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Mellon Foundation Area and International Studies Fellowships for Incoming Graduate Students

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This Mellon Fellowship enabled me to do pre-dissertation research on ethnic German cultures in Eastern Europe and Russia in Romania and Germany for four weeks in June and July of 2017, affording me opportunities to gather experiences and materials impossible to obtain in the United States. With the funding provided by this award, I was able to travel to and conduct research in Sibiu, Romania as well as in Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, and Berlin, Germany. In doing so, this award was instrumental in allowing me to sound out and refine aspects of my future dissertation topic.

The first week I spent in Sibiu, Romania, researching and experiencing the lives of ethnic Germans in the area. The largest such group is comprised of the Transylvanian Saxons (*Siebenbürger Sachsen*), a community of people which migrated from German-speaking lands to the then-Hungarian frontier around Sibiu first in the mid-12th century at the invitation of Hungarian King Géza II. During my time in Sibiu, I was able to visit several of this group's church fortresses, which continue to serve as the center of Transylvanian Saxon culture, and meet with members of secular and religious organizations using and advocating for the churches, historians of Transylvanian Saxon culture, students of the German-language Brukenthal School, and a former Chairperson of the German Forum political party—the former party of the current Romanian President. In doing so, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of Transylvanian Saxon culture in Romania.

For the next two weeks, I focused on conducting research with hard-to-find documents at the German National Library in Leipzig, Germany. There I was able to make use of materials such as maps, conference proceedings, almanacs, house calendars, and newspapers which would have been difficult to obtain in the US (or anywhere else in the world). While in Leipzig, I was also able to take advantage of other cultural institutions the city has to offer such as the museums in the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum and in the Nikolaikirche, where the Monday demonstrations were held in the former GDR. During this time I was also able to meet with György Dalos, a historian who has written about ethnic Germans in and from Russia.

During the last week, I joined a study trip exploring issues of migration and memory in German public discourse. This started in Frankfurt a. M., where we learned of and discussed the complex role migration has had in the city, before going to Berlin, where we toured the massive German History Museum, joined a lecture at the Humboldt University with students of migration in the GDR, and attended an experimental play which deals with topics of migration in Germany, among other things, at the Maxim-Gorki-Theater.

I am thankful to the Mellon Foundation for providing me the funding to conduct this research. Without this generous funding, I very much doubt that I would have been able to study this topic in Romania and Germany at this point in my graduate career. These experiences and documents will surely prove to be of central importance in my further research.