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*Колесник Олена Сергіївна  
доктор культурології, доцент,  
професор кафедри філософії та культурології  
Національного університету «Чернігівський колегіум» імені Т.Г.Шевченка*

*Колесник Елена Сергеевна  
доктор культурологии, доцент, профессор кафедры философии и  
культурологии Национального университета «Черниговский колледжум»  
имени Т.Г.Шевченко*

*Olena Kolesnyk  
Doctor of Cultural Studies, associative professor,  
Professor of National T.G. Shevchenko University “Chernihiv Collegium”  
097 4683407 [elenakolesnyk2017@gmail.com](mailto:elenakolesnyk2017@gmail.com)*

ІСТОРИОСОФІЯ В ДІЛОГІЇ ГАЯ РІЧІ ПРО ШЕРЛОКА ХОЛМСА

ИСТОРИОСОФИЯ В ДИЛОГИИ ГАЯ РИЧИ О ШЕРЛОКЕ ХОЛМСЕ

THE HISTORIOSOPHY OF  
GUY RITCHIE'S *SHERLOCK HOLMES* DYLOGY

**Анотація:**

**Мета дослідження.** Однією з найпомітніших тенденцій сучасної культури є невизначеність кордонів мистецтва та науки, образа та теорії. Інколи митці першими помічають, щонайменше – привертають увагу до певної серйозної

проблеми. В цьому плані фільм Гая Річі «Шерлок Холмс» та його продовження «Шерлок Холмс: Гра тіней» мають діагностичну цінність, оскільки вони не лише презентують глибокий аналіз кінця ХІХ – початку ХХ століть, але й попереджають реципієнта про можливі небезпеки сучасної політики. Мета нашого дослідження – показати, яка форма класичного детективу може бути використана для того, щоб висловити авторський погляд на історію та сучасний стан однієї з головних світових проблем.

**Методологія.** Основними методами є компаративний, історико-логічний та метод архетипного аналізу. **Наукова новизна.** Дані фільми Г. Річі вперше аналізуються у філософському контексті. Показано, що вони є повноцінними історіософськими дослідженнями в художній формі.

**Висновки.** Г. Річі демонструє два діаметрально протилежних, але однаково згубних варіантів поведінки. Коли вони практикуються відкрито, то кваліфікуються як злочинні, однак, у прихованій формі, вони мають місце на політичній периферії. Перша з них – «права» у політичному сенсі, базується на ієрархії та жорсткому порядку, та прагне встановити світову диктатуру, що тримається на обмані та терорі. Друга – анархічна, така, що використовує революційну риторику заради власних цілей. Провокації, які можуть привести до світової війни, слугують збагаченню певної особи, яка залишається в нейтральній країні. Фільми Г. Річі візуалізують ці дві небезпеки, яких треба уникнути, підвищуючи розуміння реципієнтом світових проблем.

**Ключові слова:** Шерлок Холмс, Гай Річі, історіософія, тоталітаризм, анархізм.

**Анотація:**

**Цель исследования.** Одной из наиболее заметных тенденций современной культуры является неопределенность границ искусства и науки, образа и теории. Порой творцы первыми замечают, или, как минимум – привлекают внимание к некой серьезной проблеме. В этом плане фильм Гая Ричи

«Шерлок Холмс» и его продолжение «Шерлок Холмс: Ира теней» имеют диагностическое значение, поскольку они не только презентуют глубокий анализ конца XIX – начала XX веков, но и предупреждают реципиента о возможных опасностях современной политики. Цель нашего исследования – показать, как форма классического детектива может быть использована для того, чтобы выразить авторский взгляд на историю и нынешнее состояние одной из главнейших мировых проблем. **Методология.** Основными методами являются компаративный, историко-логический и метод архетипного анализа. **Научная новизна.** Данные фильмы Г. Ричи впервые анализируются в философском контексте. Показано, что они являются полноценными историософскими исследованиями в художественной форме. **Выводы.** Г. Ричи демонстрирует два диаметрально противоположных, но одинаково пагубных варианта поведения. Когда они практикуются открыто, то квалифицируются как преступные, однако, в скрытой форме, они имеют место на политической периферии. Первая из них – «правая» в политическом смысле, базируется на иерархии и жестком порядке, и стремится установить мировую диктатуру, которая ддержится на обмане и терроре. Вторая – анархическая, использующая революционную риторику ради собственных целей. Провокации, которые могут довести до мировой войны, служат обогащению некоего лица, остающегося в нейтральной стране. Фильмы Г. Ричи визуализируют эти две опасности, которые необходимо избежать, повышая постижение реципиентом мировых проблем.

**Ключевые слова:** Шерлок Холмс, Гай Ричи, историософия, тоталитаризм, анархизм.

### **Summary:**

**The aim of the research.** One of the most noticeable tendencies of the contemporary culture is the fluidity of the borders between the art and science, the image and the theory. Sometimes the artists are the first to notice, or at least,

to draw attention to some serious problem. In that way, Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes* and its sequel *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* have a diagnostic quality, as they not only present the in-depth analysis of the late XIX – early XX ct., but warn the recipient about the dangers of the contemporary politics. Thus, the aim of the research is to show how the form of the classical detective can be used to express the contemporary author's view on the history of the major world problems and their current state. **The methodology.** The main methods are comparative, historical-logical, the archetypal analysis. **The scientific novelty.** For the first time Guy Ritchie's films are analyzed in the philosophical context. It is shown that they can be seen as the complete historiosophical research in the artistic form. **Conclusion.** Guy Ritchie shows two seemingly diametrically opposing but equally unacceptable ways of behavior. When openly practiced, they are qualified as criminal, but in their more covert form, they have a place on the margin of political forces. The first of them is right-wing, based on the strict hierarchy and rigid order, that establishes the dictatorial world-state, based on deception and fear. The second one is anarchic, or, at least, using the revolutionary rhetoric for its own aims. The provocations, that may lead to the world war, are used to enrich a certain person who stays in a neutral country. Guy Ritchie's films visualize the twin dangers that must be avoided, heightening the recipients' awareness of the world problems.

**Key words:** Sherlock Holmes, Guy Ritchie, historiosophy, totalitarianism, anarchism.

**The relevance of the theme.** One of the most noticeable tendencies of the contemporary culture is the fluidity of the borders between the art and science, the image and the theory. Sometimes the artists are the first to notice, or at least, to draw attention to some serious problem. In that way, Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and its sequel *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011) have a diagnostic quality, as they not only present the in-depth analysis of

the late XIX – early XX ct., but also warn the recipient about the dangers of the contemporary politics.

**The analysis of the literature.** The literature about the history and theory of the detective genre is quite extensive. The philosophical subtexts were most successfully analyzed by G. K. Chesterton, D. Kluger, and K. Summerscale. The most prominent contemporary Ukrainian researchers are L. Hamburg [1] and G. Krapivnyk [3]. It is possible to use their factual material and methodology for the further research of the theme.

**The aim of the research.** It is to show how the form of the classical detective can be used to express the contemporary author's view on the history of the major world problems and their current state.

**The methodology.** The main methods are comparative, historical-logical, the archetypal analysis.

**The scientific novelty.** For the first time Guy Ritchie's films are analyzed in the philosophical context. It is shown that they can be seen as the complete historiosophical research in the artistic form.

**The main material.** Sherlock Holmes is one of the "eternal characters", which have acquired a kind of independence from their authors and transcended the limits of time and space. Still, his personality is quite definite, and the totality of Arthur Conan Doyle's detective stories has been defined as "the Canon". That is why all the numerous artistic interpretations of the character and the story (screen adaptations, literary sequels etc.) can be roughly divided into two types:

1. The interpreter aims at achieving the maximal "correctness", trying to make every detail historically accurate and true to the literary source;
2. The interpreter sees Conan Doyle's stories only as the starting-point for their own imagination.

It is clear, that interpretations of the second type can be quite distant from the original. However, choosing the first strategy also does not guarantee the congeniality of the new work of art and the classical stories. The main cause of the discrepancy is the absence of the surprise element for the recipient. For their

first readers, Conan Doyle's stories were vibrantly relevant in their problematics, thrilling in their suspense and unpredictability. Now this thrill is considerably dulled, because it is hard to find an adult person, who does not know the final of most stories. Therefore, the screenwriters try to go away from the original stories with their predictable finals and explore the unknown.

Guy Ritchie's two films are somewhere in between the two abovementioned types. The stories were completely rewritten. Nevertheless, the depiction of Sherlock Holmes's world, the general atmosphere, the stylistics and the rhythm are remarkably true to the original. The author made the instauration of the character and plot, clearing away the accumulation of the stereotypes but retaining the "hard core" of the Canon.

The screenwriter's task was to write a new story, greatly upscaling the events but maximally using all the original Conan Doyle's material. Just one example. Since the times of Chekhov, we know that a rifle hanging on the wall, must fire eventually. For Conan Doyle, the Detective's smoking-pipe could be just an accessory. In the contemporary art, every object must work, and the pipe works hard, turning into a tool for bomb defusing, an instrument of fire diversion in the auction hall etc. In that way the writer and the director take what is already present in the original stories and "blow it up".

It is interesting – even symptomatic – that at the same time a different team used much the same principles when creating *Sherlock* series. In both films, we see explication of subtexts, heightening the emotional score, visualization of the individual process of thinking and different mind games etc. Very noticeable are the protagonist's incomprehensible actions that demand the *leap of faith* from other characters as well as from the recipient. The contemporary setting of *Sherlock* not only heightened the spectators' emotional engagement, but also created the effect of the "stereoscopic vision" of history. Sometimes we can see how much the world changed. And on the contrary, some problems remain: almost 150 years later Watson again returns from Afghanistan.

Still, the implicit philosophical basis of Ritchie's films is even richer.

It is evident, that the contemporary filmgoer is used to the maximal scale of the conflict and its impact. Such an attitude is quite different from the paradigm of the classical crime story, where the focal point is the complicated riddle that must be ingeniously solved. It does not mean that the detective is indifferent to the ethical and social problems. G. K. Chesterton was one of the first to state that one of the main functions of the classical detective was to demonstrate the triumph of justice, and thus – triumph of Cosmos of the destructive forces of Chaos [5]. Much later, K. Summerscale concluded, that detective story takes reader into the mystery of death and rebirth [7]. Taking into consideration the experience of the XX ct., D. Kluger showed the transformations of the detective genre, sometimes leading to the triumph of Chaos [2]. However, G. Ritchie chose to retain the traditional, much more optimistic, approach.

Strictly speaking, the structure of both Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* films is much closer to thriller, than to the classical detective. Detective as a genre developed and reached its maturity in the XIX ct. Its main point is in solving the already committed crime, in other words, in uncovering the secret of the past. Thriller in the modern sense of the term has appeared in the early XX ct., though its elements can be seen in earlier works, significantly, in Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. While detective deals with the question "how it was done?", thriller – with "what will happen?". Often the protagonist is more or less innocent bystander, caught in the stream of events and bound to fight for his life. Besides the duel with the forces of evil, the protagonist is often on the wrong side of the law, which complicates the game. Such a situation where a gentlemen's reputation was smirched, even temporarily, was not typical for the Victorian literature. However, since J. Buchan's *The Thirty-nine Steps* the plot where the hero evades both criminals and the police has become a staple.

In the second half of the XX ct., appeared a new sub-genre of thriller, where a brilliant and devious criminal makes a defender of the law to accept a kind of chess game. Mostly, such a game is initiated by a maniac. Ritchie's plot is more interesting, because both players are quite sane, though highly unusual

personalities. In *The Game of Shadows* Ritchie turns this theme of *agon* into the leitmotif of the whole story. In both films, we see the intellectual duel of almost equal participants, which creates powerful suspense.

It is clear, that in both stories Sherlock Holmes is defending the Cosmos and the principle of order and justice (though not necessarily the law). It seems only natural that his enemy must represent Chaos. But it is true only in the second film *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, where appears the notorious Professor Moriarty. The villain of the first film is quite different. He also “plays for” Cosmos, only his version of the world order is a wrong one.

It is difficult to say whether the author planned his two films as the development of the same historiosophic theme. But we see clear and complete depiction of two different “crime paradigms”: “classical” and “non-classical”, or the totalitarian and the anarchic.

In the first film, *Sherlock Holmes*, the hero’s archenemy is the Lord Blackwood, rich and privileged, though – significantly – illegitimate. He combines his wealth, social standing and intellectual resource to seize the power in the country.

Here we can find many features, typical for the second half of the XIX ct., which combined the ancient tradition with the search for the new ways of thinking and acting. The antagonist is a representative of the ancient elite, who believes in his hereditary right to rule. At the same time, he wants to twist the already existing ancient institutions – from with the Masonic-like lodge to the Parliament – to suit his purposes. It is typical, that he searches to “marry” the occult lore with the latest scientific achievements. Such things were attempted in these times, and much later. One of the notable examples is Hitler’s Ahnenerbe, a mysterious institution that collected and studied all the kinds of ancient lore for possible practical use. Some studies that try to establish the correlation between myth and science take place in our own time [6].

Guy Ritchie does not show these arcane experiments to be effective. Mostly, they serve to create the atmosphere of awe. Fear becomes a force in itself,



helping to demoralize the opponents and oppress their minds. In such an atmosphere *coup d'états* becomes a possibility. Blackwood does not mean to destroy the state – he wants to seize it and change it according to his plans. No doubt, he would have turned it into an extremely right-wing hierarchical totalitarian world-state embracing both Britain and Northern America.

Blackwood's Dracula-like image, his quasi-religious terminology, his usage of some very antique occult tradition have an archaic feel. In a way, he is a throwback. But that is not all. Both his scientific achievements and his ability to manipulate the public opinion are shown to be effective.

A plot to seize the power in a state is not typical for the XIX ct. fiction. The existing order seemed too strong to think of that. Only the XX ct. with its experience of revolutions, world wars, coups and dictatorships, brought into the focus of attention stories about the charismatic leaders turning tyrants. John Buchan was one of the first to notice this tendency of “domination of spirit upon spirit” [4, 678], whether openly leading the masses, or covertly manipulating them. In that way, when we recollect Lenin and Hitler's unpredictable rise to incredible power, the plot of the film goes far beyond the XIX ct.

The second film, *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, presents quite a different paradigm, even a different age. If Blackwood only experimented with the new technologies, there we see the coming of the mass production. Unfortunately, it is the mass production of the instruments of the mass murder. Moreover, there is a hint that this mass-production can be used to standardize human beings. Plastic surgery, “making” twins is just one example.

Professor Moriarty is not the embodiment of Chaos – after all, he is a mathematician and music-lover, which refers us to the Pythagorean notion of the cosmic harmony. Still, he does the work of Chaos, because his course is pure destruction without a hint of any new order.

Everybody knows that Professor Moriarty is the arch-villain of *Sherlock Holmes* stories. But he never appears in the spotlight. In the book, Watson does not see him at all, and knows only Holmes' brief description of his enemy's

character and activity. Paradoxically, we do not even know Moriarty's name. It is supposed to be James, but actually, it is the name of Professor's brother. In a story, such a veil of mystery is good, but in the screen adaptation, "the Napoleon of Crime" must have a real and impressive presence and convincing psychological motifs.

Guy Ritchie brilliantly explained his character's peculiar combination of order and disorder. It is all in the title of Moriarty's monograph about the deviations of asteroids. This theme wakes in mind the discussion of Classical Greek and Roman philosophers, dealing with the trajectories of atoms, whether strictly deterministic (Democritus) or having a degree of freedom (Lucretius). But for Moriarty this deceptive "freedom" becomes the source of catastrophes that from time to time burst the order of Cosmos. It is a convenient creed for him, for it combines the belief in the mathematically precise mechanism of the Universe, and the inevitability of periodical cataclysms in the work of this mechanism. If these cataclysms are natural and inevitable, it seems no great crime to produce one. Moreover, in such cosmic incidents, the collateral damage is inevitable and of no importance. This peculiar combination of fatalism and freedom of will is sufficient to justify any crime.

It is remarkable, that the story begins with the anarchist bombers, which is strictly in keeping with the historical truth. The turn of the centuries was the time of many ideologies, some of which become violent. However, later we see that these terrorist attacks were orchestrated by a person with no ideology at all. He is the *tertius gaudens*, who provokes the revolutionaries and the states to receive maximum gain. He cares about no one, and he does not belong to a certain country. That is why all the states can ruin themselves as long as he has a neutral enclave to enjoy his gains. It is quite close to the alleged position to the contemporary "international elite", whose worldwide mobility means that they are free to exploit and leave any country, having no loyalty to any people or any state. This new elite is not the aristocracy of old. They have no "origin", no lineage, and no motherland – just personal abilities that allow making money.

Such actions provoke different kinds of conflicts, which can turn into a full-scale war. We all have grown with the knowledge that the world wars are quite real. However, in the XIX ct. such a thing appeared quite unthinkable. That is why Holmes, who has no illusions about Moriarty's intentions, is ahead of his time. It is clearly seen in his usage of the formula "the fate of the Western civilization". The civilizational approach in his time was marginal; it was much later that Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* popularized the conception. The term "Western civilization" is younger still. Thus, Guy Ritchie hints to the spectator that Holmes uses the contemporary historiosophic categories. He can see the future.

In the first film, the action is confined to London. In the second, significantly using not only train and steamer, but also the latest invention – automobile – the heroes go abroad and see different countries in their interaction. Every state is characterized by its most prominent features. For example for France, it is revolutionaries, good wine, international summits, the unfinished Eiffel tower and the Opera. For Germany, it is a military factory.

Britain, France, Germany would become active participants in the forthcoming two world wars; Switzerland in both cases would manage to stay neutral. All this is foreshadowed in the plot, and the spectator has a kind of sad knowledge of the inevitable future events. For example, for the XIX ct. Britons Switzerland was beautiful and exotic but rather unimportant. In the XX ct., it became a symbol of neutrality, with all its positive and negative connotations. Combining these senses, Guy Ritchie gives the fatal Reichenbach Falls the completely new semantics.

Another theme seen in *A Game of Shadows* is the borders between the states, and the way to transcend these borders – both geographical and mental. In this way, mobile gypsies are of more help to the "concerned citizens" trying to prevent the collapse of the civilization, than their own bigoted governments. On the other hand, the crime lords are also no longer confined to one state. War and terrorism also become global. Unfortunately, this is all too true now.

**Conclusion.** Guy Ritchie shows two seemingly diametrically opposing but equally unacceptable ways of behavior. When openly practiced, they are qualified as criminal, but in their more covert form, they have a place on the margin of political forces.

The first of them is right-wing, based on the strict hierarchy and rigid order, that establishes the dictatorial world-state, based on deception and fear.

The second one is anarchic, or, at least, using the revolutionary rhetoric for its own aims. The provocations, that may lead to the world war, are used to enrich a certain person who stays in a neutral country.

The difference between their principles can be summarized as follows:

<i>Sherlock Holmes</i>	<i>Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows</i>
Cosmos in a twisted form	Chaos
Traditions of state	Destruction of all traditional order
Open power, hierarchy	Hidden control
Giving orders	Making provocations
Totalitarianism	Anarchy

Unfortunately, both these tendencies – extreme fundamentalism and self-centered anarchism – in ideology and politics are still with us. Guy Ritchie’s films visualize the twin dangers that must be avoided, heightening the recipients’ awareness of the world problems. The correlations between these two extremes and the search for the optimal course between them is open to further study.

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