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Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life

by Susie Harries

Chatto & Windus, 880pp; £30 * £24

Pevsner, the German émigré writer and architectural historian, gave the English a magisterial postwar sense of their architectural traditions and achievements. He is not to everyone's taste: throughout his life and after his death in 1983, as a leftist Modernist, he was vehemently opposed by English Romantic right-leaning critics such as David Watkin. Pevsner's work is everything in the context of his intellectual life and achievements, but Susie Harries has given a private face to the public intellectual: she discovered secret journals that he kept for 50 years, which deal movingly with his exile and the difficulties of cultural assimilation. This biography is an important and heroic work of reclamation and rehabilitation.

Iain Finlayson



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