Week 12  (April 30-May 2)

Literature, Stage, Film, Dramatic Representation, Power:

Sergei Eisenstein has the last word

Throughout the semester, we have used the Boris Godunov story to investigate subversive plots in unfree societies — a thrilling chemistry that enhances the value of art as it increases the number of victims.

As our final assignment, and to accompany your revising of your three best critiques (which can include this final week’s submission), we will read [or re-read] Meyerhold’s most gifted student, Sergei Eisenstein, film theorist and film creator, on the graphic and kinetic arts, war, power, taboo, and literature. Boris Godunov is not mentioned, but aspects of our work on that cultural-historical invariant are everywhere relevant.

READINGS:

- [re-read] Eisenstein, “From Lectures on Music and Colour in Ivan the Terrible” (1947)
  ……………. [handout from Wk 7]
- NEW: from The Eisenstein Collection, ed. Richard Taylor [2006]

  Eisenstein, “Lectures on Literature” (1930s-40s) …………. pp. 321-35
     Polygenrism
     The Grotesque
     The Detective Story
     Shakespeare

  Eisenstein, “American Cinema and its Fight against Fascism” (1942)
  …………. pp. 404-14

  Eisenstein, “Letters to Authority” (to Zhdanov 1942, to Stalin 1944)
  …………. pp. 415-19

  Eisenstein, “Some Personal Reflections on Taboo” (1943) .. pp. 420-23

Agenda:

- Film aesthetics in the context of modernist stage art.
- How mass art liberates and enslaves (cf. Eisenstein: “the theme of Ivan Groznyi is power”)
• Where *Boris Godunov* fits in. In the spring of 1940, after Meyerhold’s execution by firing squad, Eisenstein did a series of sketches on BG sc. 8 “I have achieved the highest power” that begin with clouds and end with the vaults of a church. In 1941 came the *Ivan Groznyi* commission. Links?

**SLA 537 for Tues. May 1.**

• А. С. Пушкин, «Маленькие трагедии» (1830), especially the first three [with attention to the *Boris Godunov* resonances and themes]:
  
  — in the courtship of Don Guan and Donna Anna in «Каменный гость» (cf. Dmitri and Marina in the Fountain scene, and Pushkin on Eros as fuel);

  — the greed for power via gold of the Baron in «Скупой рыцарь» (cf. actual quotations from Tsar Boris's monologues)

  — the aesthetic of the whining self-serving monologue by a responsible, rule-bound drudge confronted by a carefree, chameleon improvisor [Salieri in «Моцарт и Сальери» as a reworking in art of the Boris / Dmitri opposition in political history].

**DAY 2: Wed. May 2:**

Evaluating the course.

Final sum-up discussion and critiques.

End-of-term final exercise (due by e-mail to cemerson@ by Dean’s Day Tuesday May 15 at midnight):

**Three BG critiques**, revised, improved, and none longer than 2 pages. Two should deal with topics / readings discussed in seminar, and one should be a review of the Princeton production (written either as a spectator or a participant).

Venues have been found for publishing a selection of these brief essays. Any editing will of course be checked out with the authors.