

"Britain in Japanese anime: truth, fiction and fantasy"

「日本のアニメに描かれたイギリス：真実、虚構、ファンタジー」

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For a long time, I have been interested in the relationship between Japan and Britain. Like other people before me, I have noticed the many things Japan and Britain have in common, some important, some perhaps trivial. Both are island nations; both sit next to continents that have had a deep influence on them in terms of language, culture and religion, but from which they feel quite distinct. Both share interests in tea, politeness, the weather, gardens, queuing, and so on. Yet there are also many obvious differences, and British tourists in Japan experience various forms of culture shock.

To discover what is different in another culture – whether it's the custom of removing one's shoes on entering a home, turning pages from left to right, or even heated toilet seats – makes us consider our own culture in new ways. It helps us to see ourselves from the outside, transforming customs that have always seemed very familiar and natural, and making them appear suddenly strange. In other words, in learning about Japan I am also learning about Britain. Meanwhile, that combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar – the 甘い and 酸っぱい – is part of Japan's fascination for me.

So, I'm interested both in how the British see Japan, and in how the Japanese see Britain, but really these are just two sides of the same coin. I'm less concerned with what people get right or what they get wrong than with the ways that we *use* each other's countries, for the purposes of imagination and fantasy. Today, with that in mind, I would like to report on the understandings (and misunderstandings) of Britain that I have noticed in Japanese animated films for television and cinema.

These are the topics I will cover:

1. Japan – an Eastern Wonderland?
2. Fantasies of Britain
3. Studio Ghibli and British Fantasy Literature

Fantasy and Wonderlands – the British looking at Japan

Let me begin by saying a little about the ways that the British have seen Japan in terms of fantasy. Fantasy literature is full of wonderlands, but in the British imagination Japan has always had an ambiguous position – both a real place and a place of the imagination.

That history goes back at least to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, published in 1726 . In Swift's book, the Englishman Lemuel Gulliver visits many invented countries: the lands of the little people, of giants and of talking horses. In his third voyage, he visits the flying island of Laputa, as well as Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubdubdrib, and... Japan. Of the places Gulliver describes, all are invented by Swift, with that one exception.

Gulliver writes:

We landed at a small port-town called Xamoschi [?], situated on the south-east part of Japan; the town lies on the western point, where there is a narrow strait leading northward into a long arm of the sea, upon the north-west part of which, Yedo [江戸], the metropolis, stands...

If you don't know this part of the book you will be pleased to learn that Gulliver is well treated during his visit to Japan. He doesn't stay very long (he soon sails for Europe from Nangasak 「ナンガサク/長崎?」); but isn't it strange that he comes here at all, considering that all his other destinations are fictional?

Perhaps it's not so strange. At the time Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, after all, it was impossible for Englishmen to travel to Japan, because of the policy of *sakoku* (鎖国). Japan was an unknown and mysterious country, as hard to reach as fairyland. Perhaps that's why Swift included it in a book about imaginary places?

More than a century later – on 4th July 1862, in fact – Charles Dodgson (who wrote under the name Lewis Carroll) took a boat trip down the River Thames with the young Alice Liddell and her two sisters. The story he told to amuse the children that day later became the book *Alice in Wonderland*, which is almost as famous here as in its homeland. (Indeed, only in Japan can you eat in an Alice-themed restaurant like “Alice's Fantasy” in Shibuya, or bow your head to enter the tiny door that leads to “Alice on Wednesdays”. And, of course, in the 1980s it became an anime.)

Alice in Wonderland was published in 1865, and became popular immediately in Britain. Seventeen years later, the author D. C. Angus published *The Eastern Wonderland* (1882), a book in which he aimed to introduce modern Japan to young British readers. The book is not well known now, but its title tells us something about the way the British thought of Japan. Angus was British himself, but in order to tell his story he invented the character of a Japanese man, born in 1850, who had lived for a while in London and been introduced to *Alice in Wonderland* by his host family:

The children were much given to talking about “Alice in Wonderland”, and one day I rashly said, “I don't believe your Alice saw things a bit more wonderful than you would see if I could take you to *my* country. *That* is a wonderland if you like!” Then, of course, they began to ask how and why, and to set some startling incident of Alice's life before me, and ask if I

could match that! And then I used to bring out the oddest things I knew (odd, I mean, to English people), and sometimes succeeded in beating Alice.

Throughout the book the author repeatedly reminds us that Japan is a “looking-glass” world, in which the ordinary rules of England are reversed. For example, in describing a street of craftsmen, he writes :

Carpenters make our shoes, and basket-makers our hats; and you would see the blacksmith pulling the bellows with his foot, the cooper holding his tub with his toes, the tailor sewing *from* him, and the sawyer pulling the saw *to* him, and many ways of doing things which would seem to you “upside down” if you had walked through our streets and watched the people at work. (83)

So, two of the most important early works of British fantasy can be related to Japan, directly or indirectly, and in each case Japan appears a kind of “wonderland”, a land of fantasy. The later history of the ways that Japan has been subject to “orientalist” fantasy is a long and complex one, and could be the subject of another lecture. But while the British were looking at the Japanese, they were also being looked at, and that’s what I want to consider now.

Fantasies of Britain

Britain has several functions and images within Japanese anime, and for the sake of clarity I have divided them into categories:

- a place that is interesting precisely for its foreignness
- the land of “gentlemen” and aristocratic living
- a centre for magic and magical schools
- the centre of worldwide organisations, sometimes sinister or secret

The “foreignness” of Britain and the British

The attraction of foreignness is something I wish to illustrate through the TV anime *Kiniro Mosaic* (Studio Gokumi), first aired in 2013 and based on the four-panel manga by Yui Hara, which began in 2010. This story is largely set in a Japanese high school, but in the first episode Shinobu, then still a middle-school student, goes to England for a homestay and becomes friends with Alice, an English girl of the same age. After Shinobu returns home Alice misses her. She learns Japanese in England, and transfers to a Japanese high school to join Shinobu and her friends. *Kiniro Mosaic* is a charming, healing anime about their life together in Japan, but it frequently refers back to Alice’s home – a farmhouse in the beautiful countryside of the Cotswolds, in southern England.

Just as the child readers of D. C. Angus’s *The Eastern Wonderland* were invited to be fascinated by Japan as a “wonderland” full of unfamiliar customs, so it is the foreign quality of Alice and her home

that initially attracts Shinobu. When she first steps into the farmhouse, Alice's mother tells her it's not necessary to remove her shoes, which makes her to exclaim in delight: ["So foreign!" 「外国っポイ!」]. Here and elsewhere, the differences between England and Japan are highlighted. One of the things that Shinobu loves about Alice, for example, is her blonde hair, which gives the anime its name. (About one in seven British people is blonde, but it is perhaps the most obviously foreign hair colour for Japanese people.)

Alice, in turn, becomes fascinated by all things Japanese, especially Shinobu herself. Part of the show's humour lies in the contrast between Shinobu's obsession with Britain, and Alice's obsession with Japan. Shinobu sleeps in a Western-style bed, Alice on a futon. Alice's breakfast consists of natto, rice, miso soup, tsukemono and fish, while Shinobu has a traditional English breakfast of bacon, fried egg, tomato, black pudding and toast with homemade English jam. The choice of the name "Alice" is not coincidental, of course: Alice's blonde hair is shared by Alice in Wonderland, as portrayed by Sir John Tenniel in Lewis Carroll's original book (although Alice Liddell really had straight dark hair, like Shinobu herself). The first episode of the series is even called 「不思議の国の」. The connection is highlighted early on, when Shinobu receives an airmail letter from Alice, and her friend Yoko assumes that it must have come from Wonderland (this scene is in both the manga and the anime). Of course, we laugh at Yoko's mistake, but in Shinobu's imagination Britain really is a kind of wonderland.

Shinobu's interest in Britain as an exotic location recalls those places in Japan designed to cater to the same taste. For example, there is British Hills in Fukushima, a "British" resort for people who can't (or don't want to) leave Japan: "The Britain that Anybody Can Visit Without a Passport", as it says on their homepage. British Hills provides a select variety of British locations: a castle, a manor house, a Tudor pub, a tea room. Similarly, the church of Brockhampton in Herefordshire has been faithfully recreated in Osaka, to allow Japanese couples to get married in a European church without leaving the Kansai region. Of course, there is a difference between the rural setting of the original church and the replica, which is located on the 20th floor of a tower block, but once you're inside perhaps that doesn't matter? Then there is Yufuin Floral Village in Kyuushu, which was created in 2012 and is based on the idea of a Cotswold village, even containing a shop called "Alice in Wonderland".

Finally, I should mention Dreamton in Kameoka, Kyoto Prefecture, a village based on the famously pretty village of Castle Combe in the Cotswolds. (The choice of the name "Dreamton" is quite significant. Is Britain a real country, or just a dream, like Alice's dream of Wonderland?) In Dreamton, as in most of these locations, a great deal of effort has been put into researching the physical details – from stone arches to window latches – and reproducing them accurately. For British and Japanese visitors alike, this can lead to a sense of such places as being "uncanny" – falling into an unsettling gap between the familiar and unfamiliar, between reality and make-believe. In Dreamton, are you in England or Japan?

Despite the accuracy of their details, British Hills, Yufuin Floral Village and Dreamton offer a very selective vision of what Britain is like. The Britain visible here contains only old, high-status and rural buildings. The urban, industrial and modern aspects of Britain – that is, the Britain where most people actually live – are all absent. Similarly, the vision of the English countryside offered by *Kiniro Mosaic* is idealized: not many English people live in a beautiful old farmhouse in the Cotswolds.

Nevertheless, the anime is also accurate, in that the makers of the anime found real locations for the scenes set in England and reproduced them faithfully. Places like this are not typical, but they do exist! Alice's house, for example, is based on a real eighteenth-century building, Fosse Farmhouse, which is just three kilometres from Castle Combe, and in reality is run as a guest house by Caron Cooper. The animators were careful to reproduce the house accurately.

In this respect, the *Kiniro Mosaic* anime is very different from Yui Hara's original four-panel manga. The manga showed Shinobu's arrival at and departure from Alice's house, but the imagery is far less true to the appearance of the Cotswolds. In the manga, Alice house appears to be made of wood, a highly unusual building material for house walls in Britain. Even more strangely, her village is surrounded by snow-capped mountains, scenery that may be common in Japan but is unheard of in southern England: the Cotswolds are a place of low, gentle hills, not mountains. Perhaps Yui Hara was unfamiliar with English landscape and architecture; or perhaps, in a four-panel manga it was more important to convey the general sense of "house" and "countryside" quickly to Japanese readers. In any case, the Studio Gokumi team who converted the manga to an anime had a very different set of priorities. Details such as the teddy-bear doorstep at the entrance to the house, the bedspread with heraldic patterns in Shino's room and the 1954 Morris Minor driven by Alice's father truthfully reflect what the studio found when they visited Fosse Farmhouse with a film crew in 2012. (Caron Cooper had bought the bedspread that year to celebrate Elizabeth II's 60th year as queen.)

If the anime is modelled on a real house, to an extent the reverse is also true: the real house now recreates, or at least preserves, the anime. These days, most of the visitors who come to Fosse Farmhouse are Japanese, and a majority are fans of *Kiniro Mosaic*. Naturally, they want to see the house looking just as it did on television. More, they want to photograph themselves, re-enacting their favourite scenes. Caron Cooper has even produced a postcard bringing this fantasy to life by superimposing Alice onto a photograph of the real farmhouse. Caron has every reason not to change the house's appearance. Her business depends on conveying a very specific aspect of British culture in a very specific way – a way shaped by the expectations and desires of those who see it. This does not mean that there is anything fake about Fosse Farmhouse, but, like most interactions between people, this one has an element of self-awareness. The England of *Kiniro Mosaic* tells us as much about Japan's fantasy as about England's reality; but it also tells us a lot about the way that the English wish to be seen.

That sense of falling halfway between fantasy and reality that I mentioned before in connection with places such as Dreamton exists in England, too. Castle Combe, for example, is a genuine village, but so perfect in its old-fashioned architecture that it feels like a film set. When I visited with a young Japanese friend earlier this year, she asked, "Do people really live here?" They do; but in fact the village has also been used as a set for many films and television programmes, and the villagers have to be careful not to modernise its appearance.

A recent example the pressure to preserve the "picturesque" appearance of such places occurred in the nearby village of Bibury. Bibury is the location of a famous street known as Arlington Row – a row of houses built in 1380, and considered so beautiful that they even appear inside British passports. A street could hardly be given a clearer national endorsement. (Arlington Row also makes a brief appearance in *Kiniro Mosaic*.) One of the houses in Arlington Row is inhabited by Peter Maddox, a retired dentist. In 2015, Mr Maddox shocked his neighbours by buying a bright yellow car,

which he parked outside his house. As a result, he was accused of ruining the scenery, and spoiling tourists' photographs. Early in 2017 his car was even vandalised, and the word "Move" was scratched into the paintwork. That act caused outrage amongst other owners of yellow cars, and in April hundreds of them came from all over Britain to drive through the village and show their support for Mr Maddox. Here we can see two precious British principles in conflict: consideration for one's neighbours, and the right to live as one pleases, even if that includes buying a car that doesn't fit the surroundings.

In case you're interested, Mr Maddox has now replaced his yellow car with a grey one, and peace has returned to Arlington Row.

Land of the 'gentleman' and of aristocratic living

Beyond *Kiniro Mosaic*, a persistent image perpetuated through anime (as well as in other ways) is the idea of Britain as the land of the "gentleman" and of aristocratic living. Many anime featuring Britain concentrate on high-born characters who live in large houses, have servants, and come from aristocratic families. Of course, the British themselves also maintain this image in shows such as *Downton Abbey*, which was popular in both Britain and Japan. And, just as you can go to Alice's Fantasy in Shibuya or Dreamton in Kameoka, you can live out this British fantasy by visiting a Butler Café such as the Swallowtail Café in Ikebukuro. For anime examples I will mention *Black Butler* (2008), which tells of the wealthy young Victorian, Ciel Phantomhive and his demon butler, Sebastian Michaelis, and the first part of the popular *Jojo's Bizarre adventure* (2007 [anime film], 2012 [TV series]), which is set in 1880s Britain and centres on the wealthy Joestar family.

As I have said, these kinds of buildings and lifestyles are not typical in Britain. When Japanese people come to Britain expecting it to resemble *Downton Abbey*, the reality can be a shock, as William Hollingworth has pointed out:

Japanese often fantasize and have an idealized image about life in London and Britain, but once they arrive they can become quite disillusioned ... some Japanese women may feel disappointed that British men do not match up to their expectations of a traditional English gentleman.¹

Probably some Westerners have come to Japan expecting to find everyone living in traditional Japanese houses, and have been surprised to see Starbucks and McDonalds on every street corner; but Japan's image in the West is ultra-modern as well as traditional: indeed, this combination of qualities is seen as part of its appeal. I don't think the same is true of Britain's image in Japan.

Land of magical knowledge and/or schools

¹ William Hollingworth, 'Life in U.K. comes as a shock for many Japanese', *The Japan Times*, 29 August, 2014. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/08/29/national/science-health/therapy-offer-japanese-struggling-adjust-life-u-k/#.WDvf0fmLRPY>.

Britain's association with magic, and especially magical schools, is evident in many anime. For example, in the 1999 magical girl anime *Cardcaptor Sakura*, Clow Reed, the maker of the clow cards that give Sakura her power, is the son of a Chinese mother and English father. Both are magicians, and Clow is especially powerful because he combines Western and Eastern magic.

In Britain, books about magical schools have a long history, but Harry Potter has certainly been the most important factor in spreading the popularity of the genre around the world. An example of a Japanese anime that shows a strong Harry Potter influence is *Little Witch Academia*, which began as a short film in 2013, and in 2017 became a TV series. The story concerns a magical school called Luna Nova Academy, located in the South-West of England. The academy's pupils have various nationalities, including the Japanese protagonist, Akko, and other young witches from Russian, America, and so on. But its British setting in a school full of dangers and secrets, including a Sorcerer's Stone, strongly recalls Hogwarts. Also, the story uses certain quite obscure British magical ideas, such as ley lines; while Akko's main rival, an English girl with the aristocratic name Diana Cavendish, prides herself on coming from a long line of witches – something that underlines the status of Britain as an ancient centre of magic.

The witches of *Little Witch Academia* may be directly influenced by Harry Potter, but anime has depicted many other kinds of magical schools in recent years, from religious magic of the True Cross Academy in *Blue Exorcist* (2011) to the hi-tech magic of *An Irregular at Magic High School* (2014). Neither of these claims any overt connection with Britain, but in other anime the British influence on the magical school genre is openly acknowledged. For example, in *Fate/stay night: Unlimited Blade Works* (2015) Japan has its own powerful magicians and the story largely takes place in that country; but only in Britain is it possible to truly complete a magical education, and at the end of the series the main characters, Rin and Shirou, complete their magical training at a college hidden beneath London's Houses of Parliament – the international headquarters of the Mages Association, known as the Clock Tower.

Land of secret (sometimes sinister) organisations, magical and otherwise.

Apart from magical schools, anime often show Britain as the headquarters of secret and even sinister worldwide organisations. One very explicit example is *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion* (2006), in which Japan has been invaded by the "Holy Britannian Empire". More often, though, Britain's power is not military but magical or hidden. In *Read or Die* (2001), for example, we see a world in which an international network of spies and magicians skilled in the use of paper magic is run from the Special Operations Division of the British Library in London. Their motto is: "Peace to the Books of the World, an Iron Hammer to Those Who Would Abuse Them, and Glory and Wisdom to the British Empire!" In *A Certain Magical Index* (2008), the Church of England has become a powerful force, pursuing its own goals throughout the world using a secret network of agents and magicians. And in *Death Note* (2006) we see Wammy's House, a school for child geniuses just outside Winchester. It is in Wammy's House that the international detectives L, Near and Mello are raised, and from which they come to help catch the serial killer, Light Yagami.

These examples perhaps reflect the ways in which the United Kingdom attempts to maintain its standing in the world today; that is, through cultural institutions and the tools of so-called “soft power”, rather than military imperialism of the kind practised in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The BBC, the Commonwealth, the (real) Anglican Church, the British Council and the financial centre of the City of London have all helped maintain British cultural influence; so has the ability of public schools such as Eton and universities such as Oxford and Cambridge to attract the children of world leaders. Also, there is the English language itself, which has become a worldwide second language, spread by the power of the British Empire in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth. (Even Japanese shinigami write their Death Notes in English!) Perhaps all this helps explain Britain’s habitual position in anime as the centre of a web of intrigue?

British fantasy literature and Studio Ghibli

So far I have talked about portrayals of Britain itself in anime. Finally, I want to spend a little time on the ways in which British fantasy literature has been used in Japanese animation. Of course there’s *Alice in Wonderland*, but I want to concentrate on what is certainly the best-known anime studio in the West, Studio Ghibli, which has often drawn on British fantasy in its films. But in what ways has it made use of British fantasy literature? And in what ways does it portray Britain in the resulting anime?

These are not straightforward questions. For example, the floating island of Laputa, which gives its name to Miyazaki’s *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* 天空の城ラピュタ (1986), first appeared in *Gulliver’s Travels*, where it is visited by Gulliver during the same voyage that later takes him to Japan; but in other respects that film owes little to Swift’s book. I certainly can’t describe the anime as an adaptation of Swift’s story, even if the floating island itself came from there.

Still, it is notable how many of Studio Ghibli’s films are based on British children’s fantasy books.

- Diana Wynne Jones, *Howl’s Moving Castle* (1986) → *Howl’s Moving Castle* ハウルの動く城 (2004)
- Mary Norton, *The Borrowers* (1952) → *Arrietty* 借りぐらしのアリエッティ (2010)
- Joan G. Robinson, *When Marnie was there* (1967) → *When Marnie Was There* 思い出のマーニー (2014)

The main part of Diana Wynne Jones’s novel *Howl’s Moving Castle* (2004) is not set in Britain but in a fantasy land named Ingary. However, the novel’s title character, Howl, is a Welshman (his real name is Howell Jenkins), who has travelled to Ingary from Wales by magic. In one scene, he takes the other main character, Sophie (a native of Ingary), to twentieth-century Wales, where she is amazed to find children playing computer games in his sister’s terraced house. (Since she has only ever lived in a fantasy land, she naturally assumes that they are using magic.) This scene, along with some other very British aspects of the book, such as its use of a well-known English poem as a magical spell, was omitted from Ghibli’s anime, leaving the film with a far more generic, middle-European fantasy setting.

One can say of this *Howl's Moving Castle*, as of several other films by Ghibli, that "The setting is vaguely European, but we can't tell exactly what race or nationality its people are."² (That quotation is taken from Hayao Miyazaki's original proposal for *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*, but couldn't it apply just as easily to *Howl's Moving Castle*, or indeed *Kiki's Delivery Service*?) Diana Wynne Jones herself admired Miyazaki's film, but said that "if a real-life actor were to play Howl in *Howl's Moving Castle*, I would not choose someone pretty, like Howl in Miyazaki's animation. I would choose a Welsh actor, with a long, bony face, handsome enough in his way, but not *pretty*." The Welshness of Howl was important to her.

Ironically, perhaps, *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* shows more of Wales than *Howl's Moving Castle*, since the mining village in that film was partly inspired by Miyazaki's visit to the Welsh mining valleys in 1984, during a long and bitter industrial dispute. "I admired those men," Miyazaki later told a journalist. "I admired the way they battled to save their way of life."³ That sense of community found its way into the miners' village in *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*. If Wales was erased from *Howl's Moving Castle*, then, it was inserted into *Laputa*, using not fantasy but industrial politics of a very un-magical kind. The creative process is never predictable!

The British origins of the other films I mentioned are also somewhat hidden. Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952), about a family of tiny people leading hidden lives within a human house, is set near the English town of Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire, but when it was adapted by Ghibli as *Arrietty* (2010), the story was relocated to Japan. Similarly, the original setting of Joan G. Robinson's *When Marnie Was There* (1967) on the coast of East Anglia in England, was replaced with a setting in Hokkaido.

Of course, this is not so surprising: these films were made for a Japanese audience, after all. Long before Studio Ghibli existed, American studios routinely took British stories and transferred them to the United States. The novel *The War of the Worlds*, for example, was originally set in Surrey, near London, before it was transferred to California. Similarly, the recent film of *Death Note* transferred the story from Japan to the United States. There are many examples of this kind.

Some traces of these stories' British origins remains in both Ghibli films, however. In the case of *Arrietty*, we learn that the doll's house that Shou's grandfather had made to house the "little people" was actually made in Britain:

[元々はね、私の父がイギリスに注文して、小人たちのために作られたものなの。]

["Originally, my father ordered it in England; it was made for the little people."]

² Hayao Miyazaki, "Original Proposal for *Castle in the Sky*," in *Starting Point: 1979-1996* (San Francisco: VIZ Media, 1996), pp. 252-55: 253.

³ Xan Brooks, "A god among animators" , *The Guardian* 14 Sept 2005
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/sep/14/japan.awardsandprizes>.

It seems likely to me that this small detail is a way of acknowledging that the story of *Arrietty* was itself made in Britain. Beyond that, we should look at the figures of the Borrowers themselves. Arrietty, unlike her parents, has red hair, which is very uncommon among Japanese people but not so unusual in Britain. Also, although the film gave Japanese names to Shou, his aunt Sadako and Haru, the names of the Borrowers did not change: Pod and Homily are names borrowed from English words. The effect is subtly to distinguish the Borrowers from the humans in the house, in terms of race as well as size.

Marnie's appearance in *When Marnie was There* is even more striking: she is another Alice, with long blonde hair. This is true in the book as well, but there it requires no explanation – after all, blonde girls aren't unusual in England. (That said, even in the novel Marnie's blondeness adds somewhat to the general feeling of unreality associated with her: with her white nightdress and blonde hair, she appears somewhat ghostlike: "She was wearing a long, flimsy dress, and her fair hair fell in strands over her shoulders" [p. 54].) In the film's Hokkaido setting, Marnie's appearance is far more striking; and Anna's blue eyes, which she has inherited from Marnie, mark her out as having European ancestry. Marnie's house is also strikingly Western in its design. It's as if Marnie and her home have been imported from England to Japan, to a context where they seem more unusual and thus, perhaps, magical.

I'll finish by bringing this story up to date. Both *Arrietty* and *When Marnie was There* were directed for Ghibli by Hiromasa Yonebayashi. Today (8th July 2017) sees the release of his new the movie *Mary and the Witch's Flower*, the first film from Studio Ponoc. Like the previous two films, this one is based on a British children's fantasy book, Mary Stewart's *The Little Broomstick*. *The Little Broomstick* was published in 1971, and is another story about a witchcraft school, although this one is more sinister than Hogwarts. Of course, I have not yet had a chance to see the film, but one can see from the trailers that Mary has both the red hair of Arrietty and the blue eyes of Marnie.

Unlike *Arrietty* and *When Marnie was There*, *Mary and the Witch's Flower* has also retained its English setting. (The book's story takes place in Shropshire.) I am very interested to see what difference this setting will make to the adaptation. But it seems that, in this film, Japanese animation based on British children's fantasy is coming home. Home, to Wonderland.

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