

Shaggy Sherlock in Shizuoka:

Notes on Holmes as Hound in Miyazaki's TV *Anime*

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Introduction

Nearly a century after Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional character Sherlock Holmes appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, an animated cartoon series, *Meitantei Holmes* (literally, *Famous Detective Sherlock Holmes*, but known in English as *Sherlock Hound*), appeared on Japanese TV, featuring an anthropomorphic canine detective. Jointly produced by Tokyo Movie Shin Corporation and Italy's RAI Internazionale, *Meitantei Holmes* was broadcast in Japan from November 6, 1984, to May 20, 1985. The first six episodes, completed in 1982 before a legal dispute with the Conan Doyle estate delayed broadcast, were directed by Hayao Miyazaki (1941-), now an internationally acclaimed *manga* artist and writer-director of Japanese feature-length *anime*. Characters in Japanese *anime* and *manga* have been identified as key drivers in bringing about a new order in millennial capitalism characterized by a decline in U.S. cultural hegemony and an increased fragmentation of global powers (Allison, 2006). *Anime* is the quintessential Japanese genre, yet "fundamentally different" (Price, 2001, p. 166) from Disney animation. Miyazaki's work in bringing *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Spirited Away* to Western markets has attracted attention of scholars.

Meitantei Holmes represents Miyazaki's final TV work before the 1984 *Kaze no Tani no Naushika* (*Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*), the first film he both wrote and directed. Episode 19,

which aired April 1, 1985, did not, then, involve Miyazaki. But it did include prominently an animated version of another great Japanese creative figure: novelist Natsume Soseki (1857-1916), considered Japan's first English literary scholar (Brodey & Tsunematsu, 2000) and best known for *I Am a Cat*. This research note focuses on Natsume's singular and ironic appearance in *Meitantei Holmes* as a transcultural phenomenon in an *anime* that, in itself, was a transcultural phenomenon in the midst of a wave of international cultural artifacts in the early 1980s. We suggest that *Meitantei Holmes*' place in cross-cultural/transnational entertainment deserves closer attention as an often-obscured, yet pivotal global media artifact.

The Animated Holmes

For its historic place along the career arc of *anime*'s greatest creative figure, *Meitantei Holmes* represents an almost-lost classic in the Sherlock Holmes library. As for Miyazaki's work on *Holmes* and other TV *anime*, it is less well known than his films, which include Oscar-winning *Spirited Away* (2001) and Oscar-nominated *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004). Although his animation career in film began in 1963, Miyazaki's first directorial credit was in TV for *Lupin III* (1971). He also directed the 1978 TV *anime* *Future Boy Conan* (*Mirai Shōnen Konan*), which was revived in 1992 as a video game and in 2011 as a *pachinko* game, *Future Boy Conan: Love and Courage and Adventure* (*Mirai Shōnen Konan: Ai to Yūki to Bōken*).

Holmes and his supporting cast were depicted as animated canines. Miyazaki, revered as Japan's greatest animation creator, at first protested against anthropomorphization, asserting that one could not express true feeling through a dog. But RAI insisted upon a dog, and so Holmes became Hound. Notably, Miyazaki's *anime* since then has featured both magically endowed humans and fantastic animals. Although it appeals to children, too, Miyazaki's *anime* films were imbued with cultural critiques of ecology, technology, and pacifism. The setting for *Meitantei Holmes* is early 1900s London, though the dogs speak Japanese. Holmes/Hound's nemesis, Professor Moriarty, and his companions continually create problems for Holmes, but crime-solving is not the primary plotline. *Hound* features the chase—of course—and focuses a great deal on

Moriarty's genius and fantastic inventions—a Miyazaki signature. Since it was, after all, *anime* targeting a children's viewing audience, the stories are presented as mostly fun, though the crimes are often as serious as burglary and two of the 26 episodes hint at homicide.

The rights dispute that delayed *Meitantei Holmes* was settled; yet, when response time and paperwork threatened production, Tokyo Movie Shin forged ahead. The Conan Doyle estate complained, and production stopped. By 1984, Miyazaki's *Kaze no Tani no Naushika* was earning acclaim, which brought collateral attention to his work on *Sherlock Hound*. And so production of *Meitantei Holmes* resumed and first aired on November 6 that year. Miyazaki moved on, producing his life's—and *anime*'s—greatest work. Today, *Meitantei Holmes (Sherlock Hound)* is available for purchase online on DVD and VHS and for free through youtube.com and a Japanese blogging site.

Transnational Holmes

Hutcheon (2006) proposed a shift from comparative studies to instead consider adaptations as “memes”: units of culture that evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places. So, was *Meitantei Holmes* as an adaptation of Sherlock Holmes a matter of authentic cross-culturalism? Was it for local or global purposes? And to what purported end? No matter the culture into which the Holmes character has been adapted, he has been traditionally and universally portrayed as “quintessentially English” (Döring, p. 73). In Japanese culture, Holmes has been adapted as far back as *Chizo no Kabe (The Bloodstained Wall, 1899, an adaptation of A Study in Scarlet)*, in which the “Holmes” character is a detective named Homma.¹

It appears that *Meitantei Holmes* represented not a case of cross-cultural producers attempting to adapt the Holmes character for Japanese audiences but rather to produce a series that would reach an international audience, evidenced by the transnational enterprise between Shin and Rai. *Anime* has long established “a cultural presence in mainland Europe” (Denison, 2010, p. 223). By the debut of *Meitantei Holmes*, Japanese and European studios had already collaborated on *The*

¹ See Webb, K. (1998). *Sherlock Holmes in Japan*. Bellevue, Wash.: Next Church Resources for an overview of these treatments.

Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1980), *Dogtanian and the Three Muskehounds* (1981), *Around the World with Willy Fog* (1981), and *Ulysses 31* (1981). Some cultural critics have suggested, in fact, that *Meitantei Holmes* “does not seem Japanese” (Lu, 2008, p. 169).

The episode at issue in this article, titled “*The Soseki Kite Battle Over London!*” (漱石・ロンドン凧合戦!), centers on the disappearance of The Rosetta Stone after an argument breaks out at the London museum where it is being kept. Four countries lay claim to ownership. One night, the stone appears to float away mysteriously into the sky. Holmes’ nemesis, Moriarty, borrows a few tricks from an old Japanese story about a thief to pull off the heist. Knowing that he must stop Moriarty before the stone is sold to the highest bidder, Holmes consults a Japanese exchange student: the character of Natsume. He has reported some Japanese books missing; these hold the clue that lead to a theory of the use of Soseki kites to float the fabled stone away. Although Holmes and all of the other characters were figments of Conan Doyle’s imagination, Natsume Soseki’s startling introduction in the episode would have been plausible.

Even as a children’s *anime* fiction, the integration of Soseki as a cartoon character with an authentic backstory lent cultural verisimilitude to *Meitantei Holmes*. As a schoolboy at the dawn of the Meiji era, Natsume admired Chinese literature but turned his attention to English, given the West’s sudden aggressive attention to Japan (McClellan, 2004). His government sent him to study in the United Kingdom. He wound up at University College in London (Brodey & Tsunematsu, 2000). Natsume was unhappy: “The two years I spent in London were the most unpleasant years in my life. Among English gentlemen I lived in misery, like a poor dog that had strayed among a pack of wolves” (2007). Still, he soldiered on and studied on. When he returned to Japan in 1903, he was appointed to the First National College in Tokyo and was given the lectureship in British literature, subsequently replacing the Greek-born writer Lafcadio Hearn, who was also known as Koizumi Yakumo. Natsume rose to professor of English literature at Tokyo Imperial University.

Conclusions

As a cultural artifact, *Meitantei Holmes* is perhaps most significant as Miyazaki’s final work

in TV *anime*. Yet, it also represents an exemplar of Miyazaki's philosophies, including, as it does, a number of his artistic signatures: car chases, flying scenes, fantastic—even anachronistic—contraptions, villains who turn good, and a strong woman. The latter should come as no surprise. Miyazaki's "feminisms" are manifest in *Spirited Away*'s Yubaba and Kiki of *Delivery Service* fame. Mrs. Hudson in *Meitantei Holmes* is not the middle-aged boardinghouse proprietor of the canonical Holmes oeuvre, but rather an adventurous and assertive 19-year-old widow. Miyazaki had wanted to depict Mrs. Hudson as the real genius, smarter than either Holmes or Moriarty, which she demonstrates when abducted in an early episode. The studio, however, refused. Reverting to traditional sex roles, there are mild flirtations between Holmes and Mrs. Hudson. Ultimately, Holmes confesses to Watson that to begin a romance with Mrs. Hudson would be to put her life in danger.

As for Natsume Soseki, he nearly did not make the director's cut. The Italian studio objected to the inclusion of a Japanese character at all. Miyazaki, however, protested and stood his ground, noting that the studio's bias was against a Japanese helping Holmes. This irony suggests that the politics of transnational power and economy in *Meitantei Holmes* merits further consideration and scholarly attention.

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