

Title of Grant: Advertisements for Themselves: Authorship in Postwar America

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Abstract:

This project examined the evolution of authorship during the mid-century Cold War climate. It explored the significantly different ways authorship was understood, constructed, and practiced throughout the period. The unique contribution I hoped to make to the study of American literature and history lies in the way this project charts the relationship between the economics of authorship and the consumer marketplace of the postwar era. Understanding what I call the “economics of authorship” will contribute significantly to my ability to teach about American literature and writers, especially those in the twentieth century.

Actual Outcomes:

The knowledge gained from this research has transformed my teaching abilities. Having the confidence of fully researched convictions has improved, and will continue to improve, the learning experience of my students. Longer-term, this research has contributed information to academic articles-in-progress that, if published, will provide exposure to Thomas Nelson Community College and VCCS.

Other Colleges:

n/a

Discussion and Critique:

Studies of authorship have been largely confined to little more than biographical vignettes of (canonical) novelists, whose arbitration of authorship is presented as absolute. My research, rather, exposes the broader ways, industrially and nationally, books and writers were marketed and consumed. In doing so, I have begun work that opens up a much deeper and wider understanding of the idea of authorship in Cold War America and beyond. Looking forward, further work remains to be done on the role of screenwriters (who are not traditionally considered "authors") during the 1950s and how they affected the idea of authorship. I would not change anything about my research this summer, but would only hope to enlarge its scope in the future to include the archives of the Writers Guild of America in Los Angeles.

Evaluation:

I have solicited feedback from friends and colleagues for my written work. I will continue to do so until I feel comfortable submitting my work for publication and for speaking engagements.

Dissemination:

Using research from this summer, I will submit an article for review at the journal *American Literary History*. In addition, I will use research gathered this summer to present a paper at an international conference, *Television: The Experimental Moment*, organized by the Institute National de l'Audiovisuel and the University of Paris 8. The conference takes place from 27-29 May 2009 in Paris.

Contribution from VCCS will be acknowledged in each.