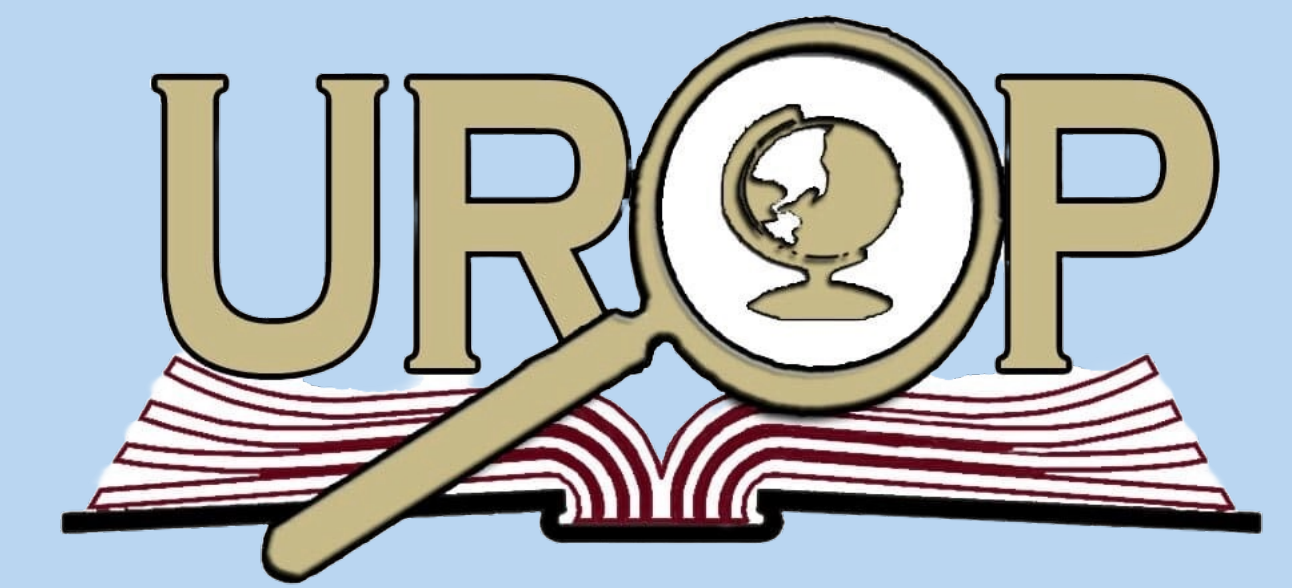




The Films of Alexander Sokurov

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INTRODUCTION

Russian Cinema was transformed when Alexander Sokurov created *Russian Ark*, a 2002 film made in a single shot. Sokurov would continue to create influential films that tackle numerous themes like family roles, Russian nationalism, and poking fun at political leaders. Sokurov uses his films as political commentary tools. Raoul Peck, a Haitian filmmaker, was inspired by Sokurov's creative filmmaking and created *Moloch Tropical*. The 2009 film follows a crumbling Haitian political leader caught in the middle of a Haitian revolution. The film has been noted to have taken influence from many of Sokurov's themes such as family structure and motherhood. Despite Sokurov's influential filmography, there is limited study on his work and its role in the Russian cinematic world. This research intends to understand the extent of the Russian director's influence on Peck's work.

METHODS

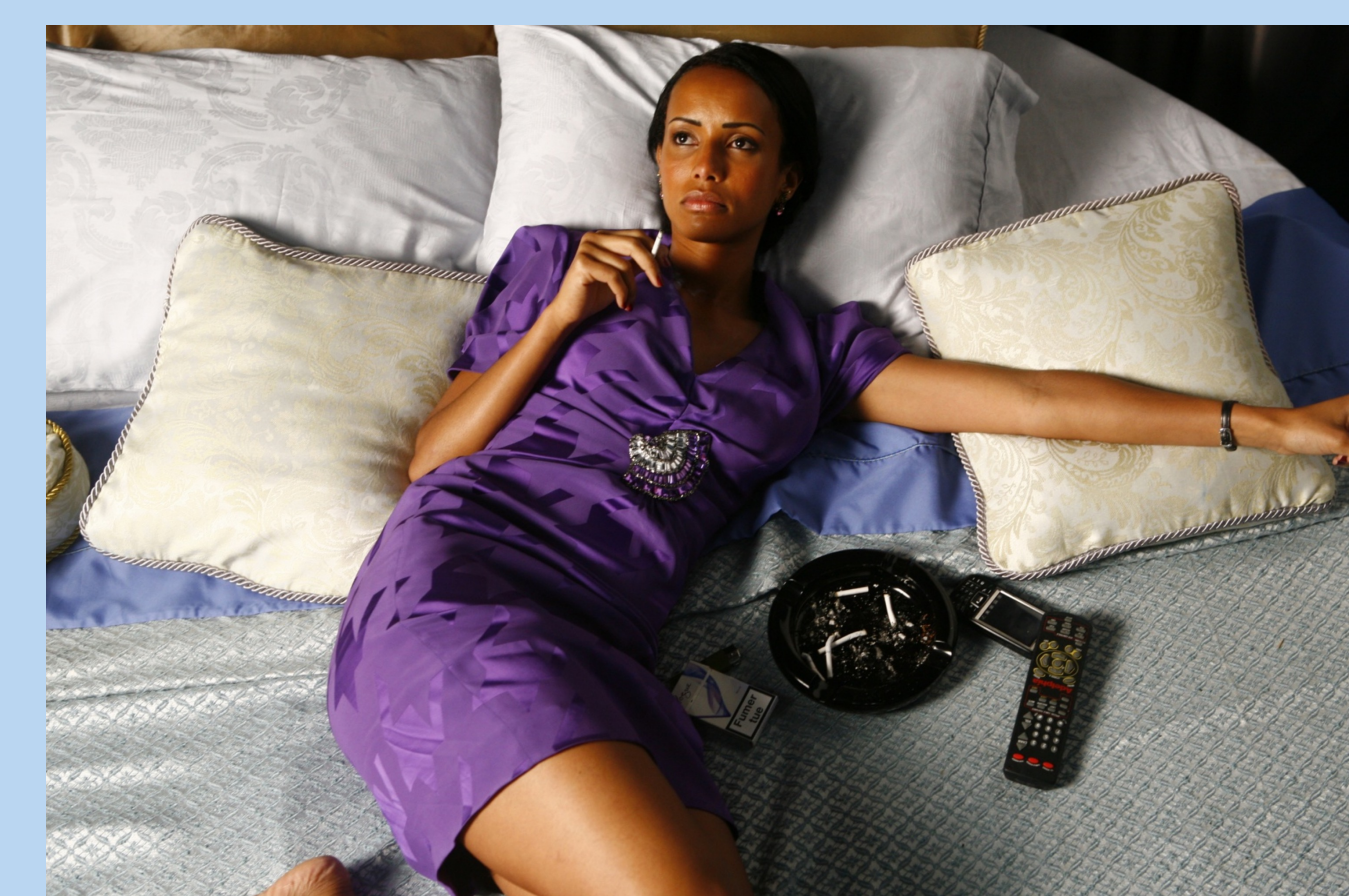
I read numerous scholarly essays regarding Alexander Sokurov and noted the prevalent themes and influence mentioned. I was provided with 3 scholarly essays and indexed each following the Chicago Manual of Style by recording words that related to filmmaking, politics, various themes such as death, life, family roles, nationalism, and Sokurov's influence. I recorded the highest reoccurring words within the index and noted them before watching *Moloch Tropical* (2009) by Raoul Peck. I watched *Moloch Tropical* with Dr. Lisa Wakamiya and noted each prevalent theme and character traits. We cross examined the themes prevalent in both Peck's film and Sokurov's most notable works such as *Russian Ark* and *Fairytale*. We noted where Peck drew influence from Sokurov's films. Wakamiya and I noted the stylistic differences and reflected on the cross-cultural connection. Why would a Haitian director be inspired by a Russian director?



Moloch Tropical (2009) still picturing the film's Haitian president, Jean de Dieu Théogène, and his security.



Still from *Russian Ark* (2002) depicting various lavish women. Raoul Peck drew inspiration from the film's unique approach to themes such as the representation of women.



Moloch Tropical (2009) image that presents Jean de Dieu Théogène wife Michaëlle smoking a cigarette. This represents the role of women within the film as they are repeatedly sexualized and discarded.

RESULTS

The most reoccurring words prevalent within the scholarly essays, each representing a continuous theme within Alexander Sokurov's work, are illustrated in the graphic below. These themes also proved prevalent within Raoul Peck's film, highlighting Sokurov's influence on Peck's work. Sokurov's *Fairytale* (2022) pokes fun at political leaders such as Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini by depicting each in a childlike manner. *Moloch Tropical*'s Haitian president Jean de Dieu Théogène is also depicted as an immature man. Both films depict political figures in a form that strays from representing each as powerful and influential people and draws itself to more negative characteristics. *Moloch Tropical* paints women as sexual objects and speaks on the role of a mother. This is like Sokurov's film *Mother and Son* (1997) as he dives into the complexities of a mother-son relationship. Both Alexander Sokurov and Raoul Peck use the film medium for political commentary and include themes of nationalism (in accordance to their respective culture) in their work.

MOST REOCCURRING WORDS WITHIN ESSAYS ABOUT SOKUROV

power women nationalism family structure politics

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the results indicate Sokurov's influence on Peck's work as themes of political turmoil and family roles are presented in both. The scholarly essays revealed repeated words such as 'power, women, and nationalism.' The research collected illustrates how political injustice transcends culture and bleeds into many communities. The results indicate the importance of film and its ability to provoke political thought, asking people to question what they define as strong leaders. Limitations within the project include a lack of previous research on Sokurov and difficulty in accessing the film *Moloch Tropical*. The cross-cultural connection continues to be analyzed and the themes continue to be dissected. More research is intended to further examine the intersectionality of both directors.

REFERENCES

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