

Report of Activities

Sabbatical Leave Fall 2018

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I applied for the sabbatical leave in order to continue my research in Romani [Gypsy] self-expression through visual art and literature in the German-speaking world. I made significant progress on my book manuscript “Art Against Forgetting: The Memory Project of Romani [Gypsy] Painter Ceija Stojka.” As proposed in my sabbatical application, I followed up with interested publishers in the US and abroad, and identified one in the fall. Together with co-author, Dr. Lorely French, Pacific University (Oregon), I had multiple discussions with the editor who was very interested in publishing our manuscript. Despite the stated merits of the manuscript in regards to scholarship and the value of using this book as a textbook in multiple disciplines at the university level, I learned at the end of my sabbatical, after much work and a change of editors, that due to the cost of reproducing the many color images, the publisher was no longer able to produce the book. This came as unexpected news when I thought we would be close to a contract. After working with this publisher, which focuses on scholarly textbook publishing, it became clear that I need to identify a different publisher. I hope to have time during breaks from teaching to make sure that this work gets published. Reviewers have evaluated it as innovative, original, and relevant in the fields of German Cultural Studies, connected to Holocaust Studies, Romani Studies, Ethnic Art, Minority Studies, Memory Studies, and other areas of inquiry both in the US and abroad.

Despite this disappointment, I am happy to report on the progress of the book manuscript which is close to being finished. I am also happy about other achievements during my sabbatical that are connected to my research in Romani Studies and Memory Studies:

Besides working on my book during my sabbatical, I

- wrote and submitted two articles for scholarly publication;
- presented a paper at the 5th International Conference on Genocide;
- served as an invited participant at a conference at a major university in Germany; and
- conducted research at two archives in Germany to prepare for a future project.

In my scholarly presentation at the *5th International Conference on Genocide* that took place November 1-3, 2018 at Sacramento State University, I drew on one of the chapters discussing the Romani Holocaust from my book manuscript. In my presentation, however, I focused on an aspect not covered in the manuscript: on the power of art and its potential to heal trauma.

Because of my contribution at this conference, I was invited to expand my presentation into a formal article. This article entitled “Art Against Forgetting: The Nazi Genocide of the Roma through the Eyes of Painter Ceija Stojka” is currently under review and, if accepted, will be published as part of *Conference Proceedings* by Routledge Publishers.

Based on my SSU RSCAP-funded research preceding my sabbatical in the fall, I was able to complete and submit another article, entitled “When Words Fail: The Story of Alzheimer’s in Arno Geiger’s text *Der alte König in seinem Exil* (The Old King in His Exile) and Til Schweiger’s film *Honig im Kopf* (Head Full of Honey),” to one of the top professional journals in my field. *German Studies Review* is a major peer-reviewed journal that uses a

double-blind review process. The research for this article helped me to further develop my work in memory studies by adding a particular angle to it: a critical discussion of the representation of Alzheimer's Disease in literature and film. Through my research I realized the significance as well as the timeliness of my work: The topic of empathy in dementia studies is currently gaining more attention, and the concept itself is increasingly being discussed linking a wide range of disciplines. Gleaning insights from disciplines such as neuroscience, psychology, sociology, and anthropology I discuss the impact of literature and film from German-speaking countries on memory and dementia studies. One reviewer describes my work as an original contribution offering major insights related to bodily memory as revealed through Alzheimer's Disease. Reviews highlight my novel discussions of empathy and my discussion of critical insights from a variety of fields in the sciences and humanities. They state that my research about Alzheimer's Disease in literature and film from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland adds an in-depth discussion of the roles of empathic listening, observing, and interacting with the person afflicted by the disease. One of the reviewers remarked that my article will serve teachers who may consider the primary works in their courses, because it helps inform courses on a wide range of subjects, including cinema, medical humanities, or health as a social issue. I am currently working on revisions for resubmission and hope to see the article published next year.

Because of my work in this particular field of memory studies, I was invited to participate in a conference at the Freie Universität Berlin/Germany, that took place September 13-15, 2018. The conference, entitled "Dementia, Violence, and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Literature, Film, and Comics," was attended by about twenty colleagues in my field of interdisciplinary German Studies. I realized the significance of the role of empathy in my work which so far has hardly been explored in the fields of disability and dementia studies.

In addition to my work described above, I spent several days at two archives in Germany that house important information about Germany's colonial involvement in Papua New Guinea (NPG): the *Mikado Missiology Library and Documentation Center* in Aachen, which contains monographs, reviews and a collection of non-published documents of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. I also researched letters and documents of missionaries at the *Hiltrup Missionshaus* near Münster, and met with the former Arch Bishop of Papua New Guinea as well as retired nuns and missionaries, who had spent decades in NPG. I plan to use this preliminary research as a foundation for future research involving the aftermath of German colonial rule overseas.

I am grateful for SSU granting me a research sabbatical, and look forward to developing my work in areas of interdisciplinary German Studies that so far have received little academic attention.