

2012 Professional Development Grant Report

South Central Modern Language Association Convention Presentation

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## **B. Restatement of Creative Work / Professional Enhancement Activity**

In November 2012, I attended the South Central Modern Language Association Convention in San Antonio, Texas. The Association's website is as follows:

<http://www.southcentralmla.org/>

## **C. Brief Review of Creative Work / Professional Enhancement Activity**

I presented as part of the Gay and Lesbian Studies in Language and Literature Division. My paper, "Death, Sexuality, Modernism," analyzed the development of the categories of homosexual and heterosexual and their relationship to gender in early twentieth-century literary culture. My paper unraveled how the modernist fascination with passivity and femininity helped to usher in new ways of understanding gender and sexuality as both liberating and confining. Arising from the destabilization of gender that came about following World War I and from the development of the sexual identity categories of homosexual and heterosexual during the early twentieth century, femininity became a catalyst for cultural change.

In addition to my own panel, I attended several others that explored topics like modern drama, rhetoric, and new media. I also served as the elected secretary of the Gay and Lesbian Studies division for the conference.

## **D. Summary of Outcomes / Experiences**

My paper received positive feedback and led to a discussion of how the same tropes of passivity and femininity function today in the cultural fascination with vampires, zombies, and romance. This discussion led me to expand my work on passivity and femininity to connect today's tensions to a modernist literary history. As a result, I have added a chapter to the book project I am working on about this topic.

In addition, I was elected as president of the Gay and Lesbian Studies division of SCMLA. This opportunity allows me to network with other scholars in the field, to read and assess paper proposals for the 2013 SCMLA convention, and to bring greater recognition and awareness of English and World Languages at Arkansas Tech University.

## **E. Conclusions and Recommendations**

I will continue to revise my paper as part of my book project and expand its argument to include a broader cultural perspective. The ideas in my paper reflect a larger current in my thinking that have appeared in papers I have written for other conferences and also in how I teach connections between literature and culture in my courses.

I am extremely grateful for the Professional Development Grant.

Copies to:     Dr. Carl Brucker, Department Head, English and World Language  
                  Dr. H. Micheal Tarver, Dean, Arts and Humanities  
                  Dr. John Watson, Vice President, Academic Affairs

**F. Appendix**

Copies of my paper are available upon request.