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**The Green Carnation behind the Iron Curtain: The Risky Adaptations of Oscar Wilde's
The Importance of Being Earnest and *An Ideal Husband* on the 1970s and 1980s Soviet
Television**

Wilde famously enjoyed enormous popularity in Russia, both before and after 1917. As Evgenii Bershtein notes in "Next to Christ': Oscar Wilde in Russian Modernism," at the dawn of the twentieth century, Wilde served as the symbol of both queerness and early Western modernism for the Russian writers and poets of the so-called "Silver Age." In the post-1917 Russia, and especially in the post-1930s Soviet Union, the queer and artistically innovative side of Wilde was erased for ideological reasons. He nonetheless remained, fascinatingly, an accepted, almost mainstream, Western literary figure. In "No More Delightful Spirit': Unlikely Connections with Oscar Wilde" (likely the only existing scholarly study of the subject), Anastasia G. Pease reminisces about the omnipresence of Oscar Wilde in the popular culture of her Soviet childhood.

As a fiction writer, Wilde was mainly popular among the young-adult audiences. As a playwright, he was recognized as a harsh critic of "bourgeois morality." As a result, his society plays were frequently produced on stage and adapted for television. My talk will examine two television versions of Wilde's prose and dramatic works produced at the height of the so-called "stagnation period" of the 1970s and 1980s. While one appropriates Wilde for the dissemination of the prevalent ideologies of the day, the other intimates surreptitious- and risky- ideas in ways that add a productive dimension to Wilde Studies.

The 1980 made-for-TV film *An Ideal Husband* (*Ideal'nii Muzh*) is removed from the proto-modernist aesthetics of Wilde's society plays - particularly from this play's famously painting-driven stage directions - and supplies an elaborately realist historical backdrop to Robert Chilltern's career as a representative figure of British imperialism. Additionally, however, the film responds aesthetically to turn-of-the-century technology (film and photography) and productively links Wilde's characteristic problematic of performance and identity to these art forms.

Conversely, the 1976 made-for-TV play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (*Kak Vazhno Bit' Seryeznim*) is an adaptation that is surprisingly faithful to Wilde's "original" aesthetics. Its decadent setting accurately follows the prescripts of the aesthetic movement, while the performances project androgyny and artifice that go boldly against the conventions of Soviet realism.

Works Cited:

Bershtein, Evgenii. "‘Next to Christ’: Oscar Wilde in Russian Modernism." *The European Reception of Oscar Wilde*. Ed. Stefano Evangelista. London: Continuum, 2000. 285-300. Print.

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