



The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov: Figures of Paradox (Directors' Cuts)

By Jeremi Szaniawski

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One of the last representatives of a brand of serious, high-art cinema, Alexander Sokurov has produced a massive oeuvre exploring issues such as history, power, memory, kinship, death, the human soul, and the responsibility of the artist. Through contextualization and close readings of each of his feature fiction films (broaching many of his documentaries in the process), this volume unearths a vision of Sokurov's films as equally mournful and passionate, intellectual, and sensual, and also identifies in them a powerful, if discursively repressed, queer sensitivity, alongside a pattern of tensions and paradoxes. This book thus offers new keys to understand the lasting and ever-renewed appeal of the Russian director's Janus-like and surprisingly dynamic cinema – a deeply original and complex body of work in dialogue with the past, the present and the future.

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Editorial Review

Review

Sokurov's work is prodigious, historically fundamental, formally path-breaking, and at the same time virtually unknown in the West. Certainly it needs a popular general introduction, but it is rare for so thorough a volume as this by Jeremi Szaniawski to offer so thought-provoking and novel an interpretation at one and the same time. His proposal to sort Sokurov's production into cycles is extraordinarily helpful, while his technical commentaries on these films will be indispensable to the layman. This exciting book is a marker with which all future students of Sokurov will have to come to terms; its accounts of cultural, political and literary contexts will be as illuminating to the non-specialist reader as its history of production will for film studies.

(Fredric Jameson, Duke University)

Like all serious criticism, Jeremi Szaniawski's book is a universe unto itself: wise, learned, a sustained dream of the films it sees so well.

(Alexander Nemerov, Stanford University)

[Szaniawski's] book, not aimed solely at those familiar with Sokurov's work, is full of observations even the most diligent viewer could miss. Szaniawski warns that Sokurov's films, complex in their imagery and symbolism, can seem tedious, but he writes about them engagingly, analysing them in great detail.

(Anna Aslanyan *Times Literary Supplement*)

Alexandr Sokurov... is arguably the most important and most prolific Russian director working today, so this volume is a welcome addition to the literature about this famously complex filmmaker and his films.

(Denise J. Youngblood, University of Vermont *Russian Review*)

Szaniawski's truly remarkable monograph... is brilliant, highly recommended... cleverly divining the right key to enter the world of one of the most fascinating (if sometimes "difficult") filmmakers around.

(*Senses of Cinema*)

About the Author

Jeremi Szaniawski holds a PhD from Yale University, and is an award-winning independent filmmaker living and working in Los Angeles. He is also coeditor of *Directory of World Cinema: Belgium* (2013).

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