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Postmodern Influences in Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes and Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows

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Postmodern Influences in Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes and Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows

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Bakalářská práce se zabývá vlivy postmoderny ve dvou filmových adaptacích režiséra Guye Ritchieho: Sherlock Holmes, Sherlock Holmes: Hra stínů. Cílem práce je analyzovat vlivy posmoderny a porovnat jejich vyobrazení v těchto dvou filmech.

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá dvěma filmovými adaptacemi ságy Sherlocka Holmese od režiséra Guye Ritchie: *Sherlock Holmes* a *Sherlock Holmes: Hra stínů*. V těchto filmových adaptacích hledá a následně vysvětluje vliv postmoderny a postmoderní etiky.

Klíčová slova

Sherlock Holmes, Sherlock Holmes: Hra stínů, detektiv, vyšetřování, postmoderna, film, kniha, Guy Ritchie, kinematografie, Londýn, pastiš, steampunk, multikulturalismus

Annotation

This bachelor thesis deals with two film adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes saga directed by Guy Ritchie – *Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes*: *A Game of Shadows.* It detects and explains the influences of postmodern style and ethics in these two films.

Key Words

Sherlock Holmes, Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows, detective, investigation, postmodernism, film, book, Guy Ritchie, cinematography, pastiche, steampunk, multiculturalism

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1 Introduction

The depiction of the character Sherlock Holmes has changed notably since its first appearance in the book *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) from Arthur Conan Doyle. This fictional character was created in a series of novels and short stories at the end of the 19th century, and by the 21st century Sherlock Holmes became a prototype of a detective. We can see him not only in written texts but also in several films which were produced to seek out a larger and larger audience.

The main object of this thesis is to analyse Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011) and to prove the influence of postmodernism on the films and their characters. Ritchie's direction is noticeably influenced by postmodernism as his films carry many traits of editing connected to it, such as fast cuts, retrospective scenes, overlapping of happening in one scene with the happening in another scene and many more, which will be explained in the thesis.

It is easily noticeable that the films are not close adaptations of the books as such but are constructed as additions to the saga of the fictional detective. In the year 2015 the rights to additions to the works written by Doyle entered the public domain (Pearson 2017, 115). In the year 2009 and 2011 they were still owned by his descendants, but they did not control the new adaptations and their resemblance to the original. (arthurconandoyle.com 2020)

Sherlock Holmes in this concept is noticeably different to his depiction in the stories. Originally, in the book form, different features of his character are emphasized than those he has in Ritchie's films: the movies highlight his cocaine addiction, combative skills and participation in various fights, as well as his willingness to have a relationship, whether it be with his female counterpart Irene

Adler or his male companion doctor John Watson. These elements of the character are mentioned in the books but are more accentuated in the films. As Ritchie and subsequently even Robert Downey point out, these habits can be justified "by pointing out the original stories, where Holmes is often depicted boxing, sprinting, and disguising himself on chases". (Reisenleitner 2014, 126)

The first part of this thesis deals in detail with postmodernism and its various interpretations by different philosophers and thinkers. It mainly discusses this notion on an ethical and philosophical level, primarily from the perspective of Derridean deconstruction, since these two aspects manifest themselves the most in the movies. Furthermore, this part describes, in a chapter called films and postmodernism, a way in which these ethical and philosophical ideas are transported visually to the movie form.

The second part gives a short summary of the plot of both films; then, it intends to demonstrate and prove the cinematic influences of postmodernism in the movies. It focuses predominantly on the editing of scenes and the camera techniques, the use of computer-generated imagery (CGI), in addition to pointing out the impact of postmodernism on the nostalgic setting of Victorian London in the late nineteenth century. Lastly, it detects the ethical aspects of postmodernism, describing the impacts of contemporary gender roles and multiculturalism on the movies.

This thesis will demonstrate that there are many traits in the films which are specifically characteristic to postmodernist strategies. These techniques, however, were utilized also because of the demand of Hollywood studios and audiences. As Ritchie with Downey Jr. emphasize in one of their interviews, "We try to stick authentically to Doyle's vision so to speak … we try to make it contemporary… it's

more than an English treasure, it is more like an international treasure. We tried to create this marriage of an English icon and something that really needed an American studio behind it in order to bring it to its full potential." (Clipsism 2009, 0:00:34) This statement indicates that what they actually intended was to seek the audience of Hollywood-style mainstream multiplex cinema; yet, I will demonstrate that they simultaneously created a postmodern addition to the vastly extensive and varied Holmes universe.

2 Postmodernism

This chapter provides a brief summary of postmodernism, focussing on its ethical and philosophical sides, and subsequently it focuses on how this ideology and creative technique reflect their characteristic traits in the media of the film.

2.1 Postmodern characteristics

The definitions of the term 'postmodernism' are complicated and manifold. According to Robinson**,** postmodernism is merely an umbrella term for "a bundle of stances, values, opinions or feelings which one has, when living in late 20th century and beginning of the 21st century". (Robinson 2000, 42) The only certain idea about postmodernism is that it is highly sceptical towards ideologies, truth and reality, which originates from its obsession with language and meaning. This originates mainly from structuralist ideas, most notably the theoretical works of Ferdinand de Saussure. Based on his thoughts, postmodernists argue that there are endless ways of interpretation for the reality described by language (Robinson 2000, 43). Hicks confirms this in his work *Explaining Postmodernism, Scepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* and says that

> Postmodernism's essentials are the opposite of modernism's. Instead of natural reality – anti-realism. Instead of experience and reason – linguistic social subjectivism. Instead of individual identity and autonomy – various race, sex, and class groupism. Instead of human interests as fundamentally harmonious and tending toward mutually-beneficial interaction – conflict and oppression. Instead of valuing individualism in values, markets, and politics – calls for communalism, solidarity, and egalitarian restraints. Instead of

> prizing the achievements of science and technology – suspicion tending toward outright hostility. (2004, 14)

Welsch also argues that the term postmodernism is not definable, but he provides a short summary of how the term came to be. The term was first used more than a 100 years ago by the painter John W. Chapman. Around the year of 1870 he and his associates called their art *postmodern* because it got past the modern style and it used the technique of their current times – impressionism. The meaning meant simply that it surpassed the modern style of that time period. In 1917 the term was being used by Rudolf Pannwitz, who talks about *a postmodern person* – on the one hand, toughened by sport, nationalistic, disciplined, and religious but, on the other hand, nihilistic, decadent and radical. In 1947, in *A Study of History* by Arnold Toynbee, the western culture is described as *post-modern* which in this case aims at the transformation of politics from focusing itself on the state to the global interaction of nations.

In the US of the 1950s this term became the topic of a continual discussion, in which the main focus was put on literature. Irving Howe and Harry Levin, two prominent American literary critics, declared that contemporary literature, unlike the authors of modernism – W. B Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce – is distinguishable by its lowered standards, lack of innovation and that it has almost no impact on the reader. In this sense, they talk about post-modern literature.

The next turning point in the discussion came in the 1960s when the comparison with classical literature stopped and new authors saw the purpose of their works in connecting the literature for the wide variety of readers and the literature for

the elites. They tried to appeal to all social classes and deal with diverse themes. Realism and fantasy are interconnected in their books, featuring outsider heroes, technology and myth. This discussion formed today's approach to postmodernism: "Postmodernism exists in works where there are many types of discourse, models and ways of acting and that is not in different works but just in one." (Welsch 1993, 21) The term 'Postmodernism' became a credible term in literary discussion as it transformed from a negative word marking elements of lowered standards and declining creativity to a term which describes works which contain undeniable traces of the pluralism of ideas, groups, styles of writing, genres, and, most importantly, interpretations. (Welsch 1993, 18-21)

Pluralism in this sense is the exact opposite of unity and cognition. As Hicks states, language serves mainly for the purpose of persuasion and is of attractiveness in the absence of truth or cognition. He presents the thoughts of more radical postmodernists, who claim that language is a weapon and care only for its effectiveness, because in case of harsh statements and ad hominem attacks, the truth and falsity are no longer the issues, they are only an effect. (Hicks 2004, 175–178)

Jacques Derrida's term deconstruction is closely connected to postmodernism itself. Its basic principle is that rather than undoubtedly believe in an idea, it is better to learn the aspects of the opposing view. This 'privileging' ideas he demonstrates on binary examples such are speaking vs. writing, reason over passion, men over women, words over pictures and sight over touch, high culture over low-culture, where he always tries to understand and respect the opposing and less valuable of those two opposites. To explain his now iconic term "deconstruction," Derrida writes in his book *Of Grammatology* that "[Deconstruction] must take into account the lack

of sovereignty of the critic himself," which then leads to "a realization that one's choice of 'evidence' is provisional, a self-distrust, a distrust of one´s own power, the control of one's vocabulary." (1976, 63) Thus, the "task is to dismantle (déconstruire) the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work in (the text), not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way." (Derrida 1976, 63)

Deconstruction does not work only with opposites but also with other texts, contexts, and sub-texts and their relation to the original. As Güney states in his work, "deconstruction accounts for how the text's explicit formulations undermine its implicit or non-explicit aspects" (2008, 223). Derrida himself observes that "We must do a thing and its opposite, and indeed we desire to do both, and so on indefinitely. Deconstruction is a perpetually self-deconstructing movement that is inhabited by difference. No text is ever fully deconstructing or deconstructed." (Derrida 1976, 67). All authors, knowingly or not, are framed by language: "all the claims, which could the philosopher make about the inherit truths lying beyond the borders of language, are therefore destroyed." (Robinson 2000, 47) Language is in Derrida's mind always metaphoric and, by using it, it is not possible to understand the core of such terms as "truth" and "cognition." This means that in order to "understand", it is necessary to create hegemony and marginalize the other opinions which do not correspond with what the "normal" definitions of these terms denote.

Derrida's philosophy deconstructs and criticises, but does not want to contribute to anything, rather to show different interpretations and dissect or destruct the original claim. It questions the meaning of every interpretation and ideology, cherishes difference, plurality and tolerant democracy, nevertheless it undermines

every rule written or spoken due to its inherit scepticism of language. As Derrida puts it, “Deconstruction can therefore never be a positive science.” (1997, 65)

Postmodern philosophical ideas, especially those of Derrida, spawned many followers, but eventually resulted in many criticisms. In a harsh refusal of deconstruction, Hogenová explains that “postmodern time has in itself many pseudos, errors created by ignorance, and since everyone has a right to their own interpretation, we are slowly approaching a point of absurdity” (Hogenová 2015, 178). This concurs with Willoquet-Maricondi’s opinion, who says that Derrida offers no secure ground, which traditional structuralists such as Saussure do; “He himself, has no qualms about embracing a world of signs without truth and without origin and offering it to our active interpretation” (Willoquet-Maricondi 2008, 126).

According to its critics, postmodernism will never produce new ethical or political philosophies which could potentially replace those which it so ruthlessly criticises (Robinson 2000, 47). Perhaps one of the most influential contemporary critics of postmodernism, Jordan Peterson, accuses postmodernists that they disagree with fundamental matters and perceive them as relative insofar as “there is no right or wrong in anything”. For example, when Peterson talks about morality, he argues that postmodernists perceive it as a matter of personal opinion or happenstance. He also mentions that according to postmodernists, “one’s group morality is nothing but its attempt to exercise power over another group” (Peterson 2018, 14) and adds that postmodernists view judgement as the worst character flaw imaginable.

Later in his book he argues that societal structures, traditions are by means of deconstruction further and further dismantled: “Our society faces the increasing call to deconstruct our society’s stabilizing traditions to include smaller and smaller

numbers of people who do not or will not fit into the categories upon which even our perceptions are based. This is not a good thing. Each person's private trouble cannot be solved by social revolution, because revolutions are destabilizing and dangerous." (Peterson 2018, 123) He argues that postmodernism provides an endless number of interpretations for everything, paraphrasing what Derrida communicates with his process of deconstruction. He also adds that what we must exempt from this theory is that there are certain restrains on our actions, because if there is no right way to interpret what is being done, written, or said, we cannot function as a society. Thus, we should always have a functional interpretation. To illustrate this, he provides an example including Shakespeare's play. "If there we look at Hamlet and interpret it as a lesson to kill our family and ourselves, [a] sensible person should say that it is the wrong interpretation." (PowerfulJRE 2017, 0:35:43) Furthermore, Peterson argues that postmodernists do not care about the constraints which our interpretation has, such as effects on other people, our wellbeing, the environment around us, and countless other aspects.

Peterson's argument about power leads us to a claim that postmodernists do not engage in dialogue and if so then a communication between different power hierarchies leads only to affirmation of the paramount side. This outlines a situation with an oppressor and oppressed where a discussion does not exist and if it did, it would always benefit the oppressor's side. Peterson believes that postmodernism is an assault on our culture and everything that has been thought of since the era of Enlightenment – rationality, empiricism, science, clarity of mind, individuality, and dialogue. The individuality is suppressed and replaced by grouping people together and artificially created conflicts.

Hicks claims, also somewhat disapprovingly, that postmodernism's complex thought process does not provide any additional thoughts, but rather tries to undermine much of what is said or done. (Hicks 2004, 27) For example, questioning the meaning of the word "meaning" itself does not lead anywhere. Stanley Fish's argument seems to confirm this with his claim that "Deconstruction relieves me of the obligation to be right … and demands only that I be interesting" (Fish 1982, 180). If the thoughts of structuralism are taken into consideration, then it can be simply said that all the users of language agreed upon the meaning of this word and there is nothing to discuss further.

On the other hand, Hicks supports the principles of postmodernism in that they tackle the social problems of our time. This would mean to shed light on problems with inequality in the Western civilization of today: "Males, whites, and the rich have their hands on the whip of power, and they use it cruelly at the expense of women, racial minorities, and the poor." (Hicks 2004, 3) The oppression of these minorities is tied strictly to capitalist nations in Hicks's view. Thus, Hicks provides a brief summary of the political and ethical aspects of postmodernism:

> Postmodern accounts of human nature are consistently collectivist, holding that individuals' identities are constructed largely by the social-linguistic groups that they are a part of, those groups varying radically across the dimensions of sex, race, ethnicity, and wealth. Postmodern accounts of human nature also consistently emphasize relations of conflict between those groups; and given the de-emphasized or eliminated role of reason, post-modern accounts hold that those conflicts are resolved primarily by the use of force, whether masked

> or naked; the use of force in turn leads to relations of dominance, submission, and oppression. Finally, postmodern themes in ethics and politics are characterized by an identification with and sympathy for the groups perceived to be oppressed in the conflicts, and a willingness to enter the fray on their behalf. (Hicks 2004, 6)

2.2 Films and postmodernism

In this chapter of the thesis I describe postmodernist film traits which are to a large extent key for the subsequent analysis of Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes movies. My analysis will deal with (1) postmodernist editing techniques, (2) referencing to other movies, genres or previous additions in the Sherlock universe, and (3) the growing influence of multiculturalism and contemporary gender relations in the production process.

2.2.1 Postmodernist film editing techniques

The modernist longing for unity and the postmodernist's focusing on the individual aspects and fragmentation are reflected also on the big screen. Fragmentation manifests itself in the postmodernist film particularly in relation to the editing techniques by fast sequences where the director makes use of a series of cuts rapidly following themselves. It is not to say that this was the first-time directors used these methods, but rather that this was a time when this technique evolved and gained recognition once again. This style of editing involves such techniques as jump cuts, whip pans, slow motion, or fast zooms in order to break the flow of visual storytelling (Booker 2007, 5-18).

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson explain these terms in *Film Art: An Introduction.* A jump cut is defined as the following: “when two shots of the same subject are cut together but are not sufficiently different in camera distance and angle, there will be a noticeable jump on the screen” (Bordwell and Thompson 2008, 254). A whip pan, on the other hand, “is a very rapid pan that creates a blurring side-wise motion across the screen. It is usually used as a transition between scenes” (Bordwell and Thompson 2008, 340) Fast zoom-in swiftly and deliberately excludes large part of the frame offscreen and focuses on one focal point (Bordwell and Thompson 2008, 261), whereas zoom-out is precisely the opposite: panning out to explore the wide surrounding of a scene.

These techniques are self-reflexive, and they disrupt Hollywood-style storytelling, which is arguably the most influential type of visual narration these days. Thus, they contribute to the fragmentation of the film and are, therefore, postmodern. Booker, however, also argues that these editing techniques are used to attract young audiences to the cinema; he presents a theory that this “increasing fragmentation of postmodern film can in many ways be seen as a logical extension of older montage techniques and indeed of the evolution of film itself as medium.” (Booker 2007, 2)

To follow up on the postmodern editing techniques, another tool is to depict a frantic activity, which means quick scene switches, also named fast cutting. This editing technique is used, for example, when shooting a conflict between two or more characters. The perspective of the audience changes and focuses either on one character, particularly on their non-verbal actions, or on the reaction of another character. Such a presentation of a non-verbal action can be seen, for example, in the

well-known shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). The film is edited in a way that there are rapid cuts from the murderer to the screaming woman.

Another aim of fast cutting is to convey as much information as possible in the shortest amount of time. A well-known example here may be the drug taking scenes in *Requiem for a Dream* (dir. Darren Aronofsky, 2000) or the montage which summarizes the quick travel from New York to London in *Snatch* (dir. Guy Ritchie, 2000). This technique is also used in *Pi* (dir. Darren Aronofsky, 1998), *Shaun of the Dead* (dir. Edgar Wright, 2004), and *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* (dir. Edgar Wright, 2010). According to its critics, the drawback of this technique is that it may lead to information overload as the audience may not have the time to digest all the conveyed information. Such postmodern films, therefore, may seem chaotic and occasionally leave the audience perplexed.

The lack of chronological depiction, time-bending or nonlinear narrative, appear in a variety of postmodern movies. Perhaps the most iconic example for this can be found in *Memento* (dir. Christopher Nolan, 2000), where flashbacks from the past appear and where the story's scenes are presented in an inverted chronological order. *Donnie Darko* (dir. Richard Kelly, 2001) complexifies its nostalgic plot about the 1980s with the usage of time travel. In *Babel* (dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), *Pulp Fiction* (dir. Quentin Tarantino, 1994), and *500 Days of Summer* (dir. Woody Allen, 2009), the director portrays events out of chronological order; therefore, the timeline of the movie is distorted and it moves backwards and forwards with the usage of cuts in postproduction. This might also include inserting a parallel timeline or featuring a story, which interrupts the main line of plot (Bolewski 2010, 2). The major drawback of this characteristic is its complexity; the viewer gets easily

lost in the plot and sometimes even film critics question if a discernible plot can be reconstructed in such movies.

Closely related to postmodernist timeline is the concept of hyperreality or alternative reality. In terms of hyperreality, it can be seen in films such as *Inception* (dir. Christopher Nolan, 2010), *Total Recall* (dir. Paul Verhoeven, 2012) or *Interstellar* (dir. Christopher Nolan, 2014), with multiple realities showing events on different timelines. Such films visualize a situation where movie-goers "are confronted with apparently reliable, authoritative information tending to confirm the existence of this alternative reality" (McHale 1987 , 22) Usually the most notable examples are tied to science fiction films such as *Matrix* (dir. Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski, 1999), *Source Code* (dir. Duncan Jones, 2011), and *Mr. Nobody* (dir. Jaco Van Dormael, 2009). Yet, they can be also seen in other movies where they appear in the form of alternative history. Revisiting the past and creating or interpreting it differently is emphasized in McHale's book where he talks about postmodernist strategy of apocryphal or alternative history. "Apocryphal history contradicts the official version in one of two ways: either it supplements the historical record, claiming to restore what has been lost or suppressed; or it displaces official history altogether. In both cases, the effect is to juxtapose the officially accepted version of what happened, and the way things were, with another, often radically dissimilar version of the world." (1987, 90) This can be found in Quentin Tarantino's movies such as *Inglorious Bastards* (2009) and *Once upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019) or in *The Invention of Lying* (dir. Ricky Gervais, 2009).

Last but not least, a method used by postmodern cinematographers which needs to be mentioned here is the disruption of reality with self-reflexive tools. This

can be done in various ways, for example, showing the set where the movie is being filmed or showing the production of a film within the film, leading to what McHale describes as mise en abyme: a work of art which includes in itself the replication of its own story (McHale 1987, 14) Typical examples here can be, for example, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (dir. Karel Reisz, 1981) or *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* (dir. Terry Gilliam, 2018). The idea here is once again that the dominion of truth and traditional storytelling are disrupted. (Willoquet-Maricondi 2008, 116-120)

2.2.2 Pastiche and Nostalgia

The undermining of structural filmmaking is thoroughly analysed in Hill's essay "Films and Postmodernism" (1998), where he describes new symbolism as an "alternative tradition in filmmaking, the reworking of old materials and representations by postmodernism [which] is interpreted not simply as a kind of surface play (or 'depthlessness') but as part of a critical project to 'deconstruct' and subvert old meanings as well as 'construct' new ones through the repositioning of artistic and cultural discourses." (Hill 1998, 102). He also applies the term juxtaposition: "in film studies, this usually refers to two different shots that have been joined together to make a contrast" (Nelmes 1996, 395), thus setting the newly created work in comparison to the representations created earlier. The recycling of old materials is not seen as an empty or shallow gesture, since the old is stripped of its original meaning and constructed in a way that it creates a new work of art with a new aesthetic value. (Hill 1998, 102)

Another term to describe this phenomenon is pastiche, which in contrast to parody does not ridicule the genre but rather praises it. Fredric Jameson argues that postmodernism revolves around pastiche and describes this term as "blank parody"

imitating dead styles. He claims that its role is to "reinforce conventional ideologies and seek the historical past in pop images and stereotypes of the past." (Jameson 1991, 64-65) This means that multiple works or genres are mixed together in a way that the movie itself becomes more attractive for the viewer in the 20th century – simpler, more familiar, and fuller.

Jameson describes postmodern film as those with a significant loss of historical depth or emptiness, claiming that the "producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture" (Jameson 1991, 65). This is also tied to a growing number of quotations used to accompany the films plot and also mixing of genre elements, which is one of the key characteristics of a postmodern cinematography. Popular pastiches can be exemplified by Quentin Tarantino's films, for example, *Pulp Fiction* (1994), which is a unique combination of humour and strong violence and is a tribute to Hollywood crime dramas and pulp magazines or his *Kill Bill, Volume 1* (2003), which is a tribute to Hong Kong action movies and spaghetti Westerns.

As a reoccurrence of the past in postmodern films, the form of postmodernist nostalgia forms itself on the screen. Jameson in his essay argues that it is "a desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past", which is now being "refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the 'generation'". (1984, 66) He also questions our memory when it comes to a more distant history, since it is being reproduced in a way that it is conformant to the contemporary attributes of ethics and fashion. The lack of accuracy in depicting historical periods is also due to constant reproductions; in case of Holmes that would

be from a book form to various media adaptations, including the contemporary television and cinematic versions.

The past is viewed upon also when it comes to the subject of a movie namely the protagonist. Jameson argues that current actor's work is judged by his predecessor from a preceding generation (1984, 67-68). This can be illustrated on James Bond and his portrayals: in *Goldfinger* (dir. Guy Hamilton, 1964) by Sean Connery, *The Man with the Golden Gun* (dir. Guy Hamilton 1974) by Roger Moore, *Tomorrow Never Dies* (dir. Roger Spottiswoode 1997) by Pierce Brosnan, *No Time to Die* (dir. Cary Joji Fukunaga 2020) by Daniel Craig.

Most importantly, in connection to the postmodern understanding of nostalgia, the setting must be considered. This is done in contemporary films with the help of editing so that the scenes evoke a given historical period. Jameson says that it is done as "a pastiche of the stereotypical past, which endows present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage". (1984, 68) In other words, this filmic representation of a place is typically a demonstration of our own images. The past appears as we visualize it via previous images, advertisements, music videos, computer games, and other pop-culture images, based on our experience of contemporary visual culture, social media and architectural reality.

2.2.3 Multiculturalism and gender relations

What is also represented in the postmodern cinema is the growing influence of feminism and multiculturalism, the loss of faith in the melting-pot philosophy in multi-ethnic societies (Stuart and du Gay 1996, 54). The traditional narrative style of visual storytelling is associated with the narrative of dominant patriarchal white

social groups and is, therefore, often intentionally disrupted. As Hill observes, this means a "loss of the faith in the idea of progress or the changing film representations of men with a breakdown of confidence in the 'grand narratives' surrounding masculinity and patriarchal authority" (Hill 1998, 100) This leads to the growing number of women and minorities represented in the cinema and to a change in the way such characters appear on the big screen. The representation of women changed from being seen in their stereotypical roles in society (cooking, caring for children, longing for marriage etc.) to more emancipated roles of independent and freethinking figures.

Minority characters break out of their supporting roles and find their place in the centre of action. Postmodern directors "wish to challenge the traditional ways in which particular social groups or 'others' (such as blacks, indigenous peoples, women, and homosexuals) have been represented and wish to portray the complexities of identity properly." (Hill 1998, 102-103) A prime example for this maybe Alfonso Cuaron's *Children of Men* (2006), which describes a dystopian totalitarian future where humanity is at the edge of extinction, and the future for its survival is only possible via the survival of a female African refugee.

On the other hand, racially diverse casts also become more appealing to wide audiences and so, especially in Hollywood movies, the decision to utilize them can also be considered a financially motivated choice. (Anderson 2017)

Based on these traits which appear in these kinds of films, it can be stated that the form of postmodern cinema does not rely solely on a singular storytelling form, especially that of Hollywood-style filmmaking. Instead, it intends to use multiple viewpoints, timelines, styles, genres, and ethnic histories. Therefore, it noticeably

and intentionally does not depict the only version of the story, but rather forms a multiplicity of stories. This is achieved in order to put into question any fixed or totalizing vision of reality. As McRobbie observes, “Postmodernism deflects attention away from the singular scrutinizing gaze of the semiologist and asks that this be replaced by a multiplicity of fragmented, and frequently interrupted, ‘looks’” (1994, 12).

3 The plot

This subchapter serves for better orientation for the reader and thus it summarizes the plot of both Sherlock Holmes films from Guy Ritchie.

3.1 The plot of ‘Sherlock Holmes’

In the late 19th century Sherlock Holmes and his partner Dr. John Watson interrupt Lord Henry Blackwood from a ritualistic murder of a woman. Blackwood subsequently faces incarceration. Watson, as a next step towards his relationship with Mary Morstan, makes a proposal and moves out from Baker Street, and so he seems to terminate his cooperation with Holmes. Just before Blackwood is hanged, he wishes to see Holmes, whom he warns of three more unstoppable deaths.

Upon his return, Holmes is visited by Irene Adler, who, as he discovers, works for a strange anonymous man. Another mystery emerges when Holmes learns that Lord Blackwood is alive and so he goes, together with Watson, to investigate the graveyard and other premises. After a fight with Blackwood’s men, sinking of a ship, and subsequent imprisonment, Holmes is taken to the secret political fraternity, where Blackwood’s father Sir Thomas urges Sherlock to stop Blackwood.

The killing of Sir Thomas prompts his follower Lord Coward to call a meeting of the Order to name a new leader – Lord Blackwood. With Coward's influence at the police Holmes is now an outlaw but also a man who knows Blackwood's last target, which is the Parliament.

Holmes, Watson and Adler disable the killing device beneath the Parliament. Lord Blackwood flees from the meeting to pursue Holmes and Adler to the top of Tower Bridge. Subsequently Blackwood is killed in a fight with Holmes and the identity of Adler's employer is revealed. It is professor James Moriarty; Holmes' nemesis in the second film. Watson moves out from Baker Street and Holmes looks forward to a new case.

3.2 The plot of 'Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows'

After her unsuccessful mission to seduce Holmes, Moriarty decides to murder Adler. Watson visits Holmes, who is obsessively tracking Moriarty's actions, and who proves to be forgetful towards the fact that he is in charge of organizing Watson's bachelor party. Holmes therefore improvises and takes Watson to a club, where the character of Simza is introduced, who is a gypsy fortune-teller. The wedding of Watson and Mary does not stop Moriarty from attacking them. Everyone survives this sudden strike, but Watson has to involuntarily take part in Holmes' business.

They both have to go to Paris to find Simza and discover more about her brother René, whom Moriarty uses in his plans. She leads them to an anarchist society, but after they discover it was a diversion, they are forced to visit the Paris Opera. Holmes, however, discovers that he has been tricked again, which causes that

a prominent factory owner is murdered and his properties are mysteriously bought by Moriarty.

The trio travels to Moriarty’s newly acquired factory, where Holmes is captured, tortured, and interrogated. Watson frees Holmes and after a skirmish with German soldiers they escape with a wounded Holmes, who nearly succumbs to his wounds.

They proceed to Switzerland to a multinational summit. The knowledge that René is a disguised assassin and intends to kill one of the ambassadors urges them to act in a subtle manner. Moriarty is confident in his victory, which would start a World War among the European nations. Holmes reveals that now he is the one who tricked Moriarty and has therefore won. After a physical altercation they both fall into the Reichenbach Falls.

The end shows Holmes alive, concealed in Watson’s office, writing a question mark after the words “The End”.

4 The Analysis

This part of the thesis deals with the analysis of movies from the director Guy Ritchie: *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011). It will be divided into subchapters dealing with postmodernist editing techniques (4.1), giving tribute to other genres (4.2) and multicultural traits in the movies (4.3). Each subchapter will deal with each point in detail.

4.1 Postmodernist editing techniques

4.1.1 The usage of jump-cuts, whip-pans, fast zoom -ins and -outs, slow motion and fast cutting

The purpose of this chapter is to accentuate singular editing techniques and show how they, in the capable hands of Ritchie, become a tool of postmodernist endeavours. Their significance will be demonstrated on the quantity of various examples from both movies together with their concise interpretation and description.

Notably, in the first film, the first distinguishable editing technique – slow motion – appears when planning the elimination of the guard before entering the place of Blackwood's ritual. This, in combination with depicting the plan itself which Sherlock is creating in his head, gives the viewer a unique opportunity to see Holmes' thoughts visualised. A sequence filmed with slow motion and underpinned with Sherlock's inner monologue shows us the eventuality of how this fight is most probably going to happen and subsequently, when he defeats him, there is a prognosis about the guard's future health condition. The reason for the usage is purely to visualise Holmes' geniality and deductive methods on the screen.

However, the most significant usage of slow motion in the first film is in the slaughterhouse scene (1:23:45). At first we hear only Watson's warning shout and right then the whole scene with the explosion is slowed down. Subsequently, as if the viewer had gone deaf, the human voice disappears and is replaced by melancholic violin music. The absence of sound forces the viewer to concentrate and demands his undivided attention. Contemporary Hollywood-style cinema rarely works with

silence as a tool. After the explosions end, sound reappears, and the unnaturally deep voice of a policeman slowly getting normal shows Watson's recuperation.

The usages of slow-motion and fast cutting are combined in the Irish pub fight scene. As we see Holmes fighting in an unlicensed boxing match, we witness a break from the storyline, and are presented a visualisation of Holmes' plans to defeat his opponent. Firstly, there is his plan depicted with slow motion and fast cutting, underpinned with Holmes' commentary, which is a prediction about his opponent's future condition. This is a visualisation of Holmes' thinking process serving as a diversion from the action topic and establishing that what we are presented is a detective and not a boxer. Secondly, we see how it really happens in normal speed and again with fast cuts.

A similar example of fast cutting is in the fight scenes with the French giant Dredger. (0:49:00) Ritchie in combination with fast violin pub music and various comedic interjections, lays a scene where every reaction, punch, grab and other actions deserve a cut.

Fast cutting connected to the conveyance of the highest amount of information in the shortest amount of time is present when Sherlock and Watson are exploring Reordan's laboratory (0:45:50). It serves with a purpose of a visual aid, presumably happening in Holmes' head, to build a peculiar image of the otherwise dull statement that 'Reordan was working on something' and it reveals one singular action after another. The laboratory is also a place where whip-pan transitions are utilized. With their usage Ritchie, in combination with fast cutting and various interjection sounds, smoothly transitions from one focus point to another one. This brisk scene then

serves to the audience's short attention span since creating long lasting scenes belongs to the past for its length and tediousness (Booker 2007, 2) (0:46:28)

Apart from Holmes' inner visualisations, fast cutting is used in a scene (1:33:00) when he describes the plan behind Blackwood's actions. The single takes are blurred on the sides as if to show retrospective shots with distinction to the reality. All of which is at certain points fastened so that it follows the speed of a dialogue and serves as a support for a clearer understanding of what Holmes describes. This is done again very similarly in the boat after he jumps out of a window of a Parliament building in (1:39:20) and when he describes Blackwood's tricks in (1:51:00). For the director the option to accompany thought processes with distinct camera work is made for the audience's better orientation. There would be an option for an actor to portray it by his mimics and gestures, but this is much more contemporary and gives the impression of a distinctive style.

The usage of fast zoom-in in the first movie appears in the scene where Holmes goes to Reordan's place and Watson is left standing in the middle of a street. Right at that moment there is a zoom from afar to Watson's left eye in order to capture his indecision or perhaps a sudden decision to follow him. Other examples of this effect include Lestrade's entry (1:34:43) and Lord Coward's entry to their scenes (1:38:12). The technique once again focuses the viewer to a single action: Watson's indecision, Lestrade's entrance, and Lord Coward's murderous intentions.

The Zoom-ins and zoom-outs in (1:29:30) have a specific function. Holmes is thinking and as the camera is zooming out, he loses his train of thought but as it is getting closer, he is also getting closer to the solution of his problem. Later when

entering the top of Tower Bridge in (1:48:06) there is a dramatic zoom-out to show the monumentality of the place.

The first zoom-in in the second film appears in the room where Simza prophesies from cards. It is connected to Holmes' observation of details in the room (0:27:00) The linear perception of time is once again disrupted during the fight between Holmes and Kozak. Sequence mixed from freeze frames interspersed with movement slowed or sped up according to Holmes' interpretation, which is heard simultaneously, shows Ritchie's playfulness with the speed of frame and partaking figures. Unity or simplicity is not a typical postmodernist trait and so this scene is not a fight at first sight, but a prophesized image of a fight, explaining how it will most probably happen, playing in Holmes's head underpinned with his commentary. However, the visualisations are not the exact depictions of the future since Simza interferes in the fight, which is again a manipulation with the timeline. It also acts as a play with Ritchie's own methods, since it defies our expectations which derive from what he does in the Irish pub fight and similar scenes in the first film.

Tempering with guns of Moriarty's men in (0:45:01) relies heavily on the frequent fast cuts, sped-up sequences, and impossible zoom-ins. It holds virtual shots though the gun barrel, slow motion of the gun being fired from and different kind of sped up or slowed down imagery. This is all done thanks to CGI (computer-generated imagery), which undoubtedly has an effect on contemporary cinematography and helps it to divert from a realist filming.

Computer-generated imagery has a close connection to postmodern filmic creations. Booker comments on it and links the heavy usage of CGI predominantly with an appeal which derives from video games and their subsequent remakes to

popular films. (Booker 2007, 183) It is therefore relatively common to incorporate their usage in films and television productions which are not video-game adaptations, such as the CSI franchise. Ritchie uses this technique to emulate 19th century weaponry and to convey the impression of technological advance.

Ritchie is often using CGI to display technological progress. Technologically advanced weaponry is shown in one of the most distinct scenes in the whole second movie (1:28:40), when the group of Gypsies, Holmes and Watson run through the forest from the German soldiers. CGI close-ups of the inner parts of machine guns and cannons are also interspersed with shots relying on slow-motion. The innovations in technology therefore are in harmony with Ritchie's inventiveness in filmmaking and therefore intensify the viewer's suspense. The speedy trajectory through the forest presents a variety of slowed-down moments showing the splintering of trees, fire burning and racking of shells. The play with an absent sound until the shell lands and impacts is extraordinarily finished with a flash of light, anguish in the faces of the fleeing characters and a fearsome music. (Breen 2012, 173)

The filming style in the cellar scene (1:03:00), where the different cuts present a different speaker, follows the postmodern trait of creating fragmented montages. This technique once again reveals singular emotions and leaves us focused only on one specific thing, rather than showing one long shot revealing the body language, reactions, or gestures of all partaking characters. Afterwards the linear narration is disrupted again by Ritchie showing a franticly visualised sequence of the past filled with squeaking, platter, sighing and other interjection sounds to reconstruct the building of a secret entrance to the cellar. The intention of this is show, in Ritchie's

manner, Holmes' deductive ability and its uniqueness and to present a long-lasting action in a swift way, to convey as much information as possible.

The killing of Alfred Meinhard in the Hôtel du Triomphe causes a chaos in the streets, many deaths in the room, and shock to Holmes. The cuts between the events are tied together with dominant operatic singing, which underlines the emotionality of these scenes. The opera's plot is now matching the power battle between Holmes and Moriarty. The deduction of Holmes and Watson in this scene (1:10:08) contains cuts to the past with blurred, fastened imagery underpinned with squeaking, high or low sounds. The reason behind such editing techniques lies inseparably interconnected with the depiction of past events. Ritchie does this to exemplify details, which would otherwise be missed and deserve better scrutiny from the audience.

In the scene in the ball room (1:40:00) in Reichenbach, Sherlock observes the room. The director uses a series of fast zoom-ins underpinned with interjection sounds and mumbling commentary from all the attendants. This if followed by a take right at end of the second movie, when the hypothetical fight between Holmes and Moriarty erupts. The scene ends with both men falling off the terrace; sounds of the waterfall and Moriarty's screams are, as previously with Watson in the slaughterhouse, muted; what is heard is only a subtle piano music evoking grief and peace. The whole shot is in slow motion, showing Holmes's peaceful resting face and Moriarty's angry one as a visual marker of the opposing sides.

To sum up, Ritchie uses postmodern editing techniques typically in connection to the past or hypothetical future scenes. Most frequently, he relies on fast cutting. He uses it to visualize different thoughts or plans. To demonstrate how a specific

character is feeling, the camera often zooms-in from a close range. Fast cutting together with whip-pan transitions convey the highest amount of information in the shortest amount of time – therefore, swiftly showing a visualised process predominantly in the past. (Wright 2014, 106) Holmes' deductive ability and gathering evidence are also supported with fast cutting mixed with zooming in on details and jump-cutting on other details. Finally, Ritchie relies on CGI zoom-ins, when demonstrating technological advance of guns and various weaponry; zoom-outs, however, are used less frequently, but mostly to show a greatness of a specific place, predominantly the nostalgic depiction of London or Paris, as well as creating a certain (mostly action-packed) atmosphere. Nonetheless, as if he was bored by all this, he occasionally provides us with a parody to his own editing, as seen in the second film.

4.1.2 Alternative reality and history

The first glimpses of alternative or falsified history in the first film from Ritchie appear in connection to eye-catching, peculiar gadgets. The first one is a device which Holmes uses to fight Dredger off; the inspiration of which is most probably a contemporary police weapon – a taser gun. This tool here is represented in the form of a rod charged with electricity. It is so powerful that Dredger, when the rod touches him, flies away through a wall. The invention of such a device is highly improbable at this period of time and charging it manually so fast would be impossible.

Another, perhaps even more inventive, gadget is a mysterious wireless device, full of small wheels, turbines, and clocks. Its function is to send a signal via radio waves, which would give Moriarty a powerful weapon. Evidently, its invention

serves as an element of alternated history and its visage does contribute to the Steampunk genre.

These elements found in *Sherlock Holmes* undeniably belong to the Steampunk subculture. Horton in her work deals with this in detail and proclaims distinctions between Steampunk and pastiche to Neo-Victorian times. The differences lie in the extent in which the past times are being re-enacted. The Steampunk genre revels in wearing fashion accessories and emulating healthy amount of mannerisms of Victorian society, but it does not accept, with respect to today's audience, certain "nineteenth century abhorrent social norms – open racism, blatant classism, aggressive anti-feminism, rampant xenophobia, and belligerent imperialism." (2017, 53) Ritchie therefore uses Steampunk, with its visually eye-catching devices and costumes, rather than a pure Jamesonian pastiche to Neo-Victorian times. As Horton says, "The films relied heavily on the visual rhetoric of Steampunk to create its mood and although top hats and horse drawn carriages were very much in evidence, there was nothing Victorian about the principal characters, their habits, their attitudes, or their interactions." (2017, 54) This addition from Ritchie therefore relies on Steampunk, not only in connection to visual aids, but also in its contemporary social norms and characters. To better illustrate how editing techniques in combination with various anachronistic devices support this new embodiment of Holmes, Wright argues, "The technology of the fast cut, mixed with the use of steampunk objects designed to look old and feel new, create a time-traveling Holmes – the kind of hero Steampunks might invent when they are retelling and reimagining the direction of the objective power we seem to have lost after the Industrial Revolution" (Wright 108, 2014).

Subsequently, Ritchie chooses to alter reality when Holmes finds himself in a hallucinogenic state. He has visions which depict the past distinctly different to the one that actually happened. The scene where Holmes reflects on previous events is accompanied by voices of Blackwood, Adler, Watson and others. An intellectual problem is depicted here graphically, on the walls around Holmes, verbally, by those voices he hears in his head, and non-verbally too, since he is sitting in a characteristic thinking position with a pipe. After he is drugged and begins hallucinating, the viewer is presented a kaleidoscopic set of previous events, which are distorted and resemble a collage from a horror. This scene, for the purpose of depicting an effect of a drug, presents a deformed image of previous reality. The director uses this before on three occasions; on the train that is carrying Dr Watson and Mary, in the bombing of a meeting of businessmen in Paris and in the Paris Opera. However, in this moment, he utilizes it in connection to a drug. As Breen in her review mentions, "Ritchie helps us, through a rapid sequence of foretelling, 'real time,' and backward re-interpretation, to understand the narrative" (2012, 172).

The film *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* begins with presenting unease throughout Europe at the end of the 19th century. This mirrors actual historical events but the connection to professor James Moriarty came from the fictional world. The main event of this motion-picture must surely be the European Peace Conference in Reichenbach in Switzerland. This cleverly borrowed location from Doyle's 'His Last Bow' (1917) serves together with historical references to anarchist activity, the assassination that brings Europe into conflict, and also the medical experimentation performed by Nazi members, as a montage of alternative-historical reality. It presents the viewer such an alternative timeline, which less experienced audiences could perceive as a real one. (Breen 2012, 170)

Ritchie tempers with not only with historical events but also with manners and customs. Right towards the end Holmes asks Watson for a dance, which in their efforts to not bring attention to themselves seems foolish and certainly would not pass at the end of nineteenth century as normal. This is probably the most distinct scene which supports Horton's claim about it not being a Jamesonian pastiche of Neo-Victorian times, but a Steampunk entourage with the mannerisms of today, which is incorporated to support Holmes' and Watsons homoerotic relationship.

Such events can also be categorized under various social anachronisms reappearing in the movie. The main one would be Mary's and Watson's unannounced wedding and they living together before marriage. Horton in her work says that "Such 'irregularity' in a doctor's household would have been unthinkable; it would have been the irredeemable ruin of his clinical practice among the upper middle class of London, whose scandalized reaction would have at best pilloried Watson in the gossip columns and at worst cost him his medical licence." (Horton 2014, 182)

Another evidence of such anachronism concerns Madame Simza and her being a gypsy; she presumably is uneducated in manners, customs and other aspects. Surely, with this in mind, in the 1891 it would be unthinkable for her to eat breakfast under the Eifel tower or attend a high-profile political summit in Switzerland. The same is applicable for Holmes, who functions as an incorporated anomaly, attending illegal boxing matches and subsequently appearing in a luxury hotel or a peace conference for world leaders. Horton comments on this alteration from Holmes' original catlike cleanliness to his contemporary depiction as the following: "Such changes not of variables but of constants in characterization of Holmes epitomizes

the difference between the limitations of stylish mimicry available to pastiche and the breadth available to remix." (Horton 2014, 184)

In the next instance Ritchie appears to try to create a link to the Nazi surgical experiments and the face transplants, with regards to René. This appears in a sequence showing doctor Hofmannsthal. (1:42:05) Although it is justifiable in connection to Nazis in the sense that the doctor needs to experiment on human beings before the successful operation, certainly it is highly unlikely that at the end of the 19th century it could be done successfully. The first successful face transplant happened in 2005 in France on a nine-year-old girl. (Rifkin et al. 2018)

The First World War and the Second World War references are notable all throughout the second movie. This is the most noticeable on the terrace, where Moriarty declares, "Hidden in unconsciousness is an undesirable desire for conflict. You are not fighting me so much as you are fighting the human condition. War is inevitable. They will do it themselves in a few years." (1:50:20)

The atmosphere of the impending war is the most noticeable in Heilbronn. The events are not fully anachronistic but they form an inconsistency in the film. These plans could not possibly have been created yet since Moriarty bought the shares of Meinhard days ago. This is obvious since the borders are still closed because of the attack in Paris. Here is where the time factor causes problems to Ritchie. In an attempt to create an action-packed adventure he did not consider the time factor. Many postmodern movies are in this manner fastened to create the illusion of a swift race between the good side and the bad one. However, since this hypothetical race has to leave us spellbound, it often leaves room for errors in the story.

4.2 Pastiche and postmodern nostalgia

4.2.1 Pastiche and parody

The beginning of the first film, apart from the filming style, nonlinear narrative and breaks from the historical events exposes that the detective genre is here presented as more of an action thriller. As Vanacker and Wynne comment on this, "[the] model of detective fiction, which Doyle was so instrumental in establishing, has, on screen, mutated into a variety of 'crime thriller' which blends the traditional indulgence in esoteric puzzles with dramatic action and suspense. In fact, the solving of puzzles is reduced in comparison to the action in Ritchie's film." (2013, 125) Thus, from Ritchie's direction emerges a pastiche to traditional American action movies with inserted elements of detective films.

The most eye-catching pastiche concerns the main villain. The character of Blackwood is here presented so nefarious that it is almost flashy. His appearance deliberately or unintentionally resembles Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992). This resemblance was also caught by Daniel Cottom in "Sherlock Holmes meets Dracula" but in connection to Holmes himself and not his filmic nemesis. To distinctly mark it, Cottom says, "[they] both are superhuman figures, Holmes in his astonishing rationalization no less than Dracula in his death-defying diablerie" (2012, 537). Ritchie chooses to divert this similarity to manners and the visual representation of Lord Henry Blackwood. This resemblance, this diablerie, is visible in the slaughterhouse scenes (1:20:00), where Blackwood's omnipresent voice and his almost inhumane acting start to divert from what would be humanly possible. Just like it is in contemporary cinema usual, the villain has to be evil in appearance, in acting, in manners, and when he expresses himself.

Furthermore, Blackwood's death and fake resurrection also serve as a connection, since "they both remain subject to mortality and to certain mortifying limits of nature" (2012, 538). Dracula's dependence on highly specialized diet and exertion of powers only during night-time is interconnected with Blackwood's reliance on science, technological progress, and detailed knowledge of 1890s superstitious civilization. Lastly, what also contributes to this similarity is a continuous symbolic appearance of a raven, which is supposed to represent him and his presence as a bat in connection to Dracula.

The humorous aspects of parody are not as apparent, but one honourable example finds itself in the second film (1:14:00) when Holmes rides a pony through the mountains with six Gypsy characters. In one shot there are seven of them, together with Holmes, standing with horses observing the German borders. This to a certain extent looks like *The Magnificent Seven* (dir. John Sturges, 1960). Of course, Holmes sitting on a pony looks certainly very absurd and comic. Furthermore, Ritchie decides to imitate the infamous Jack Sparrow bit from *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (dir. Gore Verbinski, 2006) in the auction house scene (0:07:30), in the scene when Holmes does not manage to say his whole name before the explosion.

The films from Ritchie are presented from their beginning as action movies with plots involving world politics. In their visual appeal and action-packed scenes, they cannot avoid, and perhaps intentionally do not avoid, creating a pastiche to the notorious prototype of a spy, James Bond.

The connection is not accidental. The representation of Bond girls in Holmes can be found in the female leading roles, those of Irene Adler and later Madame

Simza. They both operate on the side of the criminal underworld and emanate a considerable amount of free will, when saving, assisting or betraying Homes. As Rachel McAdams accentuates in an interview, "[Adler] is a bit of a gun-for-hire, an adventuress; she lives in this sort of underworld of crime, which is not the usual for any woman. [Holmes and I] develop this kind of strange, unique love affair". (Tribute Movies 2009, 0:02:40) The same can be applied to Simza appearing in the sequel.

One specific point where Holmes distinctively operates as James Bond is the slaughterhouse scene. As Bond in *Spectre* (dir. Sam Mendes, 2015) saves Swann from the bomb in the old MI6 building, Holmes saves Adler from her handcuffs and sudden death by chainsaw. Simza and her moments, for example in the Paris Opera or in the fight with the Kozak, include her skilled abilities with throwing knives; with its usage she saves Holmes on both occasions. Bond is as reliant on Swann also in *Spectre*, when she helps him kill his nemesis. It is not to say that the pastiche here is frame by frame as in the James Bond films but the Bond girl, sometimes betraying and sometimes saving the lead hero, functions in a similar way in Ritchie's productions.

4.2.2 Disruption of reality

After the scene when Blackwood is performing an incantation and Sherlock and Watson win a fight in fist combat, Holmes is photographed together with Lestrade and the reality depicted is disrupted with a sequence of newspapers flying across the screen. (0:06:36)

Another presence of disruption of reality comes right at the end, where specific scenes from the movie are by means of animation recreated to appear as if they were drawn by ink. (2:00:32)

This is similarly done at the beginning of the second movie. There is an animation of pages from a book, which is then connected to the reality by showing Watson typing on a typewriter. (0:00:21) Right after we see Sherlock Holmes sitting in a restaurant waiting for Adler (0:11:20) a cut is made, and an animation of a book being browsed through appears on the screen. Right after there is an ink written title *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, which then disappears and the drawn city behind it morphs into real London.

The movie ends with a series of collages from a book with illustrations that copy certain scenes from the movie. It again serves here as this tie to the books written by Doyle and should support this feeling that it is an actual story written by him. (2:00:26)

4.2.3 A nostalgic illusion of Victorian-Age London

This chapter focuses on the setting of these movies. Namely, this is a nostalgic illusion of Victorian-Age London in the year of 1891.

To emphasize a dark nostalgic feeling, Ritchie's Tower Bridge in *Sherlock Holmes* evokes "the oneiric quality of the Empire through what was one of its most prominent structures. It becomes Ritchie's symbol of a London at the heart of a British-ruled world of technological progress from which the esoteric is (repeatedly) purged. But it is also a fragile, half-finished structure, and clearly a nostalgic,

visually mediated memory of an empire that never was" (Reisenleitner 2014, 131) The structure poses as a background reviving symbolically the idea of 1890s with a dominant and unmistakably recognizable monument.

The reinvigorated nostalgic image of London is, according to Reisenleitner, a place that is on a crossroad "between empiricist- driven battle between technological progress and traditional occult knowledge supposedly submerged in the 17th century yet continuing to trickle into the heart of the Empire from its colonies." (Reisenleitner 2014, 128) This comment goes hand in hand with what Taylor-Ide states. (2005, 55) London is here presented, by means and with the help of computer-generated imagery, as a centre of the rapidly developing British empire. The idea of "an empire driven by mechanization and an industrialist rationality" (Reisenleitner 2014, 131) is best seen, when the director purposefully takes the viewer to the dockland, the shipyard and the mechanized slaughterhouse. All three locations are there to promote the visage and idea of technological progress. This image, though not being strictly postmodern on itself, serves to magnify the most, with help of various filmic locations, this nineteenth century look of the city. By portraying London as this conglomerate, this sort of collage of dark, dirty, and overflowing, Ritchie undoubtedly wants to exaggerate the visage of Victorian setting with respect to what was but also with help and acknowledgement of Hollywood practices. To visualise further this Reisenleitner's statement and this nostalgic picture of Neo-Victorian times, Ritchie decides also to transform and bring to the light this battle of supernatural, dark, and occult with rational or technological to the figure of Holmes and Blackwood and their intellectual exploits.

The director, as previously touched upon, uses various locations to realize his kitschy visions about 19th century London and Paris. The quantity of varied places and monuments he uses as a background for the movie is so substantial that, together with his reliance on postmodernist editing techniques and CGI, he creates an overhyped projection of both metropolises where movement and work of people never stops and the audience always has an architectural spectacle to observe. From the opening scene, where Sherlock chases a man on a spiral staircase, located in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, a cut takes us to the nave of the Priory Church of St. Bartholomew The Great in Smithfield. The crowded streets with working-class population were filmed in central Manchester. The scene in docks, where Sherlock fights with the giant French man and the enormous ship is being built, was filmed in Chatham Historic Dockyard in Kent. This setting also served the scene when Holmes and Watson are subsequently incarcerated. The main residence of the Temple of the Four Orders was mentioned to be located on St. James's' Square, but in reality, it is so called Long Gallery of Hatfield House in Hertfordshire. What is rather entertaining is that this place was later used as a setting for 'Diogenes Club' in the film *Mr. Holmes* (dir. Bill Condon, 2015) with Ian McKellen in the lead role. Subsequently in a scene with Irene Adler in the 'Grand Hotel, Piccadilly Circus', we actually see the Cliveden Hotel in Berkshire. Lastly, London's 'Houses of Parliament' are replaced by the interior of Manchester Town Hall on Albert Square. (Movie-locations.com 2020)

The filmic places which were replaced by different ones or created in a studio would not necessarily tie these movies to postmodernism. Nevertheless, when trying to create a feel of that time-period, Ritchie combines many distinct places together with crowded streets and industrial buzz into one magnified location. This, further

exaggerated by the lighting and gloomy weather, provides the film with an almost noir character and creates a hyperreal illusion to the point where it all becomes kitsch, in a way similar to the hyperreal visualization of Paris in 1900 in *Moulin Rogue* (dir. Baz Luhrmann, 2001).

4.3 Multiculturalism and gender relations

4.3.1 The portrayal of women

Doyle's stories were, according to the opinion of Kestner, written purposefully for men to make them believe in the "hegemony of the dominantly masculine order" (Kestner 1996, 79) In connection to the women and a question of their role, patriarchal dominance appears throughout the stories. 'A Case of Identity' (1891) presents a man marrying a woman for her wealth and simultaneously living with a different one. In 'The Copper Beeches' (1892) a father hides and locks his daughter and deprives her the possibility to marry. The depiction of women in Doyle's manner is therefore in exact opposite to Ritchie's idea about their role and he makes that very clear on the screens.

It is undoubtedly for the pleasure of today's audience that Mary is present and interacting with Holmes in these films. In Doyle's detective stories her role as Watson's wife is quite superfluous, to say the least. On the other hand, her appearance for the audience of the 21st century is important and necessary. Doyle's Holmes stories seldom portray a woman character in form of a strong and independent figure. Women usually find themselves in a position of a maid or as a company to the male counterparts. Therefore, when considering gender relations in the contemporary world, it is almost an obligation for her to be at least to some

extent vital part of the story. Her portrayal in *Sherlock* (2010) from Mark Gattis and Steven Moffat takes her much deeper to the stories and makes a spy out of her, which puts her on the same level of importance as Adler's character, and gives her a level of agenda to become a self-sufficient figure. Although in this version from Ritchie she is much more subtle and inconspicuous, she still serves as a self-reliant powerful agent when helping Holmes discredit Moriarty's fortune.

Another figure, the one that is probably more equipped to serve as a strong competitor to Holmes, is Irene Adler. Doyle originally presents her in 'The Scandal in Bohemia' (1891) and describes her with reference to male dominance as a one, who "has the face of the most beautiful woman, and the mind of the most resolute of men". The main difference to Ritchie's version is that in the stories she often dresses herself in male attire and mentions freedom, which is attributed to her once she is dressed as a man. (Kestner 1996, 86) She first appears when Sherlock is seen fighting in the pub ring and leaves him a napkin with her initials on it as a gesture and also as means to win the fight. Adler repeatedly shown in brightly red clothing and thick make-up stands in contrast with her timeless look to the surrounding and to the people present. This has to be done in order for her to be instantly discernible from the crowd. In comparison to women in the background, who look often dull and forgettable, it serves to the eye of the viewer as a striking contrast symbolizing the uniqueness and dominance of this woman. The reason for this is that since she does not get the attention with actions, she has to be striking for the audience at least visually and slowly show what she is capable of. Later, this striking contrast is replaced by showing her combative skills against robbers, which is strictly a 21st century vision of her. As mentioned above, female characters are expected to be

empowered in the view of postmodernism with regard to today's audience. Adler's empowerment is clearly visible in these scenes (Hills 2017, 70)

The moment Adler truly emancipates is when she shoots instantly, without a plan, on the men guarding Blackwood's device. Being protected by Holmes and Watson Adler takes the lead role and she becomes the person who controls what happens next. (1:41:21)

In the original stories Holmes and also the king of Bohemia underestimates her and their main mistake is their presumption that she as a woman would follow Holmes' plans or react positively on regulations of her actions to keep the king's protocol. Nevertheless, this expectation is false. (Kho 2018, 240)

As seen later in the same provocative outfit Irene Adler visits Holmes in Baker Street and brings him olives from Cyclades and dates from Jordan. Clearly, she is a travelled self-sufficient woman since she mentions Cyclades, Syria, and Jordan. In the second film, even though her mission to obtain the envelope in the beginning fails, she does not lose her serenity and manages to keep calm as a strong figure would.

When Sherlock visits Adler at the hotel she gives him a bottle of nice red wine with a sleeping substance in it and puts therefore Sherlock asleep. The invitingness of hers is unmistakable and the usage of sex, besides her previously shown fighting skills, serves as a weapon against him and does give her a powerful tool to control men. Again, fast cutting is used, representing Sherlock's inner visualisations of how she did this. Adler finishes the scene with kissing Sherlock, showing her dominance over him and leaves him there naked and tied. Noticeably her attire has slightly

changed and as Kestner adds “Not only is Holmes defeated, but the manifestation of this defeat is the woman’s transgressive act of cross-dressing” (1996, 86)

Postmodernism has made this character far more sexualized and more nudity has been used in other representations to portray her. This on itself can be explained by the postfeminist bent of contemporary media. Reasons for it are fairly simple. It has to please today’s global market and putting a woman aside and not pushing her character forward could easily reduce the viewership of today. A lot of remakes of classic movies with male groups were created also with women. This concerns *Ghostbusters* (dir. Paul Feig, 2016) and *Ocean’s Eight* (dir. Garry Ross, 2018).

In the second movie the character of Simza takes her place since Adler is poisoned at the beginning. Just like her predecessor, Simza can fight and is very skilful with throwing knives. This proves useful since she saves Holmes on two occasions in the movie. The first of those occasions is ostensibly more significant since she, despite Holmes’ thorough planning, saves him by paralyzing the Kozak character. She is not as fashionable and noble as Adler was, but her appearance is still very pleasing and she fits in very nicely, although her character is an addition to the Holmes saga.

To sum up, the representation of women here is much more apparent than in other film adaptations of Holmes, let alone in books. Adler in the first film and Simza in the second play vital parts in the stories. Mary Watson receives a relatively important role. Mrs Hudson, who is mentioned quite often in books, although not being forgotten completely, has only tangential role in these movies.

4.3.2 Depiction of homosexuality and cross-dressing

In Ritchie's additions to the Holmes saga, the portrayal of homoeroticism has found a prominent place. First, we see traces of homosexuality in the carriage, when Watson is still upset about the latest events with Mary. Holmes jumps to a different topic and Watson hits him. Their argument and manners introduce the viewer closer to the relationship these two men have together.

Another specific scene is when Watson finds Holmes bored and neglected and starts to clean the room. Homoeroticism in the Holmes universe is analysed by Fathallah, and although she does not talk specifically about Ritchie's films, her comment can be applied to Watson's role, which in this instance resembles that of a chambermaid. She claims that "Homoeroticism is constructed as the natural extension of homosociality, and frequently repositions the characters in a domestic sphere traditionally coded feminine" (2017, 80). Doyle describes Watson's admirations of his companion with words, whilst Ritchie chooses to portray them as if they really were in relationship.

The willingness of Watson to cooperate further with Holmes and bringing him the news about Blackwood's last wish together with their argument about a piece of clothing supports the claim of Thompson about their homosocial relation (Thompson 2011, 278). It also goes hand in hand with Hill and his argument that the homosexual minorities are represented in today's addition to Holmes universe for the pleasure of today's diverse audience. (Hill 1998, 103)

Later when Holmes bribes a gypsy woman, we see that Holmes' insecurity about losing Watson is a sign of his grown fondness towards him. Their dispute on the street might be compared to a couple married for a long time. The depiction

surely only touches on the subject but never goes so far to state that they really are homosexual. Doyle himself started this illusion with presenting them in shared living spaces, "Sherlock Holmes seemed delighted at the idea of sharing his rooms with me [Watson]. 'I have my eye on a suite in Baker Street," he said, "which would suit us down to the ground.'" (Doyle 1996, 9) Ritchie, however, being influenced by Hollywood and its policy, has decided to build up on this hypothetical relationship a little more.

When Watson and Holmes are put in a small prison yard Watson starts to question why he is putting up with Holmes when he never tells him his plans beforehand. Again, the homosexual traits between these two men are palpable. The quarrel revolves around Holmes' habits of violin playing, his bad hygiene and the fact that they share an apartment, clothes, and a dog. The homoerotic subtext is palpable and comic, therefore it serves two things – to amuse the audience and to engage LGBT minorities. Also, Holmes suggests, in proving his homosexual tendencies or those of an invert (which was a term used during Victorian period, describing a man with aversion towards women), going on holiday with Watson; later he reluctantly brings Mary into the picture. (Nekosmuse.com 2007, 108) Eventually a guard comes in and says that Watson's bail has been payed, Holmes follows but the doors are closed in front of his face. Here the focus-point switches to Mary, who is now shown as Watson's real partner and Holmes as a hypothetical one.

In the second movie the first time a relationship between Watson and Holmes is visible in the car which Holmes is driving (0:19:00). He purposefully tries to talk Watson out of his wedding with Mary. The emotional connection between these two men gets to a crescendo in the moment of the wedding ceremony (0:34:02). Holmes

is terrified of Watson marrying Mary: he would lose his partner necessary for his work but also for his life. This unquestionably serves to gain the attention of LGBT communities but always revolves around hints and anecdotal scenes, perhaps because this hypothetical relationship would be too distant from what Doyle has originally written.

The cross-dressing aspect comes to the foreground when Sherlock reveals himself in a costume of a woman. Watson defends the compartment, meanwhile Holmes throws Mary off the train. Watson in shock has a fight with Holmes, which implies homosexual undertones. Holmes explains how he arranged everything in order for them to have an advantage. A shot of Holmes's crotch with grenades amplifies the sexual implications even more. Metaphorically, he steps into the role of Mary, since he is dressed as a woman and throws Mary off a speeding train, which again proves his intended feelings for Watson. Holmes and Watson are seen later sitting in the carriage damaged by an explosion and debate, as Sherlock puts it, "our relationship" and after an objection from Watson changes it to "our partnership", which has a double meaning and also underlines their increasingly more homoerotic relationship. Holmes then mentions that they are heading to Paris, an ideal place for honeymoon. As the movie proceeds, the implications are more and more frequent. The shift in their hypothetical relationship nicely connects to the main line of the story and complements it. It shows that the director is in touch with what the current market demands and using a woman dress as a disguise, albeit in a joking manner, gets him credit with LGBT communities.

Towards the end of the movie Holmes asks Watson for a dance (1:41:20). "I thought, you'd never ask", he replies. The dialogue perfectly sums up their

relationship. Further, “Who thought you how to dance?”, Holmes asks; “You did.” Watson answers. This comment ends nicely their love story and gives the viewer a certain feeling of closure.

When considering homosexual sparks of male characters besides those of Holmes and Watson, Mycroft Holmes needs to be mentioned. In ‘The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter’ Doyle writes, “The Diogenes Club is the queerest club in London, and Mycroft one of the queerest men.” (Doyle 1997, 95). This usage of the word queer would on itself, together with the connection to the gentleman club, indicate a homosexual orientation. Even though it carries two different meanings, in 1890s it was also associated with gay men. (Nekosmuse.com 2007, 109) Mycroft first appears in the second movie and is homosexually oriented, which is explicitly revealed in a comedic way later, so that it is not such a shock. The portrayal of Holmes’s brother by Stephen Fry is surely a step taken in this direction, since Fry, homosexual and LGBT activist in real life, portrays Mycroft also as homosexually oriented, seen with male company and male servants in his manor. In the first scene we see him accompanied by his partner, with whom he appears later, right before the wedding of doctor Watson. The most distinguishable is that he lives in an all-male household, where nudity is the norm. Mary is shocked by this. Of course, such a portrayal of this character is an addition to the Holmes saga: Doyle describes Mycroft as a creature of habits, as a genius but also a reserved man. The reason for this is apparent, when considering Holmes’ and Watson’s hypothetical homosexual relationship. This character had to be visible by at least one trait and since geniality is now owned by Holmes, it needed to be sexualization.

4.3.3 Different nationalities and social groups

To present Sherlock Holmes movies in a multiculturalist manner, the director had to overcome Doyle's original depiction to anchor Holmes predominantly in a mono-ethnically British London.

The centre of British Power presented in the movies in the Late-Victorian Period, namely in 1890 and 1891, is shown as very chaotic. At that time there was an increase in the flow of people who came from different part of the globe and this resulted in a certain mixture of cultures, which differs itself so distinctively from the pure British character of Neo-Victorian mannerisms. Ritchie presents this social blend in a hyperbolic fashion of curiosities, overflowing streets with beggars, drunks, gypsies, workers, French assassins and German criminals. On the other side we witness aristocratic carriages riding through the crowds and posh gatherings in the auction house, the opera and the university.

Although Taylor-Ide goes hand in hand with this claim that London is being portrayed as a place where the cultures meet, thus creating this peculiar meeting of cultures, there is no doubt that this concerns only the general population of poor and "normal" people; often depicted as humorously crazy or sleazy. On the other side of the barrier stand the rich, being the peak of society, who are governed strictly by reason, and whose position is relatively untouched by the new, non-British entities.

The most noticeable divergence from the mon-ethnically British society and protagonists is the gypsy village and the female gypsy character Madame Simza. She is a representation of a woman of colour, a foreigner who is also undoubtedly respected in her community. Her social skills supersede Holmes in certain ways and make her a valuable part of the story. She takes Holmes and Watson to her tent, feeds

them hedgehog goulash; after this, they drink and dance, which brings a comic element to the story. Gypsies as a social group are depicted as very spontaneous, jolly, smelly but also dangerous and protective. Their ability to migrate unseen is made use of when finding a different route to cross the German borders. Gypsies take the protagonists on horses and find a way though mountains.

As Cottom observes, “Gypsies, were looked upon [in the 1890s] as if they held themselves above the law and so deserved to be treated as inferiors by law-abiding folk.” (2012, 538) Their ‘exoticism’ and the multinational feel they emanate presents itself in total opposition towards the way of life, cuisine, or the question of women in that period of time. Lastly, their connection to the underground powerful extremist organisation of Claude Ravache, together with their knowledge of the borders, makes them a powerful and appreciable community.

This is a spin to the original Holmes stories, where Gypsies appear in ‘The Speckled Band’ (1892), ‘Silver Blaze’ (1892), or in ‘The Priory School’ (1904) as suspects for local disturbance, for which they are almost exclusively wrongly accused, due to their non-conformist behaviour. Thus, the events in the gypsy village near Paris give the impression of broadening the original concept mostly happening in London and its near outskirts and show Gypsies with their own agenda and intentions, not only as a nuisance to Anglo-Saxon society.

Taking into consideration that the first movie, happening strictly in London, although showing villains coming from France, does not cross the border, the second one goes much further. Not only, with the undeniable help of Simza’s skills to migrate unseen, takes us to France, but also to Germany and Switzerland. It is

therefore very probable that the sequel will take again a few steps further and will be, perhaps with the help of a different social group, even more international.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to focus on the postmodern influences in the films from Guy Ritchie, *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011). It focused on the style of film editing, the chosen form of narration, and the development of characters or their modification in each of these movies.

The introductory part focuses on postmodernism and its development from the first use of this word. It describes this notion from the point-of-view of Derrida's philosophy and ethics. My analysis focuses on the scepticism it has towards language, ideologies and singular histories, and briefly mentions its notorious opponents of today.

Subsequently, the focus is put on postmodernism in film and how it is presented in a visual form. Several film editing techniques are listed, and their usages are explained. I outline in what form the representation of pastiche and nostalgia can be found on the big screen, which is ensued by a chapter about multiculturalism in contemporary postmodern cinema.

The subsequent parts concern the films themselves. The editing and filming techniques are analysed, such as slow motion, jump cuts, whip pans and CGI imagery, together with their significance and what they reveal to the audience. Ritchie uses postmodern editing techniques typically in connection to the past or hypothetical future scenes and Holmes' deductive ability; he relies on CGI zoom-ins when demonstrating technologically advanced gadgets. Occasionally in the second film, however, he seems to undermine and parody his own techniques.

The reader also finds how Ritchie operates with nonlinearity and alternative history. A chapter about pastiche follows and states which films and franchises

Ritchie refers to. The setting of the first film is described as the nostalgic illusion of Victorian London, which is supplemented by listing the actual locations that were used to portray it. It is done to show the visual hyperbole that the director uses to please its audience. Multiculturalism and gender relations provide subchapters concerning the portrayal of women and their emancipation, the depiction of homosexuality and cross-dressing with regard to Holmes, Watson and Mycroft. Lastly, one subchapter deals with the ethnicity of Gypsies and their role to allow the characters to migrate.

To conclude, the Sherlock Holmes universe is considerably changed in these Hollywood productions. The genre, supposedly a detective story, has become an action movie with comedy and Steampunk aspects, interspersed with pastiches, referring, for example, to Dracula and James Bond. Holmes's character is adjusted to be more charismatic and childish, whereas Watson has changed his appearance from constant awe towards Holmes to a more grounded version of his. Their relationship has proceeded to a point where it is not unthinkable to imagine a homosexual relationship. Adler and Simza represent the charismatic women characters in the films to the extent that they become emancipated self-sufficient characters. All of this is used, arguably, for the purpose of creating a film to appeal to the widest audience. But, as this thesis indicates, being postmodern is not only a question of the director's intention, but also a side-effect of conveying as much information as possible into accelerated visual storytelling and compressed locations.

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