

Attention is also devoted to late socialist reconstruction, for example the work of heritage cult figure Petr Baranovskii and his attempts to reclaim notionally “medieval” churches out of nothing, as he did in Chernihiv while dismantling the ruins of a seventeenth-century baroque church. The monograph ends with a tangentially related annex, consisting of an extended essay on Viktor Shklovskii’s treatment of anachronous figures of speech and thought, which partially seeks to reclaim his work of the 1930s–40s.

Overall, this book is best conceived as a meditation on heritage treated both narrowly and broadly, highlighting how the variegated Soviet deployment of temporality through memorial objects, experiences, and discourses ultimately controls if not destroys memory. Whilst there is much impressive original analysis, the course of the argument is not always apparent, contributing to a certain hermetic quality. Chapter headings are often un-descriptive, if evocative. The volume is clearly not designed for the casual reader, requiring total immersion and undivided attention, perhaps aiming to stage an experience of time through the reading process—of rich and slow time—that counteracts the disruptions and destructions at the heart of soviet heritage deployment. Those who plunge into it will reap many rewards.

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Nabokov Noir: Cinematic Culture and the Art of Exile. By Luke Parker. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. 516 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. \$47.95, hard bound.
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As David Lodge pointed out long ago, scholars tend to overlook about Vladimir Nabokov what is most obvious to practicing fiction writers. Unusually for a high modernist, his plots draw on genre fiction and film: murder-mystery, detective stories, screwball, slapstick, horror, and more. Alfred Appel’s richly illustrated, probing, if rather madcap book *Nabokov’s Dark Cinema* (OUP, 1974), praised by Nabokov himself, explored Nabokov’s relation to the European and American cinema he saluted in his interviews: “serious” film-makers such Fritz Lang, Friedrich Murnau, and Joseph von Sternberg, “comics” such as Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Laurel and Hardy, and the Marx Brothers. Appel’s work was carried forward by Barbara Wylie’s undervalued *Nabokov at the Movies* (2003), which makes richly rewarding comparisons of passages in Nabokov to specific camera movements, images, reveals, wipes, and more.

Luke Parker’s *Nabokov Noir* brings to this subject a depth of research nearly unparalleled in Nabokov studies. Parker has plunged deep into the writings of the Russian emigration and brought back pearls: a map of the cinemas of Berlin; the many film reviews in *Rul’* of the young Nabokov’s bosom companion Georgy Gessen; the writings on cinema both of his early mentors Iulii Aikhenvald, Vladislav Khodasevich, and other related émigré film theorists: Pavel Muratov, Andrei Levinson, and Evgenii Znosko-Borovskii. The first two chapters of this book use this research to recontextualize Nabokov’s early writing of the early 1920s and early 1930s: stories, plays, poems, and his first three novels, *Mary; King, Queen, Knave*; and *The Luzhin Defense*. In the second half of the book, Parker focusses on Nabokov’s fifth novel *Camera Obscura*, as it gradually developed into its American version, *Laughter in the Dark*, drawing especially on the archives of Nabokov’s engagement with his American agent, Altagracia de Jannelli, and on the internal records of the publishing house Bobbs-Merrill.

Parker has made the decision not to examine closely individual films, aiming to “shift the term *cinematic* from Nabokov’s style to the culture of his exilic environment” (11). His focus is on the strategies by which Nabokov sought from the 20s on to get a foothold in the film industry, and his key claim is that “Nabokov’s engagement with the cinema as actor, screenwriter, moviegoer, and, above all, chronicler of what contemporaries called the ‘cinematized’ culture of interwar Europe . . . understood both as literary poetics and as publishing strategy, amounts to nothing less than an art of exile” (5–6). A key claim from Khodasevich’s review of *King, Queen, Knave* is twice quoted: “It is not the style of the novel that is penetrated and poisoned by the cinema, but the style of the very life depicted in the novel . . . It is this suffusion of life with the cinema that is the true subject of Sirin’s novel” (10). This would have made a fascinating line to pursue but little is made of it, beyond reference to the much-discussed passage in *Mary* about extras selling their shadows, and some general reflections on the noirishness of exile life. I longed, for example, for Parker to build on the passage in *King, Queen, Knave* in which Nabokov’s camera catches in Martha’s mind “an extraneous image [which] floated by, stopped, turned, and floated on like those objects that move by themselves in commercial cinema advertisements” (67). Is there cinematic thought, then, in Nabokov? All the wonderful research pushes out detailed examination of Nabokov’s texts, whether at the level of theme, style, language, or image, and we are left with a richly detailed frame for Nabokov’s writing, without the canvas.

One subtle question keeps emerging, of the truthfulness of cinema versus literature. In his 1928 poem “Cinema,” Nabokov dismisses film as a simplistic mass form peddling clichés, in line with the views of Muratov and Khodasevich, who saw the movies as the death of culture, opium for exhausted workers. But as Parker shows, Nabokov shared with Gessen an appreciation of cinema’s capacity to bypass cultural blindness, see what the eye at any historical moment cannot see, and to record telling chance combinations. Yet in an article of 1931 Nabokov wrote that “the cinematographic methods which seem to our eyes to give a perfectly exact image of life . . . will be rendered false by the very style of the photography” (17). In other words, cinema is as false as any other medium, and therefore as true. As Parker writes, “for Nabokov, showing a remarkable degree of sophistication in media history, what is ultimately preserved is the medium itself, so marked historically at each stage of technological development” (49)—and, as he indicates, haunted by previous forms of the medium, silent cinema being mourned in noir, black-and-white in technicolor. If arguments such as these are not explored as fully as one might have hoped, or integrated clearly into the themes of exile and noir heralded in the sub-title, Parker’s book is nonetheless a ground-breaking piece of research into Nabokov’s early visual world and cultural self-fashioning.

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Recording Russia: Trying to Listen in the Nineteenth Century. By Gabriella Saffran. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. ix, 288 pp. Notes. Index. Photographs. \$44.95, hard bound.

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Historical changes to the practices and meanings of attention are at the heart of this ambitious, richly documented, and methodologically creative book. Nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals tried to distinguish themselves from earlier generations