

9 May 2008

Dear Professor Barry Allen,

Many thanks to you for awarding me a Curriculum and Faculty Development Grant (CFD) from the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) for your Environmental Initiative. As proposed, this curriculum development grant will help me design a course to be offered at Rhodes College in Spring 2009: “**Shakespeare and Ecocriticism**,” a new course that has not previously been taught at Rhodes College. What follows is an interim report on my course development.

Most of my preliminary work (as the course will not commence for another 8 months) has been in the mode of information-gathering—purchasing books to read over the summer, as well as compiling a comprehensive bibliography of secondary studies. To that end, I have begun by ordering *Ecocriticism* by Greg Garrard (Routledge, 2004), a general primer for the field that was recommended to me by my former colleague T. Scott McMillin of Oberlin College’s English Department and Environmental Studies Program. I have also corresponded with Lawrence Buell of Harvard University, a founding figure in the world of ecocriticism. Professor Buell suggested a book being touted as the most significant ecocritical intervention in Renaissance studies yet: Robert Watson’s *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Penn 2006). There are a number of Shakespeare essays in *ISLE*, the increasingly-better ASLE flagship journal. One of the chapters of Sharon O’Dair’s *Class, Critics, and Shakespeare* has an interesting/pertinent essay on staging Shakespeare in a problematic Oregon “rustic” setting. Ken Hiltner, a recent Harvard graduate, works on Milton; I have emailed him as well to request his suggestions. An earlier book-length study in this field was Gabriel Egan’s *Green Shakespeare*. It’s a bit too speculatively contentious for my taste, but I am sure I will include this volume among the recommended readings nonetheless. As it happens, Karen Raber (nearby at the University of Mississippi) has co-edited a forthcoming volume on Renaissance ecocritical analysis, and noted in my email exchanges with her that her University recently launched an interdisciplinary Environmental Studies program, with many faculty eager to attend a symposium on Shakespeare were I to host one next Earth Day, as planned.

In addition to ordering these books and consulting over email with fellow scholars in this small but burgeoning field, I have also sought online syllabi for comparable courses. So far it seems that a ‘green’ unit has been an occasional one in a Shakespeare course (often concentrating on *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*), but never the core theme of the entire class. This course will thus be forging new ground in this regard—making me glad, again, to receive the funding towards developing it (as it is new not only to Rhodes but apparently to the discipline). Moreover, the novelty of the topic means that my students will be engaged, through the planned symposium, in conversations with scholars who are themselves shaping the field as it emerges.

With thanks for your continued support,

Scott Newstok
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