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The Cinema Of Sergei Parajanov (Wisconsin Film Studies)



Synopsis

Sergei Parajanov (1924–1990) flouted the rules of both filmmaking and society in the Soviet Union and paid a heavy personal price. An ethnic Armenian in the multicultural atmosphere of Tbilisi, Georgia, he was one of the most innovative directors of postwar Soviet cinema. Parajanov succeeded in creating a small but marvelous body of work whose style embraces such diverse influences as folk art, medieval miniature painting, early cinema, Russian and European art films, surrealism, and Armenian, Georgian, and Ukrainian cultural motifs. *The Cinema of Sergei Parajanov* is the first English-language book on the director's films and the most comprehensive study of his work. James Steffen provides a detailed overview of Parajanov's artistic career: his identity as an Armenian in Georgia and its impact on his aesthetics; his early films in Ukraine; his international breakthrough in 1964 with *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*; his challenging 1969 masterpiece, *The Color of Pomegranates*, which was reedited against his wishes; his unrealized projects in the 1970s; and his eventual return to international prominence in the mid-to-late 1980s with *The Legend of the Surami Fortress* and *Ashik-Kerib*. Steffen also provides a rare, behind-the-scenes view of the Soviet film censorship process and tells the dramatic story of Parajanov's conflicts with the authorities, culminating in his 1973–77 arrest and imprisonment on charges related to homosexuality. Ultimately, the figure of Parajanov offers a fascinating case study in the complicated dynamics of power, nationality, politics, ethnicity, sexuality, and culture in the republics of the former Soviet Union.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In the temple of cinema, there are images, light, and reality. Sergei Parajanov was the master of that temple."#151;Jean-Luc Godard"Steffen has managed to capture Parajanov's unique style in a language that is simple and elucidating, making you want to watch his films again and again."#151;Birgit Beumers, editor of Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema"A sweeping survey of the entire oeuvre of a great film auteur and a tour de force of scholarly research."#151;Elizabeth Papazian, University of Maryland"An . . . enthralling and desperately overdue book." #151;Sight & Sound Magazine

– "A masterful new study. . . . A godsend for people teaching or studying film, as well as those who have come away from watching Parajanov inspired and intrigued, but also overwhelmed by the wealth of elements in his films seemingly never to be fully understood or contextualised. As a result of this meticulous study, his films can now be discussed with sufficient contextual knowledge."

– "Senses of Cinema" – "The Cinema of Sergei Parajanov not only includes a biographical account of the famous filmmaker and a narrative and stylistic analysis of his films, but also offers a well-researched, multilayered study of the social, cultural, and ideological context in which Parajanov was making his films and the factors that shaped the director's style and identity as a filmmaker. . . . Culture and film historians and scholars in the field of Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies will find Steffen's book especially useful in their own teaching and research on auteur cinema, the relationships between the state and cultural producers (especially in totalitarian societies), and the role of the national aspect in culture."

– "Slavic and East European Journal" – "No Soviet-era film career presents greater intellectual challenges to western film scholars and cinephiles. . . . Steffen admirably succeeds in guiding the reader a long way down the road [in this] well-researched chronological account of Parajanov's life and career."

– "Slavic Review

James Steffen is film and media studies librarian at Emory University in Atlanta and a historian of Soviet and post-Soviet cinema. For more information, visit www.jamesmsteffen.net.

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