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Professional Development Grant Report

Conference Presentation

American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies

March 30-April 2, 2017

Minneapolis, Minnesota

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1. **Restatement of the Professional Enhancement Opportunity**

I received funding to attend and present a paper at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) in Minneapolis, Minnesota on March 30-April 2, 2017. My paper “Hebrew without Jews: Sublime Hebrew as a Christian Inheritance in Eighteenth-Century England” was a part of the panel “New Jews: Debating Modernity in the Long Eighteenth Century.”

My presentation explored how, with very little direct knowledge of the language, important Christian scholars in England forged an eighteenth-century Hebrew of the imagination. The fascination with and praise of the Hebrew bible as sublime literature forged in the eighteenth century is often mistaken as a form of philosemitism and embraced by current Jewish readers of this scholarship. However, as this paper will argue, this eighteenth-century fascination was not an act of appreciation but one of appropriation. English-imagined Hebrew brings Hebrew into the western literary fold as a high western art form, but the flipside of this reverence is that it marks the Hebrew as always wholly other and outside of comprehension. The sublime, after all, is not the beautiful. Terror, horror, and the dissolution of the subject make the sublime what it is. Perhaps, most importantly, it erases the presence of any actual Jews in the process of biblical interpretation. By looking at the scholarly work of Daniel DeFoe and Bishop Robert Lowth this paper showed how both authors created an impression of embracing Hebrew while erasing the legitimacy of Jewishness and severing the link between Jews and their own language.

1. **Brief review of professional enhancement opportunity**

While at the conference I had the opportunity to attend many panels, gather new ideas for teaching eighteenth-century material, and network with colleagues in my field of specialization.

Attending the conference and presenting my work will inform both my research and teaching in the future. This was the national conference in my field of specialization for 2017. While there, I was able to participate in professional development that will make me a better mentor to students and allow me to continue developing the material I present in the classroom. Specifically, I attended panels that discussed making the eighteenth century accessible to students from many different backgrounds.

By both attending sessions and presenting my own work to a national audience at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I was able to grow as a scholar and make important professional connections.

1. **Summary of finding, outcomes, and experiences had**

The conference was a great success. In addition to successfully presenting my paper and learning about new approaches to teaching, I was invited to speak in June 2017 at Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a direct result of my attendance at the conference.

Not only was I was invited, by the friend of a speaker on my panel, to give a paper in Jerusalem at a conference at the Humanities Center at Hebrew University, but I also worked on my book material as research for this paper and will have the added opportunity for archival research while in Jerusalem.

1. **Conclusions**

Participation in the conference allowed me to present my work to a national audience, keep up on pedagogical and research developments in my field of specialty, and network with colleagues in my field. As a result of the conference, I have new ideas for the classroom and have received an international speaking invitation.