Sherlock and Shārokku: 'Nerdy' detectives in the West and in the East

Natalia Rumak

The Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia
Correspondence: rumakng@iaas.msu.ru
Twitter: @mckuroske
ORCID: 0000-0002-1399-2497

Abstract

This article explores the problem of archetypical features in the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. There are many fictional works, which we may regard as proof of the increasing popular interest, where this character presents 'awkward or socially embarrassing' features that can be associated with tropes on 'nerds' even. At the same time in our post-modern society, we also see a great number of different 'upside-down' stories, which show us well-known fictional characters from another angle, explaining their stories or giving them unexpected features. We suggest that it became a trend to expand features immanent to an archetypical fictional character, shifting the focus towards them, and thus allowing the creators to change the character while still keeping some of his core characteristics intact. Such changes also make it possible to move a character to a different environment and make him look quite natural there. In recent TV shows, Sherlock Holmes has undergone drastic changes in his homeland – Great Britain, and he changes ever more when he appears in Japan. His devotion to his work as shown in classical works by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has turned into a kind of sociopathic behaviour: he hates people and tries to avoid them; he is only interested in his work, which aligns him with 'nerdy' features. We suggest that in spite of these transformations, he is the same great detective, maintaining an archetypal identity that we can recognise easily.

Keywords: archetype; detective; nerds; Sherlock Holmes; Shārokku

Introduction

We are going to explore the changes that one of the most well-known fictional characters, private detective Sherlock Holmes created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, has undergone throughout his long history in original stories and adaptations. We ask why two modern adaptations of the story, namely the British *Sherlock* series (BBC, 2010) and the Japanese *Misu Shārokku* series (Hulu & HBO Asia, 2018), turn the hero detective into what can be popularly perceived as a 'freaky' or 'nerdy' character.

We will examine the qualities associated with nerds in these two counterpart detectives created in two island nations. We suggest that some traits attributed to stereotypical perceptions of the 'English national character' stay unchanged from Victorian to Modern Britain, and can be found in modern representation of Sherlock Holmes, who becomes a personification of 'a Victorian myth' (**Rasevich, 2014**), epitomising the ideals of his own age and nation (**Coffman, 2005**). We will also try to map common features in British and Japanese cultures, which allow this modern representation to find favourable and creative reception in Japan.

At the same time, we will concentrate also on the so-called 'nerdy' features of these two Sherlocks and see whether these traits really affect the image of the great fictional detective. Based on definitions for 'nerd' given in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (1. a person devoted to intellectual, academic, or technical pursuits or interests, or 2. an unstylish or socially awkward person (**'Nerd', 2022a**) and the Cambridge Dictionary (1. a person, especially a man, who is not attractive and is awkward or socially embarrassing, and 2. a person who is extremely interested in one subject, especially computers, and knows a lot of facts about it (**'Nerd', 2022b**), we shall regard 'nerdiness' in a broad sense. We will concentrate on the image of a 'nerd' being 'socially awkward and embarrassing' and 'devoted to intellectual interests, extremely interested in one subject' and dwell upon the interest audiences show towards deviant behaviour of such 'nerds' in fictional works.

For several decades now, people considered to deviate from established norms of social interaction, especially those who have unusual intellectual abilities (sometimes these are people with so-called *savant syndrome*), have been drawing much attention in fictional works, with autistic people of genius often at their centre. After *Rain man* (1988) and *Forrest Gump* (both the book (1986) and the movie (1994)) there came *Shine* (1996), *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), *The Big Bang Theory* (2007), *Good Doctor* (2013, with a US remake in 2017 and a Japanese remake in 2018) and so on. Rare as savant syndrome may be seen in real life ('one or two in 200' among people with autism, according to data cited in (**Treffert, 2010: 4**)), it nevertheless attracts audience and therefore is quite sought-after by

modern authors (**Maich, 2014**; **Vazhenina, 2018**). It is arguable whether we can apply the word 'nerd' to such characters, but they are popular, allegedly being unrecognised geniuses demonstrating slight (or strong) peculiarities in their behaviour. Quite naturally, the contrast between the inability to communicate with people and high scientific (or other) abilities of such character become the core of the story.

In the postmodern age, with its eagerness to distort established forms, storytellers and filmmakers apply this new approach even to characters, which long seemed to remain unchanged forever. For example, Maleficent from the animated film *Sleeping Beauty* (an evil fairy godmother in Charles Perrault's fairy tale) turns to be an offended angel in Disney's *Maleficent* (2014), and Red Riding Hood appears to be a werewolf in ABC's *Once Upon a Time* (2011) series. Among these, Sherlock Holmes has been the object of numerous contemporary refashionings, for example within the Lovecraftian Cthulhu Mythos universe in Neil Gaiman's *A study in Emerald* (2003). More recently, *Sherlock*, a TV-series by BBC, UK (2010-2017) appeared, giving the audience another vision of Sherlock Holmes. This archetypical private detective is 'a cold mind' (**Doyle, 2014: 123**), a talented sleuth that becomes a 'high-functioning sociopath' (**Moffat, 2010: 86**), as he proclaims himself, one who 'sees but does not observe' (**Doyle, 2014: 124**; **Gatiss, 2010: 71**) people around him unless they are crucial for his investigations.

Following the extraordinary British detective, another Sherlock (*Miss Sherlock*, Hulu and HBO Asia, 2018) emerged in contemporary Japan, a country where nerds are often associated with the similar *otaku* (nerd or geek) culture. *Otaku* may or may not have evident mental disorders (**Teo & Gaw, 2010**), but in common discourse they are characterised by perceived degree of deviant social behaviour. The Japanese Sherlock's (Shārokku-san) ways of interacting with people very much resemble those of *otaku*, because Shārokku does not notice people around her, being deeply involved in the investigation, and seldom following common rules (often going against the norms of a strict Japanese society in the show).

Against this background, we will try to explore Holmes' archetype and how it is influenced by contemporary tendencies refashioning well-known characters with anti-social traits.

Sherlock and the Archetype of a Detective

Sherlock Holmes, the main character in the series of novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, can be described as the most famous fictional detective worldwide, with the books boasting translations into 98 languages, and Holmes becoming 'the most portrayed human character in film and on TV'

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in 2012 (**Guinness World Records, 2012**), as he had appeared on screen in 254 cinema and TV-adaptations.

Many researchers suggest that the image of a detective is a personification of an archetypical myth of a hero (see, for example, **Miyachi, 1999**). Cawelty, in his *Adventure, Mystery and Romance* (**Cawelty, 1976**), Propp in his *Poetics of Folklore* (**Propp, 1998**), Eco in *The Role of the Reader* (**Eco, 1979**) analysed the archetypical bases of fictional texts; Eco in particular, thoroughly explored the connections between myth, fairy-tales, and novels, including detective ones. He pointed out a strict formula and repetition of plots or heroes, which can ease the response of a reader. At the same time, he suggested that a character of a novel and his life should be as unpredictable as the readers' lives are, in order to elicit sympathy and compassion with the reader (**Eco & Chilton, 1972: 15**). But what if a hero outgrows the frames of a novel and returns to being a myth, an archetype at a higher level? Ritual archetypes can be the base for any fictional world across all literary genres, including crime fiction (**Karmalova, cited in Krapivnik, 2014: 162**).

Detective texts always have as their base a formula, a cyclic or a loop-structured time, which is typical for a mythological consciousness re-creating an archetype, a stereotype (**Ibid: 163**). A detective thus is a personification of a mythical hero, a superman, because, according to Eco, in an industrial society a positive character is supposed to represent to the utmost the need for power which an average citizen feels but cannot satisfy (**Eco & Chilton, 1972: 14**).

Being at the same time a personification of a mythical hero, and of the quintessence of an English gentleman in popular perception, the 'original' Sherlock Holmes is supposed to demonstrate the best features of both. We may regard him as a character embodying the 'national features' of an Englishman, thus reinforcing a stereotype popularised worldwide. Various authors in the book by Ter-Minasova define 'national features' as 'the whole of specific psychological features which have more or less become characteristic of some social-ethnical community under specific economic, cultural and environmental circumstances of its development', 'psychological characteristics', 'stable national features of customs and traditions' (**Zhandildin, Parygin, Arutyunyan, cited in Ter-Minasova, 2000: 136**).

According to Sukharev and Sukharev, 'a beau ideal of an English person is independence, education, dignity, honesty and unselfishness, tactfulness, elegancy of manner, exquisite politeness, ability to sacrifice time and money for a good deed, ability to lead and to obey, insistence in pursuing a goal' (**Sukharev & Sukharev, 1997: 106**). All these features can easily be found in the stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Holmes helps people, 'his

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sole reward being the intellectual joy of the problem' (**Doyle, 2018: 772**) and he plays 'the game fairly' (**Ibid: 805**); he has 'the power of detaching his mind at will' (**Ibid: 508**); he is sure that 'the emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning' (**Ibid: 92**), he is able to 'plunge into a chemical analysis' for rest (**Ibid: 131**). As seen by people around him, he is also 'a little queer in his ideas — an enthusiast in some branches of science' and 'a decent fellow' (**Ibid: 12**), has his 'little peculiarity' (**Ibid: 15**), his knowledge 'is very extraordinarily ample' (**Ibid: 17**), he has 'the reticence' (**ibid: 16**); he has 'many extraordinary qualities, nimble and speculative mind' (**Ibid: 127**), he is 'a wonderful man' (**Ibid: 128**). At the same time, he is sometimes 'a little too scientific' (**Ibid: 13**), certainly 'very conceited' (**Ibid: 21**), has 'a small vanity' (**Ibid: 86**) and shows 'the over-refinement of his logic' (**Ibid: 127**).

If we pick up and strengthen several features mentioned above (having little peculiarities, being too scientific etc.), we can attain an image of a 'nerdy' character with his exquisite mind, deep involvement in crime solving and his unwillingness at some times to communicate with common people, which we can interpret as social misbehaviour. Relying on the dictionary definitions given above, we could regard Sherlock Holmes as a Victorian 'nerd', fully devoted to and deeply involved in crime solving, though he never gives impression of an unstylish or a socially awkward man.

We can define the name of Sherlock Holmes as a 'precedent name' being a 'complex sign which is attributed not to a denotation, but to a number of distinctive features, qualifiers of such a name' (**Zakharenko et al., 1997: 83**). The name of Sherlock Holmes is associated with detective work and thus is relatively common for the names of search-engines (*Holmes* application and *Sherlock* online Apple version) or detective agencies (online agency *Sherlock Holmes*, Ufa town agency *Holmes*, Ukranian Detective Agency *Sherlock Holmes*). It is seen as something undoubtedly English, so pubs (perhaps the most famous one is situated in Northumberland Street, London), and even tea brands (Gutenberg *Sherlock Holmes' Favourite Tea* or The Literary Tea Company *Sherlock Tea Collection*) are named after this hero detective character.

At the same time, the image of the famous detective has definitely changed throughout the years, mostly due to stage and cinema interpretations. For example, a survey provided in (**Popova & Stolyarova, 2014**), shows an interesting trend in the movies and TV-series (*Sherlock Holmes*, 2009 with Robert Downey-Jr and *Sherlock,* 2010-2017 with Benedict Cumberbatch) to be seen as the most interesting modern reproductions of the story. Perhaps it is the gap between the canon and the adaptation, which attracts spectators, though both Holmeses are

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dissimilar. The former acts in Victorian London, he is eccentric, quirky, not only brainy but brawny, while the latter has changed with the epoch, but he still relies on his brain more than on his fists.

One may suggest that it is archetypical features of Sherlock Holmes that give creators the liberty to fiddle with his certain incarnations while keeping the main features of the image intact. Let us have a closer look at the BBC series *Sherlock* created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss. The writers did not try to change the nucleus of the archetype, but 'wanted to bring him out of the faux-Victorian fog and see him for what he is', as S. Moffat put it in an interview on *The Guardian* (**Jeffries, 2012**). They changed almost every variable parameter placing their characters into the twenty first century, making them use mobile phones and taxi (which are still 'cabs'), browse Internet instead of Encyclopedia Britannica and publish their reports not in newspapers but in blogs and on websites (**Moffat, 2010**).

Sherlock (the first name is enough now, as no one uses Victorian 'Mr Holmes' anymore) does not smoke but uses nicotine patches (**Moffat, 2010: 86**) to stimulate his brainwork, though he still uses drugs for the same purpose both in the novels and the show (**Doyle, 2018: 85; Sherlock, 2019: 379**). Dr Watson (he is John now) is still a military surgeon who has visited 'either Afghanistan or Iraq' (**Moffat, 2010: 17**) – even war zones have not changed much since Victorian times. The Baskervilles estate becomes a government research station (**Sherlock, 2012a**), inspector Lestrade can call for helicopters backup (**Sherlock, 2019: 326**), but Sherlock still solves crimes, John is still ready to help his eccentric friend, Mycroft still represents the British government (**Doyle, 2018: 898; Moffat, 2010**), Irene Adler is still 'The Woman' (**Doyle, 2018: 170; Sherlock, 2012b**), and Moriarty is an evil genius and a criminal mastermind weaving his intricate web (**Doyle, 2018: 473; Gatiss, 2010: 47**).

At the same time, some of Sherlock Holmes' features change drastically in the BBC adaptation, and we will see into the reasons of such changes later. The great detective's aim now is not so much to help people, as to amuse himself – though he has always been striving for 'the intellectual joy of the problem' as Dr Watson puts it in *The Valley of Fear* (**Doyle, 2018: 772**). It seems that he never thinks of his friends but only uses them. He talks to John only because Mrs Hudson has taken away his skull 'friend' (**Moffat, 2010: 64**), he never pays attention to his devoted helper Molly's feelings (**Moffat, 2010: 19**) and he can easily divert DI Lestrade from his investigation just because he needed some help with the best man's speech (**Sherlock, 2019: 326**). Yet, this inability of his to adopt strict rules of the society (**Sherlock, 2019: 196**) can be another possible feature of an allegedly peculiar and extravagant Englishman. Sherlock is still

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independent, highly educated, full of dignity, though not necessarily honest and unselfish like the original Holmes was. He is surely able to lead (but not to obey), he is insistent in pursuing a goal, but delicacy and exquisite politeness are not among his strong features (see **Sukharev & Sukharev, 1997: 106**). He even announces himself a 'high-functioning sociopath' as opposed to a 'psychopath' (**Moffat, 2010: 86**).

Sollid explores this matter by applying tools for psychiatric assessments to both versions of the great detective. Using the Hare PCL-R test (Psychopathy Checklist-Revised), developed by Robert D. Harem, one of the most widely used instruments in the psychiatric assessment of psychopaths, commonly used to rate a person's psychopathic or antisocial tendencies (according to the web-site of Individual Differences Research lab (**Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, 2022**)), she establishes that neither of the two detectives are sociopaths or psychopaths, though the modern version scores higher on both scales. At the same time, she notes that the term 'high-functioning' is mostly addressed to people with Asperger, although here again applying the test does not prove the diagnosis, but only shows some of the traits associated with the syndrome (**Sollid, 2016**). Even without a mental disorder diagnosis, the new Sherlock ignores social conventions (**Sherlock, 2019: 196**) and does not care much about maintaining communication when he does not need it. His thoroughness (or, better, obsession) with detailed information and meticulous research are evident in scenes where he boasts about having published an article on 240 different varieties of tobacco ashes (**Sherlock, 2019: 155**), or beats corpses with a stick to find out the nature of the bruises (**Moffat, 2010: 14**). Both episodes are also mentioned in the original stories: *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (**Doyle, 2018: 209**) and *A Study in Scarlet* (**Doyle, 2018: 13**) respectively – obviously suggesting 'nerdy' traits.

This then begs the following questions: To what extent may archetypical features be adapted and modified, while still performing a substantial representation of the archetype? And what happens if we move the archetype into another culture?

In the beginning of the twentieth century there were many stories describing Sherlock Holmes' adventures in Russia, most of them showing the detective stunned by the unpredictable Russian criminals with their famous 'Russian character.' Such were the series 'Sherlock Holmes' adventures in Russia' by P. Nikitin (1908-1909), or two story collections by P. Orlov, 'Adventures of Sherlock Holmes in Siberia' and 'Sherlock Holmes against Nat Pinkerton' (1909) (**Reitblat, 1994**).

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There are examples of Russian filmmakers who have tried both to represent classical Sherlock Holmes on screen and to film their own stories about the great detective (*Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson* series, USSR, 1979-1986; *Me and Sherlock Holmes* short animated movie, USSR, 1985; *My Dearly Beloved Detective,* USSR, 1986; animated *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson: Lord Waterbrook Murder*, Russia, 2005, and its sequel *Sherlock Holmes and Black Men*, Ukraine, 2012; *Sherlock Holmes* TV-series, Russia, 2013; *Sherlock in Russia*, Russia, 2020). Neil McCaw links such interest with an 'Anglophilic nostalgia', proving the right of a 'non-English production team' to be nostalgic for 'a history… which primarily belongs to someone else' (**McCaw, 2020: 239**).

Among the modern adaptations mentioned above, the Soviet TV series is perhaps the most famous one in the post-Soviet territory, receiving high praise and love from Russian spectators for its faithfulness in following the original story, as opinions by spectators in *kinopoisk.ru* or *imdb.com* websites state. Vasily Livanov, who portrayed Sherlock Holmes, was appointed Honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire in 2006 'For service to the theatre and performing arts' (**List of Honorary Awards, 2006**), and his picture can be seen in the Sherlock Holmes Museum at 221b Baker Street in London .

Other works are more or less modified versions, of which, perhaps, the 2013 TV-series is of interest as it portrays the Victorian Sherlock Holmes, but gives the spectators an image not of the ideal gentleman from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories (allegedly written and idealised by Dr Watson), but of a 'real' person with his faults and weaknesses.

However, for the present analysis the image of Sherlock emerging in an even more different background, in Japan, is of particular interest. While Rudyard Kipling famously stated that 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet', (**Kipling, 1889**), other views highlight that Great Britain and Japan have a lot in common. Ovchinnikov, a famous Soviet journalist, who described both countries (**Ovchinnikov, 1971;1979**) after he had spent several years working there, wrote that English and Japanese people were very different and at the same time very similar to one another. Both follow strict social rules, – though English people tend to show individualism and the Japanese – collectivism; both value traditions, though the Japanese tend to praise inconstancy and changeability while the English succession and continuation (**Ibid**). The people of these two island countries are famous for their loyalty and nobleness together with some possibly extravagant features of character. Of course, these are stereotypes that do not represent all English or Japanese people, but stereotypes are an important factor in intercultural communication (**Haarmann, 1984; Seiter, 2006**), so we cannot fully ignore

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them when comparing literature or cinematographic works using an archetypical character.

The history of Sherlock Holmes in Japan goes back to 1894, when the first abridged translation of *The Man with the Twisted Lip* was published, followed by many other translations and adaptations (**Kobayashi & Higashiyama, 1983**). Japan is quite famous for its own detective writers as well, starting with Edogawa Ranpo, whose mystery fiction, and own pen-name were clearly influenced by Edgar Allan Poe (**Fisher, 2017; Bode, 2019**), or Okamoto Kido, an outstanding playwright who had been deeply inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (**Silver, 1999: 147-148**). There are many works taking inspiration from the Victorian period as a whole, and Sherlock Holmes stories in particular (**Nakatsuma, 2019**), with numerous adaptations, pastiches, and derivative works across media, including the animation series *Sherlock Hound* (*Meitantei Holmes*) by Tokyo Movie Shinsha, 1984-1985 (**McCaw, 2020**). Thus, it is only natural for Japan, which in some aspects resembles England so strongly, to get its own modern reincarnation of Sherlock Holmes as well: such is the case of the TV series *Miss Sherlock* (*Misu Shārokku*) by Hulu and HBO Asia, broadcast 2018.

The main character of the show, Sara Shelly Futaba, whose nickname is Shārokku, is a woman, though this is not revolutionary, as the Russian pastiche *My Dearly Beloved Detective* by TO Ekran (USSR, 1986) had already portrayed a woman Sherlock once, and there were female Watson and Moriarty in American TV series *Elementary* by CBS Television Studios (USA, 2012-2019). According to the creators of the Japanese show, Shārokku is a Japanese who was born in England and later returned to Japan (**Hulu Original Miss Sherlock, 2018a**). This makes her a *kikoku-shijo,* which is a term for Japanese returnee children (**'Kikoku-shijo', 2022**) who had long lived abroad with their parents and then returned to the country: this is an important fact, which we shall examine later.

Dr Watson (Wato-san), a former surgeon suffering from post-traumatic syndrome disorder after having taken part in a peace-making mission in the Middle East (**Hulu Original Miss Sherlock, 2018b; 2018c**), is also a woman. In the series we see modern Japan, where a rich widow like Mrs Hudson's counterpart Hatano-san may still own a large traditional Japanese house (**Hulu Original Miss Sherlock, 2018d**), but young women are ready to choose their own way in life, though their families sometimes expect them to act in a more traditional way (**Hulu Original Miss Sherlock, 2018e**).

McCaw sees *Misu Shārokku* as a nostalgic reminiscence of former Japan, an 'idealized Japanese past' (**McCaw, 2020: 247**). But in our opinion, he overlooks (or intentionally ignores) a very transparent fact, that although

Misu Shārokku is far from being a remake of the BBC *Sherlock*, Shārokku-san obviously mimics her British counterpart by behaving as a 'nerdy sociopath' within a Japanese context. She ignores cultural customs and social etiquette, staying too close to a person, sitting on the table, entering the house without taking off her shoes or refusing to greet people with the traditional *aisatsu* (formal greeting) (**Hulu Original Miss Sherlock, 2018f**), and insisting she has no friends.

It is interesting to explore the reason of such changes in the archetypical hero detective. Why has he adopted such nerdlike features in his British homeland and why does the Japanese adaptation also stick to these peculiarities? We suggest that the two shows demonstrate and speak to an increasing interest in unconventional people, including those with behavioural issues deviating from accepted social norms.

Autism Spectrum Disorder and Media

Popular fascination with 'different' individuals is nothing new, let us just remember Barnum's American Museum or his 'What is It?' Exhibition held in London in 1846 and other so-called freak shows. *Punch* called the interest for this kind of entertainment a 'deformito-mania' (cited in **Karpenko, 2004**; **Durbach, 2011**). Barnum implied that the participants of his show were neither people, nor animals, and even physicians were not sure of the extent of their disabilities.

Researchers have highlighted gradual developments in the recognition of disabilities, which first meant a declaration of the human status for all disabled individuals. For example, the Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles founded in France in 1785 became the first specialty school for blind people in the world (Louis Braille, the inventor of the braille system, was one of its students). Later, its founder Valentin Haüy continued his work in Russia, at the invitation of Alexander I of Russia. In the first years of Soviet Russia Lev Vygotsky provided a strong theoretical basis for defectology, suggesting that humanity should first fight deafness, blindness or 'imbecility' socially and pedagogically, rather than medically (**Vygotsky, 1995: 16**; see also **Knox, Stevens, 1993**). Even now there are still cases of marginalisation and mistreatment of physically disabled people; as for mental disorders, there is too little common understanding of depression, let alone schizophrenia, different kinds of manias or syndromes. That is why there is still much prejudice concerning such disorders and people having them.

Media, including literature and cinema, have engaged with picturing people with 'divergent' mental features for some time already (see the list above). Of course, not any degree of 'neurodiversity' attracts the attention of the creators of media content: as far as the audience needs drama,

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people of genius (either evil or good, real, or fictional) usually become the centre of any story. Such are the stories of Hannibal Lecter and Billy Milligan, John Nash-Jr. and David Helfgot and many others. People with schizophrenia or autism spectrum disorder, including those with Asperger syndrome, have become the centre of media attention, though mostly those with unusual abilities (first of all, people with traits of savant syndrome) are widely pictured in literature and cinema, as we can see even from the short list or cinematographic works given above. It is possible to say that fictional works often try to show the audience nice, soft, and kind people whose medical issues become obstacles to normal interacting with others. But these works also make every effort to explain that obstacles can be overcome with mutual interaction and help.

Perhaps, we may speak here rather of socially 'divergent' people. Nerds can also enter the category if we take them mostly as 'awkward or socially embarrassing' as per the Cambridge Dictionary entry. In any case, movies and novels focusing on disabled or divergent characters are not just making them 'moving objects with certain functions in a fiction work' (**Shestyorkina & Vazhenina, 2018: 108**), but are also explaining to wide audiences that there are ways of communicating with them. This is quite important as far as media are supposed to play an educational role in society promoting a certain way of life and common values (**Ibid: 108**). For Vazhenina, through this practice media can and should be a motivator for further promulgating humanist values of the society (**Vazhenina, 2018**). Such works may supposedly serve as a way of acquainting people with various social and psychological issues, and may thus be useful even for psychiatrists and medical students (**Beloguzov et al., 2017**). Of course, fictional approaches can be rather oversimplifying or non-academic, and some researchers criticise such works as misinterpreting mental disorders, for example contributing sometimes to 'a harmful divergence between the general image of autism and the clinical reality of the autistic condition' (**Draaisma, 2009**). By showing idealistic portraits of persons with autism spectrum disorders and giving them superpowers, such fictional works attract spectators, but do not provide them with a full understanding of problems which people with mental disorders and their families face (**Beloguzov et al., 2017**).

Fair as this criticism may be, there is still a tendency of making people with autistic spectrum disorders, together with outstanding intellectual powers, central figures of fictional works. This may explain the changes adopted by a postmodern reincarnation of Sherlock Holmes, the hero detective.

Now let us explore the reasons for creating a Japanese version of a 'nerdy' detective.

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Japanese Ways of Escapism: *Ijime* and *Hikikomori*

Why would the Japanese audience be interested in such a perverted image of the famous detective?

There is deep meaning given by the creators of the show to the fact that Shārokku is a *kikoku-shijo*, a girl who born and/or raised abroad and returned to Japan later. Tawara, speaking of the problems school teachers face when organising activities, points out the guidance to 'be like the others', which can be seen in Japanese society and which extends even to elementary schools (attended by children from 6 to 12 years old). Since acting in unison is encouraged in different group activities in Japan, *kikoku-shijo*, presumably raised in different conditions and with different values, find it necessary to conceal their individuality and experience after they come to Japan, otherwise they may incur bullying (*ijime*) (**Tawara, 2004: 68**).

In Japan *ijime* is a problem closely connected with isolation from society. While it is not limited to school bullying (**Abe & Henly, 2010**), studies of *ijime* in school as a social problem have a long history that dates back to the early 1980s. Though schools in different countries report bullying problems, Kanetsuna argues that Japanese *ijime* has its specific features and, in comparison with bullying in England, does not always mean direct violence, but is frequently associated with aggressive behaviour, which causes a victim more psychological than physical suffering (**Kanetsuna, 2016: 155**). He defines *ijime* as 'one of the strategies for pupils to maintain group cohesiveness of the class' and sees the pupils' inability to fit in with the specific climate of the class as one of the reasons for *ijime* (**Ibid: 163**). *Kikoku-shijo* is one of those categories often 'unable to fit in', and therefore potentially subject to *ijime*. It is then quite natural for Shārokku to become an outcast because of her background.

Other phenomena which may explain the interest towards highly intellectual but strangely behaving detectives are *hikikomori* and *otaku*.

These are interrelated with discourses on instability in contemporary Japanese society. After the decades of massive postwar economic growth and accumulation of material wealth as a sign of prosperity – such as the idea of *maihōmushugi* (my-home-ism), buying one's own home and concentrating on one's own family (**Sakai, 2017**) – , in the aftermath of the recession from the mid-90s and the progressive casualisation of the job market, the possibility of realising these dreams of affluence and accomplishment became more and more unrealistic and remote (**Suwa & Suzuki, 2013: 196-97; Allison, 2012**). The sociologist Ōsawa defines this contemporary age as a 'time of the impossible' (**Suwa & Suzuki, 2013: 196)**. This was the time when individuals lost 'the agency of a third person',

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'the transcendental other who alone can judge the appropriateness of social standards', and against which they may resist (**Ibid**). Arguably, gaining such agency could commonly be typified as being among those areas of emergent socialisation which young adults pass through during their formative years. Consequently, deprived of such standards (societal, governmental, etc.) and of the models of prosperity they represent, many young people turned their resistance from clear ideologies, the 'transcendental other', to their closer proximity, including themselves, which resulted, among others, in the *hikikomori* phenomenon as a form of social withdrawal in order to protect and harm themselves at the same time (**Ibid**).

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) uses the definition of *hikikomori* given by Mitaku: a 'situation when a person stays at home for more than six months, not going to work or to school, and beside that not communicating with people outside the family' (**MHLW, 2010**). The word also describes people who find themselves in such a situation. Saitō, who first suggested the term, sees *hikikomori* or 'social withdrawal' as a psychological problem. He describes symptoms characteristic of psychological disorders and, citing Walters, gives an unwillingness to act manly out of fear of a failure as one of the reasons for such behaviour (**Walters, cited in Saitō, 1988**) – possibly due to the influence of *amae* (accepting overdependent behaviours) and 'shame' culture (**Kato et al, 2018**). Further, Poznina and Kolomoets suggest that after many years of such high pressure from society Japanese young men decided to free themselves of this terrible burden and not to take any responsibility for someone's or even their own lives (**Poznina & Kolomoets, 2014**). At the same time, one may also admit influence of family environment (**Umeda & Kawakami, 2012**) and possible high-functioning pervasive developmental disorders (**Suwa & Hara, 2007**).

Hikikomori stay at home even after leaving universities, not marrying and being fully dependent on their parents' support. Allegedly most of them indulge in different hobbies, often, but not necessarily in consuming anime, manga or/and videogames, or collecting related merchandise. This category is called *otaku* - 'young persons who are very interested in and know a lot about computers, computer games, anime, etc., but may find it difficult to talk to people in real life' (**'Otaku', 2022**), which bear comparable features with nerds or geeks in the West. The three categories are slightly different. For example, Merrill Perlman's research on the changes the word 'geek' meaning has undergone shows that it developed from 'a fool, a person uncultivated, a dupe' in 1876 to 'an overly diligent, unsociable student; any unsociable person obsessively devoted to a particular pursuit' in 1957, and to the modern 'a person regarded as being especially enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and skilful, esp. in technical

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matters' (**Perlman, 2019**). Still, there are some common things about them as well, as all of them may have deep knowledge in some fields, and they are often frowned upon as not socially functioning, sometimes incurring seclusion.

Shārokku-san shares comparable features with the above phenomena insofar as her behaviour presents traits of obsession, specialist knowledge, and incapacity to integrate with mainstream society. However, perhaps it is her success in turning her inability to act in unison or to follow the rules of society into her strongest traits, such as the power to move independently, that attracted the Japanese audience.

Conclusion

We have thus studied the archetypical features of the image of Sherlock Holmes, one of the most famous fictional detectives. We showed that his name can become a 'precedent name', and he himself, being independent, educated, honest and unselfish, elegant, polite, and insistent in pursuing his goals, represents a number of stereotypes which may be regarded as an 'English national character.'

We also found out that under contemporary tendencies of making people with different behavioural disorders – from serious illnesses to slight divergences – the main characters of fictional or autobiographical stories, the core features of Sherlock Holmes change slightly to attract the interest of the audience. At the same time, picturing Holmes as a sort of social outcast allows him to be easily adapted in a foreign environment – emblematically in Japan, a country with notable examples of collectivism and phenomena of social withdrawal by those who feel and resent its pressure.

The character's development makes it possible to shift the focus of his core characteristics of intelligence, nobleness, extravagance and eagerness to help, to high-intellect, asocial behaviour, and eagerness to solve crimes for the sake of self-amusement. Therefore, we can conclude that it is still possible to keep the archetype intact while mediating different features relevant for every epoch and every society.

High intellect and asociality, or avoidant behaviour seem to have become features describing both a modern English Sherlock Holmes, and his Japanese counterpart as well. A *hikikomori* (or *otaku*) type seems to have become another impersonation of the nerdy and geeky famous detective, making East and West meet halfway. These common features appear to connect archetypical features of the character with his modern impersonations, regardless of different cultural backgrounds. Contemporary tendencies of media-texts, which develop features immanent to detective stories, now show a tendency to erase nationally

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specific features within the circumstances of globalisation, while common features evolve on the surface letting audiences forget the differences.

Natalia Rumak graduated from Moscow State University majoring in Economics and Japanese language and completed a PhD in Linguistics with a thesis titled 'Theoretical and Practical Problems of Cross-Lingual Matches (Illustrated by Examples of Translation of Japanese Onomatopoetic Words)'. She is currently an assistant professor in the Institute of Asian and African Studies in Lomonosov Moscow State University teaching Japanese language, theoretical and practical translation, and history of Japanese language. She decided to participate in the project due to her interest towards British and Japanese culture and their mutual influence.

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