with the toy, he is going to use the toy to cast spells or do whatever the toy does in the cartoon…And then when they don't have the toys and they're on the playground, then they take on these characters and fantasy roleplaying themselves, and they imagine themselves with these occult powers."[110]

In these examples, there is a clear concern about controversial media elements ('occultism,' violence) influencing children who then actualize these elements in reality. In narrative media which criticizes *Dungeons and Dragons*, such as the film *Mazes and Monsters* (1982), this

[107] Michelle Hilmes, *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States*, Boston: Wadsworth, 2011, p. 291-293. The quotes within the quotations are derived from; Mark Fowler & Daniel L. Brenner, "A Marketplace Approach to Broadcasting. Regulation," *Texas Law Review*, vol. 60 Rev. 207, p. 207-258 (1982). The author does not have access to the latter text.

[108] John Corry, "TV View; Cartoons or Commercials," *NY Times*, October 30th, 1983, https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/30/arts/tv-view-cartoons-or-commercials.html. (Accessed July 6, 2021)

[109] *Deception of a Generation*, 1:09:55- 1:10:24.

[110] Ibid. 31:58-33:12.

narrative is realized and an actualization of violence and the occult is presented as the emergence of the medieval into the present.[111]

2.1.2 Mazes and Monsters

The film *Mazes and Monsters* was adapted from Rona Jaffe's novelized fictionalization (1981) of the disappearance of James Dallas Egbert III. Egbert's disappearance and later suicide was chronicled by private investigator William Dear in his book *The Dungeon Master: The Disappearance of James Dallas Egbert III* (1984). Dear's text was published four years after Egbert's suicide, and according to the Saturday Evening Post, "dramatically downplays any involvement that gaming might have had in his death."[112] However, both Dear's text and the media reception to it centers *Dungeons and Dragons* as a tool of escapism from reality.[113] The book comprises Dear's investigation into the disappearance and later suicide of the teenage Egbert, and it is centered around his speculation that Egbert's commitment to *Dungeons and Dragons* played a critical role in his disappearance. Dear conjectured that Egbert had descended into his university's steam tunnels in order to play *Dungeons and Dragons* in real-life, writing,

> "The tunnels seemed eerily to fit the descriptions I'd read of the dungeons where adventures took place and monsters lurked and pursued…Dallas might actually have begun to live the game, not just play it. *Dungeons and Dragons* could have absorbed him so much that his mind had slipped through the fragile barrier between reality and fantasy, and he no longer existed in the world we inhabit."[114]

[111] There are quite a few narratives which comprise this genre, but for the sake of brevity, only Mazes and Monsters will be mentioned here. Narratives from the time include: *Skullduggery*, directed by Ota Richter, (Canada: Wittman/ Richter films Inc., 1983); Jack Chick, "Dark Dungeons," *chick.com*, (Chick Publications, Unknown), https://www.chick.com/products/tract?stk=0046. (Accessed JULY 6, 2021); *Honor Thy Mother*, directed by David Greene, (USA: MCA Television, 1992). However, this genre has also seen a handful of parodies, such as Zombie Orpheus Studios' parody of Chick's *Dark Dungeons* (2014) and *Knight Chills* (1997) by Collective Development Inc.

[112] Troy Brownfield, "Disappearances and Dragons: The James Dallas Egbert III Story," *The Saturday Evening Post*, September 2, 2019, https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2019/09/disappearances-dragons-the-james-dallas-egbert-iii-story/. (Accessed July 6, 2021)

[113] Carla Hall, "Into the Dragon's Lair," *The Washington Post*, November 28, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1984/11/28/into-the-dragons-lair/b4c93daa-e50e-443c-bc65-02b4bdb28a27/. (Accessed July 6, 2021)

[114] William Dear, *The Dungeon Master: The Disappearance of James Dallas Egbert* III, Crossroad Press, 2017, ebook. There are a few things to note here; 1) Live-Action Roleplaying (LARPing) is a relatively common way to play roleplaying games, and it is not functionally different from various other roleplaying-storytelling events (murder mystery parties are the easiest comparison). However, LARPing is often discredited in popular media for blurring the lines between reality and fantasy which leads to violence. For another example of this, see the 2009 film, *The Wild Hunt*. 2) I'm omitting Dear's homophobia in my description of the event, which certainly deserves its own separate analysis in relation to the moral panics of the era.

After Dear finds Egbert, he inquires about Egbert's reasons for playing *Dungeons and Dragons* in the steam tunnels. Egbert supposedly responds,

> "'Playing the game-for real, I mean- was total escape. I mean, I could get into it. Scramble through those tunnels like a monkey. And you can use all your brains. There's nothing to constrain you except the limits of your imagination. When I played a character, I was that character. Didn't want to bring all my personal problems along with me. Its's a terrific way to escape."[115]

Regardless of Dear's intentions, his account reflected and amplified dominant news media narratives about *Dungeons and Dragons* which had been present since his disappearance. Unsurprisingly, these news accounts appropriate the medievalism of *Dungeons and Dragons* in order to indicate its strangeness. The New York Times' coverage of Egbert's disappearance in 1979 refers to Egbert's hobby as "an elaborate version of a bizarre intellectual game called *Dungeons and Dragons*...Students at Michigan State University [Egbert's university] and elsewhere reportedly have greatly elaborated on the game, donning medieval costumes and using outdoor settings to stage the contest."[116] The headline for their coverage of Egbert's suicide in 1980 continues to suggest that the game was linked to his suicide, describing the game as a, "highly complex fantasy game, [in which] players assume the roles of contrived medieval characters who oppose each other in war campaigns."[117] The continued reference to the medieval in order to describe *Dungeons and Dragons* is remarkable because it represents an attempt to understand something which is perceived as bizarre through historically familiar elements i.e. the medievalist database. Additionally, these media reports are the first to establish the association between youth violence and *Dungeons and Dragons*, which would provide this narrative as a template for other media.

[115] Ibid. I write "supposedly" because we have no other confirmation that these are Egbert's words and according to a Washington Post review of the book, Dallas' mother comments, "'Most of the things in the book are inaccurate… I just don't want to comment. It's all his [Dear's] word against mine.'" Additionally, Dallas' aunt states, "I think it's a big bluff to make [Dear] look good… It's all a publicity stunt to make him a star and get him public attention. I think he went way overboard with all his quotation marks. After all these years, I don't know how he could remember all those conversations." From "Into the Dragon's Lair."

[116] Nathaniel Sheppard Jr., "Tunnels Are Searched for Missing Student," *NY Times*, September 8, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/09/08/archives/tunnels-are-searched-for-missing-student-described-as-brilliant.html?smid=url-share. (Accessed July 6, 2021)

[117] William Robbins, "Brilliant Computer Student Dies from Gunshot Wound," *NY Times*, August 18, 1980, https://nyti.ms/3hinUFL. (Accessed July 6, 2021) The description of the game reads, "In the highly complex fantasy game, players assume the roles of contrived medieval characters who oppose each other in war campaigns."

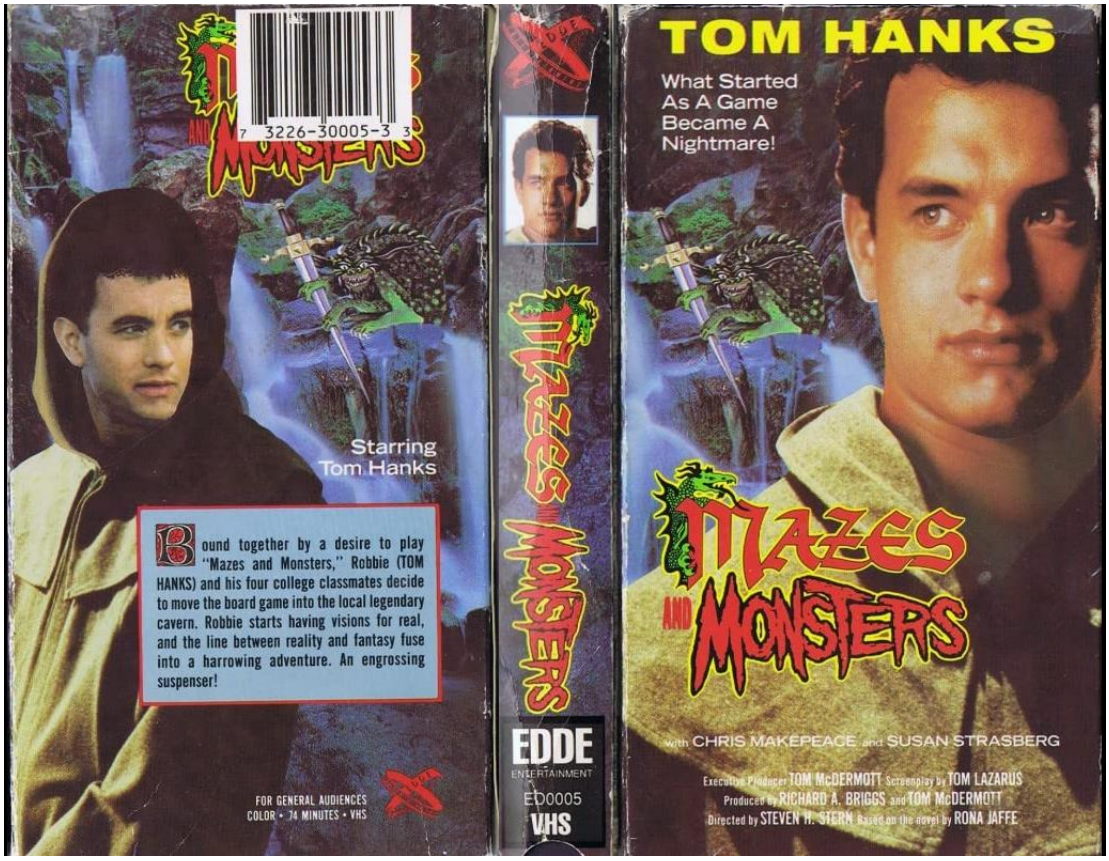

Figure 30: Video Cassette Sleeve for EDDE Entertainment's distribution of Mazes and Monsters *(1991).* Mazes and Monsters*, directed by Steven Hillard Stern, (USA: McDermott Productions, 1982).*

The film version of *Mazes and Monsters* provides a heavily fictionalized account of Egbert's disappearance. More importantly, the film iterates upon Egbert's story for entertainment purposes. The differences between Mazes and Monsters and Egbert's case are too numerous to describe, but it is worth noting that *Mazes and Monsters* relies upon the audience's familiarity with the case and intentionally subverts their expectations for which character in the film is the fictionalized Egbert. It was broadcast on CBS (Central Broadcasting Service) with an accompanying home video cassette release.[118] The film begins with police, an investigator, and a news reporter arriving at a set of cave tunnels near Grant University, where the reporter remarks that an unnamed student disappeared while playing a game of Mazes and Monsters (the film's version of *Dungeons and Dragons*), a game which the reporter describes as "a psychodrama…where these people deal with problems in their lives by acting them out, but in this case, there might be a loss of distinction between reality and fantasy."[119] The film's narrative then reverts 6 months prior to the disappearance and introduces the players who will comprise the Mazes and Monsters group. Early in the film, the character Jay Jay is presumed

[118] John J. Connor, "TV: 'Mazes and Monsters,' Fantasy," *NY Times*, December 28, 1982, https://nyti.ms/3xjohW5. (Accessed July 6, 2021)

[119] *Mazes and Monsters*, directed by Steven Hillard Stern, (USA: McDermott Productions, 1982), 1:20.

to be the fictionalized Egbert where, upon expressing suicidal ideation, he concludes that the cave tunnels would be an ideal place to commit suicide. After his Mazes and Monsters character dies, he suggests "a logical extension of the game" to his group, where they play the game in the cave tunnels except, "this time it won't be a fantasy, it really will be Mazes and Monsters."[120] Borrowing robes and armor from the theatre department, they descend into the tunnels. In the tunnels, the group's cleric, Robby (played by Tom Hanks), wanders off alone and becomes frightened. This causes his understanding of reality and fantasy to blur. He believes that he sees a fantasy monster called a Gorvill and slays it in a panic.[121]

Figure 31: Robby and his friends, dressed in their costumes, confront a mysterious skeleton in the cave. Mazes and Monsters, *38:09.*

[120] Ibid. 31:00

[121] The cleric is a common character class in *Dungeons and Dragons*. As the name suggests, they are worshippers of a god and channel their god's power into reality. The Gorvill, however, is not a monster from *Dungeons and Dragons*. As Robbie's romantic partner and fellow player, Kate, remarks, "Holy men are supposed to see things that aren't there."

After the group exits the cave, Robby does not return to reality and he continues to role-play his character. That night, he has a dream where a figure in a hooded habit encourages him to further integrate his character's monastic asceticism into his real life.[122] Their exchange concludes with the hooded figure telling Robby that he must "come to the Two Towers and be one with the Great Hall," foreshadowing the film's conclusion where Robby attempts to commit suicide by jumping off of the World Trade Center.[123] Earlier in the film, the audience learns that 3 years ago on Halloween, Robby's brother, Hall, ran away to New York and disappeared. Robby remains traumatized by this, and often dreams about searching for his brother. Because of this, it is strongly implied that *Mazes and Monsters* exploited this trauma in order to induce his break from reality by presenting a fantasy where he can be reunited with his brother.

On Halloween in the film's present, Robby leaves unannounced for New York and his friends try to find him. Jay Jay suggests that they look for him at the cloisters and cathedrals because they are "medieval." [124] In New York, Robby is attacked by two people who attempt to rob him and, believing one of them to be a Gorvill, stabs them. He then descends into the city's sewer system, which he regards as a maze (a dungeon). Here he encounters a homeless man who sarcastically refers to himself as the King of France, a statement which Robby takes literally and pays royal deference to him.[125] The conversation between the two of them proceeds lucidly, but with more medievalist misunderstandings. The homeless man believes Robby to be newly homeless and advises him to stay away from the surface where the police may capture him. Robby interprets this as advice to stay away from the subway which he believes is a dragon, but he inquires where he can find 'the Two Towers.' The homeless man obliges him and directs him to the World Trade Center. When Robby arrives at the towers, the audience is presented with a vertical panning shot from street level to the top of the two towers, while a stark neo-gothic spire inhabits the space between them. He travels to the roof where his friends intercept him and use the rules of the game in order to persuade him not to jump. This causes Robby to realize that the game is not reality, and he briefly returns to reality.

[122] A habit is the name given to robes worn by Christian monastics and they often feature prominently in medievalist aesthetics. Also, these religious behaviors seem to fit a popular understanding of the behavior of Christian monastics: abstinence, charity, and the performance of religious rituals. These behaviors are dismissed by his friends as, "just role-playing his character."

[123] Robby devises a map of the World Trade Center which resembles a dungeon map used for the game. The 'two towers' is also a reference to the title of J.R.R. Tolkein's second book in *The Lord of the Rings*.

[124] Ibid. 1:26:55

[125] The maze here is obviously meant to be understood as a dungeon. Likewise, it should be stated that sarcastically remarking that one is "the King of France" expresses disbelief in the other's stated identity.

However, 3 months later, Robby has returned to live with his parents and his friends visit him, only to discover that he tragically continues to believe that he is his character.

In *Mazes and Monsters*, we can see that a foundational narrative of the *Dungeons and Dragons* panic utilized a very concentrated expression of public medievalism in order to express the blurring between reality and fantasy. References to the medieval emerge alongside the blurring between reality and fantasy, leading to violence. This medieval is not explicitly expressed in the historical sense, but like the blurring between reality and fantasy, the distinction between the medieval and fantasy are blurred and positioned as a dangerous alternative to reality. This begins when the characters bring the world of Mazes and Monsters into reality through live-action roleplaying in medievalist garments and it is cemented when Robby's violent hallucination (attacking the imaginary Gorvill) proliferates into a medievalist asceticism. Because his participation in the live-action game brought fantasy into reality (like the child on the playground without their toy), the game exploited his existing trauma in order to change him. Anti-social and violent episodes follow from this as references to the medieval increase, often serving to indicate the depth of Robby's delusion.

Robby's character class, the cleric, is a remarkable choice that underscores the religious anxieties of the era. It demonstrates concern about the deception inherent in violent medievalist media and how it replaces the player's understanding of reality with a false reality. While pretending to be a priest, he is led down a dark and dangerous path. His return to reality accompanies the shedding of his priestly character, but this character and his false reality eventually return. The film's concern with religious aesthetics in medievalist media is a concern about a false representation of reality that comes in a religious form. It is fundamentally derivative from the satanic panic because it is concerned with the ability of false religious messages in children's media that can provoke violence.

In conclusion, an understanding of the medievalism of the *Dungeons and Dragons* panic requires an understanding of the discourses which were critical of the game as an example of broader trends in children's media. This medieval is expressed as a fantasy world which corrupts children, impelling them towards violence and the occult. This occurs through the media, and situates parents as the guardians of their children by advocating that they regulate their children's media consumption. While *Mazes and Monsters* is certainly not the only media which expressed this medievalism, it demonstrates that this medievalism had a position in both evangelical and mass media.

2.2 Conclusion

Shifts in the public medievalism, particularly as it relates to the depiction of the medievalist content in children's media, became a flashpoint for broader issues related to violence. As *Dungeons and Dragons* became an important dimension through which the Satanic Panic was aestheticized, public medievalism was colored by the panic. As the next chapter will argue, this rippled across all aspects of North American medievalist media directed at children, but discrete evidence of this shift in medievalism can be found in the localization of Japanese video games during this era. This would define aspects of Japanese-North American video game localizations which remain to this day, even though the panic has faded. Most notably, this would result in the removal of database elements which included explicit reference to Christian imagery and themes. Much like Gary Gygax would remove explicit references to Christianity for the next edition of *Dungeons and Dragons*, Nintendo of America would remove elements of Christianity from their games which were localized to North America. The goals were ultimately the same: to evade controversy by presenting a medievalism which would be more broadly acceptable to (and thus more easily consumed by) a North American audience. These localizations would become the standard for localizations beyond North America and represent a defining moment in the globalization of video game medievalism.

Chapter 3: '…And Back Again:' The North American Localization of Japanese Medievalist Games from the 1980's

Concluding this paper, this chapter will provide a descriptivist account of the North American localization of the 5 games mentioned in the first chapter of this paper: *Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord* (the NES version), *Final Fantasy, Dragon Quest, Dragon Quest III,* and *The Legend of Zelda*. These localizations are presented comparatively to their originals, for which the reader is encouraged to consult sub-chapter 1 of chapter 1. Likewise, given space constraints, the reader is encouraged to consult sub-chapter 2 of chapter 1 for an overview of how race was handled in North American localizations. For the purposes of symmetry within the paper, this chapter will primarily concern itself with topics related to religion, given that chapter 2 strictly concerns itself with this topic.[126]

3.1 Introduction

Overwhelmingly, the North American localization of the games listed in the 1st chapter of this paper were performed in order to reconcile the differences between the two medievalist databases of North America and Japan by replacing unique and controversial elements of the Japanese medieval database with aspects from the more familiar and less controversial North American database. As mentioned in the second chapter, there was considerable controversy surrounding *Dungeons and Dragons* during the 1980's, the central part of the Famicom/Nintendo Entertainment System's lifespan. In this controversy, critics of the game's violent nature drew from the medievalist database utilized by *Dungeons and Dragons* in order to illustrate their criticism. Central to this was the position of religion within the game, and likewise, the representation of religion within their critiques. Their critiques had a public dimension, often being distributed through mass media and with calls towards the public guardians of children, "Educators, Librarians, Pastors, Police, Parents," (to cite Patricia Pulling's *Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons* pamphlet) to protect their children against the harmful influence of these games. This harmful influence was often represented as a form

[126] The author is forced to admit that, during the planning stage for this paper, race was more deeply integrated into the analysis of this paper; it is the author's hope that a more professional publication of this work will expand on the content provided in 1.2.2 'YOU': Whiteness, Medieval Mukokuseki, and the Japanese Player.

of religious indoctrination which led to violence. As seen in *Mazes and Monsters*, Robby believes that he is following the words of his god, but this god is the product of his own delusions and he is led into violence and attempted suicide. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is notable that Robby's priest costume aesthetically resembles a monk's habit, even though the god who commands him is not the Christian God. Thus, we can find the central point of concern in the writings of these critics: that these games are a formative component of the child's social and religious upbringing and, likewise, will lead them into anti-social behaviors which need to be corrected through a return to the authoritative public guardians of children. In this light, religious elements in these games which aesthetically resemble Christianity are uncanny, and they must be removed in order for the return of legitimate public authority over childhood.

Thus, this tension between the representation of Christianity within these games and its representation by the critics of these games is resolved through the removal of explicit Christian imagery in these games by Nintendo of America. As mentioned in the introduction. Nintendo of America was responsible certifying any games released on the Nintendo Entertainment System, including the localization of games produced in the Japan technoregion. Nintendo of America reconciled the contradictions between these games and the public medievalism of North America by attempting to integrate their games into the North American market through making their games appear to be "culturally odorless," to use Iwabuchi's term.[127] This is not meant to imply that these games did not have 'occultic' or similarly controversial religious imagery, but rather, that they utilized this imagery in a manner which was consistent with the manner that North American medievalist media was adapting their representation of religion to the satanic panic. These Japanese games may receive criticism for their representation of occultic imagery, but their representation of occultic imagery would be indistinguishable from medievalist games produced in North America; they would be identified as a domestic commodity.

In *Superhuman Japan: Knowledge, Nation, and Culture in US-Japan Relations*, Marie Thorsten discusses the complex public discourse in the United States about the rapid growth of the Japanese economy during the 1980's.[128] Many US Americans became interpellated into this discourse as consumers of Japanese products: particularly automobiles

[127] Iwabuchi, 24-35. See 1.2.2 'YOU': Whiteness, Medieval Mukokuseki, and the Japanese Player

[128] Thorsten, "America's Superhuman Japan: From *Rising Sun* to globalization rising," *America's Superhuman Japan*, p.21-50.

and consumer electronics such as the Nintendo Entertainment System.[129] Thorsten says that this discourse often manifested itself as, "economic populist nationalism…synthesizing into a singular totality Japan, Inc. as a singular corporate nation-state… a realm of danger that legitimates the security responses of the [US American] state."[130] Even though the Reagan government stressed its neo-liberal vision of a world of free trade as a mutually prosperous world, they took action to limit the quantity of Japanese imports. In a New York Times article from 1987 titled "President Imposes Tariffs on Imports Against Japanese," the author describes President Reagan's efforts to, "'enforce the principles of free and fair trade. '"[131] The article describes the President's intention to levy a 100% tariff on "four main products: portable and desktop computers that process 16 bits of information or more; color televisions 18 to 20 inches in screen size, and a few types of power hand tools."[132] Notably absent from this list are criteria which would place the Nintendo Entertainment System, an 8-bit home gaming console, under these tariffs. The article also expresses concern at the Japanese producer's 'victory' in the semi-conductor (a critical chip for consumer electronics of the time) market,

> "'The health and vitality of the U.S. semiconductor industry is essential to America's future competitiveness,' Mr. Reagan said. 'We cannot allow it to be jeopardized by unfair trading practices [i.e. Japanese producers selling chips at below market value].' Chips, the tiny slivers of silicon that are the essence of computers and other electronic products, are considered vital to national security.
> There has been a rising consensus in the Government that if there was ever a case for protecting an American industry, this was it.
> The United States, after losing its dominance in steel and automobiles, is still clearly ahead in computers. The fear in Washington is that if the nation lost this advantage, other large American industries - such as telecommunications and military electronics - would be crippled."[133]

In this environment, it is understandable that localizers of Japanese consumer technology would seek to impart a degree of 'cultural odorlessness' on their work in order to escape any controversy which might be associated with their commodities. Interestingly, this would maximize the success of the Japanese 8-bit home consoles (and their US American distributors) currently on the US American market because there was no US American competitor in this market.[134] Localizing software for these home consoles would not only remove any 'Japanese-

[129] Andrew McKevitt, *Consuming Japan: Popular Culture and the Globalizing of 1980's America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 2-5, 15-18.

[130] Thorsten, 23-4.

[131] Gerald M. Boyd, "President Imposes Tariff on Imports Against Japanese," *NY Times*, April 18, 1987, https://nyti.ms/3a2noeq. (Accessed June 29, 2022)

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

[134] There would be no console from a US American competitor in the home console market until Microsoft's Xbox, affectionately titled *Project Midway* during development, in reference to the 1942 naval battle which began US America's entrance into the Asia-Pacific theatre.

ness' from the product, but would also adopt characteristics which would mark the commodity as originating from the territory into which it is localized. The author argues that the imported Japanese hyperreal European medievalist tradition became the site of localization due to both this 'economic populist nationalism," and the satanic panic. The result was a newly globalized medievalism which was derived from this Japanese tradition, but also held database aspects of the North American tradition.

3.2 Another Transformation of Christianity

Despite the relatively simplistic claim above, the localization of Japanese medievalist games were not uniform. However, there were some patterns: 1) Christian iconography at churches were replaced or removed 2) narrative uses of Christianity were secularized . For information about the localization of box artwork and the replacement of Japanese with North American fantasy art, see 1.2.2

3.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, *NES*

(For the Famicom version, see 1.1.2.1 Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, Famicom.)
(For the Apple II version, see 1.1.1 Wizardry and the Transfer of Christianity in Medievalist Fantasy)

Once again, Wizardry provides the best example of the trends, but also has some unique aspects. The names of the classes with explicit religious referents have been changed both from the original (Anglophone) computer and Japanese Famicom release. The Priest is now the Cleric, and the Bishop is now the Wizard; crosses have been removed from all illustrations. Curiously, the art in the manual bears a striking resemblance to miniatures in Western and Central European medieval manuscripts. For example, the Lord is depicted with halo behind him, similar to the original manual for the Apple II (See Fig. 3), but this halo is starkly reminiscent of those accorded to saints (see Fig. 32). Additionally, the artist seems to be aware of the method of representing space, particularly 3-dimensional space, in medieval manuscripts (see Fig. 33).

Lord

A combination of Fighter and Cleric. They have the hit points and abilities of Fighters, but at the fourth level of ability they gain the ability to cast Cleric spells and to dispel. They can wear most Fighter armor and use most Fighter weapons. Lords must have at least 15 strength, 12 I.Q., 12 piety, 15 vitality, 14 agility and 15 luck.

Figure 32: Lord, Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord Manual, 1990, p. 21.

Rest and Relaxation at The Adventurer's Inn

When your characters return from the dungeon, they will often be hurt from fighting the monsters, and the spell casters' power may be weakened. Visiting the Adventurer's Inn will cure these ailments. For a fee, your party members can recover their health (this can also be done by magical means in Camp), and for free, your spell casters will gain back their magic points. Additionally, if your characters have earned enough experience points, they may gain an experience level.

Resurrection and Cure at The Temple of Cant

A character may expire, become paralyzed or petrified during an adventure. Bring these injured characters to the Temple for curing or resurrection.

Figure 33: Representations of Space, Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord Manual, 1990, p. 9.

3.2.2 Final Fantasy, *NES*

(For the Famicom version, see 1.1.2.2 Final Fantasy, Famicom)

In *Final Fantasy*, the church has been replaced by the clinic; the cross above the door replaced by a heart (see Fig. 34 and 9). Likewise, inside the clinic, the priest's mitre has been removed (see Fig. 34 and 10). The crosses in Bahamut's lair have been replaced with candelabras (see Fig 35 and 11). Chaos has remained unchanged.

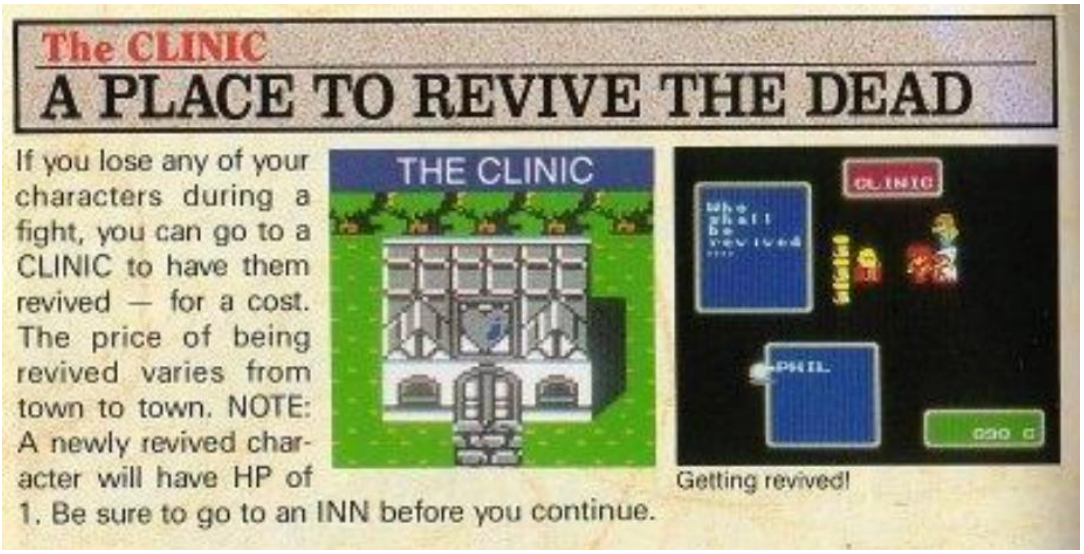

Figure 34: The Clinic: A Place to Revive the Dead, Final Fantasy Manual, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1990.

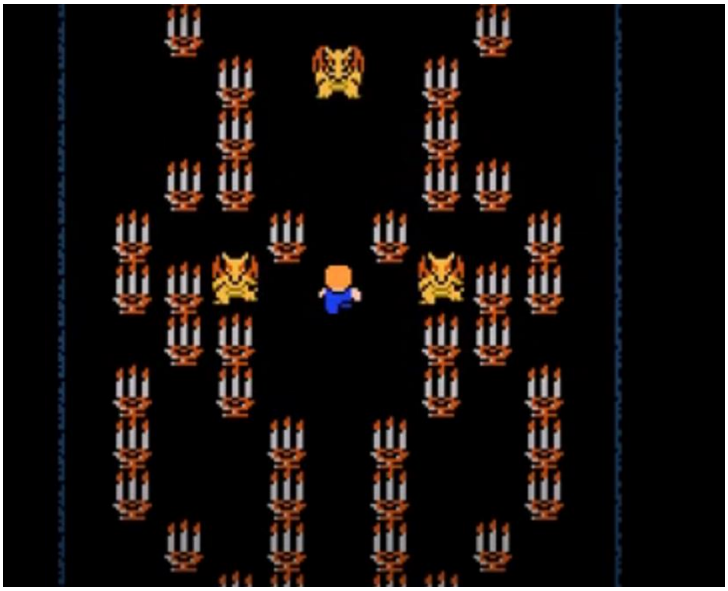

Figure 35: Bahamut's Lair, Final Fantasy, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1990.

3.2.3 The Legend of Zelda, *NES*

(For the Famicom version, see 1.1.2.3 The Legend of Zelda, Famicom)

In *The Legend of Zelda*, none of the art appears to be changed from the manual. The only major change is that the Bible has been renamed to the 'Magic Book.'

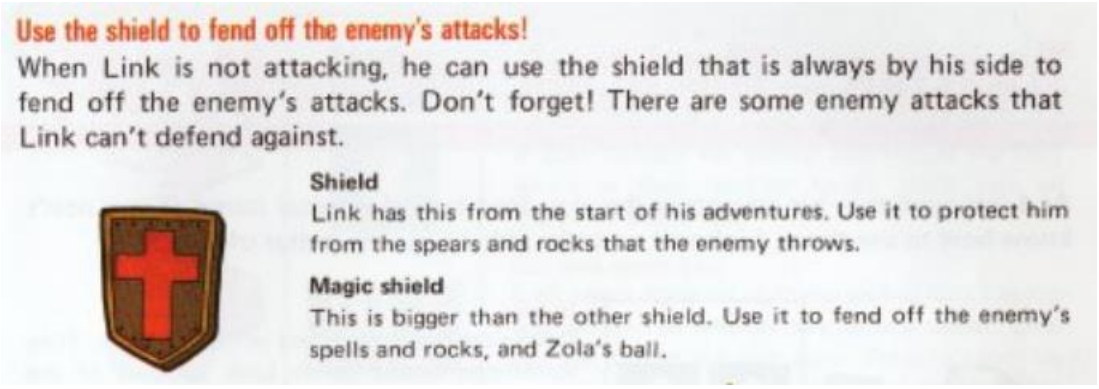

Figure 36: Shield, Legend of Zelda Manual, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1987, p. 20.

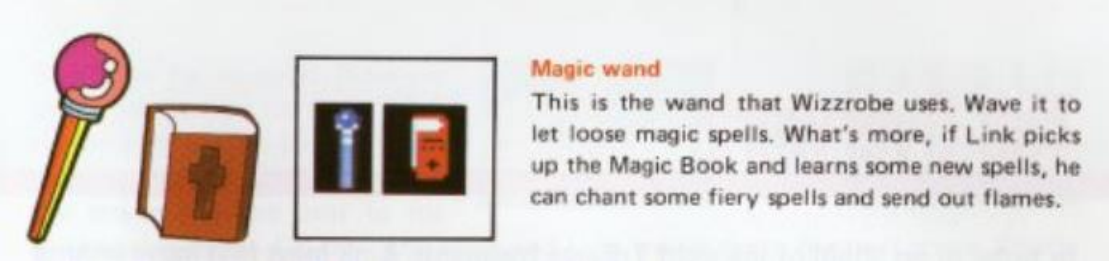

Figure 37: Magic Wand and Magic Book, Legend of Zelda Manual, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1987, p.26.

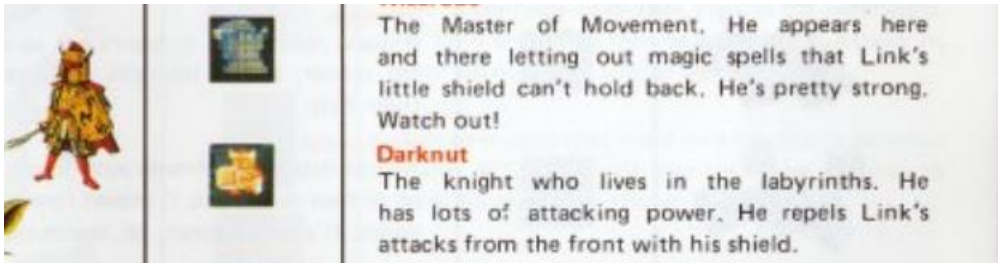

Figure 38: Darknut, Legend of Zelda Manual, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1987, p. 35.

3.2.4 Dragon Warrior and Dragon Warrior III, *NES*

(For the Famicom version of *Dragon Quest*, see 1.1.2.4 Dragon Quest, Famicom)
(For the Famicom version of *Dragon Quest III*, see 1.1.3 Dragon Quest III, Japan, and Missionaries)

Dragon Warrior is the localized title of the games in the *Dragon Quest* series for the Famicom and Super Famicom. In the first game, the ending screen of the game has had the text completely changed, notably to remove direct reference to God (see Fig. 39 and 16). The language of the ending screen (and of the game in general) is deeply reminiscent of the

language in the King James Bible, likely functioning as an aspect of the medievalist database to indicate to the antiquated setting of the game. It is also worth noting that the Japanese version of the game often uses older language as well, such as ぬし 「主」 and なんじ 「汝」.

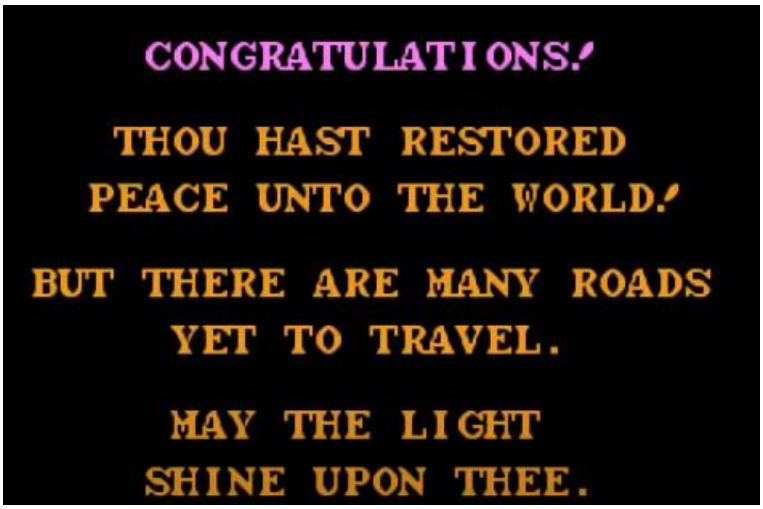

Figure 39: Ending Screen, Dragon Warrior, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1989.

Dragon Quest III has had many aspects changed. As is to be expected, the hat of the missionary has been removed alongside his explicit references to God (see Fig 40 and 42). Speaking to him after defeating Orochi shows the difficulty in translation: removing the explicit reference to God, utilizing the antiquated language, and translating the meaning of the original sentence (see Fig. 43).

Figure 40: Speaking to the Missionary during the Day before Defeating Orochi, Dragon Warrior, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1989.

Figure 41: Himiko, Dragon Warrior, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1989.

Figure 42: Speaking to the Missionary during the Night before Defeating Orochi, Dragon Warrior, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1989.

Figure 43: Speaking to the Missionary after Defeating Orochi, Dragon Warrior, Nintendo Entertainment System, 1989.

3.3 Conclusion

From the games depicted here, we can see the consistent removal of a handful of elements related to religion. Particularly, explicit references to God or Christianity are removed from the game in addition to crosses that were directly related to religious elements in the narrative. We can also see this extend to depictions of religion in Jipang, where the game attempts to avoid explicit reference to religion entirely. Coupled with the changes to box art mentioned in 1.2, the localization of the games in this chapter constitutes a further hybridized medievalism, one which relies on structural and narrative database elements derived from Japan and with certain elements, particularly religion, changed to better reflect developing trends in the North American database. This was done in order to evade the appearance that these games were anything other than North American products. The result was a medievalism that would eventually be localized to Europe in the coming years because, as mentioned previously, the North American localization often served as the basis for European localizations. This produced a rapidly globalizing medievalism, a cultural product affected by the economic factors of globalization, and evidence of an emergent global medievalism in the public sphere.

Conclusion

This paper looks at an oft-forgotten era in gaming history in order to provide the fundament for a historically rooted approach to video game medievalism. Looking at the transfers of medievalist Nintendo video games between Japan and North America in the 1980's, this paper showcases how political and social controversy in North America resulted in the creation of an emergent global medievalism: one which utilized metanarrative elements in its narrative, drew its structure and narrative from Japan, and was deeply influenced by North American medievalist works. The first chapter analyses the creation of these games in Japan and notes their similarities and differences from *Wizardry*, a popular roleplaying game at the time. The second chapter analyses the state of public medievalism in the United States, the most economically influential member of the North American technoregion, in order to discuss the Satanic Panic and the controversy surrounding the representation of religion in medievalist media like *Dungeons and Dragons*. The final chapter provides a brief explanation of the economic relations between the United States and Japan during the latter half of the 1980's and an explanation of the content changes that occurred during localization in the games discussed in chapter 1. These North American localizations would eventually serve as the basis for their European localizations, and alongside the developing global video game industry, formed the basis for a new form of global medievalism.

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Dragon Warrior III. NES. Video Game. 1992; Enix, Nintendo.
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Final Fantasy. NES. Video Game. 1990; Square, Nintendo.
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