Conference Report

In order to go to the RMCLAS conference in Santa Fe, I flew American Airlines from RDU to Santa Fe Regional Airport, with a transfer in DFW Airport in Texas. Upon my arrival on Wednesday April 3, 2019, I took a taxi to my lodgings and checked in. I unpacked and revised my presentation for the following morning. I presented the following day, April 4, 2019. The presentation was entitled “Buggering the Enlightenment: Sexual Deviancy, Shapeshifting, and Indigenous Vassals in Colonial New Spain.” The presentation was well received. I got a lot of feedback from more senior scholars such as Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, Ann Twinam, L.J. Andrew Villalon, and Shawn Austin. The questions that I received pushed me to think about a precise methodology for engaging with magic and the supernatural during the Enlightenment and in a post-Enlightenment academic setting. While I have not yet been able to articulate a precise methodology, thinking about this question will, no doubt, help my research in the future.

After my presentation, I attended many other interesting panels. For instance, I attended a talk by Clemente Gomez, from Texas A&M University, whose presentation was entitled, “A Most Humble Request: Negotiating Self-Promotion and Power in the Spanish Atlantic.” This presentation pushed me to think about politically-charged documents known as the probanzas, which obscure the truth since they were deliberately used to attain titles and privileges from the Spanish crown. Clemente has the difficult task of gleaning elements of reality from this muddled corpus of texts.

On Friday April 5th, I attended Sonya Lipsett-Rivera’s (Carleton University) talk entitled “Vagos in New Spain: Families, Young Men and the Law of Vagrancy in New Spain.” This talk inspired me to think about honor more deeply and how that concepted worked within families, not just between them. Professor Lipsett-Rivera noted that her research contained many instances
of parents denouncing their own children for being disorderly, hence a “vagabond.” The letters pleaded with state authorities to take the children away and refashion them into productive citizens so that they would not stain the family’s linage.

I left the conference on April 6, the final day, and travelled back to Durham, NC. The flights were delayed due to thunderstorms in Texas. However, I did not mind too much as the conference had been so productive. I made many new contacts and received excellent feedback on my research. I look forward to attending next year’s RMCLAS in Las Cruces, NM.