

ENGL 4650:
Special Topics, 20th Century Literature
HYBRID FORMS, GENRES & MODES

March 24, 2011

Hello One and All,

Thanks for a lively and interesting first meeting last night.

Here are several items for you to consider during the next two weeks, including guidelines for the two conversational contributions (conversation-starters) you'll be writing.

- I intended to make this connection last night, but . . . was carried away by the conversation. Please note: *Tempest*, 5.1: 33-57; pages 189-90 in the Oxford ed. See Medea's *Incantation* in Appendix E, pp. 239-41. This is just one of several examples of the presence/influence of source texts in Shakespeare's play; one more hybrid element for you to enjoy. The introduction to the Oxford ed. has good info. on Shakespeare's source texts. If Prospero is channeling Medea in this celebrated moment from Act 5, scene 1, then . . . what does that say about the artistry & poetics of Prospero/a? Julie Taymor's 2010 adaptation, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdpQcFdfXdY>, might be of interest, in that regard.
- About the INVITATIONS. Since there were questions about possibly combining these, I thought I would add a guideline: **You may combine up to THREE of these to submit as ONE work.** We will talk further about these, but . . . please remember: **these INVITATIONS should be engaged w/ the materials we're studying in this class; interesting and meaningful for you and for your work in the grad. program; and manageable for your time during the quarter.** If you would like more structure for any of the INVITATIONS, just let me know. For the moment, I would encourage you to READ, VIEW, LISTEN . . . and follow your engagement w/ the texts and films currently under consideration.
- Where to find Course Documents? You'll find my e-mails, the syllabus, and all of the noted theory texts

from Plato, Stafford, and Manovich (posted as PDFs) on my Portfolio site, <http://portfolio.du.edu/showard>, and on Blackboard, <http://blackboard.du.edu/>. On my Portfolio site, go to the Syllabi section on the right and open the folder for Spring Quarter, 2011. On Blackboard, after you login, go to the link for our class: [ENGL-4650-1 Special Topics: 20th Cent Lit 201130](#).

- Read Shakespeare's *Tempest* and view the three films: the silent production, *The Tempest* (1908); the classic sci-fi feature-length production, *Forbidden Planet* (1957-58); and Peter Greenaway's masterpiece, *Prospero's Books* (1991). To view those films, go to DU Course Media, <http://coursemedia.du.edu/>, login w/ your DU ID & password, then find and open the course gallery, *Special Topics: 20th Cent Lit 4650*. Once there, click on the gallery titled, "Tempest Adaptations." The 1908 *Tempest* (12 min.) is the second in the *Silent Shakespeare* collection, preceded by a very brief (3 min.) and very grim *King John* (1899), which you'll also appreciate (especially in comparison w/ Percy Stow's 1908 version).
- Read the noted theory texts: Plato's "Cratylus;" Chapter One, "Postmodernism and the Annihilation of Resemblance," from Barbara Stafford's book, *Visual Analogy*; and sections from the Introduction & Chapter One from Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media*.
- Also read ahead, as the syllabus notes, so that you'll be ready for our next classroom meeting. During that meeting (Wed., April 6) we will discuss: *The Tempest* and the three films; also, the three theory texts. During that meeting, we will also begin our discussion of Cole Swensen's *Such Rich Hour* and Susan Howe's *The Nonconformist's Memorial*. Read as much of those books as you can; we will continue w/ those works during Week four.
- **CONVERSATION TOPIC #1 (due by Friday, April 1):** As the syllabus notes, we are concerned (during the first three weeks of the quarter) with ekphrasis and the synergy between text/image & image/text. How and why do those relationships work in different ways in the texts, films, and theoretical readings? Remember that ekphrasis can be understood in many ways: in a strict

sense, ekphrasis means a vivid description of objects, either animate or inanimate; in a more elaborate sense, ekphrasis means the articulated perception of imaginary objects, subjects, emotions, identities, concepts & etc. **How and why does ekphrasis play a significant role in Shakespeare's *Tempest*? How and why do the film adaptations elaborate upon the role of ekphrasis in the *Tempest*? And in what ways do the theoretical texts (Plato, Stafford, Manovich) enrich your interpretation of how ekphrasis plays a role in Shakespeare's text and in the films?** Please write a 500-word conversation-starter in response to those questions: engage directly with Shakespeare's *Tempest*, your choice of the films, and your choice of the theoretical texts. You may submit your conversation-starter either on Blackboard (via the Discussion Board forum titled CONVERSATION TOPIC #1), or you may submit your 500-word conversation-starter in hard copy form to my mailbox in the English Dept.

- **CONVERSATION TOPIC #2 (due before our next class, 4/6): How and why does ekphrasis play a significant role in Cole Swensen's *Such Rich Hour*, and in Susan Howe's *The Nonconformist's Memorial*? And in what ways do the theoretical texts (Plato, Stafford, Manovich) enrich your interpretation of how ekphrasis plays a role in both of those books?** Please write a 500-word conversation-starter in response to those questions: engage directly with *Such Rich Hour* and *The Nonconformist's Memorial* and with your choice of the theoretical texts. You may submit your conversation-starter either on Blackboard (via the Discussion Board forum titled CONVERSATION TOPIC #2), or you may submit your 500-word conversation-starter in hard copy form to my mailbox in the English Dept. before our next meeting on 4/6.

If you have any questions about any of these things, please be in touch w/ me via e-mail: showard@du.edu
I will be checking my messages while on my trip to AZ, so will do my best to reply.

Have fun w/ . . . ! See you in a fortnight.

Best,
Scott