Sherlock Holmes: A *Game of Shadows.* Dir. Guy Ritchie. Perf. Robert Downey Jr., Jude Law. Warner Bros./ Village Roadshow Pictures, 2011. Film.

Guy Ritchie's adaptation has received fabulous critiques all around the world. I am not surprised at that - the adaptation's strength lies in its semiotic modesty. Hereby, I venture a theoretical hypothesis that needs further explanation.

Cinematic adaptations of novels, yet of such famous and already often adapted novels like the Sherlock Holmes stories, always have to deal with the phenomenon that they are not judged on their own but in alignment with their literary reference. Bearing this in mind, directors tend to over-compensate by (or over-emphasize, respectively) their cinematic devices to regain some kind of autonomy for their medium. A strategy that eventually just stresses the movie's dependency on the novel works all the more.

Guy Ritchie avoids this dialectic of over-compensation and dependency. He elegantly refers to Arthur Conan Doyle's stories through pastiche and bricolage. *Sherlock Holmes:* A *Game of Shadows* incorporates elements of the source-text but does not elaborate upon them. You could name, for instance, Holmes's comprehensive ability to fight or his unique talent to put forward imaginative (and at the same time precise) hypotheses, that make him almost appear a fortuneteller - for example when it comes to him predicting the fighting moves of his opponents. However there are other elements of Ritchie's plot that cannot be found within the Doyle corpus in the given form, yet you find most of its elements in it - from plot-defining moments like Holmes' death. By expanding/elaborating on the given narratives's material, Guy Ritchie adequately answers the media shift from print to screen with a homological stylistic shift. He could not obey the demands of novel composition, as he is not writing a novel, yet he could not entirely change the novel's plots and structures, as he refers to them. According to the media shift, he shifts the stories. Ritchie's film is eventually a homogenous, and therein modest, answer towards Doyle's Holmes, rather than a presumptuous reinvention of him. Or to put it in semiotic terms: his film works as a highly aesthetic synecdoche instead of an open-ended metaphor. It takes the signifier (the world of Doyle's

Sherlock Holmes) and re-signifies, while keeping the viewer aware of the source-text through recognizable parts that stand for the whole.

The basic moment that makes Guy Ritchie's work an aesthetic and powerful synecdoche is the inversion of Holmes' role. He is no longer the all-seeing, all-powerful figure but someone who, while understanding the conclusion from the very beginning, has to put together the pieces he ingeniously finds. He is as clever as always, but his standpoint alters from deduction to induction. The spectator experiences an entertaining shift from Sherlock Holmes the Detective to Sherlock Holmes the Adventurer.

This genre allows Ritchie and Robert Downey Jr., to highlight Sherlock Holmes's eccentricity, while sparing us the sometimes tiring explanations of how rationally he conducted his investigations. This highlighting does not detract from Holmes' charm; rather it works in his favor. We can now enjoy the special effects that help him to solve the case for their own sake, rather than wondering how and why they help him. These technical moments perfectly fit into Holmes's and Watson's world of invention, imaginative investigation and industrial nineteenth century Europe. Doyle would, I venture to say, probably approve of what Ritchie made out of his novels.

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