

## The long and the short: it's not about game localization

So every few months, people try to bring up the whole...non-debate of “localization of NEO:TWEWY and did it impact its sales” (note: it did not, we'll discuss that in a later post), or try to claim NEO:TWEWY had “excessively woke translation” (it did not, we'll discuss that too in a later post), but...

Here's the thing.

Literally almost *nobody* who keeps bringing this up (about NEO:TWEWY, or about *any other game or anime localized since about the year 2008 onward*) is legitimately trying to debate Ethics In Video Game Localization.

They very much *are* pushing an agenda, but it's not a very nice one.

If you look at user profiles and post history of a good 95% of the people who are actually pushing that NEO:TWEWY's localization was “woke”, or that it's part of some nebulous pattern of Game Companies Making Games Woke When They Never Were In Japan, or the like...

If you look at user profiles and post history of those folks, you start seeing a *lot* of extremely blatant racism, and misogyny, and anti-LGBTQIA posting, and a whole lot more evidence that these are just genuinely *terrible* people who are pushing this.

Almost like...their agenda wasn't about game translation at all.

***Because it isn't.***

Pretty much to sum it up very quickly: The chuds who keep bringing up NEO:TWEWY's supposedly “woke localization” are trying to drag us all into what is at least the third iteration (if not the fourth or fifth) of GamerGate. Yes, literally.

(Update: I've done [a substantial addendum on this](#) that gives some more backstory on the history of this third-and-onwards wave of GamerGate bullshit, which is worth educational reading, but isn't necessary to grasp the main point.)

### A minor history

Yes, you also read it right that I said this was at least the *third* iteration of this GamerGate incel crap, and not kidding there either—this is literally a far-right campaign (which started out on certain image and shitposting boards I won't mention) that has been going on in some flavor or other for the better part of *two decades* and has arguably turned a lot of gamer culture (especially in the US) very, very toxic.

So the brief summary:

**GamerGate 1.0:** Incel he-man woman-hater's club (and generally a group that's been into FPS games, and absorbed a lot of "jock culture") is Really Unhappy that women are getting into games and game journalism, and that there's actually starting to be treatment of games as literature (and some writers are pointing out that historically there *have* been harmful tropes about women and other minorities in video games, and through an accident of at least one of the female journalists having been an ex of another game journalist—basically accused women involved in gaming and gaming journalism of having fucked their ways into careers).

This led to a lot of doxxing, and death threats, and actually eventually led to a *de facto* split in the Shitposting Imageboard Community (when the GamerGaters *finally* exhausted the patience of even 4chan's owners, were shown the door, and promptly formed 8chan (now 8kun) where the racism and misogyny was turned up to eleven).

**GameGate 2.0 (*Attack of the Rabid Puppies*):** The same crew of incel he-man woman-haters (who at this point had founded multiple sub-Reddits, as well as other he-man woman-haters clubs, and thanks to the wonder of a LOT of far-right shit flocking to both of the 'chans AND to Reddit watering holes you now had a lot of explicit racism and anti-Semitic shit in the mix too) discovered that the Hugo Awards—which are pretty much *THE* major science-fiction and fantasy book awards, it is a HUGE thing to get a Hugo Award for a book—were giving a LOT of Hugo Awards out for women and minority writers (including people from Southeast Asia, from sub-Saharan Africa, and the like who were doing WONDERFUL jobs of incorporating their cultures into sci-fi and fantasy works).

This made those chuds exceptionally *salty*, because they saw science fiction and fantasy writing a White Manly Men's Domain...and so they took advantage of the fact the Hugo Awards is voted on by members of a major science fiction and fantasy appreciation society that has open membership, and they joined en masse specifically to *bomb the vote of the Hugo Awards to make sure that a woman or a person of color never got in again*.

And so they submitted a bunch of sci-fi and fantasy writers who were known to be friendly to the alt-right, and a lot of 50's science fiction pulp novels...and the works of one Chuck Tingle, a pseudonymous writer (or possibly collective of writers) who...had a bit of a career on Amazon writing spicy novels about risque liaisons with hyperintelligent dinosaurs and Sasquatch.

And yes, they pretty much freely admitted that their goal was to wreck this science fiction and fantasy awards program, because women and people of color participating was making it too *unfriendly* for white males and too *woke* and sci-fi had somehow forgotten its ROOTS of Space Captains Killing All The Suspiciously Swarthy Alien Savages And Having Lots Of Sex With Green Space Women.

The rest of the members of this sci-fi society actually fought back, and for a few years the Hugo Awards actually *refused to award entire categories* rather than let the chuds win.

Which leads us to...

**GamerGate 3.0** (*you are here*): So, after the Rabid Puppies (aka GamerGate 2.0) had been shown the door, the same lovely group of chuds started ginning up a whole new controversy to push far-right toxicity and bullshit; first attempting to go after Western comic books and later Star Wars fandom (claiming “woke writing ruined it and this is why it’s collapsing”<sup>1</sup>)...and then proceeded to (in light of what can be best described as “#MeToo reaches the anime industry”) start targeting localization in general, and major localization companies (Funi in particular) in what was Another Manufactured Controversy.

Specifically, the chuds started claiming that pretty much Subtitling And Translation Were Better In the 80s and 90s And Early 2000s When Animes Included Obligatory Onsen Scenes As Fanservice, and alleging (falsely) that apparently *the entire international localization industry was secretly out to actually make things more progressive than they actually were* rather than actually, uh, intellectually deal honestly with trends in both localization *and* in Japanese culture.

So, yes, Japanese culture *is* a bit more conservative than the US (outside of very conservative parts of the US like the Southeast or Utah) overall, but—just like in the US—*urban* Japan and *rural* Japan are legitimately different, just like *urban* America and *rural* America and along pretty much the same rough political and social axes.

People who have lived in urban Japan, and who have ventured out of Akibahara or outside their jobs, and especially people who have lived in Japan for a while, *will* tell you that social mores on things like sexual roles, on things like acceptance of LGBTQIA people, on progressive politics generally, are changing a fair amount. People who’ve lived in, say, Shibuya and have actually interacted with street culture there know there is a *strong* anti-commercialist, anti-capitalist (oh noes!) vibe to the street art community, such that Banksy is seen as a horrible commercial sell-out. There’s as much international, if occasionally “Japanified”, food as ramen houses and izayakas nowadays. There’s even starting to be actual discussions (which is groundbreaking, to be honest) on respectful treatment of Okinawan and Ainu culture as distinct from mainland Japanese culture, even if it’s not to the point of Japan recognizing them as legitimate First Nations yet.

The chuds who are pushing the false “translation controversies” have...a very different view of Japan that is about as similar to actual Japanese culture as “Leave It To Beaver” would be to US suburban culture in a midwestern Chicago suburb in 2015...which is to say:

The chuds basically think of Japan as a very idealized far-right ethnostate (of the sort they would very, very much like to do for White Manly Men) where Men are Men And Men Kick A Lot Of Ass Of Weakling Countries, Women are Very Submissive Waifus Who Exist For Fixing Food And Fucking And Most Certainly Do Not Work Outside The Home Living Their Own Lives, the

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, this was literally the stuff they pulled all the way back in the Rabid Puppies era, and...should sound very familiar to the TWEWY fandom. The arguments never change, just the targets.

catgirls are afraid, and the gay men stay in the closet and lesbians only exist for fanservice and other non-cis, non-het people just *don't exist at all*.

(Which—as much as they'd badly want it to be—this is *not* how modern Japan is in the cities. I will be the first to admit Japan does have real social issues but...it's not 1935 over there, FFS.)

So, between this, and between game companies and anime companies *literally getting better at localization* (and we'll get into this, too!), and *Japanese culture as well as American culture actually becoming more sensitive to perceptions*, and translation (and not just in terms of fandom!<sup>2</sup>) actually now taking an emphasis on translating *cultural* contexts as well as *lexical* content specifically so things do *not* get lost in translation...

Well, a lot of chuds (who apparently grew up on badly translated anime and manga and video games, and who are literally dredging up what is functionally a 70-year-old argument on how things should be translated that started in *religious circles* to...try to attack literally *any* translation or localization that they see as remotely progressive, or messes with their whole internal mental image of Japan as a Far-Right Ethnostate Where Men Are Men.

And it's worthy to note here that the particular animes, and video games, and subgenres of anime and video games that have been pretty consistently attacked are...not those that are known for mistranslations, but are *almost to a one specifically storytelling forms that are meant to be broadly accessible to both men and women and which tell stories that actually speak of other possibilities*.

Which means that JRPGs and animes that have “non-traditionally-studly” male or female protagonists have been attacked, and...I am still convinced that TWEWY has been *particularly* targeted because (in general) the TWEWY fandom is widely perceived as being unusually diverse, unusually progressive, and unusually LGBTQIA-leaning even compared to other JRPG fandoms.

## So, what to do?

So now you're wondering what the hell to do about these sorts.

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<sup>2</sup> Yes, seriously. A lot of work is done now for cultural context in modern translations/localizations specifically to avoid the age-old problem of “things being lost in translation”—things like idioms, or cultural references that are in one culture but not another, or even stuff like goroawase, being brought across appropriately. And yes, this comes up in surprising areas—one of *the* huge debates for the past 70 years or so has been with this in *Bible translations* especially as new texts like the Dead Sea Scrolls have come up, with at least one school (largely by mainline churches) siding with translations that incorporate cultural context in translation choices and in concordances on Levantine culture when the books were written, and “literalists” (who are generally from fundamentalist churches) claiming taking cultural context into account is literally a form of low-level blasphemy and “putting words in God's mouth”. So no, this isn't just us, far from it.

First off: Don't engage. They're not here to actually engage in honest debate; they're here to drag you into the mud, and much like mud wrestling a pig, all it does is get you both dirty and the pig likes it.

What I actually recommend largely depends on whether you're over or under 18 and your general tolerance for upsetting material.

*Under 18:* I strongly recommend just blocking. (This also applies if you don't want to worry about abuse reports or wish not to be exposed to racist/misogynist/risque material.)

*Over 18:* As I noted before, something like 95% of the chuds pushing this manufactured drama turn out to have some other extreme nastiness in their post history. IF you are running into the 5% that genuinely don't know this is manufactured drama, feel free to let them know (and point them here).

For the rest (the other 95% that you get smacked in the face with the racism and misogyny and homophobia on main), I've had the best success so far with reporting for disinformation on Twitter (and other social media have their own reporting mechanisms for disinformation/misinformation, and I encourage their use).

If there's a place to select other posts pushing racism/sexism/anti-LGBTQIA stuff, select those too, and if there is a comment section explain that this is part of an "incel" campaign that's functionally a continuation of GamerGate (and feel free to link here if you think it'd be helpful to mods).

Then report and block. (You're not missing much; they're just chuds wanting to leave a turd in the punch bowl.)

## A final note

If I thought these chuds had even so much as watched a Let's Play, I'd also be convinced they were targeting TWEWY as a franchise because of *the actual message of the franchise as a whole*. "The world ends with you. If you want to enjoy life, expand your world. You gotta push your horizons out as far as they'll go", as Sanae Hanekoma himself put it; also, not only does it *end* with you, but the world *begins* with you (as everyone can confirm who's finished either TWEWY or NEO), which is to say...the worlds of all of us, they start and stop exactly as far as we expand our horizons and push ourselves...and the people who are pushing this bogosity live in very, very small worlds indeed and are pushing very, very hard to put the rest of us in their terribly small worlds.

Which is, really, the sad part of all this, but...as Neku and Rindo both could tell you, you can't expand their worlds for them. That's something they have to do for themselves in the end.