

October 27, 2015

Dear Colleague,

I'm delighted to welcome you to the 2016 Shakespeare Association Seminar, "Rethinking the 'Minor' Epic." Let me start by saying how pleased I am that you've chosen to participate in this seminar – having written about several epyllia over the years, and having just finished an essay on the vogue for minor epics for *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Reception in English Literature* (eds. Patrick Cheney and Philip Hardie), I still find these poems dear to my heart. And I am keenly aware how much there is left to explore.

As a reminder, I'll start with the proposal approved by the SAA program committee: "Can we expand upon recent attempts to read epyllia by Shakespeare and others in light of shifting definitions of masculinity, nationhood, and the nature of social distinction? What do these not-so-minor poems reveal about the institutions of rhetorical training – grammar schools, universities, Inns of Court – that made them possible? What kinds of cultural and poetic critique emerge if we think of them as a poetic conversation? As engagements with the commercial stage, the law, or new forms of trade? Theoretical, archival, interpretive approaches all welcome." Here I would like to add that you should feel free to write about minor epics by authors other than Shakespeare. Part of rethinking the kind of "poetic conversation" carried on in the 1590s requires us to include other poets as well, so by all means follow your instinct and go where your critic's hunch takes you.

To keep all our work on track in the run up to the conference, I've put together the following schedule of deadlines.

Within 7 days of receipt of this letter: please confirm that you have received the letter, that you are still planning to attend the seminar, and that your contact information is accurate. We'll communicate with one another by email, so please double-check to ensure your e-mail address is accurate. I'll distribute a corrected list of participants once I've heard from everyone.

December 7, 2015. Please send me the title and a short abstract of your proposed paper in **Word format (.docx)**. Abstracts should be no longer than **200-300** words. Please formulate a tentative thesis, hypothesis to be tested, or central question to be posed; give a sense of your method or approach; the texts or materials you'll be examining; and a **short bibliography of no more than three books or articles** that have helped you formulate the topic or question of your essay. I'll assemble a bibliography from these suggestions and will distribute that bibliography, along with a few suggestions of my own, and your abstracts, to the whole group by mid-December. We may then be able to see the outline of the seminar's shape.

February 14, 2016. Please send your final essay, in Word format, to me and all seminar participants. **Essays should not exceed 3000 words.** We are all busy people; and all of us will need to read your work carefully before the meeting. Therefore a tighter, short essay is far preferable: *copia* may be a humanist virtue, but not in this case. The SAA mandates that I let the

conference organizers know who has completed his or her paper no later than February 15; **if I have not received your paper by February 15, your name will not be in the program.**

March 9, 2016. Within a week of receiving your essays, I will assign each of you another member's essay to which you will write a brief response. **First**, please send a response of no more than 600 words to me, the author of your assigned essay, and the whole group (again in .docx format). Please focus on the larger issues raised in the paper that are important to our seminar rather than local details. Ideally, a response will give the author commentary on her or his work and also contextualize what that paper contributes to our communal discussion. **Second**, please send me an abstract of your paper (no more than **300** words) – though you can always use your first abstract as well. Just let me know. I'll assemble these abstracts for distribution to auditors. You will hear back from me in more detail by **March 16th** about the groups of scholars and/or clusters of questions we should all think about before meeting.

March 23-26. At last: the convention. I've no idea yet about the schedule or when we will meet. But I'd very much like to meet together as a whole before we assemble on the day; once I know the time for our seminar, I'll try to set up a place where we can have drinks the evening before so we all meet.

I'm very much looking forward to the chance to work with you over the next six months. If you have any suggestions as we go along, please feel free to make them.

Sincerely,

Lynn Enterline
Nancy Perot Mulford Professor of English
Vanderbilt University