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A MAN OF THE BREZHNEV TIMES ON BAKER STREET:
ON THE PROBLEM OF THE ‘LATE SOVIET VICTORIANISM’

The Soviet television-series¹ was introduced, and flourished, from the early 1970s until the mid-1980s, from the first successful series of *Investigation in the Hands of Experts* (*Дело ведут знатоки*) to the last Soviet film, *Pokrov Gates* (*Покровские ворота*), which became an absolute legend in the USSR and post-Soviet Russia. During that time, more than twenty diverse projects of different lengths were accomplished, most of which are up to this day unmatched in quality. The best of them (with one very important exclusion, the comedy series *School Lunch-Break* (*Большая перемена*) concerning the adventures of a school history teacher in the contemporary Soviet evening school) were based on books well-known at the time, and rarely were these films set in the decade when they were shot. For example, *Seventeen Moments in Spring* (*Семнадцать мгновений весны*) is a screen version of Iulian Semenov’s novel about a Soviet secret agent who was sent to spy on the leaders of the Nazi special state police. In addition, the film *Can’t Change the Meeting Place* (*Место встречи изменить нельзя*) portrays the struggle between police and a certain gang of criminals, that terrorized the streets of Moscow in the second half of 1940s and is based on the popular Soviet novel *The Age of Mercy* (*Эра милосердия*), written by the Vainer brothers.

The *Pokrov Gates* is the film version of a famous play by Leonid Zorin, about the Moscow intelligentsia at the de-Stalinization time of Khrushchev. But the most celebrated novels amongst the producers of Soviet television-series came from the British authors. For example, the two-part film *Hello, I am your Aunt!* (*Здравствуйте, я ваша тетья!*) was a rewrite of the well-known play from the beginning of the last century, *Charley’s Aunt*, by Brandon Thomas, and *The Adventures of Prince Florizel* (*Приключения принца Флоризеля*) was rewritten from the *The Suicide Club* by Robert L. Stevenson. There were also lesser known

¹ A “television-series” in the Soviet times was any film that was created for television and had more than two parts (series).

films, such as *Face on the Target* from the short stories by G.K. Chesterton, the detective film *Death under Sail* from the novel by C.P. Snow, or the screen version of J.B. Priestley's play, *Dangerous Corner*. But, of course, the most famous series among them remains the screen versions of the stories about Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson.

Thus, from the second half of the 1970s to the first half of the 1980s a 'British World' was created by the Soviet film-making industry. This 'British World' embraced what was known of the English lifestyles, English history and the Victorian era among the Soviet intelligentsia. In addition, many Soviet directors filled their films of the late 19th century's 'English' lifestyle with allusions to the contemporary way of living, direct speaking of which was forbidden by censorship. Meanwhile, all the 'English' Soviet TV-series were shot in the USSR, most often in Riga or in Leningrad, the cities that were 'similar' to London (or Edinburgh) according to the opinions of the directors. And finally, some characteristics of the Victorian era became clearly distinguishable in the late Soviet times. All these circumstances formed an absolutely unique cultural phenomena that could be named the "late Soviet Victorianism."

Where does this similarity between Britain of the second half of 19th century and the Soviet Union of the 1970s and early 1980s of 20th century lie? The main concept common to those two epochs that seem so different is 'stability.' Queen Victoria was on the throne from 1837 until 1901, a sixty four-year-long reign. In her reign, England strengthened its position as both the main colonial empire and the mightiest sea power in the world. Queen Victoria, also acquired the new title of "Empress of India." These features highlight the "Victorian era" as one of the most important (if not the most important) periods of British history since the 17th-century revolution. This era is marked by the bloom of English prose writing, painting and architecture. In addition, this era laid the foundation for a modern city infrastructure of fast developing public transport, including the underground railway system, modern ways of communication (such as telephone and telegraph), and such important components of urban everyday life as universal stores, magazines, the yellow press as a whole, street cafes, fast food and many others. It was a time of rapid economic growth, which, together with the exploitation of colonies, dramatically improved life conditions and standards for most of the population. The most important social victories of the lower classes were also tied to the Victorian era: there were new regulations on the duration of the working day, and trade unions were established at this period.

The Victorian era is usually associated with the unshakeable standards of social behavior, especially concerning the sexual sphere. The protestant church and its various branches (e.g. Anglicanism), functioned as a conductor of these standards while the middle class brought them into everyday life. The social norm thus assumes also an 'anti-norm' and the decent Victorian 'Self' presupposes the pres-

ence of an amoral and socially incorrect the 'Other.' The 'Other' was, for a decent Victorian, a foreigner, most often a savage, but not only that. The function of this 'Other' was also fulfilled and personified by people of certain deviations: physical, mental, or sexual. Because of this, many attractions with dwarfs, bearded women, and the like were popular in the Victorian England. Another manifestation of the 'Other' — in this case, a member of the sexual minority — held the same importance during the Victorian times; it is enough to mention here the well-known trial of Oscar Wilde. And finally, this 'Other' is additionally personified as the 'Bohemian'; some British artists, poets and writers defined themselves as exceptions to the rule, rejecting the Victorian values. In reality, a man of art in those times had to choose his socio-behavioral strategy from two possible options. He could be a Victorian gentleman, carefully hiding the unavoidable (under this strict norm) mark of social deviations under the guise of the traditional English 'eccentricity' (one cannot help remembering Charles Dodgson, known to the readers under his pen-name Lewis Carroll), or building his own life after the model of an aesthete, an outsider, a romantic rebel (noted examples of this might be Rossetti, Beardsley and Wilde).

The same duality is revealed by the gender analysis of the Victorian society. In this society dominated by men, their supremacy is objectified in the existence of numerous social and cultural institutes, such as clubs. At a lower social layer this was done through the popularity of pubs, where women were not allowed until the 1960s. However, the ruler of this 'man's world' was a woman: Queen Victoria, who out-lived her husband by many years. The fact that, for sixty-four years, the throne was taken by a woman endows the masculine Victorian society with a certain duality as if putting the domination of men in quotation marks. This duality becomes even sharper if we recall that in those very years the first steps were made towards the emancipation of women in Great Britain. All in all, women played a very important role in the social life of Victorian Britain, and this role consisted not only of 'adding' to the 'men's world,' but also of forming, on the same level as men, the basic grounds of Victorian morals and styles of behavior.

Finally, the Victorian era was the time when the main contemporary British political parties were established. The political groups of Whigs and Tories turned, respectively, into the Liberal and Conservative parties; and at the very end of Queen Victoria's rule, in 1900, a new party was born as the Labor Party, which reflected the interests of proletariat. The second half of 19th century was a time when Liberal and Conservative cabinets alternated with each other, transforming the political, economical and social system of the country without much distress. The 'Third Power' (the worker's movement) also took organized forms quite quickly; in the end, the growing of the socialist movement in the country led, as was said previously, to the creation of a whole Party. The period of 'Victorian stability' was, in fact, the time of a critical, but at the same time gradual, transformation of the British society.

If we are to look from the Victorian England upon the Brezhnev Soviet Union (mostly, from the 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s), we will see some similarity, though it may seem fairly formal or superficial. Leonid Brezhnev came to power in 1964, as a result of a Party overturn, which put an end to a perpetually unstable and contradicting the reformative epoch of Nikita Khrushchev. In the second half of the 1960s, associates of Brezhnev tried to conduct certain reforms; however all those attempts ended at the very beginning of 1970s. This stabilized regime had very little similarities with both the repressive Stalin's regime and the strongly modernizing Khrushchev's epoch. Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev remained at the Soviet helm for eighteen years, longer than any other Soviet leader except Stalin. The period of 'de-Stalinization' and partly the reforms of the late 1960s created the ground for the relative economic prosperity of the 1970s. Particularly important were the post-Stalin technological breakthrough and the exploitation of natural resources of Siberia. It was Siberia that played, in the 1970s, the same role in the USSR economy as colonies did in Victorian Britain.

Thus, 'stability' can be considered the main characteristic of the Brezhnev times. As in the case of Victorian Britain, a slow but irrevocable transformation of the Soviet society was hiding under the untroubled surface of this stability. In this historical context we can even talk about the continuation of 'modernization,' which was conducted by Soviet leaders, from Lenin to Gorbachev. However, the goals and the consequences of these numerous Soviet modernizations were very different.

In politics and ideology, the 1970s and early 1980s became the time when the main political and ideological forces of the coming historical period were fully formulated. The ruling communist ideology had grown decrepit and Brezhnev's ideologists were, to some extent, stumped, in a manner similar to the influence and the attractiveness of Khrushchev's utopian project of building communism by the year 1980. They had to invent endless intermediate concepts to hide the simple and unpleasant fact that neither in 1980 nor in any close future there was going to be any communism. The most symbolic aspect of this disguise was the creation of such an ideological construction as "the perfection of the developed socialism." This indefinite present of the process of indefinite duration, which was in itself a formula of 'eternal now,' very truthfully mirrored the epoch of 'Brezhnev's stabilization.' In reality, during these fifteen years ideology played a very modest role; no one, except for a very few dissidents, ever criticized it. It could be said that there was a certain unspoken agreement between the government and the society: the first pretended to supply an ideologically appropriate plan of achieving universal happiness, while the second pretended to follow this plan. In reality, this silent agreement and inert fulfillment of the necessary political rituals hid the highly important process that was progressing, unprecedented, in the Soviet history: the process of rehabilitation and return of private life and gradual establishment of its supremacy.

It was only in the 1970s and early 1980s when millions of Soviet people finally were able to lead, at least partly, a private life, which mainly implied the arrangement of their everyday life conditions. The mass building program of modern housing had been started by Khrushchev, and Brezhnev continued it on a greater scale. Separate apartments became relatively affordable in Brezhnev's times, which served as a material ground for the 'privatization of life.' 'My own apartment' — such was the chief economic stimulus for a Soviet citizen. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that one of the most important Soviet under-censored prose pieces of the early 1970s was the novel *The Exchange* (*Обмен*), by Iurii Trifonov which is focused on the moral circumstances of the resolution of the 'housing problem.'

An average apartment of the Brezhnev epoch had three symbolic centers: a television set, a bookcase and a kitchen. The books, even if read rarely, were a sign of 'high culture,' a sign of the attainment and tacit support of social status. The kitchen was a guest room and a pub at the same time; here the guests were received unofficially and the discussions could cover any topic, from football to politics. In addition, the television had two main roles. Firstly, as it was a means of governmental propaganda; no matter how little anyone believed it, the television established political guidelines after which a Soviet person modeled his behavior and general worldview. 9 p.m. was when the sole news program *Time* (*Время*) aired, furnishing people with the ideologically digested information about the world and at the same time organizing the daily routine in the way similar to the chime of the bells during the Middle Ages. A large proportion of Soviet people woke up at 6 a.m. on week-days with the national anthem playing on the radio, and went to bed after they watched the nightly airing of *Time*. The other function of televisions in late Soviet times was the promotion of cultural values and models of social behavior. In those times the biggest part of television and radio shows were cultural programs, television films, and movies. After all, it was a sort of logical continuation of the 'Enlightenment project' of the earlier Soviet years suggested by such cultural revolutionaries as Maxim Gorky and Anatolii Lunatcharskii. However, in the 1970s, the biggest part of this production was movies and programs about the private life of the Soviet people and 'ordinary life' in general. The end of the last wave of revolutionary utopia, which found its expression in the modernization model of the Khrushchev's *Thaw*, made Soviet people of culture turn from the future to the present and the past. The result of this process was the birth of the Soviet television-series phenomena.

The television-series is a phenomenon of pop culture; in contrast to the West, Soviet pop culture had to perform as a part of the so-called 'high culture.' This is why almost all Soviet television-series of the 1970s and early 1980s were made not just well, but excessively well; they were almost 'too good,' and a lot of prominent Soviet actors played in them. As mentioned previously, these films were dramatizations of popular books, mostly foreign classics, amongst which the most popular

genre was adventure. Except for the plot troubles, which were so greatly appreciated by the Soviet audience — who were unaware of the wonders of detectives, thrillers and action movies — these books (the novels of Alexander Dumas, Jules Verne, and Wilkie Collins, and the stories of Conan Doyle, G. K. Chesterton, and Robert Louis Stevenson) gave the industry incredible space for showing the attractive ethic and aesthetic models, and even models which showed the ‘correct’ social and private behavior. These models wonderfully correlated with the Soviet realities of the 1970s and early 1980s, and this correlation was the reason for the popularity of most of those television series. And, of course, the most popular were television-series about the adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson.

Key facts on the history of Arthur Conan-Doyle’s books in Russia deserve a special mention. The stories and novellas about the detective Sherlock Holmes were translated into Russian quite early — already in the beginning of the 20th century they were so well known to the Russian reader that tens and hundreds of invented adventures of Sherlock Holmes were published in the Russian Empire. Those imitations were read in huge numbers by Vasilii Rozanov, and they were the subject of Kornei Chukovskii’s criticism. The fact that the Emperor Nicholas II wrote in his journal in 1916 about the family reading of “The Hound of the Baskervilles” in the English original says much about the level of popularity of the original works of Conan Doyle. After the revolution this popularity started to decrease for obvious reasons, especially in the years of Stalin’s campaign of “fighting the cosmopolitanism and the adulation for the West.” Nevertheless, the names of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson became common nouns and even in the most severe Stalinist times were used actively in the Soviet journalism, especially in political caricatures.

The second wave of Conan Doyle’s popularity in Russia came in the 1960s. It should be mentioned that by this time the majority of stories about Sherlock Holmes were translated (mainly re-translated) by first class Soviet translators (for example N. Volzhina), so that in 1966 the eight-volume collection of Conan Doyle’s writings was published in Russian. Numerous publishing houses of both the capital and the provinces started re-printing these translations, and the numbers of reprints could be counted by tens. Due to usual Soviet product shortages these books were almost impossible to buy; the government exchanged them for many kilograms of wastepaper while black market dealers sold them for very high prices. In the 1970s stories and novellas about Sherlock Holmes began to appear on stage, on screen, and on the radio. Finally, the first television-movie of the Sherlock Holmes epos appeared in 1979. It was directed by Igor’ Maslennikov and its title was *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson (Шерлок Холмс и доктор Ватсон)*. The main roles were played by the famous actors Vasilii Livanov and Vitalii Solomin, and Mrs. Hudson was played by a legend of the Soviet cinema, Rina Zelenaia. Within seven years, five movies were shot, consisting of eleven series; the last one was made

in the first year of *perestroika* in 1986. The series had a grand popularity; however, the attempt to reincarnate the idea in post-Soviet Russia was not successful — the thirteen series of *The Recollections about Sherlock Holmes* (*Воспоминания о Шерлоке Холмсе*) which was shot in year 2000 were failing with the public.

Holmes and Watson, played by Livanov and Solomin, established themselves firmly in the conscience of then a Soviet and later a Russian person while their catch-lines “It’s elementary, Watson!” («Элементарно, Ватсон!») and “Oatmeal porridge, sir!” («Овсянка, сэръ!») (phrases, by the way, absent in the original) became a necessary part of every-day speech. In the Bohemian and intellectual circles the popularity of the television series was secured by the artists of the *Mit’ki* (*Митьки*) group, who included the characters of Maslennikov’s films (and also some characters from Stanislav Govorukhin’s TV-series *Can’t Change the Meeting Place*) into a parody mythology. In the end, the success of these television series became the reason for the emergence of a memorial to the Soviet Holmes — a two volume edition *The Adventures of the Great Detective Sherlock Holmes* (*Приключения великого сыщика Шерлока Холмса*) published in Yekaterinburg in a year after the collapse of the USSR. This publication was prepared by two men who were to become famous afterwards, the man of letters Viacheslav Kuritsyn and the artist Aleksander Shaburov. The first volume consisted of the translations of Conan Doyle’s stories unknown to the Russian readers, the pastiches, parodies and extracts from the classical *Encyclopedia Sherlockiana*. The second volume was devoted to the ‘Russian Holmes’ and consisted of different, Russian-written texts exploiting the standard Holmes plots. *The Adventures* is a good example of a successful intellectual game, and as for the wider public in post-Soviet Russia, the icons of Holmes-Livanov and Watson-Solomin were, and still are, exploited by advertising.

Let us ask ourselves a question: “If we do not take into account the wonderful acting, the brilliancy of the director, the script writer, the director of photography and the art director as well as the amazing soundtrack by Vladimir Dashkevich, what was the reason for such grand popularity of these television-series?” Let us begin with the initial idea. In the last few years the director Maslennikov and the actor Livanov, independently from each other, stated views on the target of the Sherlock Holmes series. Maslennikov said: “We wanted to play Englishness,” and Livanov stated that this movie was about men’s friendship, and this distinguished it positively from other screenings of the stories about Sherlock Holmes, including the famous British one with Jeremy Brett. (Maslennikov) Both of these opinions are true to a certain extent. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson* is truly a play in Englishness, and this was one of the reasons that caused the huge success of these television-series. In the film, Victorian England is modelled after the pattern built up in the consciousness of a typical Soviet intellectual of the Brezhnev epoch, and it ideally merged with the context of their own historical

time. This merge resulted in an interesting aesthetic phenomenon, which I called at the beginning the ‘late Soviet Victorianism.’

The question of ‘men’s friendship’ of Holmes-Livanov and Watson-Solomin is a more complicated one. Victorianism knows no cult of men’s friendship (rather, this idea belongs to the culture of Latin countries), but one of the basic principles of a Victorian gentleman was the idea of ‘man’s solidarity.’ By contrast to ‘friendship,’ ‘solidarity’ applies to everyone included in a specific group: in our case, a gender group. The so-called temples of the man’s solidarity in the Victorian era (and much later) in Britain were clubs and pubs. Lest we forget that Victorian England was a class society, the gender solidarity in the Victorian England (and to a lesser degree later) overlapped with the class solidarity.

Unlike Victorian England, the Soviet Union of the 1970s and early 1980s (even though it was experiencing a social division, which was held back and, at the same time, camouflaged by the government) was a society of no gender preference, and women played a far more active role than women in Great Britain in the second half of the 19th century. In fact, the deliberate male solidarity, even a sort of cult of a very Soviet machismo, was a reaction to the active social role of women. It was Soviet women who were the bearers and protectors of the values of private life in the Brezhnev period, while the role of romantic rebels against the social and family rules was given to the men. A lot of Soviet movies of that time were built on this conflict: the main character is confused between the world of men, with all its ritual drinking and alcoholism, and the world of family, the world which is ruled by a woman; it is enough to remember the classic play of the 1970s, Aleksander Vampilov’s *Duck-Hunting* (*Утиная охота*), and the popular Soviet movie, *Afonia* (*Афоня*). The peak of ‘men’s solidarity,’ men’s freedom from family enslavement, was men’s friendship, which totally excluded women as equal participants of life. The gigantic success of the television-series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson* was partly due to the fact that the story about the unbreakable men’s friendship was played against the background of Victorian England, which was so dear to the heart of the late Soviet man.

In this sense, the key episodes of the whole television-series are the first, “Red on White” and the fourth, “The Great Agra Treasure.” The plot of the first one, based on the stories “A Study in Scarlet” and “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” is the formation of this world of men’s friendship, the world of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson. In this film, Sherlock Holmes meets his future biographer and Watson moves into the apartment on Baker Street. In this two-series film which lasts about two hours, there are only three women — the old lady who owns the apartment, Mrs Hudson, and the Stoner sisters, one of which dies from the bite of a venomous snake belonging to her insidious stepfather. Indeed, both of the Stoner sisters are played by the same actress, which makes us possibly admit that there are only two women in “Red on White.” Against such a poor female background

the plot reveals the formation of the legendary friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson. For example, once in the morning Doctor Watson goes downstairs from his room to the common dining room and begins his breakfast alone. After a while Holmes appears and reproachfully says: “You didn’t wait for me? Hunger is stronger than men’s solidarity...”²

Additionally, at the beginning Watson is stymied by the problem of Sherlock Holmes’s identity. The Doctor has a feeling that his companion is a clever criminal, and in order to get to the truth he instigates a boxing match. Revelation comes upon Watson after he gets a punch to his nose. Another example takes place whilst the two men are drinking sherry, which is brought by Mrs Hudson. At still another moment, Holmes and Watson talk about their attitude to each other whilst playing chess. We see all common rituals of the Soviet male society (as well as the male society anywhere): drinking, fighting, and playing games. Another ritual is mentioned when Holmes invites Watson to a restaurant, but the Doctor refuses the invitation. Watson is not altogether wrong, since for a Soviet person the “restaurant” is associated with women. This would be ‘going out’ to a place where the male would mix with the female; besides, in a Soviet restaurant people not only ate and drank, but also danced, met women and had ‘fun.’

It is interesting to understand the role played by Mrs Hudson in the relationship of Holmes and Watson. She is the owner of the apartment, but the lodgers do not take her seriously — especially Holmes, who conducts endless chemical experiments and even fired a revolver in his room. Given that the space of living for the two friends is provided by Mrs Hudson and that she feeds the lodgers and keeps the apartment clean — that is, secures the existence of their ‘men’s world’ — her role approaches that of a mother or a grandmother³. At the same time, the old age of Mrs Hudson does not allow for taking her for a woman in the sexual sense; it could even be said that from the point of view of a common man of the late Soviet era, this asexuality was the only way for a female to enter the world of a male friendship.

It is also interesting, how the role of the Victorian ‘Other’ is changed in the television-series. Women who have claim to an active social role, or even the smallest independence, undoubtedly fit this role. In this way, Irene Adler from the episode “The Great Agra Treasure” is a direct opposite to Miss Mary Morston, and in this sense we can place Irene Adler right next to such exotic wonders as the savage from the Andaman Islands who shoots poisonous darts from an air pipe, a one-legged convict Jonathan Small, or the vulgar king of Bohemia. Sherlock Holmes

² In the original text Watson confesses that late breakfasts were among his disorderly habits; so it was most likely Holmes who had to wait for Watson, and not the other way round.

³ This is different in Conan Doyle’s texts. In the original, the role of Mrs Hudson reminds one of the role played by Queen Victoria with regard to her subjects: everybody knew she was there but she had no direct influence on their life.

bumps into this ‘Other’ and suffers defeat. Irene Adler is beautiful, courageous, and ‘American,’ which was, from the point of view of the late Victorian Conan Doyle and of the late Soviet director Maslennikov, alien. A 100% English girl, Miss Morston is on the other end: she is shy, dependent, and not beautiful, and she is the one to become the wife of Doctor Watson, thus destroying the men’s union and pushing away Mrs Hudson from the role of the keeper of family hearth.

But let us return to the film “Red on White.” The ‘Other’ is objectified here not only in exotic attributes, or the animals of Roylott’s estate, or the actual love melodrama which happened in the Mormon State Utah. The ‘Other’ is also presented in the biography of one of the main characters, Doctor Watson. As we know from Conan Doyle’s texts, Watson came back to England from Afghanistan, where he took part in the colonial war and was wounded. In 1979 the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan and the Soviet censorship forbade any mentioning of the Afghan wars of the 19th century in the Soviet films of the 20th century. That is why Watson came back from ‘the East’; and in the biographies of other characters, anything that had any relation to Afghanistan was replaced with India. This is where the amazing effect in watching the Soviet television-series about Sherlock Holmes at the beginning of 1980s occurs. Those who read the stories and novels by Conan Doyle and knew that Watson came back from the Afghan campaign probably understood that the omission or renaming that occurred within the television-series was due to the censorship. Those who did not read the original texts still knew that ‘war in the East,’ which the Doctor took part in, was obviously the war in Afghanistan, as they did not know any other war in the East. At the beginning of the 1980s the first Soviet soldiers started to come back from the Afghan war, and so the large number of characters in the television-series who ‘came back from the East’ (in addition to Watson, this included Doctor Roylott, Colonel Morston, Major Sholto and others) was nothing out of the ordinary for the Soviet audience of the time.

In “Red on White,” the men’s friendship between Holmes and Watson is strengthened against the background of two plots picturing the dangers of marriage, and possibly even the danger of the very idea of getting married. In the first episode, Doctor Roylott kills one of his stepdaughters, and tries to kill the other one, in order to prevent them both from getting married. The American, Jefferson Hope, seeks revenge on Enoch Drebbler, who stole Hope’s bride, and as a result everyone dies — the bride, her father, Drebbler, his secretary Stangerson, and Jefferson Hope himself. The message of the film is that marriage is deadly dangerous, and the bloody circumstances of matrimonial drama unite the two men who are now bonded together by stable friendship. This message is typical for the late Soviet machismo, with its fear of ‘hearth’ and ‘family.’ It is thus not a coincidence that the script writer and the director of this film combined two different plots into one.

If “Red on White” is a film about the formation of the stable men’s friendship and building up of the ideal men’s world, “The Great Agra Treasure” narrates

about the clashing of this men's world, the world of men's friendship, with the female world. This clash ends in a catastrophe for the men's world only. Here we talk again about the plot of the film, and not Conan Doyle's text. In "The Great Agra Treasure" two stories are combined: "The Sign of Four" and "The Scandal in Bohemia." The difference between the first scenes of the film and of the story is very important: in the film Watson is bullying Holmes for the sweet feelings that his friend has for Irene Adler; in the book Holmes, tired of boredom, injects himself with a drug. In the film, Irene Adler is a substitute for cocaine (which for both the Victorian times and the late Soviet time was exotic).

The plot of "The Great Agra Treasure" is simple — the characters seek treasure, and they find it in the end. Only it is not the treasure they were looking for. The treasures from the chest, twice stolen in India and once in England, lie at the bottom of the Thames. However, both men, who were speeding after the treasure, find two women: Watson gets married to Miss Morston (she was the one to get half of the Agra Treasures), and Holmes is happy enough to have a photograph of Irene Adler. The symbolism of this substitution is clearly seen in the kiss that Watson gives Miss Morston right in front of the empty treasure chest.⁴ The substitution in Holmes' case is less striking: instead of the finger ring suggested by the king of Bohemia as honorarium for Holmes's work, he asks for Irene Adler's photograph. To this the king frowns, signs the photograph himself⁵ and gives it to the detective. Instead of the treasure Holmes gets a woman, only unlike Watson, not in person but in her image, which perfectly fits with Holmes' natural disposition to reduce feelings to logical paths.

The finding of the treasure, which resulted in clashing with the world of women, leads to the crash of the union between Holmes and Watson. The detective almost drives Watson out of the apartment, saying that "this was the last time [the Doctor] could study [his] deductive method." Holmes pronounces a monologue, quite depreciatory to a woman, and as an answer to Mrs Hudson, who points out that in this business Watson got a wife, inspector Lestrade got fame, but Holmes got nothing, the detective simply keeps silence, demonstrating to the audience his perfect profile. Sherlock Holmes is left with Irene Adler's photograph, a different ending than in the book, where to a similar exclamation (this time not from Mrs Hudson, but from Watson), he answers: "As for me, I have my cocaine." Maslennikov did not miss the chance to substitute a woman for a drug — and not solely because of censorship.

⁴ The Doctor is somewhat scared that Mary Morston may become too rich to marry the modest Dr Watson. The theme of "The Treasures of Agra" in general is closely related to marriage. Before Miss Morston gets her treasure, Holmes calculates her possible fortune and congratulates her saying that should the chest be found she would become one of the richest brides in England.

⁵ In the book the photograph was never signed. So in the movie it looks like one man, the King of Bohemia, by signing Irene Adler's photograph, symbolically gives her over to another man, Sherlock Holmes, whilst the lady herself gets married to a third man, the lawyer Norton.

For Conan Doyle the marriage between Doctor Watson and Mary Morston did not mean the end of his adventures with Holmes. The married Watson takes part in all the cases and when Mrs Watson dies, the widower moves back into the Baker Street apartment. The Victorian ‘men’s solidarity’ proves to be stronger than the late Soviet ‘men’s friendship.’ However, the literary duet of Holmes and Watson does not live through the actual Victorian epoch; after the Queen Victoria’s death the detective moves to the Sussex county for retirement, cheating on his solitude only for the sake of patriotic feelings at the beginning of the first World War. The Soviet television Holmes and Watson do not outlive the end of the late Soviet period — the last film about their adventures (taking place in 1914) was made in the first year of *perestroika*, in 1986. The end of the Soviet time overlaps in the movie with the end of the Victorian epoch. Here, the same actors, who ironically and truthfully played England of the end of the 19th century a few years ago, are absolutely lost, and the fine style, laced with almost invisible hints at the modern life, turns into a rough farce. It is a rare case when the dramatic historical and cultural rupture was captured in the film with no conscious intention from the part of its authors. The beauty of these Soviet television-series was strengthened by the strange likeness of the two historical epochs: a man of the Brezhnev times (primarily, of course, an intellectual) suddenly saw himself in a Victorian man. But the drama of the Russian (both Soviet and the post-Soviet) modernisation developed totally unlike the drama of the British one. After the ‘late Soviet Victorianism’ there happened no ‘*perestroikian* Edwardianism,’ and the television screens showed other characters the audience could identify with. Fairly rapidly, Holmes and Watson were replaced by the slave Isaura, then by the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, then by St Petersburg’s cops, after that by sentimental gangsters, and finally by the ‘mummified’ heroes of Russian classical literature. But looking at all these brand new heroes allows us to see what happened to the country in the past twenty years.

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Кирилл Кобрин

ЧЕЛОВЕК БРЕЖНЕВСКОЙ ЭПОХИ НА БЕЙКЕР-СТРИТ
(К ПОСТАНОВКЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ «СОВЕТСКОГО ВИКТОРИАНСТВА»).

Резюме

Статья посвящена прочтению одного из самых популярных советских телефильмов, поставленного по рассказам о Шерлоке Холмсе и докторе Ватсоне. В тексте анализируется историко-культурный контекст намерения режиссера Масленникова и актеров «поиграть в англичанство». Автор статьи обнаруживает определенное сходство между викторианской эпохой (временем написания рассказов и повестей о приключениях частного сыщика Шерлока Холмса) и позднесоветским временем, семидесятыми — началом восьмидесятих годов, когда создавался телефильм. Среди черт сходства — отношение к сексуальности, легитимизированное ханжество в вопросах секса, господство «мужской культуры» — при парадоксально (в таких условиях) значительной роли женщин в обществе. В статье делается вывод, что речь идет об исторических драмах «модернизации» общества — английского XIX века и советского XX, которые с разницей в сто лет переживали схожие процессы. Именно это сходство определило несомненный успех позднесоветской телеверсии викторианской приключенческой классики.

Kirill Kobrin

CZŁOWIEK EPOKI BREŻNIEWOWSKIEJ NA BAKER STREET
(UWAGI O „SOWIECKIM WIKTORIAŃSTWIE”)

Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest omówieniu jednego z najpopularniejszych radzieckich filmów telewizyjnych opartego na opowiadaniach o Sherlocku Holmesie i doktorze Watsonie. Analizie poddany został historyczny i kulturowy kontekst towarzyszący zamiarowi reżysera Maslennikowa i aktorów polegający na tym, by „odegrać Anglików”. Autor artykułu dostrzega określone podobieństwo pomiędzy epoką wiktoriańską (okresem, w którym powstał literacki pierwowzór filmu) i okresem późnosowieckim, przełomem lat 70. i 80., kiedy powstawał film. Wśród podobieństw należy wskazać stosunek do seksualności, legitymizowaną hipokryzję w sprawach seksu, dominowanie „kultury męskiej” przy paradoksalnie w takich przypadkach znaczącej roli kobiety w społeczeństwie. Artykuł prowadzi do wniosku, że mamy tu do czynienia z historycznymi dramataми „modernizacji” społeczeństwa — angielskiego w XIX wieku i sowieckiego w wieku XX, które w odstępnie stu lat przeżywały podobne procesy. Właśnie to podobieństwo wpłynęło na niewątpliwy sukces późnosowieckiej telewizyjnej wersji wiktoriańskiej klasyki przygodowej.