

# Global Partners against Crime: Rewriting Sherlock Holmes and Watson in Japanese Video Games

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## Abstract :

The genre of Japanese Holmesian and/or mystery video games is seldom explored in game studies. Holmesian video games generally refer to a genre of games that adapt, parody, appropriate, or rewrite characters and plot elements from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. In this article, I employ an Occidentalist framework to analyze the neo-Meiji context of Capcom's visual novel adventure game for the Nintendo 3DS called *Great Turnabout Trial: The Adventures of Ryunosuke Naruhodō* (*Daigyakuten Saiban: Ryunosuke Naruhodō no Bōken*) and its sequel, *Great Turnabout Trial 2: The Resolve of Ryunosuke Naruhodō* (*Daigyakuten Saiban 2: Ryunosuke Naruhodō no Kakugo*). Specifically, I explore how the game rewrites an idealized Meiji and Victorian past by revising the roles of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Watson. I focus on the theme of partnership and teamwork, which is reinforced in the game's unique feature called joint reasoning (*kyōdo suiri*), as it relates to deeper questions about the construction of identity in Japan. My reading of the game series through a neo-Meiji Occidental lens enriches the understanding of Holmesian adaptations in general, as it draws attention to how the role of the "great" detective is culturally redefined in Japanese popular culture.

## Introduction

For over 130 years, since the publication of *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, Sherlock Holmes has been reimagined, rewritten and reinvented across cultures, languages and media platforms. In the introduction to *Sherlock Holmes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Essays on New Adaptations*, Lynette Porter (2012) argues, "the great detective is easily recognizable, even when he is living in the London of an alternate universe or studying the remarkable properties of mutant bees in China" (3). Around the globe, Sherlock Holmes is celebrated for his extraordinary ratiocinative method of crime solving and is well known for his eccentric personality, but what would happen if quintessential characteristics of Holmes, such as his superior intellect, were significantly altered? Can we still call him a Holmesian detective?

On July 9, 2015, Capcom released *Great Turnabout Trial: The Adventures of Ryunosuke Naruhodō* (*Daigyakuten Saiban: Ryunosuke Naruhodō no Bōken*), a visual novel adventure game for the Nintendo 3DS, Android and iOS that was exclusively sold to the Japanese market.<sup>1)</sup> The game's sequel, *Great Turnabout Trial 2: The Resolve of Ryunosuke Naruhodō* (*Daigyakuten Saiban 2: Ryunosuke Naruhodō no Kakugo*) was released two years later for the 3DS on August 3, 2017 and was followed by the release of the Android and iOS versions a year later. Directed by Shū Takumi and produced by Shintarō Kojima, *Daigyakuten Saiban 1* and *2* (*DS 1* and *DS 2* hereafter) stand as prequels to the *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*

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1) This is most likely because the game has not been licensed by The Conan Doyle Estate. However, fan subbed versions of the game can be found on various social media platforms.



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(*Gyakuten Saiban*) series, as they are set in the late-Meiji period (1868-1912) and star Ryūichi Naruhodō's ancestor, Ryūnosuke Naruhodō. Ryūnosuke is a second-year student of Teito Yūmei University and an aspiring lawyer who travels to Great Britain to study British law with his judicial assistant named Susato Mikotoba. Throughout their journey, they encounter Sherlock Holmes who is depicted as a clumsy and unpredictable detective who appears to be a parodic rendering of Conan Doyle's original character. Together with Holmes, Ryūnosuke and Susato solve several murder mysteries, which they later discover are linked to an international conspiracy that occurred ten years prior to their arrival to London. The game's main objective is for the player to solve a decade-old mystery to find the criminal mastermind behind the recent killings. With a focus on the games' unique feature called "joint reasoning" (*kyōdō suiri*), which invites the player to correct Sherlock Holmes's deductions, I will explore how, through the theme of partnership, the game reconciles questions of Japanese identity by revising the Holmes/Watson pair in culturally meaningful ways.

### Sherlock Holmes in Japan: Identity, Crisis and the Role of Detective Fiction

I begin by foregrounding the political climate in which Conan Doyle's stories emerged to situate the role of the Victorian sleuth in Japanese popular imagination. This will establish the foundation upon which to begin a critical analysis of how the role of the Holmesian detective is revised in the game series. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes was first introduced to Japan in the 1894 abridged translation of "The Man with the Twisted Lip,"<sup>2)</sup> ("Kojiki Doraku"), which appeared in *Nihon-jin* magazine. Published three years

after Conan Doyle's original, "Kojiki Doraku" was followed by serialized publications of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in 1899. According to Masamichi Higurashi, because authors took the liberty of altering the names of characters and places to Japanese ones to accommodate a Japanese reading audience that was unfamiliar with foreign names and places, many of these earlier works should be considered loose adaptations or retellings. They were also often sensationalized accounts of Conan Doyle's original, emphasizing entertainment value over fidelity and, as pointed out by critics such as Megumi Tsutsumibayashi (2015), it was not until the "Taisho era [1912-1926] that the translations of the Holmes series truly got underway in terms of achieving popularity and completeness" (84).

Conan Doyle's works were not the first detective stories imported into Japan. "The first translation of foreign nonfiction detective story appeared in 1863. It was a translation of a book written in Dutch, entitled *Report on the Virtues of Dutch Politics*" (Tsutsumibayashi 2015, 89). However, it can be argued that Conan Doyle's stories were probably the most influential, inspiring writers,<sup>3)</sup> fans and enthusiasts to dabble in the art of mystery. According to Tsutsumibayashi, an important precursor to the introduction of Sherlock Holmes in Japan was the emphasis placed on the study of English during the Meiji period as "an indispensable means for dealing with or thinking about the pressing concerns of the day, be they cultural or political, domestic or international" (Tsutsumibayashi 2015, 86).

The Meiji Restoration (1868), according to Mark Silver (2008), signaled a time when "Japan began a process of Westernization that encompassed everything from the nation's systems of law, government, and education, to industry and commerce, to architecture, literature, and the arts" (1). As far as detective fiction is

2) Many critics have cited this story as Japan's first encounter with the Canon, but the reasons(s) why this story, of all others, was chosen has not been critically explored. Conan Doyle's "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891) was the sixth story in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and was rated by Conan Doyle himself as his sixteenth-favorite story in the Canon.

3) For example, Lori Morimoto (2017) has observed that "references and allusions to Holmes and his creator litter the modern Japanese literary landscape," (paragraph 2.2), including Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and most notably, Mori Mari. See the entry for Lori Morimoto.

concerned, it “assumed an educative role—something well-illustrated by the fact that many translated detective stories in addition to factual accounts of investigation (both domestic and international) were serially published in widely-read journals and newspapers catered for police officers” (Tsutsumibayashi 2015, 89). Specifically, at a time when Japan was emerging as a modern nation state, the figure of Sherlock Holmes had considerable appeal. For example, Tsutsumibayashi (2015) claims:

The fact that Doyle’s Holmes was a highly intelligent man equipped with exceptional aptitude for analysis and scientific reasoning signified that he was a figure to be taken seriously by those who aspired to elevate Japan to the status of the great powers. Indeed, Holmes was often seen as a personification of certain Western values—values that were considered by many Meiji intellectuals as the key to realizing their aspiration. (84)

However, as Japan gradually matured into a nation state, “The ideology of *risshin shusse* (rising in the world) that drove ambitious youths of Meiji Japan and beyond to seek success through education, in general, and Western learning, in particular,” (Saitō 2012, 7) and that pushed for Japan’s modernization through the mimicry of Western arts and culture, eventually lost its sway against the discourse of “‘*seiyō kabure*, the Western infection’ on Japan” (Silver 2008, 132). In other words, Tsutsumibayashi (2015) points out that “Learning from the West was a precondition for elevating Japan’s status within international society; yet this was a move that led to a sense of inferiority” (87). This paradox is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the works of Okamoto Kidō (1872-1939) and Edogawa Rampo (1894-1965), to list but two prominent writers of detective fiction born in the Meiji period who thematically explored cultural debates of authenticity and identity in their works.

Okamoto Kidō, for example, refashioned the Victorian sleuth in the cultural setting of Edo, Japan, calling attention to the need to restore Japanese traditionalism against Western modernity through the

role of his Inspector Hanshichi. The father of Japanese detective fiction, Edogawa Rampo, on the other hand, took a more ambivalent stance in his works by demonstrating a simultaneous longing for and critical apprehension about the Westernization of Japan through themes such as “hybridity” and “mutation,”<sup>4)</sup> which, according to Silver (2008), “mirror the contradictions faced by Japan itself as it attempted to create a modern colonial empire that would earn it legitimacy in the eyes of the Western powers, while at the same time preserving its sense of national and cultural difference from the powers on which it felt compelled to model itself” (133).

It is important to note that cultural debates of authenticity in search of the Japanese Self are not unique to the genre of detective fiction in Japan, but it can be considered one of the qualities that characterized the body of literature produced during the Meiji and Taishō periods. Most notably, according to Rachael Hutchinson (2011), “pressing questions about Japan’s changing identity in the modern world” (2) are found in the works of Meiji writers such as “Mori Ōgai, Natsume Sōseki, Nagai Kafū and Shimazaki Tōson [who] all traveled in Europe and saw the countries of the West with their own eyes” (1) and therefore utilized the “images of both West and Orient as defining Others for the Japanese Self” (11). For Hutchinson, what lies at the heart of the Self is a desire for the Other, and in a Meiji historical context, this desire made visible a gap that defined the relationship between the two entities. She refers to this as “*gap theory* to draw attention to the common linkage of desire for the Other with an inferior-superior binary” (13) and this model is useful for understanding the construction of the Self and Other in neo-Meiji works such as the *Daigyakuten Saiban* series. As I shall discuss in detail shortly, the ambivalent Japanese Self in the *Daigyakuten Saiban* series is made manifest through the construction of the

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4) See for example, Mark, Silver, “Anxieties of Influence: Edogawa Rampo’s Horrifying Hybrids” in *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 132-173.

Western world that is filtered through perspective of “Japanese” characters. At the same time, tension between the Self and Other is reconciled through the pairing of the series’ boy protagonist, Ryūnosuke, and Sherlock Holmes.

### A Brief Note on Occidentalism

Occidentalism is useful for contextualizing how the game constructs an image of the West. According to Xiaomei Chen (1995), Occidentalism refers to “a discursive practice that by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others” (2). It is, however, not a simple reversal of the discursive formation of power that exists between the Orient and Occident as defined by Said’s theory of Orientalism. A central argument to Occidentalism is the critique of Said’s Orientalism “that emphasizes the connections between discursive practice and imperialistic acts of aggression” (Hutchinson 2011, 229). Specifically, as it relates to the Meiji historical context, Hutchinson has pointed out that “Many images of the West were constructed in Meiji Japan and used for different ideological and political purposes, in a climate of anxiety over unequal treaties with the West and the nature of modernization,” (228) but that “Meiji-occidentalism would not have been used to dominate the West but to advance the Japanese cause for attaining equality with Western powers” (228). Although the game is not a product of the Meiji era, it invokes what appear to be images and discourses of the period in the reconstruction of a neo-Meiji/Neo-Victorian world.<sup>5)</sup> The game’s representation

of the foreign Other and the Japanese Self, when read through a neo-Meiji Occidental lens, draws attention to the precarious ways in which Japanese identity is redefined in the modern world as it appropriates a nostalgic past.

### The Construction of a Neo-Meiji World in the *Daigyakuten Saiban* Series

Political tension between Japan and England is established as early as the first chapter of *DS 1*. As the narrator of the cut scene explains, “Several years after the historic opening of Japan and with the mobilization of *Bunmei Kaika* (Civilization and Enlightenment), which brought about a big wave of Western Culture to the Far-Eastern Island, were those who embraced ‘change’ and ‘progress’ and others who were hesitant to the changing times.”<sup>6)</sup> Accompanying this narrative voiceover are a series of images—from rickshaws to a steamboat; from a *yatai* (vendor) to a restaurant; from kimonos to parasols—that juxtapose the old/new, Far-East/West and tradition/modernity, which captures an image of the “hybrid” cultural climate of Meiji society.

More specifically, set at a time when the Anglo-Japan Treaty had already established Japan’s formal alliance with Great Britain, *DS 1* and *DS 2* revolve around a serial murder case that occurred a decade prior when the alliance was still being negotiated between the two nations. The emphasis placed on maintaining and securing diplomatic relations between the two countries in the game series is, thus, reflective of a historical moment that critics such as P. L Pham have coined as the “Age of Empire,” in which the game series brings together two imperial powers personified in the idealized friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Ryūnosuke Naruhodō. Although Ryūnosuke is not a detective by trade but rather begins his journey as an amateur lawyer, his shrewd skills of observation match, and at times surpass, those of Holmes. For this reason, it can be argued that the game series represents two detecting agents from two different empires: Ryūnosuke from the Empire of Japan and Sherlock Holmes from

5) In her examination of Holmesian manga, Anna Maria Jones (2015) argues that “it should be understood within the long, varied tradition of the *tanteishōsetsu* (detective story) in Japan: not just neo-Victorian but Neo-Meiji” (21). My argument is that Holmesian video games, and especially those that invoke classic works and their authors, should also be read in relation to the historical and political context of the Meiji era in which Japanese detective fiction developed.

6) All translations of the games are my own.

Great Britain.

In the game series, Japan's status as a world power seems to be legitimized by the Anglo-Japan Treaty, while it simultaneously makes visible a power imbalance between the two nations. This is evident, for example, in the reason behind Ryūnosuke's departure to London, as his study of law abroad is ultimately encouraged by his superiors who believe that "This country (Japan) is still very *osanaï* (young)" and that "its administration of justice is even more *osanaï* (naïve)." Here, the repetition of the word *osanaï* (immature, young, or naïve) seems to undermine Japan's own status as a world power in comparison to the more "mature" West. Additionally, in the first chapter of the game, the limitation of Japan's political power is made clear by the fact that its own legal system is deemed insufficient to persecute a British foreign national convicted for murder.

At the same time, the games feature polarized views regarding the Western influence on Japan. Historical figures and writers such as Natsume Sōseki, who is best known for works such as *I am a Cat*, (*Wagahai wa Neko de Aru* 1905-1906) are adapted within the series as if to counter the ideas of the *bunmei kaika* movement (civilization and enlightenment). Drawing on Sōseki's lived experiences in England as a source of inspiration, the games parody the literary figure by depicting him as an embodiment of Japanese patriotism. Throughout the series, Sōseki expresses his yearning to return to his homeland (Japan) through remarks such as "All hail the fatherland!" ("*sokoku banzai!*") and other idiomatic expressions (*yonmoji jyukugo*).

The game series' construction of the Japanese Self and the Western Other, considering its historical context, might be justified, if still deeply problematic. When Ryūnosuke arrives in London, for example, his credibility as a lawyer (in-training) is undermined due to his Japanese identity. Ryūnosuke is considered untrustworthy because he comes from the land of the Orient, which, according to other attorneys such as Barok Van Zeiks, is a site of cheap tricks. Throughout the series, references to the Japanese as "barbaric," "stumpy," "small [and] yellow faced" and so on are

common. Certainly, these cultural attitudes toward "Japanese" characters invoke what Edward Said refers to as Orientalist. At the same time, however, the colonial gaze is inverted in the game, reinforcing a kind of Meiji-Occidentalism.

In the typical fashion of positive Occidentalism, the city of London, for example, is highly romanticized, as shown in the cut-scene in the third chapter of the first game. The scene's depiction of Susato's and Ryūnosuke's awe-inspired reactions upon their arrival to London illuminate the city's grandeur:

Ryūnosuke: Amazing...is this really a train station?

Susato: If it is a station, I've never seen structures like these.

Ryūnosuke: Look at the number of steam locomotives

Susato: Somehow...this all seems like a dream...

Indeed, the soft pastel colors and the halo-like glow that shines through the station add to the dream-like quality of the train station that is described by Susato. In addition to scenes such as these, references that highlight an image of London as a hub of culture, technology, architecture and art are scattered throughout the series. *DS 2*, for example, alludes to iconic events such as the Great Exhibition, drawing attention to the city as the center of scientific innovation. It also features the famous Madame Tussauds Wax Museum,<sup>7)</sup> where Ryūnosuke is utterly shocked by the realness of the wax figures, having only read about how they are made in a Japanese horror magazine (*Kaiki Zasshi*).<sup>8)</sup> It is within this historical setting that Ryūnosuke and Sherlock Holmes appear as they put aside their differences and work together to fight against a common enemy.

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7) To some extent, the game encourages a kind of virtual tourism through its references to popular tourist sites in London, England, including the museum created by Marie Tussaud.

8) These magazines featured stories of mystery, horror and the occult. They can be understood as the Western equivalent of pulp magazines.

## From Bromance to Partnership: A Brief Look at Sherlock Holmes and Watson

On the topic of partnership, Yūichi Hirayama (2004) argues, “The largest influence of the Canon on Japanese detective stories is the use of a ‘Dr. Watson,’ a companion of the great detective” (11). According to Hirayama, well-known pairings in classic Japanese detective fiction include, but are not limited to, detective Akechi Kogorō and his young apprentice, Kobayashi Yoshio, featured in Rampo’s fiction for children; Kindaichi Kōsuke and Inspector Todoroki or Inspector Isokawa featured in the works of Yokomizo Seishi (1902-1981); and Detective Heiji and his associate, Hachigoro, featured in Nomura Kodō’s (1882-1963) *Zenigata Heiji Torimonohikae*.<sup>9)</sup> Themes of partnership are also common in contemporary detective manga stories, as I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>10)</sup>

In the Canon, there is no doubt that Sherlock Holmes and John H. Watson are an inseparable pair. Discussing the popularity of the duo, Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse (2012) write the following:

The figures of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson have become synonymous with a range of cultural referents and meanings; key images and phrases, such as Holmes’ pipe and hat, ‘Elementary my dear Watson’... and ‘the game is afoot’ have entered into the wider lexicon of recognizable phrases and images, inseparable from the figure of Sherlock Holmes yet carrying their own cultural weight. (10)

As the main narrator of the Canon, Watson plays a supporting role as the great detective’s assistant and chronicler. However, as April Toadvine (2012) points out, “Questions about John Watson, and what to make of him, have continued since the character’s introduction” (48). In North America, much critical attention has been paid to the homoerotic subtext of the

famous duo, and while some critics reject the homoerotic possibilities of Holmes’s and Watson’s bond, it is undeniably a popular site of adaptation (and a site of contestation), as Carlen Lavigne (2012) has observed: “‘Bromance’ is becoming a standard part of the contemporary Holmes mythos” (14). Scholars have also identified the bond between Holmes and Watson through a series of dichotomies such as “unstable child/responsible adult” (Polasek 2013, 59); the “hero-worshipped/hero-worshipper” (Marinero and Thomas 2012, 68); the “head/heart” (77); and “greatness/goodness” (66), demonstrating the various depictions of Holmes and Watson in popular TV and cinematic adaptations such as BBC’s *Sherlock* (2010) and Guy Ritchie’s 2009 and 2011 films.

Loren D. Estlemen (2013) once argued that since Watson’s first appearance, he has been “calumniated on the one hand as the tanglefooted incompetent and on the other as a boozy” (vii). One possible explanation for Watson’s reputation as a “tanglefooted incompetent” might lie in how he has been interpreted by some readers as an oblivious character who, throughout the Canon, is constantly baffled by Holmes’s “brilliant reasoning power” (Doyle 2005c, 62). In a conversation about Holmes’s method in the story “A Scandal in Bohemia (1891),” Watson remarks, “When I hear you give your reasons...the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled until you explain your process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours” (Doyle 2005d, 10). Examples such as this one help bolster an image of Sherlock Holmes as someone who is superior to Watson himself and indicates that his friendship with Holmes is marked by a kind of hierarchal bond. Furthermore, although Watson accompanies Holmes on many adventures, he is rarely integral to the investigative process but rather acts as a passive observer. This is not to undermine Watson’s intelligence, for he is a doctor, but the game’s solution to the question: “what to make of Watson?” is to replace him with other, more compatible partners. Specifically, *Daigyakuten Saiban* renegotiates the power imbalance that characterizes Holmes and Watson (and, by extension,

9) For details about these pairings, see the entry for Hirayama.

10) See the entry for Okabe.

Britain–Japan relations) by assigning Holmes not one but three partners or assistants: 1) through the partnership of Holmes and Ryūnosuke 2) through the partnership of Holmes and Yūjin Mikotoba, and, finally, 3) through Holmes’s relationship with Iris.

The game’s investment in revising the Holmesian Canon is made clear from the tutorial chapter in *DS 1*, which begins with the murder of John H. Watson. By killing off Conan Doyle’s narrator, the game signals how it deliberately departs from the Canon. In fact, it is revealed in *DS 2* that Sherlock Holmes’s real partner was never Watson, but a Japanese exchange student named Yūjin Mikotoba, whom Holmes met a decade prior in London.

In terms of the narrative, the game alludes to several stories in the Canon while significantly revising the plotline to tell its own original tale of mystery. For example, the second chapter in *DS 1*, entitled “The Adventure of the Unbreakable Speckled Band (Tomo to Madara no Himo no Bōken),” pays homage to Conan Doyle’s original locked-room mystery story, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (1892). The game’s sequel draws on stories such as “The Red-Headed League” (1891), and “His Last Bow” (1917) and these stories are contained with the main story arch that is inspired by *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), which links the two games. Memorable characters in Conan Doyle’s stories, such as Enoch Drebber, Tobias Gregson, Inspector Lestrade and the King of Bohemia, are also adapted in unexpected ways, but perhaps the most notable shift that occurs in the game lies in the characterization of Sherlock Holmes.

### Joint Reasoning, Teamwork and Collegial Modes of Detection

Knowledge is power and, specifically within the context of Victorian cultural imperialism, Jon Thompson (1993) argues, “Sherlock Holmes’s knowledge, his ability to unravel the most intractable puzzles, gives him the power to penetrate the mysteries of London. The same form of knowledge that ultimately produced the empire also produced the figure of the empirical detective hero, Sherlock

Holmes” (76). The game’s representation of Sherlock Holmes, however, calls into question the efficacy of his “scientific method” and the role of the detective as a symbol of reason and authority. In the game, Sherlock Holmes resides at 221B Baker Street. He is technologically savvy and plays the violin. He wears a deerstalker hat and is at times seen smoking his pipe, but aside from these visual cues, I argue, there is nothing “Holmesian” about the character *per se*. Although in the fictional universe of the game, Sherlock Holmes is celebrated as a great detective according to the stories published about him, mostly in *The Strand*, his celebrity status falls short because he comes across as a rather clumsy detective. Not only does he make careless deductions, but his sudden bursts of uncontrollable laughter and flashy poses render him a more emotional character than the one depicted by Conan Doyle. To some extent, the Sherlock Holmes portrayed in the game resembles, more or less, a “Benedictian” brand of Holmes—one who *seems* more emotionally complex than the original but is not quite a “high-functioning sociopath.”

This is not to undermine the game’s originality or the creators’ extensive research of the time period and of the Holmesian Canon, as I mentioned earlier. The game’s parodic rendering of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes establishes the premise for a new feature to the *Gyakuten Siaban* games called “joint reasoning” (*kyōdō suiri*), which begins with Sherlock Holmes drawing rapid conclusions based on his careless and sloppy observations, and which ultimately invites the player to correct Holmes’s findings. This method of operation is highly unlike Holmes, who once stated, “Data! data! data!...‘I can’t make bricks without clay’” (Doyle 2005a, 362), but it serves a practical means in the gameplay. Each game consists of five chapters, which are further divided into trials and investigations. It is during the investigation process that the player helps Sherlock Holmes find clues to crack the case.

A clear example of Holmes’s clumsy investigation is seen in chapter two of the first game when Holmes mistakenly and on false grounds arrests Ryūnosuke for the murder of his friend. It is thus up to Ryūnosuke (the player) to dissolve this misunderstanding. In other

words, Ryūnosuke is given the opportunity to correct Holmes's deduction. This is achieved by revisiting the crime scene where the player is able to zoom in on certain characters or items from different angles to find hidden clues that Sherlock Holmes was oblivious to, allowing Ryūnosuke (the player) to arrive at a completely different conclusion than Holmes. Ryūnosuke is then able to use these findings as evidence during his trials. The fact that Holmes requires Ryūnosuke's help inverts the paradigm established between Holmes and Watson in Conan Doyle's stories by setting up Ryūnosuke as the more reliable and competent one within the pair. This feature, which allows Ryūnosuke, the Japanese amateur lawyer, to outsmart Holmes, calls into question the "great detective's" authority and his imperialist connotations.

In the last chapter of *DS 2*, we see the reunion of Sherlock Holmes and his long-time partner, Yūjin Mikotoba, solving a case together, as they race against time to collect evidence to find the criminal. In this chapter, Holmes prompts Yūjin (the player) to interrogate the sailor in the room, who is hiding a vital clue. Rather than correcting Holmes's deductions, as was the case with Ryūnosuke, Holmes guides Yūjin (the player) to find clues. At times, Holmes even encourages Yūjin, whom he refers to as his *aibō*, or partner. When Yūjin is unable to see through the sailor's lie, for example, Holmes states: "Rest assured, Mikotoba. You'll soon see it for yourself." In addition, remarks such as "I leave it to you, Mikotoba," indicate Yūjin's position as Holmes's dependable partner. While equality seems to be highlighted in their partnership, I find Sherlock Holmes's role curious, particularly because throughout the first installment of the game and up until the last chapter of the sequel, Ryūnosuke (the player) played a vital role in *correcting* Holmes's absurd deductions. With Yūjin, Holmes takes the lead, as if to suggest that he had always known more than he reveals. Holmes's ability to guide Yūjin positions him in the role of the master and Yūjin (or the player) as his pupil, which, as I have observed in other adaptations of Japanese Holmesian narratives, might suggest "an apparent allegiance to a hierarchy that reflects Japan's subordinate relation to the West" (Okabe 2013, 236). At

the same time, the emphasis placed on collegial modes of detection might work to neutralize ideas of cultural domination and superiority because it redefines greatness to encompass more than one cultural hero. Against the story's backdrop of a looming threat of war, the series suggests that the detective cannot work alone but must cooperate with his allies, highlighting the importance of *kokusaika* (internationalization) through the theme of global partnership.

## From Female Sidekicks to Competent Partners

Another significant way that the traditional Holmes/Watson duo is revised in the game series is through the inclusion of female partners, which also works to counter the homosocial subtext of Conan Doyle's original. Two female characters in particular stand out: Susato Mikotoba and Iris Watson, which I will discuss in brief.

Susato Mikotoba is the daughter of Yūjin Mikotoba and Ryūnosuke's trusted judicial assistant. Visually, she is dressed in a kimono, hakama and boots, invoking the image of the Meiji schoolgirl (*Meiji Jogakusei*). She carries a small pocketbook titled *The Code of Law of Great Britain (Daiteikoku no hoten)*, which she keeps hidden in her sleeve for easy access in times of need. Throughout the first installment of the game, Susato mainly guides Ryūnosuke by drawing attention to peculiarities during the trial, but she takes on a more formative role in the game's sequel. The clearest example of this is seen in the first chapter of the second game when Susato takes the stand as a defense attorney in the Japanese Imperial Court to protect a friend, Haori Murasame, who has been wrongfully accused of the murder of a British foreign national. At a historical moment when women were prohibited from participating in legal matters in Japan, the game draws attention to the sexist Japanese legal system through Susato's experience. Through the art of disguise, Susato conceals her identity and pretends to be Ryūnosuke's cousin, Ryūtarō Naruhodō, which allows her (the player) to gain access to the courtroom where the trial begins. After a series of cross

examinations, Susato (the player) succeeds in acquitting Haori of her murder charges and wins the case. While a comprehensive exploration of the feminist implications of Susato's role in the game is beyond the scope of this paper, I speculate that the criticism against the Japanese legal system's ban on female lawyers corresponds to wider cultural discourses regarding the limitations and constraints placed on women's professions in modern-day Japan. Nonetheless, by establishing Susato as the focalizing agent of the narrative and by demonstrating that she is just as capable and as competent as Ryūnosuke, the game makes gestures toward ideas of gender equality, which are, for the most part, absent in Conan Doyle's original stories.

Another central female character in the series is Iris Watson, who is first introduced in chapter four of *DS I* as the daughter of Dr. John H. Watson. Aside from being a tea connoisseur, Iris is a child prodigy and also the sole author of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. She resides with Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street, where she works as his assistant. Iris's relationship to Holmes invites a curious reading of how the Victorian sleuth has been redefined in the game. In Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" (1921), Holmes states, "I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix" (Doyle 2005b, 1513). In *The Sign of Four*, (2005e) Watson exclaims, "You really are an automaton—a calculating machine...There is something positively inhuman in you at times" (94), to which Holmes replies, "The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning" (94). The game, however, debunks this myth that Holmes is a genius, lone-wolf detective by casting him as a clumsy character who requires the help of others. In this way, unlike Conan Doyle's depiction of Holmes, the game achieves the humanization of the Victorian sleuth through his partnership with Ryūnosuke and Yūjin and also in his role as Iris's surrogate father. For example, Holmes is protective of Iris and takes extra precautions to conceal the identity of her biological father, such as confiscating a story she unknowingly wrote that revolved around the death of her parents. Throughout the game, Iris refers to Holmes using the Japanese honorific "kun" (*Holmes-*

*kun*), suggesting their close relationship. Moreover, at the end of the game, Iris describes how Holmes burst into tears upon receiving a letter in which she wrote "Thank you always, papa." Moments such as these in the game highlight Holmes's emotional attachment to Iris, rendering him a more compassionate and gentler version of Conan Doyle's detective.

As Holmes's assistant, Iris proves to be in possession of shrewd powers of observation herself, as seen in the episode where she correctly deduces the reason for Ryūnosuke's and Susato's visit to her abode in *DS I*. In addition to helping Holmes invent gadgets and making sure he wakes up on time for important appointments, Iris also proves to be an effective and compatible partner for Ryūnosuke. In the fourth chapter of the second game, for example, Iris plays a central role in the narrative. From helping Ryūnosuke find physical evidence during the investigation, to taking on a role similar to Susato by identifying gaps in Holmes's deductions, to sharing her knowledge of science and technology, Iris offers a helping hand in more ways than one. Ultimately, Iris's role as Ryūnosuke and Holmes's assistant suggests that teamwork is defined in fluid terms and that it is not marked by differences in age, race, and gender.

## Conclusion and Further Study

In the prologue to *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom*, Lindsay Faye (2012) writes, "the map that Conan Doyle left us, the un-careful and at times reluctantly rendered guide to Sherlock Holmes's brain attic, leaves the precise amount of negative space necessary to fire the imagination of his readers" (7). The *Daigyakuten Saiban* series fills this negative space by reimagining a Meiji historical past by suggesting the importance of teamwork and global partnership. In fact, at the end of each game, a photograph is shown of the international team that includes Holmes, Ryūnosuke, Susato, and Iris (and Asōgi Kazuma),<sup>11)</sup> reinforcing

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11) A friend and mentor of Ryūnosuke's who is believed to have been murdered but is revived in the game's sequel. A critical examination of Asōgi is beyond the scope of

ideas of friendship but also serving as a reminder of how Japan has “made it” in the West. Ultimately, through the joint efforts of Ryūnosuke and Holmes, the team stops an international assassination program that was spearheaded by England’s Minister of Justice, preventing the outbreak of war and restoring peace and order. Having saved the day with what he describes as the “best allies of the world,” Ryūnosuke is set to return to Japan at the end of the second game. In the cut scene, Ryūnosuke tells Holmes that he “is forever indebted to his kindness,” and Holmes replies, “I shall not want you to forget it, for I will be next to visit your country...the world is a lot smaller than you think.” While the game celebrates the union of two nations through the friendship of Ryūnosuke and Holmes, it also invites players to “reload,” to use Souvik Mukherjee’s term, a collective memory that glosses over Japan’s colonial history. The game thus accomplishes the reassertion of Japan as an equal competitor of the West in defining a modern Japanese identity in terms of its internationalization, but its vision is limited by its purposeful overlooking of its own imperialist past. In other words, it risks rewriting an idealized and romanticized past in its revival of the Holmes and Watson duo.

Despite this shortcoming, the fact that Sherlock Holmes has remained a popular character in Japan ever since his first appearance in 1894 is evidenced by a sustained interest in Holmesian anime, drama, manga and video games.<sup>12)</sup> This paper only scratches the

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this paper; however, he presents an interesting case study, as his role in the game can certainly be read within the context of the game’s representation of the Orient/Occident divide. Specifically, Asōgi’s conversion to Western forms of dress at the end of the second game might, for example, symbolize Japan’s transformation to a modern state, but deeper, critical reflection and analysis are needed.

12) For example, *Miss Sherlock* (2018), a Japanese TV drama series starring Yuko Takeuchi and Shihori Kanjiya, inverts the gender dynamic of the Holmes/Watson duo. An anime adaptation of Mai Mochizuki’s Japanese mystery novel series titled *Kyōto Teramachi Sanjō no Holmes (Holmes of Kyoto)*, originally published in 2015, was released in summer 2018.

surface of a genre of Japanese Holmesian games that has been, for the most part, ignored in game studies. *Sherlock Holmes: The Kidnapping of the Earl’s Daughter* (1986) might be one of the earliest Holmesian video games; it was developed by Towa Chiki and published for the Nintendo Entertainment System. More recent titles include games such as *English Detective Mysteria (Eikoku Tantei Mysteria)* (2013), a harlequin rendition of the British detective. Other playful interpretations of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes are found in *Great Detective Pikachu* (2016) developed by Creatures, Inc., and *Layton’s Mystery Journey: Katrielle and the Millionaire’s Conspiracy* (2017) developed by Level-5.<sup>13)</sup> These games might offer other fruitful and compelling ways of understanding Japanese Holmesian video games that others can explore. Meanwhile, the *Daigyakuten Saiban* series can be further studied in relation to the wider cultural production and reception of Holmesian adaptations, pastiches and rewritings.

As the curtain falls on the Heisei era with the accession of the Crown Prince to the throne in spring 2019, what new fears might haunt the Japanese popular imagination? What role will popular culture play in making sense of a new generation? Although Holmes warns that “It is a capital mistake to theorize in advance of the facts” (Doyle 2005d, 11), what is certain is that Sherlock Holmes remains a point of access for understanding the past and present, however limited, as he embodies our fears and even hopes for an (uncertain) future in an increasingly shrinking world.

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13) Thanks to Frank Vito Mondelli, who read an earlier draft of this paper and shared his passion and knowledge of the *Ace Attorney* series.

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