



Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

JAHRBUCH 2022/2023

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON BARBARA STOLLBERG-RILINGER
MIT BERICHTEN UND BEITRÄGEN VON

Elçin Aktoprak ♦ Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi ♦ Camilo Barbosa ♦ Maximilian Benz
Judith L. Bronstein ♦ NoViolet Bulawayo ♦ Kateryna Burkush ♦ Lynda Delph
Claudia Diehl ♦ Arie M. Dubnov ♦ Oren Harman ♦ Gunnar Hindrichs
Husein Inusah ♦ Deborah James ♦ Thomas Kaufmann ♦ Moritz Kraemer
Karin Leonhard ♦ Tchavdar Marinov ♦ Susan Marks ♦ Anna Medvedovska
Kateryna Mishchenko ♦ Milica Nikolić ♦ Insa Nolte ♦ Joyce Nyairo ♦ Rose O’Dea
Danai Papageorgiou ♦ Maroš Pleška ♦ Antonin Pottier ♦ Ekaterina Pravilova
Daven Presgraves ♦ Surabhi Ranganathan ♦ Lucia Ronchetti ♦ Martin Saar
Henadz Sahanovich ♦ André Schneider ♦ Shai Secunda ♦ Benny Shilo
Maria Stepanova ♦ Michael Taborsky ♦ Franciscus Verellen ♦ Njoki Wamai
Ittai Weinryb ♦ Leor Zmigrod

Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

JAHRBUCH 2022/2023

© 2024 by Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin
– Institute for Advanced Study Berlin –

Redaktion: Maike Voltmer

Satz und Druck: Buch- und Offsetdruckerei H. Heenemann, Berlin

Printed in Germany 2024



Dieses Werk ist lizenziert unter einer Creative Commons Namensnennung –
Nicht kommerziell – Keine Bearbeitung 3.0 Deutschland Lizenz

Bildnachweise:

S. 17, 20, 23, 27 privat; S. 28: Montage Johannes Traulsen; S. 31 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin/Foto Maurice Weiss; S. 37, 39, 45 privat; S. 50 privat/Foto Ines Janas; S. 54, 62 privat; S. 65 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin; S. 69 privat; S. 72 privat/Foto Nigel Stead; S. 77, 84, 87 privat; S. 93 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin; S. 98, 101, 104, 107, 111, 118, 124 privat; S. 126–127 Rose O’Dea; S. 128 privat/Foto Dimitris Papadakis; S. 132 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin; S. 136 privat; S. 141 privat/Foto Sameer A. Khan; S. 145 privat; S. 149 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin/Foto Maurice Weiss; S. 153 privat/Foto Vanessa Francia; S. 157 privat/Foto Peter Holl; S. 162 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin; S. 165 privat; S. 170 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin; S. 174 privat; S. 177 privat/Foto Andrey Natotsinsky; S. 182 privat; S. 190 Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin/Foto Maurice Weiss; S. 194, 198, 202 privat

INHALTSVERZEICHNIS · CONTENTS

11 VORWORT DER HERAUSGEBERIN

13 THE EDITOR'S FOREWORD

ARBEITSBERICHTE · WORK REPORTS

17 AN ACADEMIC SIGH OF RELIEF

ELÇIN AKTOPRAK

20 WIKO'S KITCHEN, A FELLOW'S PERSPECTIVE

SULTAN SOUD AL-QASSEMI

23 SOMETHING LIKE WONDERLAND

CAMILO BARBOSA

27 DIE LEGENDE DER HL. BARBARA

MAXIMILIAN BENZ

31 WIKO AS METAPHOR

JUDITH L. BRONSTEIN

37 eWIKO

NOVIOLET BULAWAYO

39 A PLACE CALLED "WIKO"

KATERYNA BURKUSH

45 VARIATION, VARIATION, VARIATION

LYNDA DELPH

50 THE BEST FEBRUARY OF MY LIFE

CLAUDIA DIEHL

- 54 RUNNING FROM KLEIST: FRAGMENTS
ARIE M. DUBNOV
- 62 HUMAN BEING IS SWEET
OREN HARMAN
- 65 EIN WISSENSCHAFTSKOLLEG IN DEN ZEITEN
DES KRIEGES
GUNNAR HINDRICHS
- 69 WIKO: A MIXED BAG OF EXPERIENCES
HUSEIN INUSAH
- 72 MUSINGS FROM THE REMISE; REFLECTIONS FROM THE
HOUSE BY THE LAKE
DEBORAH JAMES
- 77 KÖSTLICHE MÜHEN
THOMAS KAUFMANN
- 84 I WISH THIS WAS ON TIME
MORITZ KRAEMER
- 87 GESCHICKLICHKEIT DER HÄNDE
KARIN LEONHARD
- 93 MY ENCOUNTER WITH WIKO'S GENIUS
TCHAVDAR MARINOV
- 98 IT BEGAN WITH A BOAT TRIP
SUSAN MARKS
- 101 A YEAR OF EXTREMES IN AN IDEAL LANDSCAPE
ANNA MEDVEDOVSKA

- 104 DIE ZWEITE LINIE
KATERYNA MISHCHENKO
- 107 TIME TO (RE)THINK
MILICA NIKOLIĆ
- 111 WORK, BODY, AND SELF: A YEAR OF
TRANSFORMATIONS
INSA NOLTE
- 118 (UN)FINISHED BUSINESS
JOYCE NYAIRO
- 124 INEFFABLE
ROSE O'DEA
- 128 CONNECTING MY MULTIPLE LIVES
DANAI PAPAGEORGIU
- 132 NOW, THIS IS A STORY ALL ABOUT HOW
MY LIFE GOT FLIPPED, TURNED UPSIDE DOWN...
MAROŠ PLEŠKA
- 136 LES PENSIONNAIRES
ANTONIN POTTIER
- 141 FLORA'S SMILE
EKATERINA PRAVILOVA
- 145 A TIME TO RECALIBRATE
DAVEN PRESGRAVES
- 149 MAY IT STAND STRONG, AND LONG
SURABHI RANGANATHAN

- 153 THE TREE OF TIME AND THE TREE OF BOOKS
LUCIA RONCHETTI
- 157 CRITICAL THEORY AND ONTOLOGY?
ABSTRACT MATTERS AND LOOSE ENDS
MARTIN SAAR
- 162 UNFORGETTABLE TIME IN BERLIN
HENADZ SAHANOVICH
- 165 IMMERSION
ANDRÉ SCHNEIDER
- 170 A YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING
SHAI SECUNDA
- 174 DIALOGUE WITH OUR GENES – MY YEAR AT WIKO
BENNY SHILO
- 177 NACH EINEM JAHR
MARIA STEPANOVA
- 182 WONDER YEAR
MICHAEL TABORSKY
- 190 THE POLITICS OF MEMORY
FRANCISCUS VERELLEN
- 194 IN SEARCH OF JUSTICE: ENCOUNTERING BERLIN IN
HISTORY AND IN PERSON
NJOKI WAMAI
- 198 RECTANGLES AND LEAVES
ITTAI WEINRYB

202 A BIRTH IN BERLIN
LEOR ZMIGROD

VORWORT DER HERAUSGEBERIN

Was ist das Wissenschaftskolleg? Darauf geben die Berichte der Fellows jedes Jahr neue Antworten. Erschöpfende bildliche Evidenz auf der Grundlage belastbarer Zahlen liefern diesmal die Infografiken von Rose O’Dea. Andere Fellows greifen auf Vergleiche, Bilder und Metaphern zurück, um ihre – je nach Temperament sehr unterschiedlichen – Erfahrungen mit dem Wissenschaftskolleg auf den Punkt zu bringen. Maximilian Benz etwa zieht Parallelen zur *vita regularia* des mittelalterlichen Klosters, während Antonin Pottier an die utopische Abtei aus Rabelais’ *Gargantua* denkt, die ohne Mauern, Stundengebete und Geschlechtertrennung auskam. Für Judith Bronstein war das Wiko *family*, *window to the world* und *intellectual playground*, für Lucia Ronchetti ein vielstimmiger Chor, für Claudia Diehl und Daven Presgraves eine Rückkehr in die eigene Studentenzeit. Zwei Fellows fühlten sich – unabhängig voneinander – an Alice im Wunderland erinnert (NB: ohne böse Herzkönigin): Camilo Barbosa fand sich in einem *rabbit hole of scientific curiosity* wieder, Maria Stepanova dagegen im freien Fall durch den dunklen Tunnel in das Ungewisse des Exils.

Für nicht wenige Fellows ist das Wiko mittlerweile zu einer Zuflucht vor den Schrecken des Krieges oder der politischen Verfolgung geworden. Elçin Aktoprak aus der Türkei und Henadz Sahanovich aus Belarus waren die beiden ersten „Elkana-Fellows“ – ein mithilfe der VolkswagenStiftung neu begründetes Fellow-Format, das dazu dient, das Engagement von Forscherinnen und Forschern gegen die Einschränkung der Wissenschaftsfreiheit in ihren Herkunftsländern zu unterstützen. Kateryna Burkush, Anna Medvedovska und Kateryna Mishchenko kamen aus der Ukraine, wo, wie Anna formuliert, die Zukunft unserer Zivilisation auf dem Spiel steht. Die mittlerweile ins zweite Jahr gehende verschärfte Phase des russischen Expansionskrieges war in den Gesprächen

der Fellows ständig präsent, und sie ist es auch in ihren Jahresberichten. Zwischen den Zeilen wird darin außerdem deutlich, dass das Fellowjahr von einer Reihe persönlicher Schicksalsschläge überschattet war – Krankheiten, Todesfälle in der Familie, die Erdbebenkatastrophe in der Türkei. Alle diese Schrecken haben die Fellows und ihre Partnerinnen und Partner mit bewundernswerter Solidarität, Empathie und praktischer Hilfe aufgefangen.

Viele Fellows beschreiben, wie sich im Wiko ihre Perspektive auf die eigene Existenz verändert hat – sei es, dass sie sich durch die Berührung mit anderen Wissenschaftskulturen der eigenen disziplinären blinden Flecken bewusst geworden sind; sei es, dass der geringere Zeit- und Wettbewerbsdruck ein freieres Arbeiten ermöglicht hat; sei es, dass im Vergleich mit anderen Lebensumständen die Privilegiertheit des eigenen Professoren-daseins klarer zum Bewusstsein kam; sei es, dass beim kollektiven Jogging der *Wicked Wiko Runners* beziehungsweise *Five Ducks* die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Laufen in Schwung gebracht wurde, wie Arie Dubnov formuliert – oder sei es, dass man wie Ittai Weinryb in die Heimatstadt der vertriebenen Großeltern zurückkehrt und eine neue staatsbürgerliche Identität erwirbt.

Der historische Erinnerungsort Berlin sorgt bei den Fellows immer wieder für produktive Irritationen. Doch das gilt auch umgekehrt: Der fremde Blick mancher ausländischen Fellows trägt dazu bei, unseren eigenen Blick auf die Stadt Berlin und die deutsche Geschichte zu irritieren. So wundern sich Joyce Nyairo und Njoki Wamai aus Kenia darüber, dass am Schauplatz der Berliner Konferenz von 1884 in der Wilhelmstraße kein Denkmal, sondern nur eine kleine Schrifttafel daran erinnert, dass hier unter Bismarcks Regie der Grundstein für die Aufteilung des afrikanischen Kontinents gelegt worden ist. Einem deutschen Berlintouristen dürfte das kaum je aufgefallen sein.

Wie man sieht: Die Jahrbuchberichte sind eine überaus unterhaltsame, erhellende, bewegende Lektüre. Doch mitunter fragen sich Fellows, für wen sie sie eigentlich schreiben sollen und von wem sie gelesen werden. Shai Secunda vermutet, dass sie der endlosen Kette magischer Sprüche und Formeln auf babylonischen Kultgefäßen ähneln, die nie für menschliche Augen bestimmt waren und erst Jahrhunderte später *vielleicht* von einem Altertumsforscher entziffert werden. Zumindest Lynda Delph straft diese Vermutung Lügen; sie gibt zu Protokoll, alle Jahrbücher im Regal ihres Apartments gelesen zu haben.

In naher Zukunft wird sich aber eine viel schwierigere Frage stellen, nämlich nicht, von wem die Jahrbuchberichte *gelesen*, sondern von wem sie *geschrieben* werden. 2023

war das Jahr, in dem ein Chatbot namens ChatGPT mit schriftstellerischen Fähigkeiten von sich reden machte. Stellt man ihm die hier eingangs genannte Frage, so lautet die Auskunft: „Das Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin ist eine renommierte Forschungseinrichtung und ein internationales Zentrum für geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung. Es bietet Wissenschaftlern aus verschiedenen Disziplinen die Möglichkeit, unabhängig und interdisziplinär an ihren Projekten zu arbeiten. Das Kolleg fördert den Austausch und die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Wissenschaftlern aus aller Welt und trägt zur Weiterentwicklung des Wissens und der Forschung bei.“ Das ist höchstens halb richtig, auf jeden Fall aber wenig inspiriert. Auch der digitale Witz über das Wiko, den ChatGPT auf André Schneiders Nachfrage geliefert hat, kann sich mit dem analogen Humor der Fellows vorerst nicht messen. Die Künstliche Intelligenz hinkt der natürlichen offensichtlich doch noch ein Stück hinterher. Ich halte es jedenfalls für unwahrscheinlich, dass die vorliegenden Jahrbuchberichte digital erzeugt worden sind.

Berlin, im Februar 2024

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger

THE EDITOR'S FOREWORD

What is the Wissenschaftskolleg? Each year, the Fellows' reports give new answers. This time, Rose O'Dea's information graphics provide exhaustive evidence on the basis of reliable statistics. Other Fellows make use of comparisons and metaphors to specify their experiences with the Wissenschaftskolleg, which differ greatly in accordance with their temperaments. Maximilian Benz, for example, draws parallels to the *vita regularia* of the medieval cloister, while Antonin Pottier thinks of the utopian abbey in Rabelais's *Gargantua*, which did without walls, hourly prayers, and gender segregation. For Judith Bronstein, Wiko was family, a window to the world, and an intellectual playground; for Lucia Ronchetti, it was a polyphonic choir; for Claudia Diehl and Daven Presgraves, a return to

their student days. Two Fellows, independently of each other, felt reminded of Alice in Wonderland (nota bene: without the evil Queen of Hearts): Camilo Barbosa found himself in a “rabbit hole of scientific curiosity”; while Maria Stepanova, in contrast, found herself in free fall through the dark tunnel into the unknown of exile.

In the meantime, for not a few Fellows, Wiko has become a refuge from the horrors of war or political persecution. Elçin Aktoprak of Turkey and Henadz Sahanovich of Belarus were the first two Elkana Fellows – a Fellow format newly established with the aid of the Volkswagen Foundation that serves to support researchers’ engagement against the restrictions on academic freedom in their home countries. Kateryna Burkush, Anna Medvedovska, and Kateryna Mishchenko came from Ukraine, where, as Anna formulates it, the future of our civilization is at stake. The intensified phase of Russia’s war of expansion, now in its second year, was constantly present in the Fellows’ discussions, and it is constantly present in their Yearbook reports, as well. Between the lines in these reports, it also clearly emerges that this Fellow year was overshadowed by a number of personal misfortunes – diseases, deaths in the family, the disastrous earthquake in Turkey. The Fellows and their partners cushioned all of these horrors with admirable solidarity, empathy, and practical assistance.

Many Fellows describe how their perspectives on their own existence changed at Wiko – or because contact with other research cultures made them aware of their own disciplinary blind spots; or because the low level of temporal and competitive pressure enabled freer work; or because they became more clearly aware of their own privileged existence as professors in comparison with other people’s living situations; or because collective jogging with the *Wicked Wiko Runners* or the *Five Ducks* gave impetus to the gradual construction of thoughts during a run, as Arie Dubnov formulates it – or because, like Ittai Weinryb, one returns to the home city of one’s expelled grandparents and acquires a new citizenship identity.

The historical site of memory, Berlin, repeatedly presented the Fellows with productive disturbances. But the same is true in the reverse, as well: the outsiders’ gaze of some foreign Fellows contributes to disturbing our German perception of the city of Berlin and of German history. Thus, Joyce Nyairo and Njoki Wamai of Kenya wonder why there is no monument, but only a small plaque, on Wilhelmstraße at the site of the Berlin Conference of 1884, where, under Imperial Chancellor Bismarck’s aegis, the foundation for carving up the African continent among the European colonial powers was laid. A German tourist in Berlin would hardly ever notice this.

As you see: the Yearbook reports are an extremely entertaining, illuminating, moving read. But sometimes the Fellows ask themselves for whom they should actually write and by whom they will be read. Shai Secunda suspects that the texts resemble the endless chain of magic incantations and formulae on Babylonian cult bowls, which were never meant for human eyes and were *possibly* deciphered only centuries later by an archaeologist. Lynda Delph, at least, disproves this suspicion; she records that she read all the Yearbooks on the shelf in her apartment.

In the near future, however, a much more difficult question will arise. Namely, not by whom the Yearbook reports will be *read*, but by whom or what they will be *written*. 2023 was the year in which a chatbot named ChatGPT with its authorial capabilities was on everyone's lips. If we ask it the question posed in the first sentence of this foreword, then the answer is: "The Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin is a renowned research institution and an international center for research in the humanities and social sciences. It offers researchers from various disciplines the opportunity to work independently and interdisciplinarily on their projects. The Kolleg fosters exchange and collaboration among researchers from all over the world and contributes to the further development of knowledge and research." That is half-correct at most and hardly inspiring. Nor can the digital joke about Wiko that ChatGPT came up with at André Schneider's request, compete – yet – with the Fellows' analog sense of humor. Artificial Intelligence clearly still trails behind natural intelligence. At any rate, I regard it as highly improbable that these Yearbook reports were digitally manufactured.

Berlin, in February 2024

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger

Arbeitsberichte

Work Reports



AN ACADEMIC SIGH OF RELIEF ELÇİN AKTOPRAK

Elçin Aktoprak was born in 1979 in Istanbul. She completed her PhD at Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences with her thesis titled *Nation Building Processes and National Minority Problems in Western Europe*. While working as an Assistant Professor in the same department, she was dismissed in February 2017 for being a peace signatory. She is the author of *States and Nations* (in Turkish) (Tan Kitabevi, 2010); *Nationalism in the 21st Century* (in Turkish), ed. with A. Celil Kaya (İletişim, 2016); *Democratic Representation in Plurinational States: The Kurds in Turkey*, ed. with E. Nimni (Palgrave, 2018); and *Minority Self-Government in Europe and the Middle East*, ed. with O. Akbulut (Brill, 2019). She has taught, worked, and written on nationalism, minority issues, and peace studies, and continues to do so. She has been the administrative coordinator of the School of Human Rights Association since 2021. – Address: Tunus Cad. No: 87/6, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: elcinaktoprak@gmail.com.

The last five years have been difficult. In 2017, I was dismissed from my faculty, where I had studied and then worked for 15 years, for signing a peace declaration on the Kurdish question in Turkey. Along with many of my co-signers, we were academically punished for exercising our right to freedom of thought. This punishment was a threat to scholars in Turkey, because as academics we studied, wrote, and taught the issues that the government did not want us to touch, and as ordinary citizens we openly expressed our opinions on these issues. The government openly showed the public what can happen if you touch the undesirable areas.

Perhaps we faced one of the harshest sanctions violating academic freedom, but on the other hand, many of us fought tenaciously not to leave the academic world. Before coming to Wiko, I continued my academic studies, on the one hand, and on the other hand, I fought with my friends to build a different academic public sphere in civil society. The academy was no longer just the four walls of the university for me, but the long period of reading and writing necessary to live up to being an academic had now shortened considerably and the ordinary flow of life had turned into a rush.

Under these circumstances and in this state of mind, I was quite excited and a little anxious when I arrived in Berlin in August 2022 with my 10-year-old son. In recent years, we had experienced a lot of solidarity and support in international academic circles for the violations of academic freedom in Turkey, but we had also been exposed to some attitudes that saw us only as victims and not as equal colleagues. I was curious to see how things would be in Berlin.

Already at the orientation meetings, my fear dissipated. When Barbara and Daniel emphasized that Wiko required us to think and write freely, without the pressure of concrete results and with the possibility of pursuing new ideas, I was sure that I was in an “old-school academic environment,” which I firmly believe is the one that truly fosters skilled academic production. In contrast to the competitive academic environment that prevails all over the world, I experienced an atmosphere in which all Fellows were considered equal colleagues and the exchange of ideas about all aspects of life increased over lunches, dinners, coffee conversations, walks, and home visits. I was surprised and pleased that, after a long time, someone thought to provide me with the atmosphere I needed to work comfortably. It was very instructive to meet and share life with highly qualified but above all very human colleagues every day in the green tranquility of the Grunewald. Listening to a lecture on bees or insects, hearing the pages of a book in the voice of its author – it was wonderful to see how a multidisciplinary environment can be a source of nurturing inspiration.

We discussed the violations of academic freedom in Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, and other parts of the world not as “victims,” but as academics, and my friends who come from similar backgrounds will understand how valuable that sentiment is. Because what happened to us did not make us valuable. How we deal with it, and how we have been positioned by others in dealing with it, can really turn a process of hurt into a constructive path. Wiko is one of the few realms that offers this possibility without losing the academic framework.

Looking back now, the first definition that comes to mind for the Wiko experience is this: I had an academic sigh of relief. I could think, read, and write in peace again, something that had long eluded me. The good old days suddenly became the present, and the first result of my book project, which had been floating around in my head for years, emerged as a book chapter these days.

At Wiko, I realized once again how much I miss a sincere academic environment. But more importantly, I faced myself and realized that academia is a part of me, which was hard to admit a year ago.

For that, I am very grateful.



WIKO'S KITCHEN,
A FELLOW'S PERSPECTIVE
SULTAN SOOUD AL-QASSEMI

Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi is a columnist and researcher on social, political, and cultural affairs in the Arab Gulf states. Al-Qassemi is also the founder of the Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, UAE. He was an MIT Media Lab Director's Fellow from 2014 to 2016, a practitioner-in-residence at the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University in spring 2017, and a Yale Greenberg World Fellow in 2018. Al-Qassemi was a visiting instructor at the Council of Middle East Studies at Yale University; the Center of Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University; the American University of Paris; the Islamic Civilization and Societies programme at Boston College; and the School of Public Affairs at Sciences Po, Paris. In fall 2021, Al-Qassemi was appointed as Kuwait Foundation Visiting Scholar, Middle East Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School and Lecturer, School of Arts and Sciences, Brandeis University. Al-Qassemi, along with Todd Reisz, is co-editor of *Building Sharjah* (Birkhäuser, 2021). – Address: Villa 1 A, Al Nouf 4, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.
E-mail: sultan.alqassemi@gmail.com.

As an art collector and art history teacher, receiving an invitation from one of the most illustrious scientific research centres to spend a few months amongst the leading scientific minds felt like an unusual proposition. I didn't know what to expect or if I would fit into this esteemed group of scholars, thinkers, and practitioners. However, my time at Wiko turned out to hold some of the most cherished moments I have spent over the past few years.

Upon confirming my acceptance, I immediately reached out to former Fellow Mohammad Al Attar (2021/2022), the Syrian playwright, who not only shared a common

geographical background with me, both being Middle Easterners, but who also came from a humanities background. Mohammad assured me that the group would be welcoming and keen on learning from Fellows from other disciplines.

The Wissenschaftskolleg offered numerous amenities, such as a world-class library, comfortable accommodation, lectures by leading scholars, and opportunities to explore the great city of Berlin, and for that I am very grateful. However, I would like to use my essay, rather than to talk about myself, to talk about the staff in general and particularly the kitchen staff, with whom I interacted on a daily basis, having been the sole resident of the *Hauptgebäude* called Villa Linde, which also houses the dining hall.

At Wiko, as the Wissenschaftskolleg is fondly referred to by its residents, Fellows are expected to attend the daily lunch served promptly at 1 p.m. except on Thursdays, when a more elaborate and official dinner is served with one or several outside guests. Often the lunches would be accompanied by short speeches by the class representatives, in our case Oren Harman and Joyce Nyairo, welcoming or announcing the departure of a Fellow. I found these ceremonies to be quite touching.

I found, however, that some of the most interesting and memorable conversations I had were held during the quiet morning hours of the Wissenschaftskolleg breakfast. I felt privileged to be the only long-term resident of Villa Linde, having turned down the generous offer to move to a larger space in the Villa Walther, opting instead for the convenience of residing in the main building where lectures are held, administration is based, and meals are served.

Descending the staircase from my apartment, W1, into the dining hall at 7:59 a.m., one minute before the official start, I would always encounter Sylvia Genz, who would greet me with a big smile and a warm “Guten Morgen!” greeting as she was putting the finishing touches on the colourful breakfast buffet. The Wiko breakfast would be offered from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., although no doubt early birds like me and fellow Fellow Maroš Pleška, who also resided at Villa Linde for some time, could take advantage of the freshest fruits and cheeses. The breakfast would typically include a plate of ham cold cuts, a cheese platter with Swiss Emmentaler, French Brie, creamy goat cheese, and mountain cheese, a jug of orange juice, a fruit selection, a fruit salad, and a bowl of yoghurt, plain or flavoured with fruit. In addition to that, there would be a selection of three or four homemade jams and marmalades with fruit pieces, as well as breads such as *Mohnbrötchen*, *Knäckebrot*, and *Mehrkornbrot*, freshly baked every morning. I was told that our year was unusual in that there was not a single Fellow who requested gluten-free options, unlike

the previous years, which one of the talented bakers told me was always an interesting challenge they looked forward to, to perfect freshly baked gluten-free bread.

Next to the bread would be butter at the perfect temperature, beside a jar of honey. Furthermore, Wiko breakfast buffet offered walnuts, cashews, almonds, and chia seeds, amongst other nuts. Two kinds of branded bottled water, sparkling and still, were always offered, although I always wished Wiko would offer filtered water as an option.

A memorable event ensued when the popular and overused coffee machine finally gave in and broke down for two or three weeks during my stay in the spring of 2023, causing panic amongst the caffeine-addicted Fellows, who had to settle for regular black coffee until Dunia Najjar, the much-loved Head of Restaurant, replaced it with a more dependable machine, to the collective joy of the Fellows.

In addition to the permanent kitchen staff members Karin Nitsche and Manuela Bouillardt, I have fond memories of speaking with part-time staff members such as Ibrahima Diop, a student at the Freie Universität Berlin whose father El Hadji Ibrahima Diop was a Wissenschaftskolleg Fellow in 2016/2017. He always greeted us with a smile, without fail.

Keeping an institution like the Wissenschaftskolleg running was certainly a team effort, overseen by the much-admired Rector Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, that included administration, housekeeping, and kitchen staff, many of whom worked behind the scenes to make our stay comfortable, productive, and memorable.

No doubt, while the Wissenschaftskolleg leads as an institution with its world-class thinkers and expansive facilities, it is the people there, including the kitchen staff, who ultimately touched me and made my time there one of the most memorable experiences in my life.



SOMETHING LIKE WONDERLAND CAMILO BARBOSA

Camilo Barbosa is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He was born in Bogotá, Colombia where he grew up playing football (soccer), listening to various types of music, dancing to Latin American beats, and receiving his education as a microbiologist. His PhD work at the University of Kiel in Germany focused on identifying evolutionary paths to antibiotic resistance in the opportunistic human pathogen *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Later in his postdoc at the University of Michigan, Camilo has been trying to identify the evolutionary principles he described during his doctoral work in a tractable clinical context and to determine their translational potential. Currently, he is aiming to establish his independent research group looking at two main projects: first, to generate a biorepository of common bacterial pathogens obtained from agricultural and clinical settings to forecast the likelihood of resistance, based on genomes and their evolutionary potential. Second, to use the power of experimental evolution and the natural diversity of bacteriophages to design “evolution-proof” phage cocktails against bacterial pathogens. – Address: Department of Infectious Diseases, University of Michigan, SPC 5680, 1150 W. Medical Center Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48109-5680, USA.
E-mail: barbosap@med.umich.edu.

I had heard about the Wiko numerous times before I got the chance to be there myself. Three of the supervisors I have worked with during my PhD and postdoctoral time had been Fellows before. In my mind, a place like the one they were describing sounded incredible – as in: I could not believe it was possible or real. Who would sponsor a place for creativity, inspiration, and cultural and knowledge exchange without expecting anything

other than for you to be there and do exactly that? Well, after spending some time at the Wiko, I can say that it is more incredible than you can disbelieve. In fact, it felt, in many ways, like Alice discovering Wonderland – except that there was no Queen of Hearts trying to chop anyone’s head off. I encountered a place where time can stand still or run too fast. A place with outstanding people working very hard to make everything run smoothly. A place where fantastic food was available at any time. A place where thoughts were thought deeply with the sole purpose of generating fascination. A place where the idea of who I was and who I wanted to be were constantly put face to face to force me to take a step closer to where I wanted to be. For a young researcher like me, the Wiko was truly a place for wonder, discovery, and growth – an unexpected and treasured gift.

I arrived in Berlin a month after receiving the award that granted me the privilege of being at the Wiko: the John Maynard Smith Prize from the European Society for Evolutionary Biology (ESEB). I immediately felt at home. Not only because I had lived in Germany for almost a decade, but also because Vera and her colleagues had made everything so that Laura and I would have everything we needed. Thank you, Vera, and everyone else at the Wiko! After a couple of days of rest from traveling all summer, and before the official start of the year at the Wiko, I sat to write down the three big purposes for my time there. It took me a while, but I eventually came up with three goals for work: finish a paper, start the analysis of the next one, and write a grant for the next project. Very ambitious, and very work-oriented. Later that day, I realized something more meaningful; I was actually in the pursuit of something else. As a young postdoc, and after coming from a very hard and long pandemic that made me question deeply my role in science, my real purpose at the Wiko was to regain my passion for curiosity.

Fundamental to this aim was the company of my fellow Fellows. Early in the year, I identified the Fellows working on topics similar to mine, including those of the College for Life Sciences, who, like me, were also younger scientists. For us, or at least for me, being at the Wiko felt a bit daunting, since most Fellows have long and very successful trajectories in their respective fields, while I was just getting started. With the help of Jana, I put us all together in the main seminar room to briefly introduce ourselves to each other through our research and what we were hoping to achieve at the Wiko. This marked the beginning of my best time at the Wiko. I got to know people whom I not only admired and respected because of their achievements and contributions to science, but whom I now also deeply cared for as friends. Lynda, Curt, Judie, Goggy, Milica, Rose, Danai, André, Oren, Daven, Dieter, Ben, the Taborskys, thank you all! But it was not just

the Fellows working on life sciences topics, it was all of them. I learned something from everyone, from their talks and their discussions during lunch, dinner, or champagne. I learned something every day. I felt like a scientist again after a couple of years of feeling like a shadow of who I was or wanted to be. All the seminars, all the discussions, all the runs organized by Daniel, every aspect of the Wiko “brought me back” or took me down the rabbit hole (of scientific curiosity), I still cannot tell.

As I started feeling more like myself, I finished a paper and submitted it to the journal *Evolutionary Medicine and Public Health*. In that paper, we analyzed the evolutionary trajectory of a chronic infection and discussed what points to further knowledge of the potential of alternative strategies, such as combination therapy or cycling antimicrobials while exploiting collateral effects. I also started analyzing a large and complex dataset, evaluating whether experimental evolution can recapture the evolution of resistance that takes place within a human host and whether there are collateral effects that can be exploited to determine evolutionarily informed strategies to delay the emergence of antibiotic-resistance evolution. Finally, I started working on a grant for the next project, but I decided to start preparing applications for assistant professor jobs to start my independent research group. This was an important step forward for me, as I had been doubting whether it was what I wanted or not.

One of the most exciting and nerve-wracking events was the preparation and delivery of my Thursday Colloquium at the Wiko. As a scientist, I am trained to present my work constantly. Personally, having to sit in many long and hard-to-swallow presentations, I have also tried to be the best I can at presenting my work in very clear and useful ways. Being a good scientist and being a good speaker are not necessarily the same thing, but the former benefits from the latter. Giving a talk at the Wiko was the first time I had to prepare a lecture both for people close to my field and for knowledgeable people in very distinct fields. This meant finding a good balance between depth, clarity, and significance. I believe this is a challenge, in fact I think this is a challenge everyone should go through once or twice in their career. It was also refreshing. I had to go back to the roots and origins of our current war against antibacterial-resistance evolution in ways that were meaningful for everyone in the audience, which included scientists, musicians, philosophers, lawyers, historians, and more. It was one of the most fun exercises I had the privilege to take part in at the Wiko. I especially want to thank Lynda for moderating the questions and helping me make that lecture the great fun that it was.

Beyond the Wiko, I found myself in wonderful Berlin. A city with everything I could possibly want: diverse electronic music, foods from everywhere and for every budget, recent historical sites and events, the merging place of two worlds, the center of Europe, culture, and so much more. A city to love.

Overall, my short time at the Wiko was, without a doubt, one of the best times of my life. I will be forever thankful for this time, and I hope that later in my career I can have the opportunity to live this experience again for more than three months and experience all of Berlin and the Wiko. Thank you.



DIE LEGENDE DER HL. BARBARA MAXIMILIAN BENZ

Maximilian Benz (Jahrgang 1983) ist Professor für Deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit an der Universität Bielefeld. Er wurde mit einer Arbeit zum Thema *Gesicht und Schrift. Die Erzählung von Jenseitsreisen in Antike und Mittelalter* (Berlin/Boston 2013, brosch. Ausg. 2022) 2012 an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin promoviert; die Habilitation erfolgte 2019 an der Universität Zürich mit der Monografie *Arbeit an der Tradition. Studien zur literarhistorischen Stellung und zur poetischen Struktur der Werke Rudolfs von Ems*, Würzburg 2022). 2018 publizierte Benz *Fragmente einer Sprache der Liebe um 1200* (Zürich, 2. Aufl. 2019). Er ist Mitherausgeber des *Internationalen Archivs für Sozialgeschichte der Literatur*, der *Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur* sowie von *Pietas litterata. Internationales Jahrbuch für religiöses Wissen in der deutschen Literatur des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*. Als Fellow am Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin frug er 2022/2023 nach der „Emergenz moralischer Subjektivität an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit“ und fand so zu den „Konturen des Selbst“. – Adresse: Fakultät für Linguistik und Kulturwissenschaft, Universität Bielefeld, Postfach 10 01 31, 33501 Bielefeld, Deutschland. E-Mail: maximilian.benz@uni-bielefeld.de.

... Nachdem die Hl. Barbara den St.-Paulus-Dom in Münster verlassen hatte, zog sie zu Fuß gen Osten, um das Licht der symbolischen Kommunikation auch in die sumpfigen Regionen östlich der Elbe zu bringen. Auf ihrem langen, entbehrungsreichen Weg gelangte sie schließlich in die Mittelmark, in der eine brutale Löwin mehrere Gutsdörfer in Angst und Schrecken hielt. Als die Löwin die Hl. Barbara sah, legte sie allerdings sofort ihr wildes Gebaren ab und wurde zahm. Mit ihren Pfoten zeichnete sie ein Kreuz in den



märkischen Sand, woraufhin auch die Hl. Barbara Vertrauen fasste, und führte die Heilige in den Grunewald. Am südlichen Ende des Halensees schließlich trafen Barbara und die Löwin auf einen Fuchs, der beiden mit Blick auf ein altes, von Weinreben umranktes Gemäuer bedeutete, dass dies der Ort sei, um ein neues Kloster zu errichten ...

So oder so ähnlich hätte man es sich wohl in früheren Zeiten, die man bis heute etwas unglücklich das Mittelalter nennt, zurechtgelegt, wie Unwahrscheinliches in die Welt kam. Das waren über lange Zeit Klosteranlagen, weswegen Gründungslegenden dieser Orte – noch Joseph Ratzinger meinte in benediktinischen Klöstern einen Abglanz des Paradieses zu erkennen – von so großer Bedeutung waren. Nun sind wir über die Geschichte des Wissenschaftskollegs, einer ganz und gar säkularen Institution, bestens aufgeklärt und wissen, dass es anfangs eine durchweg männliche Veranstaltung war. Anders als die Kartäuser, die sich rühmten, dass sie nie reformiert wurden, da sie nie deformiert gewesen seien (*numquam reformata, quia numquam deformata*), hat sich das Wissenschaftskolleg, das – wenn schon – dann doch eher etwas von benediktinischer als von kartäusischer Frömmigkeit hat, ständig reformiert und geändert. Das nahezu ausgeglichene Geschlechterverhältnis, aber gerade auch die Fellows aus dem globalen Süden haben entschieden dazu beigetragen, dass hier Horizonte geweitet werden!

Wissenschaft ist auch eine Lebensform, aber selten wird sie so reguliert wie am Wissenschaftskolleg. Das Leben zwischen Kapitelsaal mit gemeinsamen Exegesen, *armarium* (Bibliothek), *refectorium* (Restaurant) und *dormitorium* (Schlafstätte), ja die sich scheinbar

selbst choreografierenden Bewegungsabläufe *intra muros* – all das führt zusammen, was andernorts nur noch parzelliert existiert: eine Gemeinschaft.

Die halbironisch gemeinte Analogisierung von Kolleg und Kloster findet natürlich dort ihre Grenzen, wo die Härten eines klösterlichen Lebens ins Bewusstsein gerufen werden: „Ideo sicut dictum es, [sc. cella] alienum qui non est filius, citius a se projicit quasi abortivum, evomit tamquam inutilem ac noxium cibum; nec diu talem pati potest in visceribus suis officina pietatis.“ Wilhelm von St. Thierry hatte in seinem an die Brüder der Chartreuse du Mont-Dieu gerichteten, später „golden“ genannten Brief pointiert, dass die Zelle als Ort der Frömmigkeit jeden, der ihr und der mit ihr verbundenen Lebensform fremd sei, von sich wie eine Missgeburt auswerfe, ja ihn auskotze wie eine unnütze und schädliche Speise. So wird am Wissenschaftskolleg durchaus nicht mit Fellows verfahren, die sich nicht ganz den Regeln des Kollegs fügen wollen. Die „Weltflucht“ der Fellows scheitert häufig genug daran, dass die Heimatuniversitäten – insbesondere der immer wichtiger den Alltag dominierende Drittmittelbetrieb – die Fellows zumindest in digitaler Form heimsuchen. Nicht also die Verführungen der Welt, sondern die Zwänge von Zoom haben allzu häufig die Kontemplation unterbrochen!

Das liegt natürlich auch daran, dass im Kolleg so viel geboten wurde, dass man wenig von außerhalb vermisste: *stabilitas loci* also nicht als Gebot, sondern als Verheißung! (Eine Ausnahme stellten die regelmäßigen *peregrinationes* in die Opernhäuser Berlins dar.) Die vorzügliche Küche, die den Rahmen bot, damit sich im Laufe der Zeit über Genüssen schwebend Vertrauen und Zuneigung zwischen Fellows ausbilden, die Tischtennisplatte, die so angenehm vor dem Nachmittagstief (Einfallstor teuflischer Anfechtung!) bewahrt, das gemeinschaftliche Singen im Chor *ad maiorem collegii gloriam*, der vertiefte Austausch in kleineren Runden – wie der Frühnezeitgruppe – haben das Jahr nicht nur sehr schnell vergehen lassen; die gute Fürsorge, die – wie ganz besonders auch der exzellente Bibliotheksservice – konzentrierter wissenschaftlicher Produktivität viel zuträglicher war als Fünfjahrespläne, Drittmitteldruck oder die notorischen Formen akademischer Wichtigtuerei, führt zwar einerseits dazu, dass nun nach dem Verlassen des Kollegs Wiedereingliederungsmaßnahmen erforderlich sind, zeigt aber auch andererseits, was es wirklich braucht, um zumindest in den Geisteswissenschaften gute Forschung zu ermöglichen: Austausch und Freiraum.

Aber auch: Vertrauen und Verbindlichkeit. Insofern waren die (in der Sache sehr wichtigen) Abende, an denen das Haus für eine breitere Öffentlichkeit geöffnet wurde, immer auch ein wenig irritierend, aber produktiv irritierend, denn sie haben den sonst

selbstverständlichen Alltag am Kolleg in eine reflexive Distanz gerückt. Es ist mir an mir selbst aufgefallen, wie leicht ich Kritik von Fellows ertragen konnte, wie gerne ich sie angenommen habe und wie sehr diese nicht nur mich, sondern auch mein Projekt weitergebracht hat.

Was bleibt? Eine Vielzahl wunderbarer Begegnungen und Kontakte, ein fantastischer Austausch, der nicht nur den Tod einiger *darlings* brachte, beispielsweise der „Subjektivität“, sondern mir vor allem substanzuell neue Perspektiven für mein Forschungsvorhaben eröffnet hat, das ebenso von dem Jahr profitiert hat wie ich selbst, der nun eines akademischen Zusammenhangs ansichtig wurde, welcher anspornt, wo man zu verzagen droht, welcher beflügelt, wenn man niedergeschlagen ist, der aber auch bremst, wo die eigenen Idiosynkrasien zu viel Raum einnehmen (wie in diesem Abschlussbericht).

An einem sehr (!) späten Abend wurde mir einmal vorgeworfen, ich sei ein hoffnungsloser Apologet des Christentums (was meines Erachtens nicht stimmt; aber es ist der Vorzug des Wissenschaftskollegs, dass auch Ressentiments zur Sprache kommen). Dabei habe ich doch auch ein wenig Empirie auf meiner Seite: Die Hl. Barbara ist nicht nur Nothelferin und rettet in jäher Todesgefahr (zum Beispiel, wenn einem beim Spaziergang durch Kleinmachnow eine Löwin begegnet), sondern ist auch Schutzpatronin der Tunnelbauer, weswegen die Berliner Verkehrsgesellschaft die Verlängerung der U-Bahn-Linie 5 zwischen Alexanderplatz und Hauptbahnhof am Barbaratag 2020 eröffnete. Sie fährt bis heute (und verglichen mit unserem M19 sehr regelmäßig) durch Berlin. Das sollte kein Wunder sein?



WIKO AS METAPHOR
JUDITH L. BRONSTEIN

Judith L. Bronstein is University Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Arizona, USA. She received her B.A. from Brown University and M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Michigan. She joined the University of Arizona faculty in 1989. Judith Bronstein's lab focuses on the ecology and evolution of interspecific interactions, particularly on mutually beneficial ones (mutualisms). Her career-long goal has been to build a solid conceptual foundation for the study of these poorly understood interactions. Her current projects focus on their intersection with other interspecific relationships, as well as with intraspecific cooperation. She has served in leadership positions locally, nationally, and worldwide. Judith Bronstein is co-editor of *The Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*; she has served as Editor-in-Chief of *The American Naturalist*, a leading international journal in ecology and evolution, and as President of the American Society of Naturalists. She is a Fellow of the Ecological Society of America and the 2023 recipient of the Distinguished Achievement in the Conceptual Unification of the Biological Sciences Award from the American Society of Naturalists. – Address: Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, The University of Arizona, 1041 E. Lowell Street, Biological Sciences West, Rm. 418, Tucson, AZ 85721, USA. E-mail: judieb@arizona.edu.

How can you capture a year at Wiko? What even *is* Wiko? As scholars and writers, artists and musicians, surely we can reach beyond the dry and factual (“The *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin* is an interdisciplinary institute... dedicated to research projects in the natural and social sciences... The purpose of the institute is to offer scholars and scientists the

opportunity to concentrate on projects of their own choosing for one academic year, free from administrative duties.” – *Wikipedia*). But beyond that: Wiko is a place (14193 Berlin-Grunewald, Germany). Wiko was a time (in our case, the 2022/2023 academic year). Wiko is people – Fellows, partners, families, visitors, and a remarkable group of skilled and dedicated staff. Wiko is an adjective (“Dunia served up another fantastic Wiko lunch today”), and it’s an adverb (“I worked very Wiko-ly this morning, but then fell asleep after that fantastic lunch”).

Here I want to consider Wiko as a metaphor¹. Metaphors implicitly suggest stories or narratives through which events in our lives can be understood, useful especially when we can’t find the right words to capture them. As I struggle to find the right words to describe my experiences, I reach once again for metaphor.

Wiko is a state of mind

My mind was sufficiently Wiko this year that I was able to focus on my overall goal of building new conceptual frameworks for our understanding of interactions between species, particularly mutually beneficial ones (mutualisms). That is not to say that the projects I worked on, let alone completed, were those I initially set out to do. I am particularly happy about the progress I made on one of them, an analysis of how within-species cooperation and between-species cooperation interact. This project is a collaboration with a previous College for Life Sciences Fellow, Hari Sridhar, who visited for two productive weeks in the spring. A related project was sparked by a very stimulating workshop on division of labor, organized by Michael and Barbara Taborsky. It poses the idea that mutualism itself is a form of division of labor, as it involves outsourcing tasks such as transportation or protection to another species. I also made progress on addressing the question whether domestication is a form of mutualism, a topic that had been troubling me since being challenged on this point during a short-term stay at Wiko in 2019.

The other projects I worked on were ones I hadn’t foreseen at all before I arrived in Berlin. All were strongly influenced by conversations I had at Wiko, particularly with people far from my own discipline. As might be obvious from this essay, I thought a lot

1 A Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. Think that what I’m talking about here is actually Simile or Analogy? Perhaps. We wouldn’t be scholars if we could resist the temptation to pick an argument. But I say it’s Metaphor, and this is my Yearbook entry.

about metaphors this year. I talked a lot about them, too, probably to the exasperation of many tablemates. I helped pull together our first Three Cultures Forum, focusing on the promise and perils of metaphors across all fields of knowledge, tapping into the expertise of Arie, Leor, and Oren (thanks!). I'm also writing an article for the *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* on this subject (thanks, Daniel, for the idea and encouragement). In the spring I got a little obsessed with Piotr Kropotkin and his influence in ecology and beyond, a topic I plan to pursue with Wiko colleagues in the near future. Finally, I signed a contract in late spring for a book that I never intended to write. In the final few weeks of my fellowship, I sat down with many experienced Fellows and staff members to discuss how to best structure my time to accomplish this task. Thanks especially to Thomas, Franciscus, Barbara, and Iris for their tips.

Wiko is the University of Heaven

At Wiko we were given the opportunity to absorb and process new ways of thinking, and then have them influence our own work, while being granted leave to pay minimal attention to university and department politics. Isn't that everything we once hoped academia would be? And didn't we hope that this University of Heaven would support us to live in fine style in beautiful environs in one of the most fascinating cities in the world, while being fed extremely well?

As someone who finds basically everything to be intellectually fascinating², my University of Heaven was (another metaphor coming:) an intellectual playground. It was actually a little random that I landed in science instead of history or literature; this year I had the chance to immerse myself in fields of study that might have been mine, and to learn from the very best. I can confidently say that everything I now know about pre-modern China, Balkan nationalism, the Babylonian Talmud, Kenyan death culture, the Peasant's War, Russian theater, the history of economic thought, German law, and Middle Eastern political art was learned this year. And I learned much more about the few things I did think I knew well (evolutionary biology, in particular – thanks, Curt, Lynda, Dieter, Giovanni, Daven, André, Oren, Benny, Camilo, and Michael and Barbara T.).

2 “There is nothing I am not interested in. That's my strength. My weakness is there is nothing I am not interested in.” (Stanley Hauerwas)

But exposure to the co-faculty of the University of Heaven also changed the way I think about my own topics of study. Here are some key things I learned from other Fellows this year.

- “The tragedy of the commons,” a foundational idea in ecology, has its roots and shoots deep in white supremacy. (Thanks, Danai.)
- “Truth” is the foundation of science, but truth is also a philosophical problem. (Thanks, Gunnar.)
- Like my desert home, the sea has been treated as empty space ripe for exploitation. Like the desert, it needs legal protection long before we achieve an understanding of its many mysteries. (Thanks, Surabhi.)
- One way or another, every Fellow this year was studying Nature. How we conceptualized Nature, though, was highly divergent, in some really intriguing ways. (Thanks, Karin, for giving me the opportunity to develop this idea in my introduction to your fascinating colloquium.)

Wiko is a present-tense verb

When I wasn't working I was very, very busy Wiko'ing. In early autumn, my weekly schedule looked so empty! There was the Tuesday Colloquium; beyond that, there was mostly a lot of time for eating (and eat we did). Then the days filled up. There were German classes. (Sadly, the language of my own present-tense verbs stubbornly remained English.) There were Thursday events, ranging from the Three Cultures Forums to extra colloquia and workshops. There were Fellows' performances and readings, dance parties, holiday parties, and good-bye parties. And there were, and always will be, the Wiko Ducks, waddling around Blue Tit Lake on Friday mornings (thanks, Insa, Joyce, and Claudia).

Once we settled into Grunewald, we started to Wiko around Berlin. My more memorable activities were the outings to street markets (thanks, Claudia, Lynda, and Curt), museums (thanks, Sultan), many, many wonderful concerts (thanks, Barbara and Michael Taborsky), and even more restaurants, including the single best meal of my life (thanks, Tim Raue). There was also a killer birthday trip spent biking and eating in Potsdam with Claudia, Peter, and Lynda. The best, though, were the quiet walks Goggy and I took together in Grunewald's neighborhoods and forest paths.

And then the trips further afield started. For Goggy and me, Wiko'ing abroad meant Amsterdam, Prague, Rome, Pompeii, and a trip down the Danube that was weighted

down by Barbara's incredible volume on Maria Theresa. (Yes, I took my playtime a little too seriously.)

Wiko is family

My own Wiko was a nested set of individuals. At the nucleus of this Wiko was, of course, my rock and my support, the wonderful Goggy Davidowitz, the quintessential Fellow partner. Goggy could always be found at the center of every conversation, activity, excursion, dance floor, and clean-up crew. Goggy offered us a particularly memorable Thursday Colloquium with themed hors d'oeuvres, thanks to Dunia's extraordinarily quick thinking on how to cook insects for a crowd. Moving out further, we have my dearest friends among the Fellows and Fellow families and staff. You know who you are. I hope you'll always be in my life. Thanks for keeping me laughing about everything, including, when needed, about myself (which was often – yes, thanks, Joyce). Surrounding this core Wiko was my extended Wiko, the remarkable staff who made this year a reality along with all of the Fellows who brightened my days at meals and events, put up with my altogether-too-intense questioning, and lent a hand when things went awry in one way or another in Villa Walther. A family gives you the confidence to try things you've never dared before, in the knowledge that if you mess up, they will always be there for you. Such was my Wiko.

Wiko is a window on the world

Peering through this Wiko, much of my complacency about the world was challenged. I would like to think it's gone; at the very least, I am aware of my privilege more profoundly than I have ever been. Like all American scientists, I spend too much time bemoaning the size of my grants; this year, I learned how knowledge can be acquired with effectively no grant money at all (thanks, Raghavendra). Like most scientists, I've been a snob about the value of hard and objective data. I was challenged this year to contemplate how objective our data actually are (thanks, Rose), as well as to recognize the scholarly value of simply asking people about their lived experiences (thanks, Joyce, Insa, Katya, and many others). I did my best to absorb from our Fellows from the arts how truth can be captured on a more emotional, intuitive level than I've been comfortable with in the past (thanks Maria, NoViolet, Katya, Lucia, Sultan, and Njoki). But most importantly, I began to grapple with what it means to be an academic or a writer in exile. I learned that being brave also involves getting mad (thank you, my dearest Elçin, for that lesson). My

admiration for our Fellows who face these challenges continues to grow, and it humbles me.

Peering through this window in a different direction, I see that I learned much about grace in handling family hardship. More than our fair share of Fellows experienced crises and challenges and losses this year; hopefully, we were able to offer some solace while they were far from home. But there were also the joys that came with watching recovery take hold. (I'm thinking of you, brave Pia, and your wonderful parents Peter and Claudia.)

Wiko is a memory

Metaphors help us organize and conceptualize more abstract ideas and events. For ten months of my life, leaving Wiko was an abstract event. Now, it's hard reality.

Wiko lives on – but our Wiko is done. It lies within us now, and it has changed us.



eWIKO
NOVIOLET BULAWAYO

NoViolet Bulawayo is the author of *Glory*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and longlisted for the Women’s Prize, the Aspen Words Literary Prize, and the Rathbones Folio Prize. Her first novel, *We Need New Names*, was recognized with the PEN/Hemingway Award and the LA Times Book Prize Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the International Literature Award, and others. NoViolet earned her MFA at Cornell University, where she was a recipient of the Truman Capote Fellowship and where she currently teaches. NoViolet grew up in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Wiko, September 2022. Another year, and the minds gather again. Like they’ve gathered for about four decades now, like they’ll gather for decades more. One feels the sheer weight of this place at the first meeting, listening to Fellows from all sorts of disciplines talk about their work. And, for the weeks and months to follow, witnessing the work come alive – in colloquiums, workshops, conversations, lunches, dinners. Minds dancing, the world opening, widening. The delight for me is being surrounded by people I wouldn’t otherwise meet, listening to conversations that don’t always form a part of my daily experience. Outside of the obvious work, well, life is lived, community is forged in the near-unreal place that is Grunewald. Grace prevails here, perhaps too much even, so that I’m a bit surprised by the absence of scandal, drama: for surely, how can it be that this kind of large group spends all this time in peace and beautiful friendships, getting along? But then again, perhaps it is no surprise and may have to do with the example that is modelled by the institution. Literally every single member of the Wiko staff is generous,

kind, positive, and present, everyone doing their best, and extra, to make Wiko the nurturing, peaceful place that it is. They are the gift, and if this place be magical, they make the magic.

My own work progresses as expected of the early stages of hewing fiction from the messy matter of life, and this could be because my subject matter is emotionally difficult. In the end, working on the project is a challenging and humbling exercise, but the writing feels necessary. I do have things to distract me as needed – a screenplay that eventually gets finished before I leave Wiko, occasional escapades with friends into the cultural hub that is Berlin, readings for the German edition of my second novel, *Glory*, that take me on tour, though, regrettably, my stops are often super-short, so that I don't have the time to properly experience the places I visit. Still, it's wonderful meeting and sharing with my readers – an opportunity I wouldn't have otherwise had – so many of them engaged, so many of them passionate about books. And in this way, between facing the main work and juggling other things on the side, I am able to coax myself into advancing my writing up until the fellowship comes to an end and I pack up my beautiful Villa Jaffé apartment. Now, months later, as I write this long overdue yearbook post – I am pleased that what began then still continues, the project has found its shape, the writing is much easier, and of course, somewhere at Wiko, the minds gather...



A PLACE CALLED “WIKO”
KATERYNA BURKUSH

Kateryna Burkush is a social historian of the late Soviet Union. Her research focuses on the topics of work and migration in the Soviet context and the cultural and social impacts of labor migration in the Ukrainian borderland region of Transcarpathia. After having received her doctoral degree from the European University Institute in 2019, she held fellowships at the New Europe College in Bucharest and the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna and taught at the European School of Social and Political Sciences at the Université Catholique de Lille, France. Kateryna writes about migration and work in the late Soviet Union and has published in *Labor History*. She is currently a fellow at Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena. – E-mail: burkush.kateryna@gmail.com.

The Wissenschaftskolleg is a well-known institution in narrow circles. Scholars often learn about Wiko from former Fellows or from the many public events and conferences held at the Kolleg long before they apply and step into the building on Wallotstraße 19 as Fellows. Similarly, I learned about Wiko during my fellowship at another Institute for Advanced Study – the New Europe College in Bucharest, which was created in the early 1990s in the image of Wiko to support scholarship in post-communist countries. It would not be long after my arrival in Grunewald that I would find out that the image of Wiko I had fell drastically short of the near-legendary aura it has in Berlin, stretching from idealization (“a scholars’ paradise”) to almost a caricature (the socially isolated “ivory tower” in a rich suburb of Berlin). Until then, Wiko was an enigma. While waiting for my trip to Berlin, I wanted to know more than Wiko’s web page had to offer. My first questions were answered by a recent Wiko alumna who happened to be my Co-Fellow at

Vienna's Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in the summer of 2022. Her stories about the campus near the lake in Grunewald, the colloquia, and the collective lunches shaped my anticipations. Another colleague described the Institute simply as "a place to read and think." After a temporary teaching position, and while I was still grappling with the devastating reality of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, this sounded like a soothing, welcome promise.

I arrived at Wiko to work on an entirely new project on water management and irrigation in post-World War II Ukraine. As Ukrainian water infrastructure was being either appropriated or ruined by the Russian army, I was interested in the ideas behind its construction. I was about to investigate the new social and environmental landscapes that came into being with the modern irrigation in the Ukrainian South, as well as the political significance of major water routes, such as the North Crimean Canal. I planned to start this project as soon as I was done with my monograph on seasonal workers in the late Soviet Union, which would round up eight years of work. That part seemed easy.

Or so thought the person who had never written a monograph. Soon enough, my clear plans were to undergo major revisions. Their reassessment was preceded by a conference at Princeton University entitled "Industrious Nations: Reconsidering Nationality and Economy in the Soviet Union," which took place in late October and where I presented a paper on the historical trajectory and variations of seasonal labor in the USSR from the 1950s to the 1980s. The discussion by and the feedback from the colleagues at the workshop were as challenging as they were inspiring, so much so that I decided to reconsider the analytic angle of my monograph. In addition to telling the story of seasonal migration as a strategy for survival and economic adaptation to socialism in rural Western Ukraine, I thought it was worth looking into the historical development of flexible labor and the institutionalization of flexible labor markets in the late Soviet Union. This shift required taking a closer look into the legislation on contract-based labor and comparing payment systems in the agrarian sector in order to single out the specificities of seasonal workers' employment vis-à-vis regular collective and state farmers. The amusing outcome of this investigation was the realization that, contrary to many scholars' and my own long-standing conviction, the role of informality in the relations between seasonal workers and their employers had been exaggerated. Informal negotiations and connections were certainly important to create an incentive and mitigate risks. At the same time, the contracts were regulated by law, albeit loosely, and the majority of employers did try not to overstep these rules (too much). I made this point in a paper that I presented at the conference

“Insecurity in the Age of Labour Formalisation: Informal Work in Europe, ca. 1870–1970” at the University of Bern. The less amusing outcome was that I would have to rewrite some chapters and add new ones.

The next round of revisions came after my Tuesday Colloquium presentation in January. I talked about the methodological challenges of historical research into a rather marginal social issue, such as seasonal migration, connected to the dearth and bureaucratic uniformity of archival sources. During the discussion, a colleague pointed out that microhistory might be a helpful tool. Most of my archival sources were regional in scope, which partly shaped the scale of the research, but since the majority of my interlocutors were from one village, a microhistorical approach could add a valuable dimension to the analysis and better illustrate the stark contrast in village livelihoods between the 1950s and 1970s. After a moment of doubt, mostly of a pragmatic nature, I succumbed to curiosity. I accepted (yet another) methodological turn and made plans to take a look at the regional archives in Transcarpathia (for the hundredth time) during my next trip to Ukraine, planned for September. I also arranged follow-up interviews via Zoom with those few contacts who could still share details about their daily lives under late Soviet socialism.

My interest in the economic anthropology of the Soviet countryside and women’s involvement in seasonal work informed the paper that I wrote during my stay at Wiko for an edited volume on labor and working-class history in the late Soviet Union. I presented another paper, on non-standard employment in the USSR, at Regensburg’s Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies.

Many would agree that Wiko is first and foremost a place for writing. Novels, academic articles, and books are written here year after year. As the responsibilities of teaching and administration are removed, scholars get a precious opportunity to fully dedicate their time to developing their ideas and writing. At least that’s the idea. Published texts are the measurement of academic productivity, of progress made, of having gotten the job done. Unpublished texts do not enter this record. They are invisible and therefore irrelevant. As a junior scholar without a permanent position, I had to spend more time than I had wished writing texts not intended for publication, but merely for securing another academic post. During my stay at Wiko, I felt as if I was living in two overlapping timelines – the here and now of research, events, and discussions and an imagined academic future, which can only be actualized if a sufficient number of unpublishable texts are duly submitted by respective deadlines. Thanks to one such text, I will continue writing my

book at Imre Kertész Kolleg in Jena. I still envision Soviet Ukrainian irrigation and its long-term environmental trace as my future research project. But for now it exists only in invisible texts. Thanks to Anja Brockmann, I have a long bibliography on water and irrigation in Ukraine in German. And thanks to Eva von Kügelgen's pedagogy, I can even read some of it.

The Wissenschaftskolleg is a place of meetings, too. To my mind, Wiko is primarily about sociability, induced by the soft structure of daily meals, Tuesday and Thursday Colloquia, Three Culture Forums, and more singular academic and cultural events. Wiko's grid of connections, which has been sprawling since the early 1980s, includes scholars, writers, and musicians from all over the world. Even though Wiko is a small and rather young institution, its history is already packed with remarkable names. Once they are gone, they are always welcome to visit again. And they do. Meetings seem easy at Wiko, as easy as they are sometimes utterly unexpected. Like that time when I sat at a regular Wiko dinner and suddenly saw one of my former professors from the European University Institute entering the Wiko dining hall as easily as if it were the EUI cafeteria some ten years ago. Or that time when I came for an ordinary Wiko lunch and came across Sofia Dyak, the director of the Lviv Center for Urban History, whom I last saw in Vienna in 2019. Or that other time, when we went to a concert at the Berliner Philharmonie, only to discover shortly after that one of the featured composers, Toshio Hosokawa, was not only a former Fellow of Wiko, but was staying at the Kolleg during his trip to Berlin (and again, the Wiko cafeteria was a meeting place!). In a similar lucky accident, I met Andrii Portnov, a historian of and from Ukraine and a former Wiko Fellow who now teaches at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). Andrii invited me there to give a talk at the Osteuropa/Ukrainian Studies Colloquium, where I had the chance to have a stimulating exchange with bright and curious students.

The core social circle was, of course, our Wiko cohort. By carefully preparing the mixture of experts, Wiko delivers an intellectual compound that is unique every year. Depending on one's disposition, exposure to such intellectual and social vistas can have a tremendous potential for both learning and introspection. Not only the formal colloquia, but every lunch and dinner is a productive collision of ideas. These ideas sometimes kept me preoccupied long after, and I found myself researching names, events, and places online. It was a privilege to learn from people from diverse corners of academia, ranging from biochemistry to the history of China, and who come from such a variety of national and cultural backgrounds. My most memorable discoveries were, perhaps, related to the

altruistic behavior of rats and to debt and indebtedness in South Africa, where people use their welfare benefits as collateral when they borrow money from private persons.

I benefited even more from discussions with colleagues whose interests were closer to my own. Insa Nolte and I returned many times to the subject of oral history. I had helpful conversations about financial redistribution and informality with Deborah James and about monetarization with Antonin Pottier. Maximilian Benz, Thomas Kaufmann, Martin Saar, and Kateryna Mishchenko were frequent partners in discussing Ukrainian and German politics and culture. Ittai Weinryb knew about the best exhibitions in Berlin, Paris, and, frankly, everywhere. I thoroughly enjoyed Karin Leonhard's talk on *sottobosco* painting, a mysterious 17th-century genre that explored the cycle of creation and decay through the depiction (and study) of such close-to-earth lifeforms as plants, reptiles, and insects. The talk provided an elegant conclusion to the nature/culture debate – this year's paradigmatic undercurrent – which tended to reemerge in the colloquium hall and at the lunch table.

In the dark background of this sheltered academic existence was the tragic war in Ukraine, the deadly earthquake in Turkey, and political reforms in France and Israel that were met with wide protests. In the early weeks of introductions and first encounters, I found myself answering many questions about Ukraine's politics, history, issues of language, and the reasons for Russia's invasion, as well as sympathetic inquiries about my family back in Kyiv. Wiko itself hosted a number of discussions related to the war in Ukraine and specifically on the long-term impact on the lives of scholars, beyond the material destruction of universities. The topics of academic refugeism, the preservation of institutions, and the prospects for academic freedom were discussed in the broader context of dictatorships in Russia, Belarus, and Turkey. In such dark times, hope is scarce. This is why it was especially reassuring to witness that Wiko, together with a number of other institutions, decided to take action and contribute to academic resilience in Ukraine by establishing the Ukraine Institute for Advanced Study in Kyiv. The very first Ukrainian IAS will open its doors, despite the ongoing war, to those scholars who stayed.

At our farewell party, in her farewell talk, Wiko Rector Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger half-jokingly asked us to refrain from saying "thank you" (too much). And yet it is hard to abide by this request, not only because of the exceptional conditions for work, a famous feature of Wiko, but also because of the friendly and welcoming atmosphere of the Kolleg. It is rare for everyone to know you by name from the moment you arrive. Vera Pfeffer and the housing team made my relocation to Berlin smooth and worryless. Daniel Schönpflug

and Katharina Wiedemann eased everyone's immersion into the Wiko life with their relaxed attitude, humor, and supportive advice. Maike Schaper was always there to answer my questions about what, how, and where in Berlin. Michael Dominik Hagel and the amazing library team found and delivered books in a matter of days and sometimes hours. To all of them I am forever grateful. It is they who steer this ship called "Wiko" with apparent ease and make it a place to read, think, write, change plans, meet, debate, and create.



VARIATION, VARIATION, VARIATION
LYNDA DELPH

Lynda Delph is a Distinguished Professor of Biology at Indiana University and a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. She grew up moving around the world with her family as a child and traveled to New Zealand for her Ph.D. She specializes in evolutionarily based questions concerning various aspects of flowering plant reproduction from both ecological and genetic perspectives. On a more general level, her research focuses on understanding selective forces in natural populations and on speciation from the perspective of how/which traits lead to reproductive isolation. – Address: Department of Biology, 1001 E. 3rd Street, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA.
E-mail: ldelph@iu.edu.

When I arrived with Curtis Lively in September and we were shown around our apartment in Villa Walther, I found it monochromatic with Bauhaus furniture. It even had a metal-shelving unit in the living room that reminded me of a magazine-display area one would find in an airport lounge. But it didn't contain magazines. Instead, one of the shelves held about 20 or so Wiko Yearbooks. Later in the year, another Fellow commented, "Who even reads those things?" and Curtis pointed to me and said, "She does." He was right – I had read every one of the accounts (well, those written in English) in all the volumes on the shelf. I was fascinated by the different approaches past Fellows took with their essays and the experiences they had. Vera commented to me, "Don't even try to be novel when you write yours. It's all been done." Sure, to some extent I can agree with her. Plenty of folks had mentioned the warm welcome, the time to work and think, the great meals, the swan family, the nearby forest, and the trials and tribulations of adjusting to a

different culture. These are things/experiences that many Fellows share and are sufficiently struck by that they think to mention them. I am no different. Here are some of the things that struck me, with a common thread of “variation.”

The people – you walk into the restaurant at Wiko and see ~50 people, all strangers, and wonder how this is going to work. How will you ever get to know these people and get your work done? How does someone in the 6th decade of their life make new friends? How am I going to get past the previous 2.5 years of pandemic-caused isolation and eat in a room with *so many other people*? The answer, as the people who run Wiko know, is that it is easy. You can’t spend a minimum of two hours in colloquia and eat five meals each week together and not get to know each other – you recognize kindred spirits, and you get to know people you would otherwise never have the chance to meet. Wiko exposed me to more of the variety that is humankind than my regular day-to-day existence. And as an evolutionary biologist, I have always appreciated the importance of variation. So... my advice: Don’t worry about it. You will make friends and influence people. And you will hopefully, like me, meet people whose breadth of open-heartedness is breathtaking.

The city – I had never in my adult life lived for an extended time in such a big, multicultural city. I wanted to get to know Berlin BIG TIME. This took an effort. Covid was still sufficiently raging in the autumn that going indoors for extended amounts of time made me uncomfortable. I heard other Fellows talk about going to concerts with thousands of people and here I was masking in crowded sections of outdoor markets. So that meant I had to do things outside for the first few months, but that worked out. Just walking the streets in different sections of the city gave me a sense of the diversity/variation the city contains. I could hop on a bus, S-Bahn train, U-Bahn, or tram (my favorite) and go wherever I wanted. With the phone apps for how-to-get-anywhere-from-here capabilities, Berlin was my oyster. Did I do a lot? Well, more than many, especially in the last third of my stay, but I still have to say what’s in my heart, which is no, I did not do enough. So... my advice: Buy a monthly public-transport pass and get out and go. You could even try what my neighbors did – pick a number out of a hat and get off after that many stops and explore. I doubt you’ll be disappointed.

The work – I was fortunate to take part in a Three Cultures Forum (TCF) on the use of the word “gender,” along with Insa Nolte and Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, under the

guidance of Daniel Schönplflug. We compared how gender is used in biology and the social sciences and found some surprising connections. Using ping-pong paddles with male and female symbols attached allowed me to represent the variation present among flowering plants in their gender, and even got some laughs from the audience. And I think it might have made some Fellows look at flowers differently. So... my advice: the TCFs are well worth your time. Even those way outside your area are enlightening.

As an evolutionary biologist, I came with the idea that for my main project I would read broadly about intralocus sexual conflict, whereby alleles that are good for one sex are bad for the other. I wanted to explore the variable ways that different researchers approached this phenomenon and to come to grips with what was needed to definitively say when it was happening. I figured out that many researchers have vastly overestimated its frequency, in part because they want to take a particular – genomic – approach to the question, and this is not sufficient. Suffice it to say, my write-up of this investigation will not be something that everyone will want to hear. But I started writing it and plan to finish it. So... my advice: Leave behind any committee/other work from your institution. Just let it go. Save the easy, straightforward investigations for another time. Instead, give yourself the gift of floundering and finding your way with something that takes real effort. Establish working habits early on and stick to them. Take note: time passes quickly.

The visas – Before leaving for Germany, I contemplated traveling to the nearest embassy to get our visas ahead of time. That would have been Chicago for us, which would have been costly both in terms of time and money. So, when I saw on the US Transportation website that one could apply for a resident visa after arriving, I decided to go that route. It seemed like it would be straightforward, and I would have the help of the folks at Wiko to help me with the process. Perhaps in a normal year this would have been true, but with the war raging in Ukraine, many more immigrants were arriving and stressing out the Berlin office that deals with the visa process. Plus, Germany decided they would no longer simply put the photo/stamp visa in your passport during your immigration appointment, but instead would have a card issued, and that would take who knows how long to get to you (6 weeks, longer?). Without going into the nitty-gritty details of my situation (or that of other Fellows – there were a lot of us, and the particulars were highly variable), I can say that the process created a great deal of stress and caused sleepless nights. In the end it worked out just fine for us, but at one point I thought we might have to fly to Romania for a 10-day stay to prevent overstaying our visitor visas. So... my advice: No one

at Wiko is an immigration specialist. They have a lot of Fellows to assist and the whole process keeps changing from year to year. Get your resident visa BEFORE you arrive in Germany if it is at all possible.

The must-see sites – I’m going to keep this list short; it contains what I consider the must-sees, not the should-sees (with the caveat that our interests are so very variable...). 1) The *Türkischer Markt* held every Friday in Neukölln is worth the trip. It takes about 50 minutes by public transport from Wiko; I liked taking the U-Bahn to Kottbusser Tor (which by the way, has a Burgermeister with world-class burgers) and walking to the market. Bring plenty of shopping bags and maybe even a friend to help you get stuff back to Grunewald. The prices on the fruit and vegetables are the cheapest in Berlin, there is great food being prepared, and interesting people to observe. 2) The *sixth floor of KaDeWe* is a doozy of a food floor (you can get there on the M19 bus). I’ve been to many around the world and this one rivals the best of them. Who knew there was such a great one-stop shop for any cheese (bread, processed meats, teas, chocolates, olive oil, ...) you had ever heard of in your life and many that you will never see again. 3) The *Dog Beach* on the way to the Jagdschloss is such fun – the dogs romp off leash and jump in the lake. I recommend taking time on a nice weekend day to do the whole loop around the lake, and maybe have a bratwurst at the castle. 4) The *7 lakes boat tour from Wannsee* takes about two hours and exposes you to this different district. A whole bunch of us Fellows went one sunny Saturday for my birthday. Just hop on the S-Bahn at the Grunewald station and head south toward Potsdam. You barely blink and you are there. 5) *Potsdam* is just one more stop on the S-Bahn past Wannsee. Walk around the parks near Sanssouci, the largest World Heritage site in Germany. Eat at the one of the terrific restaurants. Maybe even buy a ticket and go into the palaces. 6) Are you interested in the best *Wiener Schnitzel* and *Kaiserschmarrn* in Berlin? Even if you don’t know what these are, go to the *Jules Verne Restaurant* near Savignyplatz and try them. It’s French and serves vichyssoise, but I recommend these German dishes. 7) The *Museumsinsel* is another World Heritage site worth a visit – there are plenty of museums to choose from, and everyone has their favorite. I really like the Bode with its funny, small rooms. 8) Last but not least, consider attending an opera in the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*. It’s in the historic center of the city, and the tickets are cheap for the quality of the performances.

To end, I'll say that going to Wiko in 2022 was an excellent thing for me to do after the height of the pandemic. It allowed (forced?) me to emerge from my habit of being locked down and reconnected me with deep thought and with people. To quote a fellow Fellow (a certain German historian), "The more you get to know someone, the more you change yourself." It was great getting to know some people really well and being changed by them. And I hope some of my 2022 cohort take a little more time to look at the flowers as we all go our own way.



THE BEST FEBRUARY OF MY LIFE
CLAUDIA DIEHL

Claudia Diehl (doctorate: 2001, University of Mannheim) holds the chair for Micro-sociology at the University of Konstanz; she is also Co-speaker of the DFG-funded Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality.” Her substantive interests encompass integration processes among immigrants in Europe; xenophobia and ethnic discrimination; and inequality in the educational system. She has been the principal investigator of several large and partly internationally comparative survey projects among immigrants and high school students. She is a member of the Standing Scientific Commission on Education Policy of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany and of the Advisory Board for Family Affairs and was recently elected into the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. She has published numerous articles on migration, integration, ethnic discrimination, and the impact of the pandemic on social inequality. – Address: Fachbereich Soziologie, Universität Konstanz, Universitätsstraße 10, 78467 Konstanz, Germany.

E-mail: claudia.diehl@uni-konstanz.de.

Being a professor is the best of all jobs. We can do what we like to do and pursue our own substantive interests at work. We are quite free in how we structure our days and spend our time without being squeezed into a rigorous schedule like most other employees. We have a say in shaping the research orientation of our institutes, and we take part in selecting new colleagues. We earn well, we have high job security. And we have regular sabbaticals.

But we still like to complain: about university bureaucracy, about department fights, about search-committee battles over the best candidates, about dumber colleagues having

more resources. About too much “shit work” and too little time for research and writing. About heavy teaching loads and too many students who are unwilling to read and unable to write. About the incompatibility of having a family and being a researcher, and about having to live in places we often didn’t choose. About feeling stressed out all the time and about sabbaticals at home being as inefficient as vacations on one’s own balcony. About the bad cafeteria food and offices that are either too small, too hot, or too cold.

And then you get an invitation to a place like Wiko. Without bureaucracy, without teaching, without battles over research orientations and future colleagues, in a (part of a) city where you have theaters and forests, museums and lakes, and Ethiopian and Austrian restaurants within biking distance. In a wonderful building with flower bouquets, a garden with lounge chairs for reading, with cold drinks and hot coffee available at all times, and with rooms for visitors if you choose to have any. You can go to work every morning into a well-kept office – or only leave your apartment to attend a tasty, healthy, freshly prepared three-course lunch. Your only obligation is to listen weekly to excellent and well-prepared talks in the Wiko colloquium and to deliver one yourself. You are offered an apartment in an old villa with a lake view (or at least glimpse). You frequently receive emails with invitations for movies, opera visits, city tours, and dives into Berlin’s dynamic food scene. “You” is you and about 40 other Fellows, a group large enough to find like-minded friends unless you are a sociopath. What happens when all that bothers you is suddenly gone?

Most importantly, it gives you time to read and write, to overthink your own work routines, to make friends for life, to enjoy the city. These aspects are mentioned in most Yearbook entries. Reading is made easy, not only because there is time for it. Various newspapers are available, and so are publications by other and former Fellows. In my imagination (which is most likely close to reality), someone jumps on a bike to fetch your book at the moment you hit the send button in the Wiko library’s order form. Writing is easy because, by definition, we all can theoretically do it but are too often kept from it. Because we have to leave our desks for various meetings, because we have to fix this computer issue first, because we have to prepare food for our families. At Wiko, all this is taken care of. Overthinking your own work routine is another big topic among many Fellows I talked to: after I return home, I will no longer have appointments in the morning, will say “no” more often, will go running before work (sorry to assure you three weeks after being back: forget it). Making friends is easy because of the sheer number of witty and friendly colleagues, the changing seating order during meals, the encouragement of sociability by

weekly offers of pre-dinner champagne on a hungry stomach (served with style and grace by Martin) that would make even hermits talkative and narcissists curious about others. Not to mention that most Fellows' social networks are far away and even the closest couples and families and the most wholehearted singles crave company after a while.

And for these very reasons, paradise can sometimes be stressful. You are robbed of the illusion that you would write so much more if you only had the time. You have to admit to yourself that new distractions show up on the horizon as soon as old ones are taken care of. Especially when you live in Berlin. I felt about the city almost like I feel usually about my work: missing too many events and just never doing enough.

In terms of the social dynamics in paradise, the sociologist in me was fascinated by the question of how people behave when they are together only temporarily and have absolutely no reason to fight – because there is no competition for scarce resources, no struggle for future local status. With the considerate and experienced Wiko staff sensibly and successfully preventing the loudest from getting the most attention and making sure that all Fellows are similarly visible – in evening talks, in Three Cultures Forums, in special events, in features in *Köpfe und Ideen*. Competition at Wiko is limited to the small things: the biggest piece of cake at the buffet, the first comments during the colloquia, and “why do they have a salad spinner in their apartment and we don't?” And in fact: people are NICE under these circumstances, they are curious, genuinely interested in each other's work, always open-minded and mostly modest, and tremendously helpful and supportive. Throughout the year I received comments on papers from people I didn't know a few months ago, presents and food for my daughter who had to spend five weeks in the Charité hospital, help with her catching up in chemistry and French, flowers to cheer us up, and any offers for help and company we could think of.

Nevertheless, around Christmas the rumor made the round that something would happen in February: people will grow tired of being nice all the time and conflicts will pop up. This, fortunately, didn't turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy... However, just as you realize that you still don't write for eight hours a day when you theoretically can, you realize that people neither can, nor want – or even have – to be nice all the time and to anyone. The honeymoon is over (another common metaphor in many Yearbook entries) and people know with whom they want to spend their future, i.e., the rest of the Wiko year with.

And of course, you realize that even among Wiko Fellows, there is inequality in the degree of privilege. The wonderful Ukrainian Fellows with their admirable sense of

relevance and focus, despite worries about friends, families, and the future in Ukraine, made me feel ashamed about complaints about university administrations and cafeteria food. Likewise, the Fellows from Africa who would knowingly smile when Fellows from the Global North struggled with their visa issues. The brilliant Junior Fellows reminded us of what professors theoretically know: how privileged and lucky we are while others return to insecure career paths and prospects.

In the end, the most common feelings were humility – and gratefulness. I guess this is why Barbara gently reminded us in her talk at the good-bye party about the please-no-statements-of-thankfulness-policy at Wiko (I was faster!). For a grownup, it is a tremendous privilege to encounter the social thrill of a school trip and the intellectual excitement of a first-year student who hears about so many topics for the very first time in her life. But unlike students, we could be at a well-equipped institution with years of dedication and experience in catering to the needs and dreams of academics on leave.

Forget about the policy: thanks go out to the most competent, open-minded, and friendly academic and administrative staff you can think of! And even though not all Fellows were equally successful in avoiding Zoom meetings and staying out of department struggles throughout their stay – many of us sense that next time we will have that much time for research, for new friendships, and for delusions about rethinking our work routines will be after retirement.



RUNNING FROM KLEIST: FRAGMENTS
ARIE M. DUBNOV

Arie Dubnov is an Israeli historian teaching at George Washington University, Washington, D.C. He is packing a suitcase full of guilt for not completing his big book. – Address: Department of History, The George Washington University, Phillips Hall 330, 801 22nd Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20052, USA. E-mail: dubnov@gwu.edu.

The Pleasures of the Exile:

“There are three good reasons for choosing an academic career, and they are: June, July, and August.” My regular jest, it turns out, has a wonderful fourth exception: the sabbatical year. Lucky bastard: while the Jewish state was collapsing in on itself, and the news reported heavy bombardments of cities in Ukraine I had never visited but whose names I heard in family stories from the old world, I was invited to spend my sabbatical at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. A collection of academic migratory birds, including some peacocks, flew to this strange corner of Berlin to enjoy chatting while chewing in front of each other. *Zivilisation* is another name for small talk next to an espresso machine.

George Lamming, the wise writer from Barbados, called it the Pleasures of Exile. I made a mistake earlier this year during a conversation with a board member who asked about my experience when I used the words “spa conditions” to express my appreciation of the cushioned environment provided to me by the Institute. I was showered with a long preachy sermon (“*How could we defend the humanities if we’ll describe them as luxury?!*”), during which all I could do was sip my coffee quietly while staring at my interlocutor’s Armani suit. I thought of Lamming, the outsider who got in, and compared himself to Caliban, challenging Prospero and his language. Perhaps I should have quoted Edith

Wharton: “There was something heroic in living as though one were much richer than one’s bank-book denoted.”

East and West:

Grunewald, it must be said, is an odd place. Isolated from the city, someone compared its relation to Berlin to a married couple who sleep in separate rooms. True. Yet such a statement is a product of an eastward-fixated gaze, an M19 bus way of appreciating the city’s geography. For me, the memorable moments of this year were spent looking west and south, staring at the enchanted forest that gave the place its name.

The nearby forest and lakes invite you in. I learned their names this year: Hundekhelesee, Grunewaldsee, the banana-shaped Krumme Lanke, and the long, slug-like Schlachtensee. Yes, yes, and it also includes *that* lake, Wannsee, whose name and its notorious villa were well known to me from before. *They* only needed ninety minutes to finish their meeting and decide on the next steps. Much shorter than the Wiko colloquium. Considerably shorter than an average faculty meeting back in the United States.

On Short vs. Long Runs:

Some go out jogging or running to burn calories. My runs are miserable attempts to replace the chaos in my head with something that might resemble order.

This bizarre academic career, with its merciless “publish-or-perish” ethic, forced me to be productive. Put your fecundity on display or otherwise: no one wants to see the flaming sword preventing mortals from re-entering the garden, החרב המתהפכת (literally: the sword turning itself). Productiveness is a slightly obscene word, however. In a not-at-all-miraculous metamorphosis, a vocation turned into a profession, and I turned myself into a well-oiled article machine: academic peer-reviewed articles, articles of the type that wins over an audience of about five readers, three of whom serve as editors of the journal to which you submit your paper... articles of the kind one needs for promotion, and articles that allowed me to run away, leave a position in Israel, and move myself and my family across the Atlantic. (I cannot stand the dry academic English prose of those articles. They made me a stranger to myself and to the Hebrew in which I grew up.)

The Israeli literary critic Yitzhak Laor called his collection of essays מולדת אותך מולדת – We write you, homeland. We write you, exile, too. Either way, we write too much.

The world is divided into long-distance runners and sprinters. Unfortunately, I am a member of that old order of academics who are expected to produce a “big book,” that

world-known grand thesis. For what makes one a full (“complete”) professor if he is not an author with *authoritas*. While I? I got accustomed to article-length short runs, short intervals. Bursting power that ends after a couple of hundred meters. I forgot what it takes to run a marathon.

It will be a longer run today, I’ve decided: a run to Heinrich von Kleist’s gravesite. That wild dead genius never left that one great novel behind him, “only” novellas, short stories, and plays. I was introduced to him in my freshman year at Hebrew University, translated into archaic Hebrew. The textbook described his short stories poetically: written at once, from beginning to end, in a single blow, out of a concentrated and intense effort. It is as if you read a single paragraph that gets longer and longer “until the reader feels short of breath but cannot stop reading lest he misses the point.” Most of these stories end with question marks, the haunting feeling that some detail that might solve the riddle was missed during the reading. I would like to be that kind of writer. A scrivener of short, bursty runs.

Grunewald’s Villas:

Before we enter the forest, the first kilometers should be galloped delicately along Grunewald’s cobblestone sidewalks. Elegant yet pesky, they make this part of the run inconvenient. The old stones remind you that this is not the hipster part of the city, neither the bustling Berlin of smoky cabarets of the 1920s nor that of the fashionable bars and techno music parties everyone was talking about in the 1990s. The atmosphere is more that of a sleepy bastion of the haute bourgeoisie. So is this where successful industrialists put their wealth on display, close enough to the city but at a safe distance from the masses? This assembly of villas, built one on top of the other too densely, with much too small backyards, as if they were competing by towering over each other? PP, who read the series of novels set in Berlin so systematically, omnivorously, found in Philip Kerr’s *Berlin Noir* trilogy a description of Herbertstraße as “an assemblage of old field-marshals and grand-admirals, in full-dress-uniforms obliged to sit on extremely small and inadequate camp stools.” (I laughed out loud. I once saw these old Russian veterans, with chests adorned with too many medals, huddled side by side, sitting on uncomfortable plastic stools.) Walter Benjamin (Delbrückstraße 23, the original mansion is no longer there) despised this atmosphere. He obviously preferred his Schöneberg and Paris apartments. Perhaps it was this excessive display of wealth that pushed Benjamin to mix Marxism and Kabbalah?

What can one do with such huge houses these days? Foreign flags, waving over houses that have been converted into consulates and embassies, provide a partial answer. Other villas have been purchased by oligarchs, while others have been made into nursing homes. Luxury cars with license plates from Russia and Ukraine add to my confusion. “Oh, so you’ve encountered the Monaco Battalion!” exclaimed one of the refugee researchers from Ukraine, not concealing her disdain. The flow of bad news turned into a muddy torrent these past months. It’s all too depressing. Newspaper cartoons resemble slides from history classes: the menacing Russian bear threatening *Mitteleuropa*. Only arms dealers are happy these days.

Sometimes *unlearning* is needed to acquire new knowledge, to gain a new appreciation. “Please completely forget, disremember, obliterate, unlearn, consign to oblivion any notion you may have had,” Vladimir Nabokov ordered his American students at the opening of his lecture on *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. But he also warned them: “Do not pad ignorance with eloquence.”

On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts during a Run:

The chemistry here is quite simple, really. Athletes call this burst of endorphins “runner’s high.” Others talk of a state of mindless bliss. I think of my “mini-eureka” moments: you start running, and ideas start budding mysteriously, you sweat and the thoughts start flowing with them. The Latin root *discurrō*, I am told, literally means “to run to and fro, to roam, to wander.” In order to have “discourse,” you have to start running around.

Kleist, it seems to me, had little patience for pedantic and tedious philosophical modes of argumentation. He claimed that our thoughts are not readily available to us, but develop gradually and take form through an interaction, during a conversation or as we start our speech. “The French say: *l’appétit vient en mangeant* [with food comes appetite], and this maxim holds true when we add in a parodic joke: *l’idée vient en parlant* [ideas come with speech].”

Would Heinrich von Kleist go on field runs to help his thoughts take shape? He served for a while in the Prussian army. As I write this, I am reminded of the yellow cover of the Hebrew translation of Frederick the Great’s *Instructions for His Generals*, but I can’t recall anything about running there. Perhaps during his Rousseauian phase, attracted to ideals of proper “pastoral” life, Kleist went out to run in the woods? The Napoleonic occupation distanced him from such “French ideas” and turned him into an angry and resentful nationalist. Here comes the author of the “German Catechism.” Birth of a Monster.

Ich bin Caliban:

It was thanks to Lamming that I learned that the exiled writer is a universal figure. “We are made to feel a sense of exile by our inadequacy, in our irrelevance of function in society whose past we can’t alter, and whose future is always beyond us.” He altered the way I understood *The Tempest*, Shakespeare’s last play. Prospero, the deposed Duke of Milan, is also an exile, a man who lost his city and home due to a treacherous brother. Shipwrecked, he found himself on a desert island in the company of the monstrous Caliban. Lamming’s English prose was magnificent, virtuoso almost. He felt at home in that language. But in the eyes of the English poets, his Caribbean origin and the skin color made him a Caliban. White magic versus black magic.

Though obsessed with monsters, very few Jews read Shakespeare before the nineteenth century. Things changed during the previous century. In 1927, Arnold Zweig entitled his long treatise analyzing antisemitism *Caliban oder Politik und Leidenschaft (Caliban: or, Politics and Passion)* and dedicated it to Sigmund Freud, his cultural hero. Comparing the Jew to Caliban revealed Zweig’s deep sense of alienation. Six years later, he emigrated to Palestine, but this was not a simple love affair either. “In Palästina, in der Fremde” (“In Palestine, in a strange land”) read the last entry in the pocket diary for 1933. “Fremde” was not simply a technical “abroad.” It was a marker of a distant, foreign country, the unfamiliar elsewhere.

Zweig’s guru and friend mocked him. “Palestine,” Freud wrote, “has produced nothing besides religion, religious fanaticism and the obstinate attempt to change the outer shape of the world with inner wishful thinking.” Trying to make sense of his own predicament through the lens of psychoanalysis, Zweig penned an unconvincing, weak essay on “Emigration und Neurose.” He ultimately returned to East Berlin, appointed president of the GDR’s Academy of Arts. Around that time, on the western side of the city, Leo Löwenthal (Wiko Fellow 1984/1985) returned to Caliban. Invited to deliver a speech marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi book burning, he used Caliban to discuss libricide: instead of killing his nemesis Prospero, Caliban planned to burn the library the expelled humanist carried with him into exile.

In America, I am just one of those tens of thousands of Israeli immigrants. For most American Jews, I am an odd bird – yet another secular lefty academic who fled Bibistan, who does not attend our *shul* and doesn’t use words like *daven* or *frum*, but consumes hummus, Hebrew novels, and Israeli music instead. “Respect him and suspect him” – he is not ours. “Far too critical,” probably suffering from auto-antisemitism. I am reminded of that

New Yorker cartoon: the ancient Israelites crossing the Red Sea, led by Moses, and one of them whispers behind the leader's back: "He's all right. I just wish he were a little more pro-Israel."

What am I here, in Germany of 2023? How do *they* look at me? As a representative of a Middle Eastern banana republic? Or as a Jew whose very presence serves as a reminder of *that* thing? Am I Prospero in this story or Caliban? Or maybe I'm simply once again that *Ostjude*, drawn to the great European city to escape his Eastern roots?

The literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, another Eastern Jew, admired Prospero so much that he agitated his former teacher, Reinhold Knick:

Ich verstehe dich gut, aber du verkennst die Realität. Die menschliche Gesellschaft besteht nicht nur aus den Repräsentanten des Geistes wie Prospero mit seiner großen Bibliothek, dazu gehören auch solche Wesen wie Caliban, sowenig er dir gefallen mag. Das sind zwei Seiten derselben Sache, und beide sind wichtig. Paß auf – heute zumal –, daß du nicht nur die eine Seite wahrnimmst und die andere übersiehst. Ich glaube, du hast eine große Schwäche für die Intellektuellen. Dagegen ist nichts zu sagen, nur muß man diese Schwäche in Grenzen halten – und man muß sich hüten, alles andere zu übersehen.¹

(I understand you well, but you misjudge reality. Human society consists not only of the representatives of the humanities like Prospero and his grand library, but also of creatures like Caliban, as disliked as he may be. These are two sides of the same coin, and both are important. Be careful – especially these days – that you don't perceive only one side while overlooking the other. I think you have a great weakness for intellectuals. There is nothing to be said against that, only that one must be aware of this weakness and its limits and be careful not to overlook everything else.)

Zen and the Art of Running:

The forest grows denser. As I run toward the Havel, the flat biking paths curve upward and turn into hilly trails, leading me to Grunewaldturm. Running uphill is about finding an equilibrium between restlessness and shortness of breath. Stable climb. Don't think too much. Just breathe.

1 Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Mein Leben* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999), 51.

As a teenager, I was a fan of Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I cannot remember who gave me a copy of the book and don't think I understood why "An Inquiry into Values" was used as its subtitle. I probably did not notice it. What was clear, however, was that Pirsig, an engineer-writer, was in love with his toolbox. A wrench was emblazoned on the cover of his book, and his protagonist was aroused seeing gears and pistons at work. "Excellence" was some sort of metaphysical quality achieved through the proper use of mechanical tools and was about being tangled in the workings of the machine. While I? Well, I can hardly change a light bulb. Due to a pair of left hands, feet and legs had to step in instead.

Much of the pleasure I derive from running is related to its simplicity, to the fact it does not require more than a pair of shoes. In my case, these are not conventional shoes, actually, but Vibram FiveFingers, which look like rubber running socks. Races bring all the merchandise out. Sellers are coming to sell expensive shoes, thermal shirts and tight running pants, and packs of colorful energy gels. It makes sense, of course. There is something blasphemous about these festivities of consumerism, however. "Don't pretend you're not a MAMIL yourself," my daughter told me – a middle-aged man in Lycra.

The Absence of Running in Hebrew Literature:

Many like jogging, but there are very few novelists who have taken running seriously enough to write about it. Haruki Murakami, an ultra-marathon runner, is a notable exception (does this have something to do with the fact that his father was a Buddhist monk?). So is Joyce Carol Oates. "If writing involves punishment, at least for some of us, the act of running even in adulthood can evoke painful memories of having been, long ago, as children, chased by tormentors."

When it comes to running, Hebrew literature is a couch potato. Given the fact that constructing an assertive *Muskeljudentum* was such a central impetus of Zionism and early Israeli culture, the absence of running is conspicuous. Yes, yes, David Grossman did write a novel called *Someone to Run with*, but the only reflection on running by a Hebrew author I am familiar with is an essay by Dan Tsalka, who decided, after long hesitation, to substitute the rock music he used to listen to while jogging with classical music. He wrote beautifully about the panting of violinists that can sometimes be heard on recordings and his own panting while running and the way he discovered Scarlatti to be his best running mate. Is Hebrew literature stuck in place? The memoirs of Jewish pioneers and soldiers are rife with graphic descriptions of the body and its fluids, with emphasis on sweat and blood, but

there is something about running that they found unattractive. In a culture that yearns for “rootedness,” running was probably seen as an anathema, a running away from something.

We are on the other side of the forest now, passing near the elegant building of the American Academy in Berlin. The cultural life here, on the edges, is conducted in English. Even the neighboring Literarisches Colloquium hosted an evening with Berlin-based authors who write in English earlier this year. I attended it with a few friends, former Israelis, who write poetry and novels in Hebrew. What is the meaning of writing in Hebrew today? Can one write and publish in Hebrew outside Israel?

Kleist's Suicide:

I cannot say I was not warned. “Look for Kleist’s tombstone at the edge of the forest, by the lake called Kleiner Wannsee,” a German friend told me, to which he added: “You know, it’s a pretty creepy place.” He went on to tell me how Herr Kleist, a mad and tormented soul, put an end to his life, not before taking his female friend Henriette Vogel down with him. The sign on-site provided the full details: the couple rented a room at the nearby inn and wrote farewell letters throughout the night. The next morning they ordered one cup of coffee, which they shared. A few hours later they carried out their plan: Kleist shot his partner in the chest first, straight through the heart, then put the barrel of the loaded gun in his mouth.

Not a real literary site, so much as the crime scene of a double suicide.

The sweat beads of the dead dripping on our lives.

I promised my friend DM, an Israeli poet who relocated to Berlin, that I would think about the meaning of writing in Hebrew today on my next run. I thought that in the overtly Zionist Hebrew that I was brought up with, even a seemingly banal expression like “to run in the woods in Germany” (לרוץ ביערות גרמניה) brings up connotations of Holocaust movies dripping with kitsch. So how can I write about this in Hebrew? You can run in the woods but it is doubtful you’ll escape the semantic field. Or maybe I’m running to Kleist’s gravesite to overcome him? To run away from the little Kleist inside me?



HUMAN BEING IS SWEET
OREN HARMAN

Oren Harman is a historian of science and a writer. He was trained in history and biology at the Hebrew University (B.Sc. and B.A.), Oxford University (M.Sc. and D.Phil.), and Harvard University (Post-doc). He is Senior Research Fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and the long-time Chair of the Graduate Program in Science Technology and Society at Bar Ilan University. Harman's books include *The Man Who Invented the Chromosome* (Harvard, 2004); the trilogy *Rebels* (Yale, 2008), *Outsider Scientists* (Chicago, 2013) and *Dreamers* (Chicago, 2018) in the Life Sciences (co-edited with Michael R. Dietrich); *Handbook of the Historiography of Biology* (co-edited with Michael R. Dietrich and Mark E. Borrello, Springer, 2021); and *Evolutions: Fifteen Myths That Explain Our World* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018). His book *The Price of Altruism* (W.W. Norton, 2010) won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in Science and Technology and was nominated for a Pulitzer. He is currently working on a scientific and cultural history of metamorphosis and on a children's whodunit about Darwin's missing notebooks. Oren and his wife Yael live in Jerusalem with their three children, Shaizee, Abie, and Sol, but also a little bit now in Berlin. – Address: Graduate Program in Science, Technology and Society, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 52900, Israel. E-mail: oren.harman@gmail.com.

Some things I learned from good friends this year at Wiko, you know who you are:

That it's best to make fondue with a special kind of fondue cheese. That chocolate-covered maggots are tasty, really they're super tasty, well okay, maybe just almost. That philosophy can be tedious but also strangely musical. That to serve with spin in Ping-Pong will almost always win you points.

I did not know that cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and broccoli were all bred from the same plant, or that the law of the ocean is in need of revision. That I had a brother out there carrying wine made by the King of Saudi Arabia in Yemen. That the peasant uprising is in question. That Rickettsia is not really the closest living relative of eukaryotic mitochondria. That dignity is petite, metaphor a cheat, or that a favored Twi aphorism is “human being is sweet.”

Thank you. Now my life is more complete.

The year at Wiko brought me still other lessons. Beware of freckles. They might lasso in your heart. Open up. Take a side view. Look long, and hard. Give opera a chance, and walking in a rainy forest. That three-course meals work fine, depending on proportions. Don't ever count out languages – the objective has a way of becoming personal. Have a discussion from time to time with a constitutional law expert, they often have a perspective somewhat unusual.

Once more in life, alas, that a moral compass has little to do with education. That sometimes all that's needed is a furtive smile, or an unexpected hug. A good man reminded me of the power of the rare experience of finding a twin soul, but also how twin souls can be so different. Another clarified that foxes are drawn to people with especially good hearts.

Patience. Memory. Time. A sense of humor. I learned a lot this year about my family and what helps it bind. That we are as good as we are to our children, and not a reprimand less (or red Twizzler more). That we are as good as we are to our parents, that with time both remorse and gratitude soar. Wiko brought a distance that helped see such things glintingly. And the rhythm that made it possible to hear them as a softer tune.

I am grateful for meeting the woman who works on mixed marriages, and the man who studies piety. The gracious couple who forsook children for their love of animals, and the one who shirks sobriety. The heartfelt Italian composer, the chuckling Bulgarian, the brave Turk with a child. Not least the woman who says sabah-el-khir, and always with a smile. The candid diffuse coevolutionist with half a grin, the shy microbial populationist with cute kin, Faust-one-better, the climate setter, the blue-eyed dreamer with a Yiddish mandolin. Thank you, perpetuum mobile dancing bee man, and funny man from Bern. Thank you mutualist lady, Black Sea maybe, blusher, gusher, invisible college. Dear librarians: you provide an example of selfless dedication, but also of love of knowledge. You who took me to pose among butterflies, and you who fixed every matter, big or small: thank you from the bottom of my heart for you helped expand it all the while.

It sometimes takes a new mirror to see oneself more clearly. Another city, peculiar widths of sidewalks, unfamiliar angles of sunrays shining through the bedroom window on a waking morn. Thank you Wiko for providing all this, I really am full of gratitude. It's helped me figure out a new kind of hierarchy of the things that seem worthwhile.

And there was work, too, on a kids' mystery and a book about change and transformation. For this second one, especially, Germany proved a revelation. From week to week, a shape of understanding came, confusion slowly disbanding. And like wayward sands swayed by a clement wind, it began to amass into something rather than nothing. Perhaps the greatest lesson from all this took a form as banal as it is exciting: a great wisdom, won with tears and a wink, is acceptance. This is what there is.

We loved Berlin too much. And *mutatis mutandis*, things happily look slightly different from Bleibtreustraße, down the road. So thank you again for all you have given us, for your kindness, and generosity, and good cheer. I'll always remember this, along with broccoli and Ping-Pong, as a very special year.



EIN WISSENSCHAFTSKOLLEG IN DEN
ZEITEN DES KRIEGES
GUNNAR HINDRICHS

Gunnar Hindrichs lehrt Philosophie an der Universität Basel. Seine Arbeit beschäftigt sich vor allem mit Musikphilosophie, politischer Philosophie und metaphysischen Fragen, oft in Auseinandersetzung mit der Geschichte der Philosophie. Sie wurde mit dem Akademiepreis der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften ausgezeichnet. Für eine weitere Öffentlichkeit schreibt Hindrichs seit einigen Jahren die Philosophiekolonne im *Merkur*. Veröffentlichungen u. a.: *Das Absolute und das Subjekt. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Metaphysik und Nachmetaphysik*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 2008 (2., um ein metakritisches Nachwort erweiterte Ausgabe 2011); *Die Autonomie des Klangs. Eine Philosophie der Musik*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2014; *Philosophie der Revolution*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2017; *Zur kritischen Theorie*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2020. – Adresse: Departement Medien, Künste, Philosophie, Universität Basel, Steinengraben 5, 4051 Basel, Schweiz. E-Mail: gunnar.hindrichs@unibas.ch.

I

Der Krieg in der Ukraine war der bestimmende Horizont wie das bestimmende Thema meines Fellowjahres. In Kolleg und Stadt war er allgegenwärtig: auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen.

Die komische Ebene bildete der Heizstopp. Offenbar hatte die Stadt ihn über öffentliche Einrichtungen verhängt. Nicht mehr als 19 °C durfte der Heizkörper haben. Vier-einhalb Meter hoch war das Arbeitszimmer, sodass die 19 °C irgendwo oben an der Decke hingen. Man saß also in Wollüberzieher und Strickjacke am Schreibtisch und legte zusammengerollte Handtücher in die schlecht isolierten Fenster, von den Reinigungskräften verständnisvoll dort belassen, bis sie im späteren Frühjahr eines schönen Morgens

verschwanden. So rückte Deutschland zusammen: Schluss mit der Energievergeudung, Kräfte zusammenballen. Jede Tragödie kennt ihre Farce.

Weniger komisch war die politische Stimmung in der Stadt. Nur ein Beispiel. Geht man vom Bundeskanzleramt, dem zweitgrößten Regierungssitz der Welt, über das „Band des Bundes“ mit seiner Herrschaftsarchitektur und dem leeren Platz eines aufgegebenen Bürgerforums zum Reichstag und seiner „Fahne der Einheit“ – nationales Denkmal in Gestalt einer überdimensionalen deutschen Bundesflagge, hergestellt von einer Stoffdruckerei, die damals Judensterne und Hakenkreuzfahnen produziert hatte – und dann weiter durchs Brandenburger Tor auf Unter den Linden, so trifft man nach wenigen Minuten auf die Botschaft Russlands. Vor ihr wurde ein in der Ukraine zerstörter russischer T-72 aufgestellt: mit auf das Gebäude gerichteter Kanone. So mahnt man gegen den Krieg. Die politisch wie künstlerisch fantasielose Installation sublimierte ihren Tötungswunsch nicht und galt als „Aktionskunst vom Besten“ (*tax* vom 4.3.2023). In der Tat lieferte sie das Sinnbild unserer Lage: schamlos setzte sie den Kern der Freund-Feind-Unterscheidung, „die reale Möglichkeit der physischen Tötung“ (Carl Schmitt), ins Werk. Immerhin musste man vorher Löcher in die Bordkanone bohren, um das Gerät ins Land einführen zu dürfen.

Die politische Stimmung der Stadt spiegelte nur die politische Stimmung der Welt. Besser gesagt: die Stimmung unserer Welt – also des Segments, das man „Westen“ nennt. Las man die Tageszeitungen, die das Wissenschaftskolleg im Oval Office seiner Bibliothek und im Clubraum seines Hauptgebäudes dankenswerterweise zur Verfügung stellt, dann schlug sie einem stetig entgegen, ebenso wie aus den dort ausliegenden kritischen Zeitschriften, von der untersten Ebene (*The New Yorker*) bis zur obersten (*Sinn und Form*).

Kein Wunder also, dass auch die *Zeit* im Kolleg vom Krieg und seinem Vorfeld geprägt wurde: mal mehr, mal weniger. Das reichte von den Gesprächen am Tisch bis zum Kolloquium. Und die Weihnachtsansprache zum Festmahl endete mit dem Ruf nach dem Sieg der Ukraine. Et in terra pax – das heißt in unseren Tagen offenbar: Siegfrieden.

II

Mit der Arbeit an meinem Projekt zum Konzept „Wahrsein“ ging es in dem Jahr nicht voran. Das lag zum einen an der beschriebenen Stimmung und zum anderen an sachlichen Gründen. Mehr und mehr suchte ich die Kriegslage zu verarbeiten: Zu viel las ich im reichhaltigen Zeitschriftenregal. Stand gewann ich erst im November, als ich auf meine konventionellste – und daher vom Fach anerkannteste – Arbeitsweise auswich: die philosophiehistorische.

Immer schon hatte der wenig gelesene, kaum gedeutete Abschnitt über die polemische Methode aus Kants *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* zur Auseinandersetzung gereizt. Die *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* ist zwar eines – vielleicht neben der *Metaphysik* des Aristoteles das andere – der philosophischen Werke, um deren Namen und Bedeutung die gebildete Öffentlichkeit im Allgemeinen weiß. Ungefähr so wie um Goethes *Faust*: nicht unbedingt gelesen, doch man weiß, dass es es gibt. Daran ist nichts auszusetzen. Im Gegenteil. Eine Wissenschaft kann sich glücklich schätzen, wenn eine Öffentlichkeit, die sonst nicht zu viel mit ihr zu tun hat (und auch nicht zu tun haben muss), eines ihrer Kernwerke im Bewusstsein hat. Immerhin kennen ja auch im Fach zwar alle das Werk mit Namen, viele auch seine Kernthesen, aber sehr viel weniger sind die Argumente durchgegangen.

Nun zerfällt die *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* in zwei Teile: die transzendente Elementarlehre und die transzendente Methodenlehre. Die erste umfasst sechs Siebtel des Buches: samt aller Thesen und Argumente, für die es berühmt ist. Die zweite enthält das übrige Siebtel: Thesen und Argumente, die nur Kantianerinnen kennen (wenn überhaupt). Über sie, die Methodenlehre, hatte ich einst meine Magisterarbeit geschrieben. Danach wurden andere Themen wichtiger. Jetzt aber drängte sich die alte Geschichte mit ihren liegen gebliebenen Fragen wieder auf.

Denn in einem Abschnitt der transzendentalen Methodenlehre verarbeitet Kant die sogenannte polemische Methode. Wie ihr Name sagt, hat sie es mit dem Krieg (*pólemos*) zu tun. Und tatsächlich geht es in Kants transzendentaler Methodenlehre immer wieder um die wichtigste neuzeitliche Theorie des Krieges: um die Theorie vom naturwüchsigen, der menschlichen Selbsterhaltung entspringenden Krieg des Thomas Hobbes. Warum kommt sie in einer kritischen Methodenlehre vor? Weil Kant versteht: Die Philosophie kann nur dann eine gelingende Theorie vom Krieg und vom Frieden formulieren, wenn sie selber ihren inneren Krieg befriedet.

Das hatte er von der Theologie gelernt. Deren Konfessionsstreitigkeiten hatten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert zu den Glaubenskriegen geführt. Und Hobbes hatte die Glaubenskriege mit der Forderung *authoritas non veritas facit legem* überwunden: Die Autorität, nicht die Wahrheit, setze das Gesetz. Auf diese Weise schien der Streit der Glaubenswahrheiten – heute würden wir sagen: der Streit der Politik unter dem Anspruch, die Wahrheit durchzusetzen – schlichtbar. (Nebenbemerkung: Ausgerechnet im 375. Jubiläumsjahr der Pax Westphalica, die die Glaubenskriege beendete, feiert der Konfessionskrieg fröhliche Urständ: als Bekenntniskrieg zwischen Zivilgesellschaft und Autoritarismus.)

Allein die Voraussetzung dieser (und auch anderer) Lösungen des Kriegsproblems war die Annahme, dass die philosophische Reflexion auf die Bedingungen des Krieges den Frieden sichern könne. Genau hier setzte Kant an. Er sah: Die Philosophie – und zwar auch die Philosophie im strengsten, im stärksten Sinne: die Metaphysik – befindet sich selber im Unfrieden. Entsprechend lautete Kants kritische Eingangsthese, die Metaphysik sei ein Kampfplatz, und die Philosophie müsse ihn befrieden. Das heißt: Sie muss sich selbst in ihrer Erfüllungsbestimmtheit befrieden. Zugleich aber befindet sich die Philosophie im Krieg der Wahrheitsansprüche. Über ihn kann kein kommunikatives Handeln hinwegtäuschen. Was also tun?

Kants wenig beachtete Antwort besteht in einer Theorie der Polemik. Die Polemik zur polemischen Methode zu verwandeln bedeutet: den Krieg der Vernunft in die Ordnung des Friedens zu überführen. Um das darzulegen, war – historisch – auf den Hintergrund der *theologia polemica* auszugreifen. Im Abschnitt über die polemische Methode verarbeitete Kant sie stillschweigend. Denn die Theologie war ideell die Hauptbeteiligte an den Konfessionskriegen, musste also zu deren Bewältigung selber bewältigt werden. Analoges gilt für die Philosophie. Auch deren Wahrheitsansprüche errichten einen Kampfplatz, der es zweifelhaft macht, philosophisch den Krieg verwinden zu können. Im Blick auf Kant lässt sich daher – systematisch – auf die Kriegsgefahr in der Philosophie selber hinarbeiten, wodurch die Friedensfrage einen anderen Rahmen erhält.

So entstand eine Abhandlung, die über die Idee der Polemik einer Möglichkeit zur Befriedung des Denkens nachgeht. Sie löst kein einziges Problem unserer Gegenwart, sucht aber in ihrer geschichtlichen Distanz nach der nötigen Verfremdung, von der aus diese Probleme sich aus ihrer Faktizität befreien lassen. Flankierend verfasste ich eine zweite Studie zum Problem der Willensfreiheit in der nachkantischen Theorie. Gewiss sind beide Arbeiten Zeugnisse der Hilflosigkeit, akademisch die Kriegszeiten zu bewältigen, ihnen gar entgegenzutreten. Mehr aber war mir nicht möglich.

III

Die Freundschaften, die in diesem Jahr entstanden, die Anregungen, die die Arbeiten der anderen Fellows boten, die Möglichkeiten, die im Haus und in der Stadt sich eröffneten, haben mich bereichert. Ihre Erfahrungen werden bleiben. Aber diese Erfahrungen bleiben auch stets verbunden mit dem Horizont des Krieges. Er lässt sich nicht verleugnen. So bleibt mir eine positiv wie negativ stimulierende Zeit im Gedächtnis.



WIKO: A MIXED BAG OF EXPERIENCES HUSEIN INUSAH

Husein Inusah is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, where he has been a regular faculty member for the past ten years. He obtained his PhD from the University of Ghana, Accra, in 2014. During his PhD days, he took up a dissertation-completion fellowship at the University of Rochester, New York, USA, where he studied under Richard Feldman, a renowned and top-notch American epistemologist. Husein Inusah was the recipient of the Vice-Chancellor Award for the Most Outstanding Dissertation in the Humanities category in the 2015/2016 academic year at the University of Ghana. Before coming to Wiko as an Iso Lomso Fellow, Husein Inusah was an Iso Lomso Fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS) and an African Humanities Program (AHP) Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). He has published widely and is currently researching intellectual decoloniality and post-colonial studies. – Address: Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Cape Coast, Akotoshie no. 1, Accra, Ghana. E-mail: hinusah@ucc.edu.gh.

To start, I must say that being in residency at Wiko has been a transformative experience for me professionally. It has also been a great learning experience for my family, who joined me four weeks into my three-month short stay in Berlin.

I arrived in Berlin on the early morning of the 15th of February 2023 to meet the ever-smiling and kind-hearted Vera Pfeffer, who ushered me into my three-bedroom apartment in the Villa Walther. Vera introduced me to the apartment, provided me with a small map of how to get around the Grunewald neighbourhood, and then said goodbye. On the evening of my arrival, I took a quick tour around the Grunewald surroundings

and walked on Koenigsallee towards the main building on Wallotstraße. There I saw the magnificent Wiko library and the Villa Jaffé, which were later to become my favourite hub of scholarly resources and the block on which my office was located, respectively. I took a rest on the second day of my stay to shed the fatigue from my travels, and I set to work immediately on the third day.

The first month at Wiko was a mixed bag of expectations of my family's arrival (due to visa application problems) and the choices of networks I had to make within my area of research. For the first part of my stay, I had several fascinating meetings, mainly with the staff of Wiko and Permanent Fellow Lorraine Daston, an astute and erudite academic, with whom I had my first meeting. My project at Wiko "Decolonising Knowledge, Shaping Norms for Epistemic Diversity: The Perspective of African Intellectual Virtue Proverbs" benefited immensely from my interactions with her. Unfortunately, she had to travel immediately afterwards and did not return until I left Wiko on the 15th of May, 2023. My second meeting was with Jana Petri, a very kind and burgeoning scholar with a focus on the life sciences. This was followed by several other meetings that led to very fascinating scholarly conversations and important networks. For example, through Jana, I was able to contact the Managing Director of the Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien, Georges Khalil, with whom I have had great conversations relating to my work. My other meetings were with Daniel Schönplflug, a very kind and widely read academic who loved to listen with rapt attention and then make very important contributions to discourses. My interaction with Daniel was so beneficial and shaped the focus of my project at Wiko. It helped me establish contact, for example, with Peggy Levitt, the convener of The Global (De)Centre (GDC), a platform that brings together a growing network of scholars from across the world to produce new knowledge while deploying various epistemologies and methods. Through Peggy, I became a member of the GDC and participated in one of their virtual conferences later in June 2023. Afterwards, I had interesting meetings with the Rector Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger and other academic staff of Wiko. All these meetings were also quite important to the focus of my project at Wiko.

Aside from meetings with the staff, the usual lunch and dinner conversations with Fellows were quite captivating. I benefited from my interactions with several Fellows, most especially Insa Nolte, from whom I learnt a lot about the use of African oral resources. I also benefited from my interactions with Deborah James, Joyce Nyairo, Surabhi Ranganathan, Oren Harman, Danaï Papageorgiou, and many others whose names I cannot readily recall.

During my second month at Wiko, I devoted a substantial amount of my time to writing my project and engaging in other research works. I wrote two chapters of my proposed monograph; wrote two proposals for a grant and a fellowship; revised three manuscripts for publication; and prepared my colloquium at Wiko, which I delivered in May. I used this period to also sample and request so many books from the Wiko library for use when in my home country. My second month in Berlin was exciting because my wife (Huseina) and children (Ayman, Amal, and Adnan) had joined me at Wiko a day before the Ramadhan of 2023 commenced. So my second month was a mixed bag of excitement of family reunion, religious festivities, and academic work. It was a packed month and quite overwhelming, but it was indeed worth my while.

In my third and final month at Wiko, I delivered my Thursday Colloquium on “Decolonizing Intellectual Decoloniality” and also gave a talk on “African Intellectual Virtue Proverbs” at the Institute for Asian and African Studies’ Afrikakolloquium series of 2023 at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. It was an exciting opportunity to share my work beyond the walls of Wiko during my stay in Berlin.

In all, Wiko offered me a valuable opportunity to establish a network and collaborate with other scholars, work on my proposed project, and improve my communication and presentation skills. My short stay at Wiko was quite refreshing for me and my family. It had a positive impact on my family and we are grateful for the opportunities and experiences gained during the residency. The experience at Wiko has indeed bolstered my confidence and increased my resolve to expand the frontiers of knowledge in my chosen area of research. I am excited to leverage these experiences as I progress on the journey of my academic career.



MUSINGS FROM THE REMISE; REFLECTIONS
FROM THE HOUSE BY THE LAKE
DEBORAH JAMES

Deborah James, born in 1954 in Johannesburg, South Africa, is a Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics. She started her lecturing career at the University of the Witwatersrand, moving to the LSE in 1998. Her research in the anthropology of economics explores how people's access to credit in South Africa is bound up with identity, status, and aspirations of upward mobility – as published in her book *Money from Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa* (Stanford University Press, 2015) – and how in the UK debt advisers/intermediaries seek novel resource flows, invent interventions, and create new spaces of justice. Her previous book *Gaining Ground? "Rights" and "Property" in South African Land Reform* (Routledge, 2007) shows how mutually constitutive discourses about the ownership, use, and governance of land reveal contradictory understandings of custom, community, and citizenship. Before that, she focused on ethnicity, migration, and musical performance: in *Songs of the Women Migrants* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999), she explored how women migrants from the Northern Province defined themselves as ethnic subjects through musical performance. – Address: Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE, United Kingdom. E-mail: d.a.james@lse.ac.uk.

My visit to Wiko was a matter of slow introductions. This gave me time for pleasurable anticipation, but even this could not prepare me for the joys of my stay. In the end, too, it was all the more appreciated for having had to be delayed by a year.

I first became aware of the Kolleg four years before my fellowship. It was at the same time that I first fell in love with Berlin. During an earlier visit to the city (in 2018), when

I spent two months at re:work, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, part of the “Freedom for Research in the Humanities” funding initiative run by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), I erroneously sent an email with a draft paper to the wrong mail group. This proved serendipitous. The paper was received and read by the Brazilian economist Lena Lavinas, a Wiko Fellow at the time. Her interest in the use of social welfare grants as debt collateral dovetailed with my own, and we arranged to meet at a bar in Schöneberg run by a fellow Brazilian. This proved to be the start of a long and productive academic connection. At that same bar, by happy coincidence, I also met Wiko’s Francisco Martinez Casas, who proved to be enormously friendly and helpful as I kept in touch with him over the next few years while preparing my Wiko application. Later during that same visit, I was invited for lunch at Wiko by the German anthropologist Carola Lentz, with whom I’d long been in communication. All of these encounters whetted my appetite. The long-term friendships I developed with these people were premonitions of the wonderfully fruitful relationships that became possible once my fellowship actually began (a year later than anticipated owing to delays resulting from the Covid pandemic).

My initial proposal centred on an anthropological exploration of the unexpected kinds of redistribution that operate through informal or semi-formal interventions. When I arrived, I had a vaguely defined idea about bringing together my fieldwork experiences and observations from two rather different field sites: South Africa and the UK. I sat in my office, reading through my own field notes and the books and articles procured for me by the library, and began to write a diary filled with musings. Punctuated with the usual anxieties about slow progress, and with (welcome) interruptions by Tuesday Colloquia, Three Cultures Forums, and choir practices, I made slow progress at first. Another hiatus came with a delay in getting our visa, but our enforced departure from Berlin in November proved serendipitous: it allowed me to spend a longer time than planned in South Africa as my 95-year-old father gradually slipped into decline. We returned to Berlin in January, and, sadly, he died in February: a heartbreaking event that recalled me once again to South Africa and which means that my Wiko memories will always have a bittersweet dimension.

My progress, despite these hiccups and sorrowful stoppages, stepped up as time went by. By the time I left, I had six chapters and a title – “Clawing back: a new anthropology of redistribution in precarious times.” The book manuscript (if that is what it turns out to be) drew much of its overarching framework from a review article, co-written with the

anthropologist Caitlin Zaloom of NYU during the first few months of my fellowship. Entitled “Financialization and the Household,” it challenges some prevalent – overly deterministic – anthropological approaches to the study of financialised processes. In these approaches, we found, binary thinking about the stark separation of commodified and non-commodity relationships is prevalent, market logics are seen to intrude in a one-way fashion into intimate family and social relations, and families are said to be disciplined to act in ways that reproduce the formalized demands of financial contracts. In the article, due to be published in 2023 in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*, we offer an alternative view. We examine finance in practice and in place and investigate how financial demands are received, responded to, and transformed when incorporated into collective life, showing that finance does not seamlessly produce subjects who accede to its demands, but instead introduces tools with which householders pursue their own distinctive objectives.

Drawing on similar arguments, the book manuscript explores the varied and changing economic arrangements through which people have gained access to a livelihood. Addressing, and trying to make sense of, phenomena that have not often been seen as aligned with each other, it looks not only at questions of financial debt (the topic of my earlier research), but also those of work and welfare. The interlinking of these three areas became increasingly evident to me as I read through and tried to make sense of my field notes. In the process, I found myself investigating the nexus of relationships through which people relate to three sets of actors: the private or state institutions to which (or individuals to whom) they owe money; those who employ them and pay their remuneration; and the government agencies, non-governmental organisations, or charitable institutions through which they might expect social protection. My contribution to understanding redistribution is underpinned by an awareness of how the resources disbursed are not only those collected through taxation, but can include those assembled through less organised arrangements; that is, redistribution involves an interlocking of formal and informal processes. It can range from high-profile examples such as the shake-up of land ownership in the wake of political change, through less visible/obvious ones like the expansion of welfare payments, to frankly counterintuitive ones like extending credit to the poor.

I presented one of the chapters at the Humboldt-Universität (thanks to an invitation by former Wiko Fellow Alice von Bieberstein) and at the University of St. Gallen. Other matters occupied me too, especially over the first few months of the fellowship. I was involved in two publishing initiatives. One, following from a successful workshop held at

LSE in June 2022 that commemorated the centenary of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Bronisław Malinowski's influential founding text of economic anthropology, was the compiling of an edited volume, together with former Wiko Fellow Chris Hann. We submitted the manuscript, provisionally entitled *One Hundred Years of Argonauts: Malinowski, Ethnography and (Economic) Anthropology*, to Berghahn, and as I write this we have received three positive reviews. The other, an initiative together with a team of co-editors from France, China, Senegal, and Brazil, is a *Handbook on Debt*, to be published in 2024 by Routledge. Its authors include several Wiko Fellows, among them Lena Lavinias, Bruce Carruthers, and me.

Beyond enabling me to work on these focused projects and interests that I brought along with me, there is another fabulous feature of Wiko. Quite simply: it is situated in Berlin, and it is host to scholars not only from sites across the world but also, specifically, from Germany and surrounding countries. We found ourselves intrigued by the work of fellow Fellows on – for example – Martin Luther and the German Reformation, how and why a sense of “self” began to emerge in medieval times in the German-speaking territories, and how peasants on collective farms in Soviet Ukraine migrated to work in Siberia to supplement their incomes. And then there were the natural scientists, who challenged us by asking why we had found no laws of general application (other than that “everything is contingent”). An added bonus was that I became friends with an LSE colleague from a different department – we had to come all the way to Berlin to get acquainted!

Beyond Wiko itself, our fascination with the region extended to exploring the turbulent history of the divided city, visiting places like Majakowskiring in Pankow and the Waldsiedlung Wandlitz, where the DDR nomenklatura lived, and the Zentralfriedhof Friedrichsfelde with its *Gedenkstätte der Sozialisten*, where Luxemburg and Ulbricht lie incongruously side-by-side. We read Katja Hoyer's new book *Beyond the Wall*, as well as novels by Jenny Erpenbeck and Brigitte Reimann. Covering a much wider sweep of history, I also read Christopher Clark's *The Iron Kingdom* and Andrea Wulf's *Magnificent Rebels*. Being based in Central Europe for an extended period gave us the time, the curiosity, and the means to find out about a place (and its people) that, previously, had been largely unknown to us. And of course – thanks to Reinhard and Eva – there was (and is) the fascination of the language. All of this, for us so cruelly ripped away from the nurture of European membership by the idiocies of Brexit, provided a sort of balm.

Many of the things that made life so enjoyable – from delicious lunches and dinners, through movie nights on a Friday, through unforgettable opera experiences, through

convivial dinners with special friends, to regular beer sessions at Floh – have been noted by previous Fellows in earlier Yearbooks. But they are no less valuable for having been enjoyed by previous cohorts. The generosity and helpfulness of Wiko staff and officers, from the Rektorin all the way to the IT people, housekeeper, and kitchen team, was unparalleled: especially the way they made not only me, but also my husband Patrick feel welcome.

Living in the Remise next to the Library/Weiße Villa, via a last-minute change of arrangement, gave us everything we needed for a comfortable and happy residency. Learning of its spare room with grand piano proved an unexpected bonus. I spent ten months trying to learn jazz and working on some of the Goldberg Variations (I still haven't mastered Var 1, although I practised it about 3 times a week!). I have never lived closer to my office than I did during 2022/2023, when going to work was a matter of merely crossing the road. Returning now to an 80-km commute from Oxford to London is going to be hard to take. Likewise, I have never lived closer to the site of my daily exercise. Climbing over the fence at the Strandbad (which by November had been abandoned and which, we joked, had likely been a site for a money-laundering front), together with my intermittent partners in sport Claudia and Antonin, made daily swimming an easily achievable thing, albeit one that got increasingly cold as the winter wore on. Eventually I reverted to the gym room at the Villa Jaffé, until things warmed up in April.

One thing remains a puzzle. Why does the M19 bus stop at Rathenauplatz after 8 p.m. rather than bringing us back to Erdener Straße?



KÖSTLICHE MÜHEN
THOMAS KAUFMANN

Geboren 1962 in Cuxhaven; seit 1981 Studium der Evangelischen Theologie (und ein wenig Philosophie, Geschichte, Latein und Germanistik) in Münster/Westfalen, Tübingen und Göttingen; Examen 1987; Promotion zum Dr. theol. im Fach Kirchengeschichte 1990; Habilitation 1994; drei Kinder mit Antje Roggenkamp, Professorin für Praktische Theologie/Religionspädagogik in Münster; 1996 ord. Professor für Kirchengeschichte an der LMU München, seit 2000/01 in Göttingen; nach Max Benz' Urteil „ausdekoriert“; Abt von Bursfelde. – Adresse: Theologische Fakultät, Universität Göttingen, Platz der Göttinger Sieben 3, 37073 Göttingen, Deutschland. E-Mail: thomas.kaufmann@theologie.uni-goettingen.de.

Dass ein Leben „köstlich“ gewesen sein kann, wenn es „Mühe und Arbeit“ gewesen ist, widerstreitet modernem Lebensgefühl. Martin Luthers Übersetzung von Psalm 90,10 steht völlig quer zu Urlaubs- und Freizeitstilen und zur Work-Life-Balance. Sie wird auch von modernen Exegeten nicht mehr geteilt; man übersetzt lieber: „Unser Leben währet siebzig Jahre, und wenn's hoch kommt, so sind's achtzig Jahre, und was daran köstlich scheint, ist doch nur vergebliche Mühe.“ Weder gegenwärtiger Lifestyle noch zeitgenössische Bibelphilologie bringen Freude und mühseliges Schaffen zusammen. Und doch gestehe ich, gewiss ein Dinosaurier und ganz oldschool, dass für mich Freude an der Arbeit und deren Mühsal, das Ringen um den immer neuen Anfang und die Beglückung über gelingende Worte ineinanderspielen und untrennbar miteinander verwoben sind.

So habe ich auch am Wiko gerne und viel gearbeitet – und schäme mich dessen, selbst nach der Lektüre des *Journal intime 1982/83* des früheren Fellows Nicolaus Sombart,

nicht. Auch der 90. Psalm wird für mich mit dem Wiko verbunden bleiben, denn während ich hier mühselig fröhlich war, hatte ich eine Predigt über diesen wunder- und geheimnisvollen Text zu schreiben und zu halten. Mein noch unendlich weit von den 70 entfernter, sehr geschätzter Göttinger Kollege Christian Polke, der sich gewiss einmal mit Erfolg am Wiko beworben hätte, wurde im April 2023 im Alter von 42 Jahren jäh aus dem Leben gerissen.

Dinosaurier haben über 150 Millionen Jahre auf diesem Planeten gelebt, und im Huhn ist noch reichlich Tyrannosaurus Rex vorhanden; ich weiß nicht mehr, wer mich das gelehrt hat, aber auch diese Erkenntnis fällt in mein Wiko-Jahr. Die so flüchtig gewordene Wissenschaft unserer so ephemeren Spezies braucht eine gute Dosis Dinoanpassungsfähigkeit.

Natürlich kommt man sich wie ein Streber oder ein Bruder Leichtfuß vor, aber wenn es nun einmal so ist: Ich habe mein Wiko-Projekt *in time* abgeschlossen. Ich muss gestehen, dass ich nicht übermäßig an der Schriftstellerei leide, was mich gewiss von einem tiefgründig-skrupulösen Skribenten unterscheidet. Oft fließen die Worte tatsächlich wie von alleine in den Stift oder die tippenden Finger. Deshalb habe ich auch am Wiko rasch mit dem Schreiben begonnen und zunächst einen aus den Fugen geratenen Aufsatz zu einem schlesischen Reformator namens Johannes Hess und den Anfängen der Breslauer Reformation fertiggestellt. Schon im Vorgriff auf die unendliche Zeit, die ich wohl am Wiko haben würde, hatte ich mich mit reichlich Handschriften versorgt und begonnen, auch der von Zeitgenossen des schlesischen Reformators gerühmten Privatbibliothek nachzuspüren. Das waren lauter hilfswissenschaftlich-philologische *Specialissima*, die einfach nur Freude machten, kleine Erfolgserlebnisse verschafften und lehrten, demütig und bei seinem elementaren handwerklichen Leisten zu bleiben. (Trotz vieler und langjähriger Mühe und Arbeit im Lateinischen, so gestehe ich, verschafft mir die literarische Virtuosität manches humanistischen Poeten nach wie vor liminale Erfahrungen!)

Erst kurz vor meiner Ankunft am Wiko realisierte ich, dass Handschriftenkonvolute noch im Frühjahr 1945 aus der Festung Breslau in die hiesige Staatsbibliothek gerettet worden waren. Was auch immer ich tue: Einen Tag, an dem die verfluchten zwölf Jahre der Nazizeit nicht irgendwie präsent werden, hat es in meinem Leben seit Kindertagen – davor wusste ich es nur noch nicht! – nie gegeben. Wahrscheinlich war mein literarischer Ausflug nach Schlesien, dem ein Breslauer Vortrag und eine erste Reise mit meiner geliebten Antje in das Land meiner mütterlichen Ahnen vorangegangen waren, ein später Akt der „Wiedergutmachung“ des westdeutsch Sozialisierten gegenüber seinen östlichen

(Thüringen, Schlesien) Wurzeln. Insofern war der Boden ein wenig bereitet, um von meinen Mitfellows Kateryna Mishchenko, Kateryna Burkush und Henadz Sahanovich zu lernen, wie bunt der Osten eigentlich ist und wie gräulich grau Kindheit und Jugend unter dem Schatten russisch-despotischer Dominanz sein konnten. Berlin liegt ziemlich weit im Osten Deutschlands; noch niemals zuvor habe ich so lange so tief „im Osten“ gelebt wie 2022/2023. Katjas Satz, dass sie auch deshalb nach Berlin geflohen sei, weil sie sich hier Kyjiw näher fühle, werde ich in meinem Herzen bewahren.

Schon nach wenigen Wochen, bereits im Oktober des Fellowjahres, war ich, durch jahrelange Präliminarlektüren gerüstet, tief in die Schlachten des Bauernkriegs von 1525 verstrickt. Manche Gespräche in der Anfangszeit und manche tastenden Versuche, zu erklären, warum mich dieses Thema interessiere – besonders mit Deborah James, Gunnar Hindrichs, Franciscus Verellen, Ittai Weinryb, Dieter Grimm, Arie Dubnov, Martin Saar und wieder und wieder Maximilian Benz –, waren der Präzisierung meines Fragefokus sehr dienlich. Dabei wurde mir immer klarer, dass ich vor allem zu verstehen hatte, was „den Bauernkrieg“ von allen vorangehenden Aufständen unterschied, ja, was es rechtfertigte, ihn überhaupt als „den“, zumal „deutschen“, „Bauernkrieg“ zu begreifen. Die Ereignisgeschichte des sogenannten Bauernkrieges führte hier nicht weiter; sie noch einmal zu erzählen, hätte bedeutet, eine ziemlich endlose Katene an regionalen Einzelgeschichten aneinanderzuknüpfen – ein ziemlich langweiliges Unterfangen, bei dem mir zweifellos über der Fülle der Bäume der Wald aus dem Blick geraten wäre. Ganz abgesehen von der forschungsgeschichtlichen Redundanz im Verhältnis zu den übermächtigen Büchern von Wilhelm Zimmermann und Günther Franz, deren gemeinsamer – politisch freilich inverser – Lesart des Phänomens als „Revolution“ ich immer skeptischer gegenüberzutreten begann.

Was also verbindet die einzelnen regionalen Bauernaufstände miteinander und was unterscheidet „den“ Bauernkrieg von anderen Revolten des spätmittelalterlichen Europa? Angesichts meiner wissenschaftlichen Vorbelastungen in Gestalt von Studien zur gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Rolle des Buchdrucks im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit konnte mich die Lösung, die ich fand, nicht wirklich verwundern. Als entsprechend dressiertem *one-trick pony* imponierte sich mir die Publizistik als der maßgebliche und entscheidende Zusammenhang des Bauernkrieges. Ohne die typografische Verbreitung der *Zwölf Artikel* hätte es „den“ Bauernkrieg nicht gegeben. Die Rezeption ihrer Programmatik, die die Freiheit jedes Menschen von der Leibeigenschaft und seinen Anspruch auf Teilhabe an den Ressourcen der Wälder, des Himmels, der Flüsse und Seen

– unbeschadet aller Bereitschaft, den Obrigkeiten zu gehorchen – proklamierte, wäre ohne die „schwarze Kunst“ undenkbar gewesen. Da die *Zwölf Artikel*, mit ca. 25 Ausgaben das wohl verbreitetste Druckerzeugnis der Reformationszeit, der einzige „bäuerliche“ Forderungskatalog waren, der in seiner Zeit durch den Druck verbreitet wurde, kam ihnen eine herausragende Sonderstellung zu. Umso schwerer musste es aber wiegen, dass mir ein direkter Zusammenhang dieser wirkungsreichen Publikation mit dem Agieren der oberschwäbischen Bauernhaufen fraglich wurde.

Wahrscheinlich sind die *Zwölf Artikel* das Produkt eines reichsstädtischen Handwerkers, des Kürschnergesehnen Sebastian Lotzer aus Memmingen, der mit ihrer Publikation einer gewaltbereiten Richtung innerhalb der oberschwäbischen Bauernschaften, die jede Abgabenzahlung verweigerte, entgegneten wollte. Aufgrund ihres publizistisch artikulierten Anspruchs führten sich die *Zwölf Artikel* als so etwas wie die Magna Charta der Mühseligen und Beladenen, Ausgebeuteten oder Aufmüpfigen ein. Selbst da, wo bestimmte ihrer Forderungen nicht zutrafen – so existierte etwa keine Leibeigenschaft in Thüringen –, wurden die *Zwölf Artikel* rezipiert und als Grundlage regionaler Forderungskataloge und Aushandlungsprozesse eingeführt.

Von dieser Erkenntnis her eröffnete sich mir die Perspektive auf den Bauernkrieg als Medienereignis: In der Form von zwischen März und Mai 1525 in verschiedenen Regionen, ausgehend vom Süden des Reiches (Oberschwaben, Schwarzwald, Breisgau, Elsass, Franken, Thüringen als Kernzonen) ausbrechenden regionalen Aufständen war der Bauernkrieg durch die Druckpresse initialisiert und ermöglicht worden. Die Publizistik war es denn auch, die das Narrativ und den Begriff „der Bauern Krieg“ – zuerst in einem im Spätsommer 1525 gedruckten historischen Ereignislied gleichen Namens – hervorbrachte. Es waren lese- und schreibkundige, ja literarisch z. T. virtuose Städter, die den „Bauernkrieg“ mit publizistischen, auch ikonografischen, Mitteln mental vorbereiteten und ermöglichten und bestimmten politischen Vorstellungen und Forderungen einen breiten Raum verschafften. Auch in dieser Hinsicht erwies sich die postrevolutionär-ernüchternde Erkenntnis beinahe als unvermeidlich: die Bauern waren z. T. instrumentalisiert und verführt worden. Diejenigen, die sich zu Sachwaltern ihrer Anliegen aufwarfen, hatten durchaus eigene Interessen verfolgt. Thomas-Müntzer-Dämmerung!

Das ambivalente publizistische Agieren Luthers und anderer der Wittenberger Theologie nahestehenden Reformatoren im Bauernkrieg verdeutlichte mir, dass „der Bauernkrieg“ für die reformatorische Bewegung eine durchaus gefährliche Zäsur markierte. Denn die Zustimmungswerte des Wittenberger Reformators fielen in den Keller; seine

unverhohlenen Mordappelle gegen die mörderischen, aufrührerischen Bauern verselbstständigten sich in der weiteren Druckgeschichte von dem sie ursprünglich einhegenden literarischen Kontext, seiner „Ermahnung zum Frieden“. Die Phalanx der „altgläubigen“ Publizisten wurde breiter und wacher; sie verstand es, die Verantwortung des Wittenberger Scheusals für das Gemetzel an etwa einhunderttausend schlecht bewaffneten Bauern und für die erbarmungs- und schamlose Siegerjustiz der Herren herauszustellen – gewiss über Gebühr, aber dadurch umso wirksamer. Die Risse, die durch die reformatorische Bewegung gehen sollten – die konfessionelle Separation zwischen „Lutheranern“ und „Reformierten“, der Exodus der Täufer, Spiritualisten und „Radikalen“ aus den entstehenden evangelischen Mehrheitskirchen – all dies hatte auch eine Ursache im Bauernkrieg. Und selbst Luthers wenige Wochen nach dem Gemetzel begonnene radikalste und genialste theologische Schrift *De servo arbitrio* (Vom unfreien Willen), die den allmächtigen als schrecklichen und verborgenen Gott (*deus absconditus*) begreift und mit dem leidenden, Mensch gewordenen und ins Verheißungswort „eingewickelten“ offenbarten Gott (*deus revelatus*) konfrontiert, uns getriebene Menschlein von Gott zu Gott flüchten sehend, hätte es ohne den Bauernkrieg gewiss nicht gegeben. (Danke, Gunnar!) Insofern ist mir der „Bauernkrieg“ zu einem Kaleidoskop des Zeitalters geworden. Die fragwürdige Doktrin meiner kirchenhistorischen Lehrer, die uns glauben machen wollten, Bauernkrieg und Reformation hätten im Grunde gar nichts miteinander zu tun, ist abgeräumt.

Gewiss wäre das Buch, das ich am Ende meiner Wiko-Zeit ziemlich „punktgenau“ fertigstellen konnte, ohne das Wiko gar nicht, anders oder doch ein anderes geworden. Dies lag auch an den besonderen politischen Rahmenbedingungen dieses Jahres: Putins verbrecherischer Krieg gegen die Ukraine und der beinahe tägliche Umgang mit Menschen, deren Leben durch diesen Krieg aus der Bahn geworfen wurde, hat meine Sicht auf Krieg – und also auch auf „den Bauernkrieg“ – nicht unberührt gelassen. Der Schlussvers von Andreas Gryphius' *Tränen des Vaterlandes* aus der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges – „dass auch der Seelen Schatz so vielen abgezwungen“ – gilt vielleicht für jeden Krieg. Krieg zerstört Menschen und ihr Leben; Krieg zerfrisst Menschlichkeit; Krieg ist die Katastrophe schlechthin. Krieg tötet die Seelen.

Die vielen Gespräche des Fellowjahres, unsere kleine Frühneuzeit-AG (danke, Max!), der regelmäßige Austausch mit vier Historikerinnen und Historikern von Format am Kolleg – Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Iris Fleßenkämper, Daniel Schönplflug, Luca Giuliani –, der fulminante Bibliotheksdienst, die Möglichkeit, dass meine Frau häufig und unter Nutzung eines schönen eigenen Arbeitszimmers hier sein konnte: An all das

werde ich mich sicher gerne und dankbar und vielleicht manchmal auch ein wenig wehmütig erinnern. All dies hat mein Leben in dem Fellowjahr in froher Mühe und Arbeit geprägt und heilsame Distanzen zu all dem geschaffen, was ich verließ und was nun bald wieder auf mich wartet, daheim in Göttingen.

Noch einige kleine, ganz ungeordnete, unmaßgebliche Anmerkungen und -regungen eines Abeundus, der dem Wiko sicher stets gewogen und hoffentlich auch verbunden bleiben wird: 1.) Visitenkarten, krass! Ich habe sie als Lesezeichen verwendet und nehme noch einen ziemlich dicken Stapel mit. Hier könnte man aus meiner Sicht abrüsten. 2.) Berlin ist, wie man als Provinzler erst richtig realisiert, wenn man länger hier ist, ein Tummelplatz der Großpersonen aller Art. Besonders mit manchen ziemlich oder echt wichtigen Institutionen der Wissenschaft muss das Wiko zusammenarbeiten. Bei bestimmten Anlässen – Begrüßungsempfang, öffentlichen Abendvorträgen, Publikationspräsentationen, z. B. neuer Nummern der ZIG, „Berliner Abenden“ und Alumnitreffen – kann sich das Wiko in eine Kulisse verwandeln, vor der ein „Tanz der Vampire“ stattfindet. Als Fellow, der eigentlich nur ein bisschen Wissenschaft kann, fühlte ich mich hier etwas überfordert und war dankbar, dass Martin und Max mich gelegentlich brieften. Vielleicht wäre für einige künftige Fellows ein „Kleiner Katechismus“ zu den wichtigsten Berliner Wissenschaftsgöttinnen, -göttern und ihren Organisationen hilfreich. 3.) Eine wunderbare Chance bietet das Zusammentreffen von Künstlern, Übersetzern und Wissenschaftlern am Wiko. Allerdings scheinen mir die kreativen und methodischen Potenziale, die sich aus dieser Zusammenkunft ergeben könnten, nicht erkannt, systematisch strukturiert und insofern kaum ausgeschöpft zu sein. Was verbindet und was unterscheidet eine geisteswissenschaftliche von einer künstlerischen Recherche? Wie gehen wir jeweils mit Sprache um? Was bedeuten Übersetzungen und wo sehen wir Grenzen? Gewiss: Das Englische als Verkehrssprache, als Instrument der wechselseitigen Information und elementaren Kommunikation ist völlig alternativlos und steht nicht infrage. Doch Monolingualisierung der künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Kommunikation ist – im Unterschied zu den Naturwissenschaften – für unsereinen in keiner Weise wünsch- und realisierbar. Jenseits der Freude darüber, dass wir uns im Englischen weitgehend störungsfrei verständigen können, sollten wir offener mit den Grenzen dieser Sprache umgehen. „Leibeigenschaft“, „Herrschaft“, „Bildung“, „Heizungsgesetz“, von „Heimat“ (erst recht im Sinn von: „darin noch niemand war“!) ganz zu schweigen – das sind lauter mehr oder weniger schwer übersetzbare, mühsam verständlich zu machende deutsche Wörter und Sachen. Die Sprache gehört für mich zur Sache meiner

Wissenschaft selbst; im Grunde existieren meine Gegenstände nur, weil oder insofern sie sprachlich verfasst sind. Übersetzen ist mein Kerngeschäft. Über Foren und Formate nachzudenken, in denen dies für den Austausch am Wiko fruchtbar würde, schiene mir aussichtsreich. 4.) So ganz weg von dem üblichen Wirkungsrahmen, in der Regel der heimischen Universität, ist man als etablierter Fellow auch am Wiko nicht; Mitarbeitergespräche, Gutachten zu Dissertationen und Habilitationen, Gremiensitzungen der heimischen Universitäten, Herausgeberschaften, Verbundforschungsprojekte, Exzellenzinitiative etc. pp. – wer kann und will sich dem schon völlig entziehen?! Als das Wiko gegründet wurde, war Forschung exklusiv, was sie für viele Geisteswissenschaftler bis heute noch primär bedeutet: Einzelforschung, eben: mein eigenes Buch schreiben. Doch seit einer Generation bedeutet Forschung auch: Forschungsmanagement, Forschungsmittelakquise, Forschungsbegutachtung, Mitarbeit in Forschungsförderungsorganisationen, interdisziplinäre Forschungsstrategie. Wer einigermaßen verantwortungsvoll agiert, wird all dem auch im Wiko nicht entkommen können oder wollen. Deshalb schiene es mir sinnvoll, hier, ziemlich weitab des Alltags, so etwas wie einen optionalen Gesprächszusammenhang zur Analyse des Wissenschaftssystems, seiner Potenziale, seiner Absurditäten und Dissonanzen aufzubauen. Denn auch in dieser Hinsicht könnten wir in dieser besonderen Atmosphäre, jenseits unserer jeweiligen Universitäten und Fakultäten, manches, auch generationenübergreifend, voneinander lernen. 5.) Im Leben und im Beruf gibt es nur wenige, die wissen dürfen: Melde dich, wenn du meinst, dass ich dir hilfreich sein kann. Das Wiko gehört jetzt dazu. Danke!!!



I WISH THIS WAS ON TIME
MORITZ KRAEMER

Moritz Kraemer is an Associate Professor of Computational Epidemiology (since 2022) at the University of Oxford. He's a recipient of the Branco Weiss Fellowship (2017–2023) and the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Institutes of Health (NIH) Fellowship (2017–2019). Currently he is the co-director of the Oxford Martin School Programme in Pandemic Genomics, a recipient of the Google Faculty Research Award, and the co-founder of Global.health, a data integration platform for open-access epidemiological and genomic data. Moritz's research interests are the ecology and evolution of infectious diseases; he works at the intersection of data science, epidemiology, public health, and genomics. His work has been published in *Science*, *Nature*, and *The Lancet* and featured widely in the *New York Times*, *NPR*, *Economist*, *Der Spiegel*, *Financial Times*, *Nature*, and *Science News*. Moritz has given over 100 invited international talks and taught courses in data science and epidemiology at Oxford, MIT, Harvard, the University of São Paulo, and the University of Hong Kong. His group's work has been funded by the Wellcome Trust, Google.org and AI, The Rockefeller Foundation, NIH, and The John Fell Fund, among other institutions. – Address: Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford, 34 Broad St., Oxford, OX1 3BD, United Kingdom. E-mail: moritz.kraemer@biology.ox.ac.uk.

My wife Nahema and I arrived in January 2023: she was equipped with a new job and the uncertainty and excitement that comes with it. I was hoping for intellectual adventures with Fellows from academic disciplines far away from mine. I had just established a growing research group, and I spent the first month getting used to the new way of working. Often I dreamed of being a “senior” academic or humanities scholar coming to Wiko

to write a monograph or popular science book. I might well come back for that experience.

From our first day, a community of Fellows that had already established relationships with each other welcomed us and invited us to their tables and homes, which made us feel that this would be a great few months in a country I was happy to leave behind in 2011. It is hard to know how to describe this eclectic and stimulating group of people. Friendships have followed, and I look forward to traveling to see many of you again soon (looking at you Arie, Joyce, Max, and Shai). Arie, thank you for introducing my team and me to Jewish German History. I'll forever remember your kindness and thoughtfulness and what you taught me. Daniel, Barbara, Iris, and Katharina, Maike, Stephan, Jana, Vera, Andrea, Nina, Petria, Dunia, Eva – we are grateful for showing us that German academia can be attractive. I wish I did not have to wait until the second-to-last evening to find out about Daniel's work and talent as a documentary scriptwriter.

As a researcher and professor of emerging infectious diseases and modeling, I tried to move from rapid analysis to developing a new theory at the intersection of the evolution and ecology of infectious diseases. Six months is too little to accomplish anything really, but I tried and succeeded in solving some small puzzles. For example, what are the appropriate, cost-effective, and rational ways to implement distributed disease surveillance for early detection, mitigation, and potentially containment of novel pathogens? This work took me down the paths of 1980s papers in computer science and economics and made me appreciate how much of this had already been solved by smart people. I could get distracted again, read widely, and discuss how we can actually translate some of these academic findings into policies. Academics can be obsessed about their way of working and presenting "evidence." Talks by historians and historians of science are so fascinating because they remind you that what you do matters for generations to follow. Many will come read and look at boring science papers and ask critical questions, including about how these works are embedded in and have contributed to the larger process of scientific "progress." Wiko allowed me to step back, think big (again), and slow down.

Wiko now is a second academic home away from Oxford, but near my home in Germany. I thank everyone who was involved in it and for their patience with me during and after the fellowship ended.

A selection of works produced during my time at Wiko:

1. Tegally, H., E. Wilkinson, J.L.-H. Tsui, M. Moir, D. Martin, A.F. Brito, M. Giovanetti, K. Khan, C. Huber, I.I. Bogoch, J.E. San, J. Poongavanan, J.S. Xavier, D. da S. Candido, F. Romero, C. Baxter, O.G. Pybus, R.J. Lessells, N.R. Faria, M.U.G. Kraemer, and T. de Oliveira (2023). “Dispersal patterns and influence of air travel during the global expansion of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern.” *Cell* 186 (15): 3277–3290.e16. doi:10.1016/j.cell.2023.06.001.
2. Tsui, J.L.H., J.T. McCrone, B. Lambert, S. Bajaj, R.P.D. Inward, P. Bosetti, R.E. Pena, H. Tegally, V. Hill, A.E. Zarebski, T.P. Peacock, L. Liu, N. Wu, M. Davis, I.I. Bogoch, K. Khan, M. Kall, N.I.B. Abdul Aziz, R. Colquhoun, Á. O’Toole, B. Jackson, A. Dasgupta, E. Wilkinson, T. de Oliveira, The COVID-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK) consortium, T.R. Connor, N.J. Loman, V. Colizza, C. Fraser, E. Volz, X. Ji, B. Gutierrez, M. Chand, S. Dellicour, S. Cauchemez, J. Raghwani, M.A. Suchard, P. Lemey, A. Rambaut, O.G. Pybus, and M.U.G. Kraemer (2023). “Genomic assessment of invasion dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 Omicron BA.1.” *Science* 381 (6655): 336–343. PMID: 37471538. doi:10.1126/science.adg6605.



GESCHICKLICHKEIT DER HÄNDE KARIN LEONHARD

Karin Leonhard ist Professorin für Kunstwissenschaft an der Universität Konstanz. Nach einem Studium der Kunstgeschichte, Neueren deutschen Literatur und Theaterwissenschaft an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München und einer Dissertation *Zur Interieurmalerei Jan Vermeers* folgten Anstellungen als wissenschaftliche Assistentin an der KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, als Fellow am KHI (Max-Planck-Institut) in Florenz und als Senior Research Fellow am Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin. Von 2013 bis 2015 war sie als Professorin für Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Bonn tätig; 2015 wechselte sie an die Universität Konstanz. Ihre Habilitationsschrift wurde mit dem Übersetzungspreis des Börsenvereins des deutschen Buchhandels ausgezeichnet und erschien 2020 unter dem Titel *The fertile ground of painting. Seventeenth-century still lifes & nature pieces*. Ausgewiesene Forschungsschwerpunkte sind die Verbindung von Kunst- und Naturtheorien in der Frühen Neuzeit, Geschichte und Methodologie der Kunstgeschichte und neuerdings v. a. der Dialog zwischen Kunstgeschichte und Restaurierungswissenschaften. So war sie 2018–2023 Sprecherin des Graduiertenkollegs *Rahmenwechsel. Kunstwissenschaft und Kunsttechnologie im Austausch*, eine von der VolkswagenStiftung geförderte Kooperation der Universität Konstanz mit der Staatlichen Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart, sowie Mitglied der an der TU Berlin angesiedelten DFG-Forschungsgruppe *Dimensionen der techne in den Künsten*. – Adresse: Fachbereich Literaturwissenschaft, Universität Konstanz, Fach 152, 78457 Konstanz, Deutschland. E-Mail: karin.leonhard@uni-konstanz.de.

Während meines Aufenthalts am Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin und im Zuge meines Forschungsprojekts zu „*Shared Skills*“: *Praktisches Wissen als immaterielles Kulturerbe* habe

ich mich auf zwei basale Elemente praktischen Wissens und Könnens konzentriert, in denen die Geschicklichkeit der Hände von großer Wichtigkeit ist: 1) auf eine der ältesten und grundlegendsten Kulturtechniken, in denen das „Berühren, berührbare Dinge sowie taktile Praktiken“¹ die Hauptrolle spielen, nämlich die Fähigkeit, aus tierischen oder pflanzlichen Fasern, einem Halm, Haar, Ast oder irgendeinem biegsamen Material eine Schlinge und weitergehend einen Knoten zu formen. Entsprechend bereite ich gerade sowohl eine theoretische Schrift zur Praxis des Knotens als auch eine über Fallbeispiele motivierte Kulturgeschichte desselben vor. Zum anderen interessierten mich 2) sogenannte „Sleight-of-hand“-Praktiken oder Taschenspielertricks (auch bekannt als Legerdeman), d. h. feinmotorische Fähigkeiten, die von darstellenden Künstlern in verschiedenen Kunstformen als Augentäuscherei oder Manipulation eingesetzt werden. Während es also in Teilprojekt 1 um eine Form des tangiblen Denkens ging, die den Prozess der händischen *Herstellung* und das *Hergestellte* (*Knöten/der Knöten*) unauflöslich ineinander verschränkt, konzentrierte sich Teilprojekt 2 hauptsächlich auf die Verschränktheit und Unauflösbarkeit von *Objekt* und handgreiflicher *Nutzung* in der Performanz des Spiels.

Zu 1) Da ich zu diesem Thema bereits einen kurzen „Brief aus Berlin“ für das Jahressheft *Köpfe und Ideen* des Wissenschaftskollegs schreiben durfte, auf den ich an dieser Stelle verweisen kann (<https://www.wiko-berlin.de/wikothek/koepfe-und-ideen/issue/18/brief-aus-berlin-18>), fasse ich nur noch einmal einige Punkte bzw. Schritte in meinem Berliner Arbeitsprogramm zusammen und ergänze sie um einige Überlegungen, die sich weiterhin ergeben haben: Denn Knoten begegnen uns durch alle Zeiten und überall auf der Welt, d. i. überall dort, wo es etwas zu verknüpfen oder zu lösen gibt. Sie markieren Verbindungs- und Gelenkstellen, und so können sie neben ihrer praktischen Anwendung in der Jagd, im Handwerk, im Transport- oder Ingenieurwesen auch eine magische, religiöse, medizinische, mathematische oder ästhetische Bedeutung erhalten. Neu erdings sind sie vor allem in der Topologie von Interesse, denn Knoten sind räumliche Gebilde und lehren uns etwas über die Eigenschaften mathematischer Strukturen.

Sicherlich stellt man sich den Knoten in erster Linie als ein ertastbares und hartes Ding vor – ähnlich einem Knopf oder Knubbel –, aber das Knoten ist ein fluider Prozess.

1 Jessica Güsken, „Knoten: lösen, knüpfen, mit der Haut denken. Michel Serres' tangible *Philosophie der Gemenge und Gemische*“, in: *Michel Serres – Das vielfältige Denken. Oder: Das Vielfältige denken*, hg. v. Reinhold Clausjürgens u. Kurt Röttgers (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2020): 37–57, hier: 38.

So hat beispielsweise Michel Serres, der in jungen Jahren als Seemann ausgebildet wurde, in seiner *Philosophie der Gemenge und Gemische* auf solch ein Denken des „Flüssigen“, der „Turbulenzen“ und „Gemische“ hingewiesen und gerade am Beispiel des Knotens zeigen wollen, wie die praktisch-händischen Techniken und prozesshaften Verfahren ihrer Herstellung, also Weben, Nähen, Stricken und vor allem Knüpfen, sowohl Bedingung als auch integraler Bestandteil textiler Gewebe wie Stoffe, Tücher und Teppiche sind.² Der Wissen um diesen engen Bezug basiert jedoch nicht vornehmlich auf einer anschaulichen, logischen oder theoretischen Ebene, sondern manifestiert sich vor allem im praktischen Nachvollzug und sinnlichen Erfahren, während der Herstellung oder Nutzung der Dinge also, die unseren Alltag physisch bestücken. Serres hat diese epistemologische Dimension des Praktischen als *tangibles Denken* bezeichnet, und in diesem Sinne ging es mir um ein Überdenken der Übergänge von reiner Theorie zur Praxis auf methodologischer Ebene. Einen Großteil der Forschungszeit habe ich deshalb mit der Lektüre praxeologischer Texte und auch mit einer intensiven Recherche auf einer zunächst beinahe unübersehbaren interkulturellen Materialebene verbracht, denn Ziel meines Vorhabens war, am Beispiel des Knotens eben einen solchen Konnex zwischen Theorie und Praxis zum Untersuchungsgegenstand zu machen. Als ein besonderer Untersuchungsgegenstand hat sich im Laufe der Recherche u. a. das „Cat’s-Cradle“-Spiel oder sogenannte Abnehmspiel herausgestellt. Hierbei handelt es sich um ein Fadenspiel (eine Figurenfolge) für zwei oder mehrere Spieler. In dieser in Europa bekanntesten Form des Fadenspiels geht es darum, aus einem bestimmten Anfangsbild neue Figuren zu entwickeln, indem die Schnur vom Mitspieler abgenommen und auf die eigenen Hände aufgenommen wird. Das Abnehmspiel ist aber keinesfalls auf Europa beschränkt, sondern auf der ganzen Welt unter verschiedenen Namen bekannt, zum Beispiel in Hawaii unter dem Namen *hei* oder auf der Osterinsel unter *kai kai*. Und auf der Osterinsel werden beispielsweise mithilfe des Abnehmspiels Geschichten weitererzählt, die wahrscheinlich so alt wie die Moais sind. Die Geschichten werden nur in Rapanui, nicht in der heutigen Inselsprache Spanisch erzählt, und Narrative und Figuren sind eng miteinander verwoben. Man kommuniziert also, indem man ein genuin wandelbares, figurierendes Fadenspiel betreibt ... Für die Handwerksforschung ist es außerdem wichtig, anhand des Abnehmspiels die Interaktion zwischen dem Herstellenden und dem hergestellten Gegenstand genauer zu verstehen. Die Herstellung von solchen Fadenspielen ist, so Dinah Eastop, ein nützliches

2 Vgl. ebenda.

Modell für diese Interaktion. Eastop untersucht sowohl die Artefakte als auch die damit verbundenen Repräsentationen und hat gezeigt, dass die Herstellung der Fadenspiele sowohl ein Prozess der Verkörperung von Wissen als auch dessen Vermittlung ist – Wissen, das in Handlung umgesetzt wird.³

Hierzu habe ich während meines Aufenthalts in Berlin Material gesammelt und Gespräche mit Kolleginnen und Kollegen v. a. aus der Anthropologie und diversen Fachkulturen geführt. Es gibt zahlreiche Beispiele der Verbindung von Faden, Knoten und narrativem Ereignis, die ich in meiner anstehenden Publikation verfolgen möchte. Insgesamt habe ich vor, die eben genannten Beispiele als Ausgangssituationen für eine Theorieebene zu verstehen, auf der ich weiterführend das Verhältnis zwischen materiellem und immateriellem Kulturerbe aus einer praxeologischen Perspektive thematisieren möchte. Im Ergebnis kann dies sogar bedeuten, einen konkreten Vorschlag für die Aufnahme des Fadenspiels in die Liste des UNESCO-Weltkulturerbes einzureichen. Diese Überlegung bezieht sich vor allem auf die Ausgangsfrage meines Forschungsprojekts, in der es um eine Infragestellung der systematischen Dichotomie zwischen materiellem und immateriellem Kulturerbe ging, die ich an dieser Stelle noch einmal zusammenfasse:

Dem Aushandlungsprozess kulturellen Erbes kann ein Fokus auf isolierbare Werke, Monumente und Stätten nicht gerecht werden. 2003 wurde deshalb die UNESCO-Welterbekonvention auf das immaterielle Erbe ausgeweitet, auf mündlich überlieferte Traditionen, darstellende Künste oder Handwerkskünste. Allerdings bleibt selbst in den daran anschließenden Critical Heritage Studies der Begriff des Immateriellen – des „intangible“ – vage und bisher wenig systematisch und historisch erforscht. Grundlegende Fragen wie beispielsweise die nach dem Verhältnis zwischen impliziten Fertigkeiten („skills“) und tradierbarem Fachwissen („know-how“) bleiben unbestimmt, ebenso wie die nach der Relation von immateriellen Praktiken, materiellem Kulturerbe und Naturerbe. Genau hier setzt meine Forschungsinitiative an, mit der die Praktik des wechselnden Ausschlusses, entweder das Produkt oder den Prozess als geschützt zu betrachten, hinterfragt werden soll. Und während sich die aktuellen Diskussionen im Sinne von Shared Heritage vor allem um Restitutionsfragen ethnographischer Exponate und Sammlungen drehen, konzentriert sich mein Augenmerk auf die durch Räume und Zeiten „wandernden Fertigkeiten“, d. i. die Wanderungen künstlerischen und kunsthandwerklichen Handelns, also um „shared skills and practices“ innerhalb einer Debatte, die sich weg von der

3 Dinah Eastop, „String figures matter: Embodied knowledge in action“, *Craft Research* 5, no. 2 (October 2014): 221–229.

Bewahrung von Dingen hin auf die zeitlich-räumlichen Dynamiken ihrer Herstellung und sozialen Einbindung verlagert und auch nicht im Rahmen einer Dichotomie zwischen „westlich“ und „nichtwestlich“ fassen lässt.

Zu 2) Eine ebensolche wechselseitige Verschränkung von Produkt und Prozess lässt sich auch für das Spiel mit (Bild-)Karten sowie der damit verbundenen Perfektionierung motorischer „skills“ feststellen. Im Zentrum des zweiten Teilprojekts standen deshalb Techniken der Taschenspielererei. Spielkarten sind bereits selbst Objekte, die auf ungewöhnliche Weise zwischen einem pluralen Bild, einem Gebrauchs- sowie einem Sammelgegenstand changieren können. Sie sind, wie Bogen/Leonhard (2022) es formuliert haben, tatsächlich „ein Wechselbalg“: Mobile Medien sind sie, Bilderfahrzeuge gar, Gegenstände, die Teil und Träger eines agilen Kultur- und Formentransfers waren und bis heute sind. Die Spielkarte hat ihre Wege in viele Hände und viele (soziokulturelle) Räume gefunden. Sie ist in jedweder Hinsicht ein vielseitiges Objekt: Als Vehikel transportiert sie Bilder wie Bildwissen und etabliert neue Sehgewohnheiten. Auf ihr finden sich die Einflüsse zahlreicher Kulturen wieder. Sie bebildert soziale Ordnung oder zeitgenössische Moral. Die Aufgaben und Möglichkeiten von Spielobjekten der Frühen Neuzeit sind unüberschaubar. Sie sind zunächst materielle und haptische Objekte, die, auch durch ihre Formelhaftigkeit, mit den jeweiligen zeitgenössischen Sehgewohnheiten operieren.

Innerhalb meines Forschungsprojekts werden aber neben diesem offensichtlichen Objektcharakter der Spielkarte vor allem ihre Nutzung und dabei die „Sleight-of-hand“-Praktiken des Kartenspiels interessant. So wird die Taschenspielererei aufgrund der häufigen Verwendung und Ausübung durch Zauberkünstler oft mit der Magie verwechselt; sie ist jedoch ein eigenständiges Unterhaltungsgenre. Dennoch, als eben dieses Genre ist sie stets eng mit Praktiken der Täuschung, des Betrugs und sogar Diebstahls verbunden gewesen, und eben diese damit einhergehende Verwirrung und Verunsicherung der visuellen Wahrnehmung hat mich schon lange gereizt, eine praxeologische Perspektive für diesen Sachverhalt zu entwickeln. So ist Taschenspielererei ein äußerst „handgreifliches Beispiel“ für mein Interesse am „tangiblen Denken“, d. h. an jenen eingeübten Bewegungen der Hand, die zur geschickten Manipulation der Sinneseindrücke führen und sowohl erkenntnisgenerierend als auch täuschend wirken können. Es geht also um die sinnlich und dinghaft gebundenen Erfahrungen sowie praktischen, zumal spezifisch handgreiflichen Vollzüge, die jede sprachliche Äußerung oder visuelle Darstellung in einer menschlichen Praxis beheimaten. Nicht zufällig ist das Beispiel der Spielkarte rasch in den

kunsttheoretischen Diskurs aufgenommen worden: Das gekonnte Händeln der Karten, das Mischen, Ausspielen und Tricksen wurden nicht nur regelmäßig als integrativer Teil des Kartenspiels verstanden, sondern dieser praktisch-technisch zu nennende Aspekt wurde wie selbstverständlich zugleich zum Gleichnis für eine gelungene künstlerische Darstellung erhoben: Vergleichbar dem Mischen der Farben auf der Palette und dem gelungenen Arrangement dieser Farben auf der Leinwand resultierte auch die händische Geschicklichkeit des Taschenspielers in einer erfolgreichen visuellen Illusion.

So werden in beiden Teilprojekten weder Produktions- noch Rezeptionsprozesse vom physischen Gegenstand entkoppelt, sondern in praxeologischen und spieltheoretischen Ansätzen stetig zusammengedacht. Ob Knotenbildung, Fadenspiel oder Kartenspiel: Sie alle dienen gleichermaßen als Modelle für die intrikate Verflechtung zwischen Herstellendem und Gemachtem. Auf diese Weise verknüpft sich eine tiefenhistorische Perspektive des Projekts, die auf die Rekonstruktion handwerklicher bzw. künstlerischer Rezepte und Techniken zielt, sowohl mit einer systematischen Begriffsarbeit zu „praktischem Wissen“ bzw. „tangibles Denken“ als auch mit den aktuellen Debatten um den Austauschprozess kulturellen Erbes – in meinem Fall: um die Relation von immateriellen Praktiken und materiellem Kulturerbe, von Kunst und Handwerk sowie von Werk und Prozess.



MY ENCOUNTER WITH WIKO'S GENIUS TCHAVDAR MARINOV

Tchavdar Marinov is a researcher at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He earned his PhD in History and Civilizations at the EHESS, Paris with a dissertation on the Bulgarian-Macedonian identity controversies – a topic that unfortunately has acquired a new level of international political relevance over the past several years. His research area includes the modern and contemporary history and historiography of the Balkans – in particular, the construction of national ideologies and identities. He has dealt in particular with the political uses of Antiquity and with cultural heritage policies in South-Eastern Europe (with a focus on Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Romania). Marinov is the author of *La Question Macédonienne de 1944 à nos jours. Communisme et nationalisme dans les Balkans* and of “*Nos ancêtres les Thraces.*” *Usages idéologiques de l’Antiquité en Europe du Sud-Est* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2010 and 2016). Marinov is also the co-editor of *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vols. 1 and 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2013 and 2017), and of *Balkan Heritages. Negotiating History and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). – Address: Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 13 A Moskovska Street, 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria. E-mail: tchmarinov@gmail.com.

When I received an invitation from the Wissenschaftskolleg, I was rather surprised – like other Fellows, as I later discovered. Indeed, encouraged by a prominent colleague, I had sent a research project proposal optimistically targeting a 10-month fellowship, but I was sure it was going to be one of those futile applications. Wiko is a widely known institution in the academic circles I have been part of throughout my career, but it is considered a difficult place to get into: a high-profile Institute for Advanced Study, traditionally

attracting the “cream” of the humanities and social sciences. This seemed obviously not a place for somebody dealing with the history of a rather provincial and obscure context (just ask yourselves what you imagine when you hear the term “Balkans”). Expecting to be selected for a Wiko fellowship with such a parochial area – next to researchers dealing with globally important topics in the natural and social sciences, prospective Nobel Prize winners, internationally famous writers and poets – seemed to be far from realistic.

Yet, at a certain point in 2022, it was already about time that I pack my luggage for one academic year in Berlin, in a place where, at the first moment, I felt I didn’t belong. My defeatist mood changed nevertheless rather quickly. This adaptation was largely due to the perfect organization of every single step and question related to my fellowship, which contrasted quite a lot with the somewhat chaotic conditions in institutions I am used to: from the email exchange preceding my arrival covering *inter alia* questions such as the school enrolment of my daughter or travelling to Germany with a cat, through the warm reception by Vera who had patiently waited for us in Villa Walther for a rather long moment, to the meticulous initiation into the life at the institute, the organization of both entertaining and beneficial classes in German, the extremely efficient IT services, the interesting architectural tours of Berlin, the babysitting services... It is difficult not to miss later some of the – almost royal – privileges one enjoyed as a Wiko Fellow. Every aspect of my stay was so carefully and professionally prepared by an amazing staff that was always, without exception, not simply and superficially friendly but cordial and ready to help. Apart from Vera, I must not forget to mention Maike, Andrea, Nina, Katharina, Eva, Corina, Petria, Francisco. And, of course, Dunia and the formidable kitchen staff with their great meals on every weekday and the excellent wine on Thursday dinners!

But Wiko is no doubt much more than a professionally organized institution that is efficient “in a German way.” What really made me feel at home, despite my initial reserve, was the welcoming and open-minded academic spirit – or indeed, genius – of the Wissenschaftskolleg. Representing the complete negation of intellectual parochialism, Wiko is a place that sees no geographical contexts as “provincial.” Indeed, it is a place that inevitably “de-provincializes” contexts and topics that may otherwise seem isolated one from the other. At discussions following the Tuesday Colloquia and other events (Thursday Colloquia, Berliner Abend, lectures, readings), Wiko finds ways to encourage an unexpectedly fruitful dialogue between geographically distant places (such as the Balkans and Nigeria, Transcarpathian Ruthenia and India), different historical eras (ancient China and contemporary Kenya, for instance), and even between entire scholarly fields

and scientific disciplines. In the latter case, this was made possible in particular through the Three Cultures Forum series where researchers coming from the life sciences, social sciences, and humanities were able to discover and debate themes of common academic interest – or, on the contrary, to identify false resemblances and pitfalls such as anthropomorphism in biology or notions like “intuition.”

But, most of all, this dialogue is made possible thanks to the informal communication between Fellows – and here come maybe my dearest memories from my year of fellowship. Prior to it, I would have never thought that I would find so interesting and thought-provoking a conversation with, let’s say, specialists in evolutionary genetics or in interspecies mutualism in botany and zoology: I wouldn’t dare underestimate such fields of study – on the contrary, they seem so divinely serious compared to my research and so far away from it! People praising – so often in a futile way – inter- and cross-disciplinarity have a lot to learn from Wiko. In any case, communication with Co-Fellows is an intellectually crucial aspect and an inestimable benefit of one’s life in Wiko – not only because it widens intellectual horizons, but also as it inevitably reveals one’s limitations. I remember how ashamed I was when I suddenly realized that a Co-Fellow from India knew so much about the historical and political context of my home country, while I was trying to imagine in vain in which Indian state Bangalore is situated.

The global scale and interdisciplinary character of Wiko may also have limitations. Yet, in any case, one cannot emphasize enough how faithful Wiko is to its true vocation: free research, intellectual freedom, high academic standards. Here, I cannot bypass one of the greatest privileges of being in Wiko: its amazing library staff and services. People of Eastern Europe know well what I mean: trying to be an internationally competitive academic in countries where university libraries are often understaffed and poorly supplied with books and (even more often) with academic periodicals is by no means obvious. It is often unthinkable to have free access to thousands of titles you would otherwise search for to no avail (or should order at a high price) and to be able to simply order them in the easiest possible way, without formalities. And that an unbelievably efficient staff, working literally “for you,” would take care of the rest and you can even receive publications from remote libraries the same day... In some cases, the extent of the staff’s care can make you lose your detective skills. Another moment when I felt shame was after ordering a somewhat “exotic” publication – a Serbian interwar periodical (by the way, in Cyrillic script) – just to receive the quick answer from the librarian, “It would be difficult to order a physical copy, but you can find all issues digitized by the National Library of Serbia at

the following web address...” I hadn’t even bothered to check if by chance it was accessible online before ordering it...

Despite sticking to non-negotiable academic values, Wiko’s genius is not a mentor in the bad sense. Having trust in the academic merits and qualities of its Fellows and in its own high reputation, the cosy institute in Grunewald is far from the overall tension and overambitious competitiveness of university institutions. It is a place where communication between the leadership, the staff, and the Fellows is relaxed, where academic manners necessarily include a well-intentioned subtlety, a refined intellectual kindness, and a smart sense of humour. Let me reveal the masterminds behind this formidable combination: Barbara, Iris, and Daniel, and of course, the Permanent Fellows. The presence of these academics throughout the academic year, the possibility to discuss with them a variety of topics – scholarly, but also political, social, etc. – and even to ask them for their help was an honour for us. I guess this is how a true academic community is being built – far from the usually feudalized structure of traditional university and research institutions.

Faithful to this subtle and open-minded manner of communication, in the beginning of our year of fellowship, Barbara admitted we were also free to fail in our individual research projects. Frankly speaking, I feared this was going to be my case: therefore, initially, I was trying to ponder the weight of the literal sense in Barbara’s words. Like some other Fellows, I had arrived in Berlin with a rather enthusiastic project without being sure it was based on a clearly feasible plan. My intention was to write a short monograph exploring the analytical potential but also the limitations of the concept of “national indifference” in the context of modern and contemporary Balkan history. While it geographically focused on the Balkan area, the more general ambition of my project was to contribute to the ongoing debates on temporality and social diffusion of nationalism in modern Europe. By crediting “national indifference” an explanatory value, my project tackled self-identifications and external categorizations within modern and contemporary Balkan societies that are often obscured by national historians. It surveyed the practical choices and reasons of (non-)élite populations, but it also addressed epistemological problems related to their study. My idea was to employ a critical appraisal of the concept of “national indifference,” both in past uses and nowadays, to shed light on questions such as the temporal scales of the spread of nationhood, the social logics of loyalty and pragmatism, and the relationship between identity and interest. A far too ambitious endeavour.

A year later, it seems my project is to a large extent completed and its outcome will hopefully be published soon. Like some of my colleagues, I also had to dedicate part of my

time to projects “inherited” from the years prior to my Wiko fellowship. Thanks to the generous resources and staff of the Wiko library, I was able to consult and collect much-needed sources and secondary literature on topics such as the Balkan art histories during the first half of the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, it would have been much more difficult to find relevant titles in the Balkans where the communication and exchange between different countries’ academic institutions is not always particularly good and developed. Normally, I would have needed to look for accommodation in Belgrade, Skopje, and Thessaloniki or Athens to do the research which was made possible by a simple online search in the Wikoscope...

Frankly speaking, I tried to limit other academic participations to the minimum during my year of fellowship, so that I was able to concentrate on my individual research. This is nevertheless difficult in a leading intellectual centre like Berlin. Invitations to take part in a seminar, a colloquium, a conference, or a workshop started popping up in my email inbox even already before my arrival. Meeting “local” colleagues – in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany – was surely one of the great advantages of being at Wiko. Apart from official conference venues in Berlin or Hamburg, it was funny to meet German colleagues working on the Balkans, for instance in the “Sarajevo Inn” – the Bosnian restaurant with an unmistakable *Gastarbeiter* ambiance right behind the railway station of the otherwise posh Grunewald. A peculiar blend of serious and professional spirit and an informal and democratic openness is omnipresent in Berlin – and in Wiko in particular.

It is hard for me to find words to express my gratitude to Wiko’s genius for making possible this unusual year of my life. At least I hope I managed to keep part of its forces with me: it is this inspiring sense of academic community that marked my life in Berlin. It is maybe not much, but I believe it is enough.



IT BEGAN WITH A BOAT TRIP SUSAN MARKS

Susan Marks is Professor of International Law in the School of Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She graduated BA, LLB from the University of Sydney and LLM, PhD from the University of Cambridge. Before joining the LSE, she taught at the University of Cambridge and King's College London. Her research seeks to bring insights from critical social theory to the study of international law and human rights. Her publications include *The Riddle of All Constitutions*, *International Human Rights Lexicon* (co-written with Andrew Clapham), *International Law on the Left* (as editor), and *A False Tree of Liberty*. – Address: Department of Law, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE, United Kingdom. E-mail: s.marks@lse.ac.uk.

I believe it is now a tradition that the Wiko year begins with a boat trip. On a partly rainy September day, Philip and I boarded a boat with a large group of strangers, and by the end of the trip those strangers had already started to become friends. Laughing together on the deck as we all ducked to avoid the lowest bridges, we bonded over the glorious prospect of the year that lay ahead.

My project for the year was to finish a book on the concept of dignity. It was an appropriate topic, perhaps, to be undertaking in a country that has a constitution, the very first article of which declares the inviolability of human dignity: *Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar*. While my study was more socio-theoretical than jurisprudential, I was inspired by the eminence of German constitutional scholars – among them two Permanent Fellows of Wiko, Dieter Grimm and Christoph Möllers – in this sphere.

Inspiration is important, but so too are the practical tasks associated with academic work. My project had led me into a range of unfamiliar literatures, so finding books and articles was an ongoing challenge. For me, one of Wiko's greatest gifts was its amazing library services. It was not just that no book or article was too esoteric for Wiko's librarians to track down. It was also that the books or articles one requested almost invariably appeared the very next day, so that one's thinking and writing could move forward without the delays that usually hold back research.

Of course, research is only part of the Wiko experience. Another hugely significant and memorable element was the colloquium series. My study of the natural sciences ended when I was fifteen, so it was eye-opening to say the least to hear papers at the cutting edge of biology, genetics, genomics, ecology, microbiology and clinical psychology, among other disciplines. Scarcely less impressive than the papers was the preternatural ability of Barbara, Daniel, Iris and the Permanent Fellows to formulate interesting and insightful questions, no matter how remote a paper was from their own respective fields of work.

More immediately accessible to me, but no less fascinating, were papers from Fellows and Permanent Fellows in fields such as anthropology, philosophy, history, critical theory, political science, international law, art history and the history and philosophy of science, and on topics ranging from Kenyan funerary practice to ethnic discrimination and inequality in Germany. The opportunity to attend presentations by Wiko's writers-in-residence, Maria Stepanova, NoViolet Bulawayo and Kateryna Mishchenko, and its composer-in-residence, Lucia Ronchetti, was a particular privilege.

And what a joy to be able to go on to lunch after these colloquia (thank you Dunia!) and continue the conversation! I loved that there was never small talk. Everyone was too excited by the issues and ideas that had been put before us. But everyone was also too sobered by the violence and injustice in which many of our colleagues and those close to them were caught up – Elçin from Turkey, Anna, Kateryna B and Kateryna M from Ukraine, Maria from Russia, Henadz from Belarus, NoViolet from Zimbabwe ... That they faced the horrors of war and the unfreedom of authoritarian rule was powerfully reality-checking.

My final memory of Wiko is of our farewell party, with dinner on the terrace surrounded by Wiko's magnificent garden. It was an incredibly beautiful scene, bathed in the golden light of a July evening. A moment of calm in a troubled world. A last demand-less day before normal life resumed. Thank you Wiko for a wonderful, unforgettable and fantastically restorative year. Thank you for the colloquia, thank you for the

conversations, thank you for the friendships, thank you for the books and articles, thank you for the readings, concerts and receptions, thank you for the lunches and dinners, thank you for the breathing space in which to read and think and write. Thank you!



A YEAR OF EXTREMES IN AN IDEAL
LANDSCAPE
ANNA MEDVEDOVSKA

Anna Medvedovska is a public thoughts and Holocaust memory researcher, a Candidate of Sciences (PhD) in History, a Senior Research Associate of the “Tkuma” Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies (Dnipro), and a managing editor of the journal *Problemy istorii Holokostu: Ukraïns'kyi vymir* (Holocaust studies: A Ukrainian focus). As part of the “Tkuma” Institute team, she developed and created the permanent exhibition of the Museum “Jewish Memory and Holocaust in Ukraine” (2011–2012). She was a Fellow at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2015–2016). In 2017, she defended her dissertation titled “The Holocaust in Ukraine in the Public Thought at the End of the 20th to the Beginning of the 21st Century” (in Ukrainian). She is an author of a number of articles on the reception of the Holocaust in Ukraine during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Currently she is finishing her first monograph “The Others’ Pain Doesn’t Exist? The Holocaust in Ukraine in the Public Thought in the Second Half of the 20th and the Beginning of the 21st Century” (in Ukrainian). – Address: Voskresenska St. 9, apt. 36, 49000 Dnipro, Ukraine. E-mail: medvedovskaya_an@ukr.net.

I was already in Berlin when I learned about the Wissenschaftskolleg and when the invitation reached me to become a Fellow among the group of 2022/2023. I came to Germany in March of 2022 as a refugee from the war in Ukraine. Dnipro, the city of my education and my academic initiation, is located in the East of our country and seemed dangerously close to the Russian aggression in the early stages of the invasion. To this day, frequent missile and drone attacks target Dnipro. I left with an older family member, whose serious illness was also a reason for seeking better security outside of Ukraine.

Having arrived in Berlin, my academic colleagues from various countries of the world immediately helped me to make new connections. The city and its institutions were incredibly welcoming to people from Ukraine (even if occasional hiccups with the notorious *Verwaltung* of Berlin had to be dealt with). I had not even really set up camp when I was already elected for a grant from the Deutsches Historisches Museum to prepare for publication my Ukrainian dissertation on the topic of Holocaust discourses in Ukraine. And the Wissenschaftskolleg followed right after, offering me a fellowship beginning in January 2023. I felt honored, inspired, and also slightly overwhelmed, since after finishing my PhD I did not always have the capacity to invest much effort into a strictly academic career, finding my niche in public history, museum work, and editing. Life in Ukraine has always been demanding for academicians, even before the full-scale war, making them find ways to adjust their professional skills to the picky and unsustainable job market of humanities specialists.

So this is a sample of the best of mankind in all its diversity, I thought, when during the Welcome Week in September I encountered the group of new Fellows. Thus, this was one of the most promising exits from the bubble that each person inevitably creates around oneself when attaching oneself to something for a long time. However, in addition to the most incredible expansion of the range of topics and issues that have ever come into my field of vision, I often sensed genuine interest in my perspective on our nation, which I could elaborate on on a level you can only expect from people who are used to thinking in nuances and reflected terminology.

The move to Villa Walther in the middle of winter coincided with the return of a member of my family from the Charité, and thus we were able to say goodbye together to a 2022 full of not only anxiety and worries, but also new ideas about our ability to cope with challenges. In a few months, I could relive the impressions of my first visit to Wiko in the spring of 2022: this idea of an ideal landscape, half nature, half city, half recluse, but well connected by the M19 that often took me to the city to attend a concert at the magnificent Philharmonie, just take a stroll through the Tiergarten to toss up fresh insights to my brain when my writing seemed stuck, or have a bite at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, which became one of my favorite places.

Wiko also became for me a place of the revival of lately forgotten skills and interests, such as a performing historical songs. When I one day managed to get a ukulele again (the best musical companion when you don't have much space), I enjoyed the opportunity for a little improvisation with a few Yiddish songs I remembered from a Judaica Youth Camp

in Lviv in 2013 at my first party among Fellows, hosted by Judith and Goggy. That was also a super-helpful experience in terms of slowly coming back to normality with its usual practices and possibilities.

In the meantime, my writing progressed step by step thanks to this atmosphere of casual, unconstrained stability and friendly calm. In early April, I submitted my book for prepress. Done! But I don't know for better or for worse; we are not limited to individual achievements and successes alone. Otherwise, life would be too predictable. My relative's condition started to worsen; and in the end, I had to cut my stay short to leave for Ukraine for family obligations.

Nevertheless, several spring walks in Grunewald gave me space to breathe and to think about this intense period I was going through – from speaking at the Center for the History of Emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development on resentment in the Ukrainian public sphere in January to meeting its director Ute Frevert at a Wiko event again a few weeks later and discussing the situation in Ukraine with many Co-Fellows, whom I admire as intellectuals and came to like greatly as people; and from clumsy attempts to sort out German grammar and the most functional vocabulary to a genuine excitement over certain German linguistic concepts during the German course I attended at Wiko in the fall of 2022 (*Hassliebe, doch, Fernweh, also, gern*; a big thank you to Eva and our teacher Giancarlo!). The most precious memory is probably that array of information, opinions, and impressions I absorbed in common conversations generously shared by Fellows and their openness and willingness to speak about everything, whatever you ask.

It has been a year of extremes for me, and I wish the wider German public were more aware of the enormous privileges this country enjoys. The Wissenschaftskolleg to me is an indication of a level of civilization I yearn for my nation to have, retain, and become a part of. I am deeply grateful for everything I learned here, and I invite everybody to look at Ukraine. Because I think that the future of our civilization is at stake there. And in the green forests of Grunewald as well.

In July 2023, I finally held a pre-print item of my dissertation in hand. I finished this chapter of my work and my career, and now I feel free to seek new pathways and interests. It may be a precarious freedom, but my year in Germany has taught me to relish every second of it.



DIE ZWEITE LINIE
KATERYNA MISHCHENKO

Kateryna Mishchenko ist Autorin, Verlegerin und Kuratorin aus Kyjiw. Sie studierte Deutsche Philologie an der Kyiv National Linguistic University, wo sie später kurz als Dozentin tätig war. Danach arbeitete sie als Übersetzerin, unter anderem von literarischen und kulturtheoretischen Texten, und war Mitbegründerin der Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst und Gesellschaftskritik *Prostory*. Parallel dazu war sie als Dolmetscherin für die deutsche NGO Connect plus e. V. tätig, die Fortbildungs- und Aufklärungskampagnen zu HIV/Aids in der Ukraine durchgeführt hat. Seit 2014 ist sie Verlegerin im unabhängigen Verlag Medusa. Ihre Essays sind in internationalen Zeitschriften, Anthologien und als Buch erschienen: *Ukrainische Nacht/Ukrainian Night* (2015). 2023 erschien der von Katharina Raabe und Kateryna Mishchenko herausgegebene Band *Aus dem Nebel des Krieges: Die Gegenwart der Ukraine*. – E-Mail: kat.mishchenko@gmail.com.

Kirche, Berufsschule, Bibliothek, Schloss Bellevue, Bundestagsgebäude in Bonn, Literaturhaus, Theater, Universität, Buchmesse – all das sind physische, öffentliche Räume, in denen ich im vergangenen akademischen Jahr über soziale, ästhetische und politische Verhältnisse im Kontext des Krieges in meinem Land sprechen konnte. Diese Diversität der Räume, die den Zugang zum öffentlichen Dialog und grundsätzlich zur Öffentlichkeit ermöglichen, verwundert und überwältigt mich gleichzeitig. Am Ende des Jahres fällt der „topografisch-quantitative“ Rückblick auf die Arbeit leichter als der „diskursive“. Das Gesprochene verblasst und die Eckdaten bleiben, denn sobald die Sommerpause kommt, drängt sich zunehmend die Frage auf, ob all das, was gesagt und diskutiert wurde, etwas ändert, oder warum nach allem, was gesagt wurde, sich nichts ändert. Oder steckt doch etwas hinter diesem Nichts?

Gleichzeitig ertappe ich mich beim Gedanken, dass die Zeit der Erschöpfung die Möglichkeit bietet, die eigene Arbeit kritisch zu durchdenken und ihre eventuelle Umgestaltung zu planen. Sie selbst wird zum Gegenstand der Reflexion. Hängt Erschöpfung zwangsläufig mit Enthusiasmus zusammen? Vermutlich nötigst sie einem den Raum ab, in dem man genauer auf den Prozess der rasanten Akkumulation von Aktivitäten blicken kann. Natürlich bedeutet die Erschöpfung auch ein Ende. Daran denke ich im Kontext des Krieges. Die Ukraine kam in die Phase eines Abnutzungskrieges, in der das Überleben auch der Abnutzung ausgeliefert ist. Und vermutlich ist die Erschöpfung da, um endlich zu trauern und es nicht mehr auf eine ungewisse Zukunft zu verschieben. Um sich eine Heilung vorstellen zu können, muss man sich für die Sprache der Erschöpfung sensibilisieren.

Diese Sprache hat ein wichtiges Bild: die ans Licht gebrachte Dunkelziffer der gefallenen ukrainischen Soldaten und Soldatinnen. Die Strategie der Verheimlichung soll dem gesellschaftlichen Zusammenbruch vorbeugen. Aber vielleicht käme dann nicht ein Zusammen-, sondern ein Umbruch zustande. Vielleicht ist jetzt die Zeit für die Akzeptanz der eigenen Vulnerabilität und des strategischen Selbstschutzes statt der strategischen Selbstopferung. In Gesprächen und Kommentaren über den Krieg höre ich manchmal von der zweiten Verteidigungslinie, deren Aufbau jetzt schon wichtig wäre, aber so eine Idee kommt informationspolitisch nicht gut an, denn von der Ukraine wird innerhalb und außerhalb des Landes ein ultimativer Erfolg erwartet. Diese zweite Linie konturiert symbolisch eine neue Phase in der (zeitlichen) Wahrnehmung des Krieges, die früher oder später auch die Kriegsführung beeinflussen wird. Ich lese viel über die Führung des Krieges, über die Vorteile von bestimmten Raketen und Flugzeugen, aber sprechen oder schreiben kann ich über die Imagination, die auf die Perspektiven und Politiken wirken kann. In diesem Sinne bedeutet die zweite Linie etwas, was hinter dem oben erwähnten Nichts steckt oder reift.

Dank der vielen Gespräche im Rahmen der Vorstellung von *Aus dem Nebel des Krieges. Die Gegenwart der Ukraine*, das im März 2023 erschienen ist, konnte ich viel darüber nachdenken, wie die Sprache wider den Krieg Raum für das Leben schafft. Die Reflexion, die sich durch Sprache in einem Text materialisiert, kann man ebenfalls als eine „zweite Linie“ verstehen, auch wenn sie anfänglich als solche nicht gesehen wird.

Erschöpfung ist auch eine körperliche Sache. Der körperliche Aspekt ist nicht unwichtig, da die physische Präsenz für die Glaubwürdigkeit der Handlung und des Wortes sorgt. Der Krieg bringt die Körper auf unterschiedlichste Weise in Bewegung, man kann es vielleicht als exzessive Mobilität bezeichnen. Bewegung habe ich meistens als

Ausdruck der Freiheit verstanden. Ihre rettende, befreiende Funktion hat dennoch den Schatten eines Zwangs. Die Umstände zwingen zu Bewegung. Und auch wenn ihr Druck nachlässt, bleibt ein gewisser Automatismus, der scheinbar sinnlose Regungen verursacht. Die neu erworbene automatisierte Bewegung sehe ich als Gegenpol zu dem ruhigen Leben und Denken, das das Wissenschaftskolleg bietet. Und ich befand mich zwischen diesen Polen.

In einem Gespräch mit Martin Saar über das Recht auf die Beständigkeit des Ortes für das Leben, das Recht, sich nicht bewegen zu müssen, nahm ich dieses Recht als ein sehr großes Privileg wahr. Ich spüre – und kann sie auch nachvollziehen – diese große Angst vor dem Halt. Wiederum im Kontext des Krieges. Auf der mentalen Ebene findet ebenso eine Bewegung statt: die Flucht vor Verlusten und vor dem Leiden. Ihre schmerzhaft Präsenz zu akzeptieren und ihr nicht zu entkommen, ist eine schwierige Aufgabe. Neben dem Halt dachte ich noch an die Möglichkeit der Rückkehr. Kann man die von der historischen Zäsur getrennten Teile des Lebens zusammenfügen? Man kann es zumindest versuchen.

Im Januar 2022 begann ich ein Gespräch mit den Künstlerinnen Anna Scherbyna (Kyjiw) und Christina Werner (Wien) über ihr multimediales Projekt *Dust Covers the Landscape*. Das Projekt widmet sich dem Ort Babyn Jar, dem Schauplatz eines der größten Massaker an osteuropäischen Jüdinnen und Juden im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert. Das Interview wurde unterbrochen, und einige Monate nach der russischen Invasion setzten wir das Gespräch fort. Das Gebiet von Babyn Jar wurde im Verlauf des aktuellen Krieges wieder Ziel von Angriffen. Unsere Entscheidung, das Interview zu Ende zu führen und als eine kleine Publikation zu veröffentlichen, war unter anderem ein kleiner Akt der Zusammenfügung. Und danach habe ich gespürt, wie sich die Wahrnehmung der Geschichte durch Unterbrechungen und Überlappungen vertieft.

Dieses Gefühl bestimmte die Planung meines Dienstagskolloquiums am Wissenschaftskolleg. Es war eine Art Reise durch unterschiedliche Räume der privat-politischen Wirklichkeit in der Ukraine des letzten Jahrzehnts mit einer gebrochenen Chronologie. Ich begann mit der Lesung eines Textes, der die Erwartung einer möglichen Ausweitung des Krieges 2022 behandelt, und schloss mit einem Ausschnitt aus meinem Essay über den Maidan-Aufstand 2013/14. Ich weiß nicht, ob mein Versuch, eine Kontinuität durch eine nichtlineare Erzählung aufzubauen, erfolgreich war. Mit wurde aber klar, dass die Rückkehr auch nach mehreren Umbrüchen wichtig ist, denn sie kann das Denken historisch machen. Und wahrscheinlich kann man von der Rückkehr lernen, den Schmerz der Verluste auszuhalten.



TIME TO (RE)THINK
MILICA NIKOLIĆ

Milica Nikolić is Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychopathology at the University of Amsterdam. After graduating in Psychology in Serbia, she moved to the Netherlands as a PhD candidate to work on emotional and socio-cognitive disturbances in the development of social anxiety disorder. After she defended her doctoral thesis in 2017 cum laude, Milica worked as a post-doctoral researcher at Leiden University and the University of Amsterdam, supported by Amsterdam Brain and Cognition. She seeks to understand how self-conscious emotions and social cognition contribute to healthy social functioning or the development of psychopathology. Her research suggests that self-conscious emotions play a pivotal role in child social development. She pursues her research in children innovatively using an interdisciplinary and multi-method approach. It has gained attention from the European Association of Developmental Psychology, which granted her the George Butterworth Young Scientist Award for valuable contributions to the field of developmental psychology. She has published on the topic of self-conscious emotions and social cognition in children and adults in highly regarded journals in her field, and her research ideas have gathered considerable funding (including from the Dutch Research Council). With her colleagues, she is currently introducing a new faculty research priority area to conduct interdisciplinary research on emotions in real world. – Address: Research Institute of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam, Postjesweg 332, 1061AX Amsterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: m.nikolic@uva.nl.

Although the time at Wiko defies easy categorization, I draw parallels to the various stages of human development. The journey unfolds from infancy, marked by a sense of

novelty and wonder; transitioning to childhood – characterized by the formation of close and profound connections; progressing to adolescence – a period of curiosity and substantial growth; to young adulthood – a busy season of accumulating memories; and, finally, to late adulthood – when contemplation and a touch of nostalgia arise.

1.

It has been precisely two years since I first came across the call for the “Gain time to think” fellowship of the College for Life Sciences at Wiko, Berlin. The promise of providing early career researchers an opportunity to take a break from the lab, offering them time to develop and write their own projects and to immerse in an intellectually and culturally diverse environment sounded like an academic reverie.

As a mother of two young children, I could not help but fret over the feasibility of moving to Berlin for a couple of months. Yet, when I reached out to Jana, the Academic Coordinator of the College for Life Sciences (little did I foresee the multitude of emails and live conversations that would follow), she reassured me that it is possible to arrange for Fellows with families to join. With excitement, I ran to my partner: “What do you think about moving to Berlin for a couple of months?” and I applied for the fellowship. Roughly six months later, Jana returned with exciting news – and we were bound for Berlin, psyched up for this adventure.

2.

I was both nervous and excited to arrive in Grunewald. The contrast to bustling, crowded Amsterdam was noticeable. I was struck by the tranquil serenity of the neighborhood. Villa Walther with its surrounding was nothing short of enchanting.

Vera’s warm welcome made us feel at home right away. I went on to explore Wiko’s buildings. Arriving at the Villa Jaffé where my office was to be, I found myself immersed in its beauty. “Milica,” an unfamiliar voice called out, “Hello, I recognized you from a photo.” It was Eva, the German teacher. I was taken aback by her attentiveness. This gesture set the tone: every Wiko staff member welcomed us with kindness, consideration, and openness.

3.

The days swiftly passed after our settling in. People who were complete strangers mere weeks before now felt like dear and familiar friends. The sense of a community started to build up quickly. We all had something in common: being displaced from our regular

lives, and gathering daily for lunch conversations that could spiral into the most intriguing discussions quickly built a growing sense of togetherness. The atmosphere was one of comfort and familiarity, yet also of freshness, inspiration, and revelation.

While I managed to work on my planned project, I dedicated substantial time to introspection, ruminating not only on my research, but also on academia more generally and my role within it. I pondered the ways researchers engage in science and with other fellow academics. I marveled at the unexpected connections between seemingly disparate topics and my own area of study. I believe I was not the only one. The environment at Wiko is crafted for contemplation – the absence of deadlines and the freedom to think fostered an atmosphere of open reflection and discussion.

Attending and giving the Tuesday Colloquium made me realize the vast differences in definitions, concepts, and methodologies across different fields. Emotion – my area of research – it seemed, could take on myriad meanings depending on whom you ask. And so could any other construct. Within our own field, we often take our definitions and our methodologies for granted, without questioning them fundamentally. As a psychologist, I was aware that my approach would be different from those of other disciplines, but the extent of the discrepancies was revelatory. I recall some of our impromptu discussions about the concept of “evidence” or “truth” at a few of our regular lunch gatherings that sparked major disagreements at the table. This opportunity to question everything, no matter how seemingly mundane, I came to cherish the most about Wiko.

Another distinct aspect of being at Wiko is the opportunity to engage with academics, both from within and outside of Berlin and discuss research, fostering new collaborations and establishing lasting connections. This unique networking opportunity is especially valuable for early career researchers, like me, as it provides a chance, perhaps for the first time, to gain a perspective on one’s research program from a diverse group of senior faculty. Among others of them, I had the pleasure of meeting Ute Frevert. Her openness, curiosity, and kindness set a guiding example of how I should aspire to treat emerging young scholars in the future.

4.

Memories of my time at Wiko abound. The warm welcome from the receptionists at Wiko’s main building; neighborly after-work moments with Martin and his family; Dunia’s kindness while carefully packing numerous take-away lunches; Jana’s compassion and understanding; the warm support of Vera who arranged our stay; memorable

Thursday dinners made possible by Dunia and her team, including kind Ibrahima; the wisdom shared in speeches by past and present Wiko Rectors; discussing early-career researcher challenges with my dear Co-Fellows of the College for Life Sciences, especially Rose, Danai, and Camilo; and interesting, inspiring conversations with many Co-Fellows, including (but not limited to) Daven, Oren, Michael, Judie, Martin, Max, Thomas, Tchavdar, and others. Getting many recommendations, from must-read books to must-try cake recipes, including the best ever chocolate cake recipe from Rose, my officemate; a spacious office with a beautiful view on the top floor of the Villa Jaffé; the rhythmic crack of the wooden floor when I climbed the stairs to reach the office; the beautiful garden turning red and yellow as the autumn approached behind our home in Villa Walther; the top floor of the White Villa, where our kids' laughter echoed at celebrations and Thursday dinners; the enchanting walk to the S-Bahn station; and, maybe most memorable, Tuesday Colloquia that always offered an intriguing and fresh way to look at the world.

5.

As I reflect on these memories, I am once again reminded how exceptional this time at Wiko was. The true depth of its warmth and familiarity struck me during my return to Wiko for the farewell party, six months after my fellowship ended. As I stepped off at the Grunewald S-Bahn station and walked again that well-trodden path to Wiko's main building, nostalgia swelled within me, mixed with a profound appreciation for the privilege of experiencing such a chapter in my life. The sight of familiar faces reminded me of how lucky I was to intersect paths with these people.

6.

For some, the fellowship serves as a respite from regular demands of teaching, meetings, and administrative duties, providing time to dive into new areas of research. Others see it as an opportunity to make new connections and draw inspiration from fellow scholars. Some seize this time to crystalize their ideas and projects, while others engage in profound reevaluation of their place within academia. In my case, it encompassed all of the above. It was a truly remarkable, special, and transformative chapter of my life.



WORK, BODY, AND SELF: A YEAR OF
TRANSFORMATIONS
INSA NOLTE

Insa Nolte was born in Göttingen and completed her first degree at the Freie Universität Berlin before moving to the UK. After completing her PhD at the University of Birmingham in 2000, Insa held the Kirk-Greene Junior Research Fellowship at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, before returning to Birmingham. Over the course of her career, Insa has worked closely with Nigerian colleagues and institutions, and she is Professor of African Studies and Anthropology at the University of Birmingham and Research Professor in History at Osun State University, Nigeria. Insa's research focuses on social and political processes from the ground up. Her first book focuses on the local politics of the Nigerian politician and Yorùbá leader Obafemi Awolowo, and subsequent publications and books have explored ethno-national politics, youth, and gender. Insa's current research explores the social history of Muslim-Christian relations and the largely peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians in the Yorùbá region of Nigeria. – Address: African Studies and Anthropology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT, United Kingdom. E-mail: m.i.nolte@bham.ac.uk.

My year at the Wissenschaftskolleg was defined by the friendship, support, and engagement of the Wiko staff and the 2022/2023 Fellows. This was partly due to the format of the programme: it is a great privilege to be part of a community of brilliant researchers and outstanding professionals dedicated to supporting scholarship in one of Europe's most exciting cities and countries for a year. But every year is different, and for me the real impact of my year arose from the warmth, kindness, and intellectual generosity of our group. I enjoyed the camaraderie and friendship of activities surrounding shared seminars,

lunches, dinners, and other celebrations and activities such as karaoke, dancing, and exercise, or visits to restaurants, museums, theatres, and the city's opera houses. By chance or providence, I ended up spending more time with some Fellows than with others, and I am very grateful for their friendship: it made all the difference. But I think that I would have enjoyed more time with almost everyone in the group, and when it was time to say goodbye, I was gripped by regret for the exchanges we might yet have had. It was a privilege to leave Wiko while we were enjoying ourselves most: *zu gehen, wenn es am schönsten ist*.

Looking back at my time in Berlin, I realise how much I benefitted intellectually from being part of the amazing group of 2022/2023 Fellows. While the distinctions between different disciplinary fields, and especially between the natural sciences and the social sciences and humanities, were sometimes bewildering, they really drove home to me how important it is to take nothing for granted in one's own work. With hindsight, I could not say whether I benefitted more from exchanges with colleagues in anthropology or cognate disciplines such as history and textual studies, or from exchanges with colleagues whose work had very little overlap with my own. Very often, I was inspired by the genuine curiosity of those who knew very little about my area of research.

For me, the fellowship year was also deeply transformative in other areas. I remain deeply grateful to a group of amazing women – all 2022/2023 Fellows – for accompanying me on the journey from cheerful waddling to being able to run for about 5 km by the end of the year. It has been an adventure! And finally, the fact that, due to unforeseen circumstances, I spent significant time in Berlin without my partner and two of my three teenage children offered me a glimpse of life beyond the immediate relationships and responsibilities of family life. This was not always easy, but it has given me great confidence, and even zest, for the years to come.

The reward for writing a book? Planning more books

My Wiko project focused on a large archive of materials relating to the social history of Muslim-Christian relations in southwest Nigeria from the nineteenth century to the present. Over several years of anthropological and historical research, I had collected a lot of material, originally out of curiosity. However, eventually it dawned on me that many of the traditional and Muslim sources shared explicit references to the importance of gender relations and marriage for the religious history of the region. Re-reading missionary and colonial sources with this insight in mind offered a very different perspective on the local history of Christianity and on the trajectory of broadly peaceful Muslim-Christian

relations in the region. Thus, the plan for the year in Berlin was to use my material as a starting point for a book that complemented and challenged existing ideas about religious coexistence, both in this part of West Africa and beyond, by exploring Muslim-Christian relations through the lens of gender and marriage.

Implicit in my plan for Wiko was the idea that after the book, I would move on to work on a different topic. However, as soon as I began to write, I realised that the manuscript expanded in unexpected directions. At first I experimented with a number of workarounds to keep the manuscript within acceptable length for the publishers I had in mind, for example by taking out some material for separate publication in article form. However, it was the Wiko environment, and in particular my seminar and the conversations with other Fellows, which helped me to realise that the data I had was not simply indicative of a unique and important case study, but deeply embedded in, and responsive to, broader historical changes. Yorùbá social history was closely linked to the expansion of European influence as well as the Islamic debates and revolutions that transformed West Africa in the period under investigation. While I needed to convey the distinctive nature of West Africa's social and intellectual history, I also wanted to highlight that the Yorùbá conceptual world was and is not simply an "Other" to the ideas foregrounded in Europe and the West, but rather part of global inequalities, appropriations, and exchanges. It was impossible to convey all this while also maintaining a temporal focus on the entire period I had originally wanted to explore: I would need to write two books.

By the end of the 2022/2023 fellowship year, I had produced a full-length manuscript covering the nineteenth and early twentieth century, while Islam and Christianity were still minority religions in the region. Beyond confirming the importance of gender relations for each religion on its own, the dedicated support of library staff both in Berlin and in Birmingham had enabled me to access a large number of texts that revealed highly gendered exchanges and borrowings between Muslims and Christians. Understanding the importance of Islam as an alternative monotheism for the strategies of African Christians in particular allowed me to challenge widely accepted perceptions of Christian-cum-European influences as the main sources of social innovation and gendered change in the region at the time. I am excited and happy about the insights that have derived from my research, and I really look forward to developing that argument further as I see the book through to publication over the coming year.

A second book, exploring the role of family relationships and intermarriages between Yorùbá Muslims and Christians from the high colonial period to the early twenty-first

century, remains to be written. As it will undoubtedly take several years before I will be able to move on from the topic of Muslim-Christian relations, I realise that I will benefit for many years to come from the time to read and reflect I enjoyed at Wiko.

Running and the art of being a “duck”

Before arriving at Wiko I am afraid I was a bit of a stay-at-home or *Stubenhocker*. What little sports I played in my twenties I had given up as work responsibilities expanded, political dramas unfolded, and I was lucky enough to find myself responsible for a family in which the children (just about) outnumbered adults. Like many people in similar stages of life, I entertained vague notions of taking up some form of exercise again when I had more time. And equally, like many people, I found that “more time” never introduced itself formally. During the Covid lockdowns, I decided that I needed to do something that would take me out of the house beyond gardening and settled on running. As anyone might have told me if I had asked (which I did not), starting exercise in middle age is not like doing it in your twenties. I did enjoy a few glorious runs in my capacity as an independent learner, but sadly these soon led to an injury that took several months to heal. While the exercises that helped me to recover eventually encouraged me to take up yoga, which I thoroughly recommend to anyone who needs more balance in their life, I started to think of running as the exercise I missed out on.

Coming to Wiko, I learnt that it is famous for its running group. Unfortunately for me, this group was, however, so highly accomplished that its members consider the 5–6 km run around the Grunewaldsee a warm-up exercise. I am actually in awe of them: in 2023, several members trained for, and competed in, half marathons, which is clearly an extremely cool thing. However, I saw no way of bridging the gap between my own vague ambitions and their skill level until a Thursday evening dinner sometime in late winter, where a much-beloved and very sporty Fellow suggested to several women and me that we could just form our own group. She also suggested a fairly simple training programme that would reduce the risk of injury. I am pleased to say that we recognised this advice as excellent. As the evening progressed, we agreed that while we could not really run, we could waddle; and a wonderful community was born. As “the ducks,” we met once a week to run, nay, hop, waddle, and glide together, and although our ambitions were occasionally interrupted by travel, visitors, and sadly some injury too, we all progressed from one-minute runs to longer intervals.

Being part of a group, however loosely knit, made a big difference to me. On the odd headache-y morning after a long night I still got up to run on a Friday (later Thursday) morning because I knew someone was waiting for me. I enjoyed every run because there was no judgement if one of us needed to slow down or return to walking, and because we all delighted in one of our members' amazing ability to sprint up the stairs on the north side of the lake without turning red in the face. It was an absolute highlight of my time at Wiko when two of us were able to go for a joint run with the established running group: to me that felt like I had reached an important goal. But really it was our journey to this point that made the difference, because it linked the thrill of running to the shared pleasure in the glorious nature that surrounded us and introduced me to the joy of unforced conversations enabled by shared exercise. There was something very special about the Wiko ducks' early morning chats about our plans for the day as we shoed the real ducks from the walkway circumnavigating the Hubertussee.

Since returning from Berlin I have been running on my own, and my pleasure in the experience and the particular way of being alive facilitated by running remains unabated. But I have missed the company of my fellow ducks, and I very much hope to recreate the experience and to find fellow conspirators who enjoy a bit of a waddle – or hop, or glide – with their morning chats as I settle back into life in the UK.

Life beyond the security of family bonds

There are very few films or novels about female professors whose research focuses on cultures other than their own and who are also part of a family with three small or school-age children. The reason is not that we lead boring lives – quite the contrary! But we just don't have the time to write, or even advise on, the screenplay or text. Even if we are lucky enough to work in a university where women are adequately represented at all career stages, the everyday pleasures of spending appropriate time with a partner and offspring and the desire to maintain friendships, collaborations, and acquaintances across long distances and cultural boundaries take up most of the day. In my case, I found the time I needed for work and family in numerous ways. In addition to doing less exercise than ideal (see above), I often relied on "easy" friendships for my social life. Many of my UK friends are people I met through the children or through work, while others were initially friends of my husband's, who is the more cheerful, fun, and outgoing partner in our relationship.

When I first applied to and was initially accepted by Wiko, we had planned to spend the year in Berlin as a family: our daughter was going to take a gap year before returning to the UK to attend university, our sons would go to school, and my husband would work remotely as much as possible. However, things turned out differently. If our sons left their school, we were told, their places would be given to others and they would not even be guaranteed a place in a school that offered their choices for the GCSE examinations for which they would need to prepare. While both boys had looked forward to a year in Berlin, they did not appreciate the prospect of not being able to return to the school where they had made friends and of having to take examination topics they had not chosen. In the end, we decided that our daughter and I would move to Berlin, while my husband and our sons would remain in the UK. As we were very kindly given a flat that, at a push and with foldout beds, could accommodate five, we could visit each other as often as possible. During their stays in Berlin, my husband and sons very much enjoyed participating in shared meals and especially dinners and the interaction with other Fellows. However, broadly limited to Wiko holidays and school holidays, we also spent long stretches of the year apart from each other.

Living without the support and expectations of all close family members was an interesting and novel experience for me. It was a great pleasure to see my daughter find work and a lovely group of friends in record time and to use our time together to explore the great, if only partially related, German traditions of the *Konditorei* and the *Regietheater*. Living with each other outside of established family structures allowed us to deepen our understanding of each other as individuals and women of linked but different generations. I did, however, miss my husband and sons terribly between visits. I also felt quite guilty for leaving my partner with the main responsibility for two adolescent young men who were, at 15, at a slightly more complicated stage of life than our daughter. My first response to this constellation was to make the most of my time in terms of my research, and to spend any free time either with my daughter or to catch up with other German family members. But after a few months, I realised that by dividing my time between work and family I was simply repeating an older pattern, albeit in a slightly different way than before. It seemed a pity to miss out on the opportunities that the year at Wiko offered me. As the attentive reader may have guessed, this was roughly around the time I took up running!

I also began to think more actively about life beyond the security of family and child-care. With our oldest child preparing to go to university and two children at an age where

they wanted to spend more time with friends than family, my husband and I had often spoken about the fact that we would be “empty nesters” in a few years. I for one had been quite worried about what I might do with myself once that happened. And yet I had not taken advantage of the opportunity to try out at Wiko what that life might be like. To remedy this omission, I decided to speak to everyone at Wiko in as much detail as possible and to follow up on texts, conversations, and encounters I had enjoyed. I cannot say that this was successful in every instance, but despite the occasional misunderstanding or clash of timetables, I am very pleased I tried. Revisiting first impressions confirmed to me that all of my Co-Fellows were and are genuinely interesting people. And in a few cases, it showed me that making new friends and acquaintances outside of the realm of immediately shared interests was not only possible, but fun. I really hope to catch up with many of the 2022/2023 Fellows in the coming years.

I would of course be lying if I pretended to have become a totally different person. At this point in time I am very glad that I will be able to spend the rest of the summer with all family members and to say good-bye properly when our daughter leaves for university. I am also glad to live with my husband again: I recognise that I may be a little biased, but he is a rather wonderful person. But I am happy to have learnt that I, or we, will enjoy navigating the impending adulthood of our children in more ways than I had imagined, and I look forward to opening my life to new people and experiences.

Overall then, the time at Wiko has left me with a clearer sense of my intellectual ambition and a new form of exercise to pursue, but it has also allowed me to overcome some of my fears about the changes to come in my life. I am very excited about the new friendships and opportunities that will emerge from that realisation.



(UN)FINISHED BUSINESS
JOYCE NYAIRO

Dr Joyce Nyairo is an independent researcher who works on cultural memory projects under Santuri Media Limited. She enjoys being a ghostwriter of biographies when she is not on Twitter trying to unpack the roots and routes of Kenyan cultural trends. For twenty years, she taught at Moi University, Eldoret, in the Department of Literature, Theatre and Film Studies. She spent five years as a Program Officer with the Ford Foundation Office for Eastern Africa, where she bridged theory and practice by initiating and managing cultural memory projects in the fields of Civil Society, Media, Arts, and Culture. Joyce has published numerous opinion pieces and features in Kenya's daily press, as well as a host of academic papers on East Africa's literary trends and popular culture in international peer-reviewed journals such as *African Affairs*, *Social Identities*, and the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. Her recent publications include *Ten Cities: Clubbing in Nairobi, Cairo, Kyiv, Johannesburg, Berlin, Naples, Luanda, Lagos, Bristol, Lisbon, 1960–March 2020*, which she edited with Johannes Hossfeld and Florian Sievers (2020), and a celebration of urban culture titled *Kenya@50: Trends, Identities and the Politics of Belonging* (2015). – Address: Santuri Media Ltd., P.O. Box 1051, 30100 Eldoret, Kenya.
E-mail: jnyairo@gmail.com.

I left Wiko on the morning of July 15, 2023. I had with me the same three suitcases I had landed with 11 months earlier, which made my year abroad look like a neat and compact narrative. But even with the three suitcases that my husband Alfred was pushing along at Berlin Brandenburg Airport, I knew that our time at Wiko surpassed everything we had come with, everything we had come hoping for, everything we were taking home with us.

I had arrived in Berlin on Friday, August 26, 2022, those three suitcases in hand and three goals in mind. First, complete the first draft of the 14 chapters of my book project on “Death and Funerary Practices in Modern Kenya.” Second, learn German. Third, travel to an ATP or WTA lawn tennis tournament in Europe – Basel, Monaco, or Stuttgart. I could choose from these and several others, perhaps I could even catch a Grand Slam – Roland Garros or Wimbledon. Arriving at the splendour that is Grunewald, bags set down, eyes firmly glued to the amazing sunny view from my pretty apartment at Villa Walther, my dreams for my time at Wiko grew wings. It looked and felt like a place where every success was possible.

And then it started raining. I shrugged off the excess baggage I had been hauling in my mind from the moment I left Nairobi. Let’s call it unfinished business. There was the political uncertainty and noise of an ongoing presidential petition following the General Election of August 9, 2022. There was the forthcoming wedding of our son, Ronald, in March, which was to be preceded by six improvised traditional ceremonies; two of them had been held just days before my departure. There was *The General and I*, a memoir I had ghostwritten. It was in the final stages of production, and I had to be available for nearly all the online meetings with the designers and with my team at Santuri Media as they planned the launch.

I was momentarily distracted by the death of Queen Elizabeth and forced to find a moment to reflect on her legacy in Kenya.¹ Her exit was an opportune moment to unpack the culture of our democracy, so I found time to gel those thoughts for one of Kenya’s progressive journals.²

As the days in Berlin grew colder, shorter, and darker, my third bit of unfinished business came to a happy ending. The designers produced a beautiful and thematically cogent cover design and layout; Wiko’s head of Public Relations, Katharina Wiedemann, helped me locate a brilliant printing press in Hanover, and Alfred and our daughter Wanda, the cover designer, arrived back in Nairobi on the morning of the December 8th book launch, which the team planned and executed to perfection.

As our other daughter Stephanie and I scoured Berlin’s Christmas markets in readiness for our trip back to Nairobi for the third of Ronald’s marriage ceremonies, I took stock of

1 <https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/let-s-keep-our-mourning-of-the-queen-brutally-honest-3944512>.

2 <https://www.theelephant.info/culture/2023/02/17/the-boon-and-the-bane-three-markers-of-democratic-culture-in-kenya/>.

my first four months at Wiko and the three goals I had arrived with. I had devised a simple formula to guarantee progress with my project. I would write a chapter every time I was invited to give a talk. That strategy extended to my Wiko colloquium on the last Tuesday of November, for which I would present Chapter One. Someone remarked at lunch that this is not the purpose of the Tuesday Colloquium. I smiled, suspicious as always of the idea of authentic traditions and far more interested in traditions as ways that are always in the making, constantly open to reinterpretation and infusion from many elsewhere.

Surabhi and NoViolet, fellow postcolonials, would understand my need to escape straitjackets, to do the work of adding perspectives without degenerating into native informant or diluting ways of becoming by making them legible for others. Halfway through the deluge of questions after my presentation titled “Dying in the City” – as a condition of (post)colonial spaces and as a bodily transition that generates clear cultural practices and attitudes – I had to summon my inner tennis. Breathe, one more ball, go where they don’t expect you to, breathe, laugh at your inadequacies, don’t balk at the erasure/ignorance of colonial legacies.

One of the conditions of being a racial or ethnic minority is invisibility. But here I was elected one of the speakers of my cohort, a position of some prominence. I had decided not to overthink it. I would do what came naturally to me, not fall over trying to imitate traditions. My experience as a student of character and situation had to be worth something in helping me navigate personalities, needs, and meanings. As long as I was willing to listen, I would be fine. Indeed, a big part of Wiko life is listening. Reflecting on, learning and experiencing from what others present as the work that keeps them awake at night; internalizing what people say about your work. My colloquium was invaluable in this regard. The following Tuesday I found myself better prepared when I gave a seminar at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, where I presented “On Grief and Public Mourning,” the last chapter of my book. I had by then revised my book outline. I now had ten chapters – more compact, more thematically coherent, I thought. In the new year I was due to speak at the University of Edinburgh on “The Politics of Autopsies,” at the Humboldt-Universität on “Missing Bodies,” and at the University of Exeter on “Vigils and Wakes.” This would take me to the halfway point of my Wiko goal Number One, but even before I hit that target, I published “Missing Bodies”³ as a commemorative piece on Kenya@60, sixty years of self-rule.

3 <https://nation.africa/kenya/kenya-60/missing-bodies-and-the-making-of-kenya-60-4277092>.

Goal Number Two, learn German, had proved to be business that I would not complete, but great nonetheless for character building. I was amazed by what I retained with such ease – numbers, nouns, poems. I was appalled but not entirely surprised by what I was so poor at – pronouns, verbs, syntax. The online magic of Duolingo helped but could not save me. Every time I spoke, my atrocious accent tickled most of my classmates. I shrugged off their bemusement. My life as a post-colonial cultural critic had long freed me from ideas of correctness, singularity, either/or, so I laughed with them and even as I decided that time spent on German lessons would be better spent on my book, I delighted in the great friends I had made thanks to these German classes – Oren, Judie, Goggy, Igor, Arie, Ronie, Danny, Lynda, and Rose.

On Day Three in Berlin, Rose and I had quickly connected over lawn tennis. As we kept vigil over the US Open, our love for the game eased our mutual struggles with German. In the dead of winter, we staged tennis parties in the TV room at Villa Jaffé as we watched the finals of the Australian Open. I was heartbroken when Rose's six months at Wiko were up and we hadn't made it to a tournament anywhere in Europe. In early June, as she reacquainted herself with her home in Australia, we kept up our tennis-watching tradition – exchanging rapid text messages mid-match and sharing podcasts, video clips, and Twitter posts and news reports dissecting the tournaments. That's how she reminded me about the WTA 500 tournament at the Steffi Graf Stadium in Grunewald. Yippee! I ticked off goal Number Three on Sunday, June 17th, even though my newly discovered Wiko tennis buffs, Moritz Kraemer and his partner Nahema Marchal, couldn't join me. Alas, goal Number One stood between me and the rest of the tournament that week. I tried not to curse Tchavdar Marinov and his Nationalism and Folk Religiosity Workshop because his invitation to present a paper there was keeping my strategy alive after the University of Exeter seminar was rescheduled to 2024.

Wiko's culture of excellence is so distinct. I felt its pressure on my work – Dunia's attention to detail; the timely efficiency of the librarians; the calming energy of Frank Nörenberg and Sophia Pick; the unfailing warmth of Maike and Vanessa; the way Vera Pfeffer and Nina Kitsos sit patiently with a problem until it is resolved; and the remarkable wisdom of Daniel Schönpflug, Iris Fleßenkämper, and Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger. Wiko is a time to think and it is also a place to excel.

With five talks and five chapters done, it was time to see a little more of the city and its buzzing streets. In September, Alfred, Njoki Wamai, and I had carefully chosen a spot on Olivaer Platz to watch the Kenyans perform their magic at the Berlin marathon. I had

enjoyed a few brunches in Kreuzberg, and walking through Friedrichshain I stopped by the Suicide Club to flesh out a thought about where in my book I would fit in a section on Nairobi's clubbing-related deaths.

The second bit of unfinished business that I had dragged with me from Nairobi, our son's wedding, was completed without a hitch but with a ton-load of fatigue. Ten days later, the family gathered again, this time in Berlin to mark my 60th birthday. That didn't go without surprises as the girls Stef, Wanda, and Nyambura, the latest addition to our family, planned a second birthday dinner with Yael and Oren Harman, whose daughter Sol was marking her 3rd birthday!

Thanks to the generosity of Sultan, I had made it to the Opera; but despite all of Yael's best efforts, I never made it to the skating rink. Alfred and I still wanted to watch a play and to enjoy some music at a jazz club. Where had time gone? Berlin's commemorative landscape is a treasure hunt for any student of cultural memory. I found this was also true of Potsdam, Tübingen, Reutlingen, and Dresden. The things that have been selected for memorializing and the ways they are remembered in these cities are so intriguing, so instructive about the economics of memory work. One of the highlights of my museum visits was the exhibition "Roads Not Taken. Oder: Es hätte auch anders kommen können," which I went to with Lynda, Alfred, and Mwarigha, a friend who visited us from Canada so that we could fulfil a long-held desire to drive to Prague.

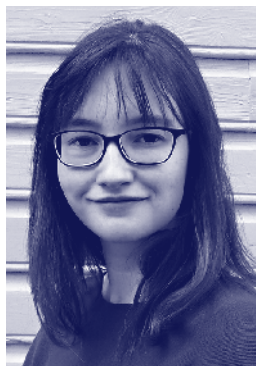
As our time at Wiko drew to a close I reflected on the new goals and excess baggage I had picked up, activities and events that had not been in my purview when I first arrived in Berlin. The choir and Pilates were pure joy and were also moments of reckoning with what I will never achieve. German comfort with nakedness and doorless showers drove me away from its efficient public swimming pools, but its endlessly cool temperatures and the relatively flat terrain of Berlin led me to try out a new sport – running. "Couch to 5K," the wonderful app that Susan Marks introduced me to, led to the formation of the *Wiko Waddlers 2023*, aka the Five Ducks – Judie, Claudia, Insa, Lynda, and I. I wonder how they are doing. I am still working to achieve a straight 5K run, no pausing, no walking, no dawdling. Unfinished business.

Recreational activities helped me push to the back of my mind unfinished business Number One, the state of Kenya's politics. Not forever though. On Friday, May 5th, I found myself on the lawns of State House Nairobi. I had been invited by the Federal Republic of Germany to accompany Chancellor Olaf Scholz on his official visit to Kenya. What?! I gathered myself. This was a fresh vantage point from which I could study the

culture of politics and the politics of culture – in both countries. As we moved from one official function to the next, with my role as interlocutor necessitating shifting nationalities, I revisited my ideas on cultural hybridity, multiple identities, and the work of belonging. I am still unpacking the many meanings of that visit and its implications for Kenya’s tangled politics, its sinking economy, and its perpetual relegation of culture to an afterthought.

On our last day at Wiko, Alfred and I tackled a tough reckoning on our bucket lists – a search for the landmark of the Berlin Conference of 1884, that site where our fate as postcolonials was sealed. Wilhelmstraße 76. There is no building, no towering monument to/of atonement, just a tall plaque bearing an edited (hi)story in German, English, and French. A sense of anti-climax tangled with numerous unnameable emotions. There was so much to think about regarding cultural geographies and the force with which ideas from a place can disperse across oceans for centuries and also about the (im)material forms that reconciliation can take.

Speaking of (un)finished histories, as soon as I settled back home in Eldoret, I finally found the intellectual bandwidth to complete a report that I had been working on since May – the assessment of the Lisa Maskell Fellowship for the Gerda Henkel Foundation. Now, I am staring out of the window on a flight from Eldoret trying not to overthink the Championing Culture panel that I will soon moderate at the Nairobi LitFest. I pick up my phone to capture a striking image of the clouds. The fluffy white form reminds me of some unfinished business with Berlin’s snow. When will I get round to making a video collage of changing seasons from those photographs that I took – religiously – every Sunday at circa 9 a.m. from the window of my Villa Walther bedroom? Enough of (re)membering my life at Wiko. Let me get back to Chapter Six, “The Template Eulogy,” so that my book on death can come to birth. After all, the only good book is a finished book.



INEFFABLE
ROSE O'DEA

Rose O'Dea is a research scientist with experience in behavioural ecology, evidence synthesis, demography, and metascience. Born and raised in Canberra, Australia, Rose's PhD began in Sydney, morphed in Montréal, and finished in COVID-19 lockdown. Rose is the current president of SORTEE – a not-for-profit society she co-founded in 2020 with the aim of improving the reliability of research in ecology and evolution. Perhaps the best advice Rose ever received was to apply for a College for Life Sciences fellowship at Wiko. She applied twice. Now she keeps recommending that others apply too. Today Rose lives in Melbourne, Australia. – Address: School of Agriculture, Food and Ecosystem Sciences, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, 3052. E-mail: rose.eleanor.o.dea@gmail.com.

I've spent over half my life emotionally invested in the triumphs and disasters of tennis player Roger Federer. During Wiko's first week, in September 2022, 41-year-old Roger announced his retirement. The players sobbed when his farewell match ended. In Villa Walther's apartment 231 I sobbed too, mourning the parasocial relationship most evocative of my youth. The end had been a long time coming. I was still blindsided by how it felt.

I didn't know how it would feel to be at Wiko. In Australia, when telling friends where I was going, I worried: "It's going to be *a lot* of socialising." Recent lockdowns and border closures had made life small and isolated, and I had liked it. There had been nowhere to go, nothing to do, and no one to meet. It was soothing: no big decisions, no regrets, and no insomnia. But mere weeks after stepping onto Koenigsallee, newly smitten with Wiko life, my worry changed: "It's going to *hurt* to leave." Too soon the leaves of the Villa Walther vine turned red, then dropped.

The Fellows' Yearbook archives describe just about every aspect of life at Wiko. The gifts of Grunewald and grandiose freedom, aided by exceptionally supportive staff. German classes, the miraculous library, the food, the wine. Colloquia and conversations. Distant cultures brought closer. Bildung. The forest and lakes. Swimming, running, cycling, Pilates, table tennis, movies, music. *Berlin*. Europe! Celebrations and consolations. Late nights, dancing, singing. The people, always the people. Chance. Kismet. Gratitude. Family. Finite time, competing priorities, regrets, advice. Fellows who wrote a lot, read a lot, heard a lot, thought a lot, talked a lot. Yet we cannot convey the tacit knowledge of how it felt to live that fleeting life.

And then it ends. Returning to Australia, when telling friends where I'd been, I reasoned: "I just think life will never be *that* good again." While most people offered well-meaning rebuttals, a former Wiko Fellow simply agreed. Of course, he remembered how it felt.

Months have passed. I keep looking back. I revisit colloquia recordings and trawl the Fellow Finder archive for glimpses of other Wiko lives. Out of 1,659 former Yearbook entries, one gave an outlet for my Wiko fixation. The 2014/2015 Fellow Simone Reber created an infographic of their year-that-was. In a similar vein (and, online, in the same colour scheme) the following page presents a slice of who we were. But not what we felt. Thank you, Wiko, for everything.



Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin



43 Fellows 2022/2023

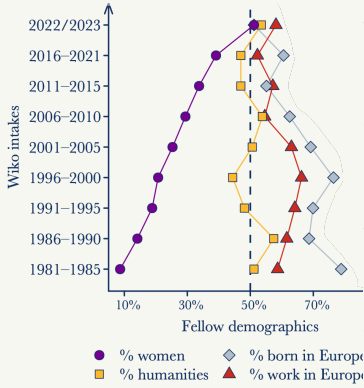
Infographic by Rose E. O'Dea

53% Humanities

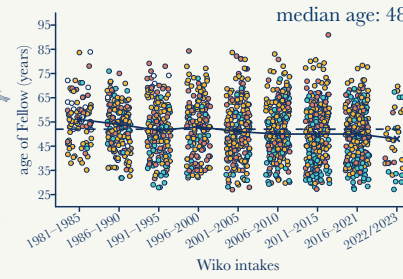
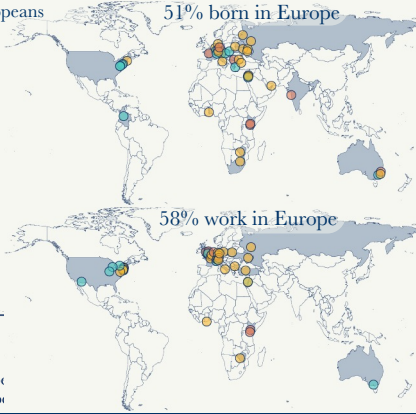
28% Natural Sciences

19% Social Sciences

2022/2023: relatively more women, fewer Europeans



51% born in Europe



58% work in Europe

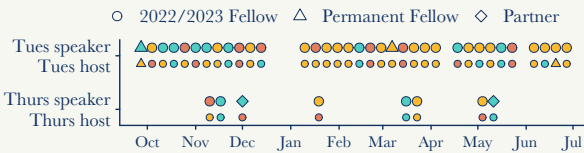
43 Colloquia

39 recordings

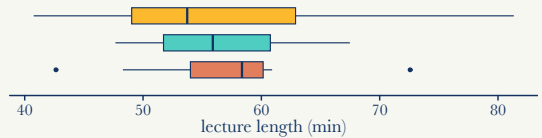
32 hosts

35 Tuesdays

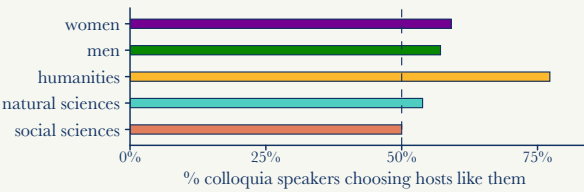
8 Thursdays



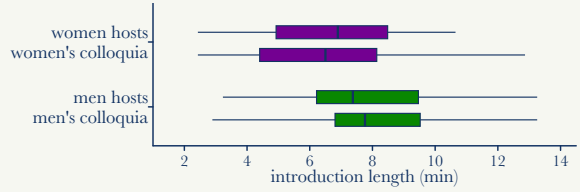
Lectures median length: 56 minutes, 44 seconds



Matching demographics between Fellows and chosen hosts



Introductions median length: 7 minutes, 9 seconds



Questions



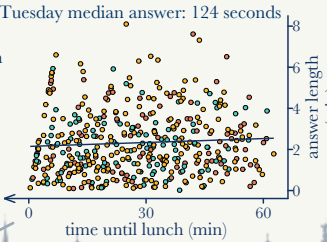
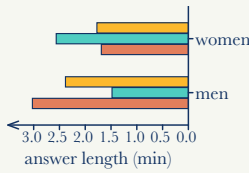
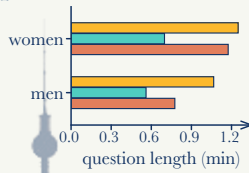
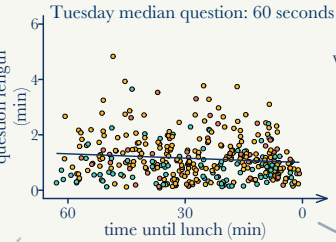
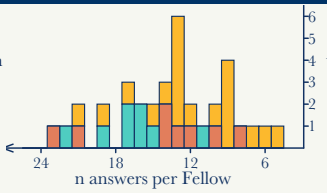
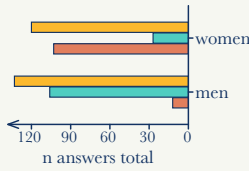
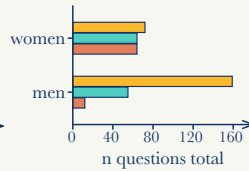
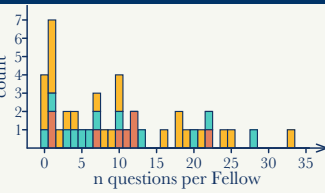
426 questions from 39 Fellows
8 hours, 0 minutes, 50 seconds

543 answers from 36 Fellows

20 hours, 20 minutes, 13 seconds



Answers



"I'll try to keep it short"

"Just quickly, I'll say..."



CONNECTING MY MULTIPLE LIVES DANAI PAPAGEORGIU

Danai Papageorgiou was born in 1992 in Athens, Greece. She is a biologist with a Bachelor's and a Master's degree from the University of Patras, Greece, where she worked on avian diversity in urban areas and on the stopover ecology of migratory songbirds. She did her doctorate (2016–2021) affiliated with both the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior and the University of Konstanz in Germany, and she explored collective decision-making and social structure within a society of vulturine guineafowl, earning a prestigious Otto Hahn Medal from the Max Planck Society. After completing her doctorate, she embarked on her first postdoctoral position (2021–2022) at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies at the University of Zurich. Then she was a Fellow of the College for Life Sciences in the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (September 2022–March 2023), investigating the responses of subordinate group members to the actions of individuals in positions of power. Currently, she is a Marie Curie Research Fellow in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Bristol and in the Department of Evolutionary Anthropology at the University of Zurich. Her upcoming endeavours include an exciting fieldwork expedition in Shark Bay, Australia, where she aims to study bottlenose dolphins. – Address: Changes regularly. E-mail: danai.papageorgiou@proton.me.

I am writing this piece from my current postdoctoral base, reflecting on my beautiful time at Wiko. It has been three months since I “graduated” from Grunewald, and I have been experiencing the nostalgia that previous Yearbooks have reported. My time there was a journey of self-rediscovery, as I had somewhat lost myself due to the harsh realities of academia. Being an early-career researcher constantly on the move between cities, countries,

and continents, a woman, and the first doctorate holder in my family, adding also my class background into the equation, I have so far met some significant challenges in my path. When I began my PhD almost seven years ago, I was full of motivation to explore animal societies, travel the world, and acquire new skills, ranging from coding and scientific writing to changing flat tires in the mud. I was eager to go anywhere in the world that could provide answers to my research questions, spending months in savannahs, forests, and remote islands. However, the accumulation of hardships along this journey made me reconsider whether I wanted to continue or not.

Wiko provided me with a safe space to explore this question without the pressure to produce immediate results. It allowed me to rediscover the version of myself that couldn't wait to learn more about how animals live their lives. In this sense, Wiko played a crucial role in preventing a drop from the "leaky pipeline",¹ which is invaluable for both the drop herself and maybe also for the scientific community.

Wiko embodies a rare culture of academic freedom. While in academia, I often felt like the protagonist of *La double vie de Véronique*, leading separate lives that were disconnected from each other. Each life setup allowed me to express different perspectives. However, at Wiko, I felt safe enough to start connecting hidden dots that explained how my personal trajectory had influenced my research journey and how my research had opened new windows in my life.

The daily interactions with scholars from various disciplines and areas of expertise reminded me, in practice, that topics considered taboo in my field were regular subjects of discussion in other fields. For instance, I have unfortunately witnessed (post-)colonialism in the field of (behavioural) ecology, particularly in the way field sites are managed, where segregation based on class background and, sometimes, race is normalized. Discussing such topics has often felt unwelcome or been regarded as irritating. Not accepting these norms used to make me feel isolated, and I struggled to express my critique constructively among peers. I even felt uncomfortable with my own research, and signs from close peers indicated that I had to suppress such thoughts to avoid being perceived as a heretic by the broader community.

1 Farah Jelaani Shaik and Bernard Fusulier, eds., "Experiences of Early Career Researchers/Academics: A Qualitative Research on the Leaky Pipeline and Interrelated Phenomena in Six European Countries," *GARCIA Working Papers*, no. 11 (2016).

Unexpectedly, during my time at Wiko, I connected with individuals who not only shared my views and concerns regarding decolonizing ecology, but who also had a more radical and well-educated perspective on the matter. They possessed a rich repertoire of arguments and a solid historical background, developed through their own scholarly journeys. As they opened up and spoke about these issues, I found myself re-evaluating my own experiences and perspectives and their connection to historical realities. During my time in Berlin, a paper describing the harsh colonial situation at the field station in Kenya, where I spent over 15 months for my PhD, was published² and set me thinking deeply. My Co-Fellows showed interest in discussing this piece, leading us to organize journal clubs on related topics across different disciplines. Thus, what was perceived as taboo in the field station and in the field of (behavioural) ecology at large became a lively, informative, open, and constructive discussion at Wiko. This made me feel less like a heretic and brought me into contact with scholars from the humanities, from the social sciences, and those holding critical perspectives in the natural sciences. I want to express my gratitude to my Co-Fellows for their open sharing and the fruitful interactions we had.

In addition to these experiences, I found time to initiate and make significant progress in a new project and to make progress on pending tasks, resulting in two manuscripts currently under review and one close to submission for publication in a scientific journal. I also shared my work with numerous labs and institutes I visited during these six months – I had the opportunity to give talks at the University of Potsdam, the University of Münster, the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, the Freie Universität Berlin, and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. At Wiko, I also had the privilege of giving a Thursday Colloquium and participating as a panel speaker in a Three Cultures Forum on inequality. These experiences together expanded my network within, around, and beyond Berlin. One of my primary goals during this fellowship was to explore the potential of applying for a junior research group leader position in Berlin or its close proximity. I thus wanted to get a sense of the atmosphere and dynamics in the various institutions that might be interested in hosting me. Excitingly, I have accomplished

2 Mark Griffiths, Fridah Mueni, Kate Baker, and Surshti Patel, “Decolonising spaces of knowledge production: Mpala research centre in Laikipia County, Kenya,” *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, published electronically February 13, 2023, doi:10.1177/25148486231156728.

this goal, and I am looking forward to preparing an application to hopefully return soon to Berlin for a longer period.

Even though I was initially afraid of its winter, possibly because I was born and raised in the south, Berlin remains a dream place for me to live and work. I highly value the openness and the diversity of interests that the city allows its residents to develop. During my time at Wiko, I had the chance to live my multiple parallel lives that I have always loved but had kept somewhat hidden from one another. I could enjoy techno parties, pursue research, engage in interdisciplinary interactions, explore international plant-based cuisine, meet like- and unlike-minded individuals from around the world, attend punk and other concerts, enjoy art exhibitions, experience the Berlinale, practice aerial acrobatics, support local social movements addressing gentrification, visit the best pet hospital in the area, and even have my cat's benign tumour treated, which allowed her to enjoy Villa Walther on three legs. The list of experiences is endless. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to attend Wiko, for the support of its staff, especially the librarians who facilitated my literature searches and Jana for her endless interest and care, for Dunia and her team for always having something vegan for me to eat, and for my Co-Fellows who welcomed me into their diverse worlds of knowledge. This experience is one I will never forget, and I hope to return soon. Καλή συνέχεια σε όλα μας και εις το επανιδείν!



NOW, THIS IS A STORY ALL ABOUT HOW
MY LIFE GOT FLIPPED, TURNED
UPSIDE DOWN...
MAROŠ PLEŠKA

Maroš Pleška is a research fellow at the Rockefeller University in New York. He completed his undergraduate studies in Bratislava, Slovakia, where he studied molecular biology. His PhD work at the Institute of Science and Technology Austria focused on the biology of restriction-modification systems, which are considered a primitive form of prokaryotic innate immunity. As a postdoctoral researcher in the Laboratory of Living Matter at the Rockefeller University, he developed novel experimental and theoretical approaches to study the behavior of microorganisms at an unprecedented scale and resolution. His primary interest, which he also pursued as a College for Life Sciences Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg, is in understanding the role of individual-level variability in population-level processes, both in the context of microbial populations and in populations of higher organisms. – Address: Laboratory of Living Matter, Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave, New York, NY 10065, USA. E-mail: mpleska@rockefeller.edu.

As a nineties kid, I used to watch a lot of television. In the opening credits to one of my favorite TV shows called *The Fresh Prince*, young Will Smith, playing a street-smart teenager from West Philadelphia, slams the door of a taxi to find himself in front of his new home, a beautiful mansion in Bel Air, Los Angeles – a rich neighborhood studded with large luxurious villas. I have not thought about the show for a long time, but I was strongly reminded of the scene once I managed to escape the busy streets of New York City to find myself standing with a large suitcase at the doorstep of Villa Linde, a stately old house conveniently located in what appeared (and later proved) to be one of the fancier districts of Berlin. For young Will, adjusting to the new environment was difficult and

his struggles were the central focus of the TV show. For me, the transition was less dramatic, even though it did involve a few ups and downs.

To begin with, due to a combination of logistic, professional, and personal constraints, I had the honor to be the last arriving Fellow, joining the program only in March 2023, approximately six months after everyone else had jumped aboard. Therefore, I was welcomed by an astoundingly heterogeneous group of circa forty people and their partners, all of whom seemed to know each other very well and were thus eager to get to know a newcomer. In contrast, I as that newcomer knew very little about the composition of this remarkable assembly and the dynamics within it. As a person who is easily socially overwhelmed, it would be a big understatement to say that I was socially overwhelmed. I was not discouraged though, and day by day, or should I say lunch by lunch, I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know almost everyone (I do remember introducing myself to a few people at the goodbye party, though). The effort definitely paid off and if I had to pick one aspect that made my Wiko experience memorable, it would certainly be the diverse mixture of interesting characters and unique personalities, all working, playing, and laughing in unison.

While the timeframe of my fellowship at Wiko was constrained by a multitude of predominantly external factors, circumstances luckily arranged it such that it happened at the best possible time. Or, better said, at the time when I needed it the most. Before my departure to Berlin, I was swamped with personal, family, and personal struggles. I had projects to finish, job applications to submit, interviews to conduct, a lab-space to clean out, all of this while raising three small kids in the hectic city of New York, which is known to offer many opportunities, but little time to relax. The environment I found in Berlin was pretty much the opposite and therefore almost exactly what I needed. Ahead of me were four months of barely any obligations and distractions other than the beautiful lakes inviting me to take a swim and a large forest to explore. To make things even better, a delicious lunch (and even more delicious breakfast!) was served every day so that I could spend most of my time thinking about my current work and future plans, undistracted from such trivial things as nutritional needs. Indeed, the official slogan of the College for Life Sciences program that convinced me to apply was: "Gain Time to Think!" In retrospect I can certify that the slogan was fitting, and time to think, which seems to be an increasingly valuable commodity in academic research, was offered in abundance, together with all the spectacular meals.

So, what did I do with all that time? Most importantly, I made significant progress in my research project, which I embarked on just a few months before leaving for Berlin

and which I am currently very excited about. The aim of the project is to bridge the behavioral and physiological timescale of individual organisms to the ecological timescale of populations in order to quantify the extent to which individual-level variations affect population-level dynamics. Put simply, I aim to quantify how much variation between individuals within a group matters once we zoom out and observe whole populations instead. Microorganisms, which are the main object of my scientific interest, are a good model organism for this sort of a study, since their small size and short generation times make it possible to capture the behavior and physiology of hundreds of individuals across several generations in just a few days.

Initially, I focused on finding a meaningful set of variables to capture the astounding variation between individual organisms thriving in the synthetic ecosystems observed in my experiments. Instead of arbitrarily deciding on traits to be quantified, I attempted to extract the traits directly from the microscopic images using artificial neural networks, an approach not too dissimilar to the (in)famous ChatGPT, which was one of the more frequent topics of our lunch discussions. The analysis revealed that most of the phenotypic variation observed in my experiments can be conveniently captured by a small number of traits – two morphological and two behavioral. Using these traits to quantify the phenotype of all individuals, I found that populations are not static in their phenotypic composition, but move along seemingly deterministic trajectories, which are strongly correlated to population sizes. This effort not only informs us that, at least in the organisms under study, the phenotypic composition of the population is linked to the size of the population, but also gives us a general and flexible framework to directly quantify and compare the strength of this association across different biological and environmental contexts. I am currently in the process of finishing the quantitative analysis of the data, and I plan to write the manuscript reporting on the results of this work in the upcoming months.

Besides allowing me to significantly advance my scientific work, the time at Wiko was also important because it gave me the opportunity to think more about my future scientific career. I have submitted a number of job applications and conducted several interviews. In the end, I was fortunate to be offered a nice position at the New York Genome Center, which will allow me to do what I enjoy the most – develop novel theoretical and experimental approaches to extract biological knowledge from large volumes of complex microscopy data. This success would hardly be possible without the peace of mind that I found at Wiko.

Even though I spent most of my time thinking and working by myself, I benefited greatly from interacting with other Fellows. Like the desserts served after every meal,

that made me fail my attempt at a sugar-free diet, the conversations were always unique and never dull. I have learned different things from different people, but there was one piece of information that I have heard from almost everyone I talked to. When I told people that I was only staying for the second half of the year, almost everyone invariably told me that it was a great decision as I would avoid the depressing winter and enjoy Berlin in the spring and summer, when it was the most beautiful. This really made me wonder about how horrible the winter must have been.

While I clearly did arrive at the best possible time, not everything related to my stay at Wiko was smooth sailing, however. By far the toughest aspect of it was that I was away from my wife and children for something over three months – the longest period so far. Luckily, they were able to join me near the end of the fellowship and once they did, my happiness peaked, and not a negligible number of people have told me that it also showed. Indeed, the final month of my stay at Wiko was one of the nicest, most relaxed, and strangely enough also most productive times I have recently experienced.

In biology, it is often said that just as there is no organism without an environment, there is no environment without an organism. The external factors we experience are rarely something that preexists and that we have to simply adapt to, but instead, we all together choose, create, and modify the little niches that we thrive in. At the end of my report, I would therefore like to thank the people who helped me create my niche in Berlin: I will be forever thankful to Jana for taking care of everything related to the fellowship itself and especially for helping me when I was experiencing health issues. My gratitude also goes to Vera and Andrea for arranging everything needed to accommodate my family and me. I thank Dunia for bringing the most delicious food to the table, Nina for taking care of all the formalities (which I am notoriously bad at), Sultan for his wonderful friendship, Barbara for directing this unique program, and everyone else who made this experience so memorable. I hope I was able to do the same at least for some of you and I wish to see all of you again soon.



LES PENSIONNAIRES ANTONIN POTTIER

Antonin Pottier est maître de conférences de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales. Ses centres d'intérêt incluent les conséquences socio-économiques du changement climatique et de sa limitation, l'histoire de la pensée économique et de ses liens avec l'environnement, le rôle de la discipline économique dans la décision publique. Dans *Comment les économistes réchauffent la planète* (Paris : Seuil, 2016), il a étudié le diagnostic du changement climatique posé par la littérature économique et les solutions qu'elle propose. Il a édité récemment *Concilier économie et écologie : les textes fondateurs du CIREC*, Presses des Ponts, 2023. Il réfléchit présentement aux interactions entre la justice sociale, les inégalités et les mesures de réduction des émissions. – Adresse : Chaire économie et soutenabilité, EHESS, 54 boulevard Raspail, 75006 Paris, France. E-mail : pottier@centre-cired.fr.

J'arrive par le sentier, comme tous les matins. L'air est frais, et clair le temps. Un trille me surprend et me fige ; je ne veux brusquer personne. Je repère le chanteur, bien accroché sur une branche du lilas. Perché à bonne distance des dangers du sol, couvert par le feuillage, il vocalise. Sa gorge orange palpite, son bec entrouvert. Quel plaisir de voir un rouge-gorge et d'entendre son chant. Il me salue et je le salue en retour, rasséréné par sa musique.

Je m'avance vers la porte et tends instinctivement le doigt vers un bouton au milieu du mur. Quelle est cette nouvelle sonnette ? Je m'arrête au moment de presser. Au bout de mon ongle, une boule épineuse, compacte, deux yeux et des ocelles, huit longues pattes qui dessinent une toile d'araignée dont les nervures radiales auraient été soulignées au khôl. Je laisse là le faucheur et j'entre dans le bâtiment.

Je profite de la douceur du matin pour petit-déjeuner. Entre le hêtre et le bouleau, une trouée du feuillage me laisse entrevoir un saule. À son pied, le lac étale ses eaux perses. Des algues font des poches jaunes qui maculent sa surface immobile. J'imagine dans quelques heures la ronde des agrions et des sympetrum sur ses berges, les éclaboussures des baigneurs. En attendant, le calme règne ici. Sur la terrasse déserte, l'écho des conversations passées résonne peu à peu en moi. Les images des jours défilent dans une théorie troublante, pellicule de l'année enroulée sur elle-même, superposant les saisons, les thèmes, les personnes, les plats. Un brouhaha de couverts heurtés, de remarques et d'arguments, de découvertes et de réfutations, de rires, tout se mêle et se mélange, magma indistinct, bribes de discours qu'il faudra peut-être classer, ordonner, ranger.

Quatre ailes blanches viennent à passer. La piéride s'est posée sur un replat de la pente douce qui monte vers le bosquet. Elle replie ses ailes, recouvre ses antérieures de ses postérieures et se repose quelques instants. Les herbes toutes à même hauteur troublent ma vision. Les points jaunes des crépides, les blancs des pâquerettes, le vert de la pelouse, le bistre des mousses desséchées, tout est affecté d'un léger flou. La piéride finit par se confondre avec les pâquerettes qu'elle visite. Plus près de moi, les abeilles atterrissent sur les boutons jaunes des porcelles, butinent, s'élancent et recommencent.

J'entre dans mon bureau. Sa blancheur saute aux yeux. Nettoyé de ses livres, débarrassé de ses papiers, il a retrouvé l'aspect qu'il avait à mon arrivée. Les étagères sont vides, la table nette, les sièges rangés, dossiers remontés. Un espace vierge dans lequel on peut projeter sa pensée, déployer ses idées. Un nouvel élu occupera bientôt ma cellule dans cette abbaye de Thélème.

La lumière entre par les larges vitres, tamisée par les feuillages de l'acacia et du charme. En hiver, le soleil se levait vers les chênes de la rue, il montait péniblement sur l'horizon et ne parvenait jamais clairement jusqu'à ma table de travail, bloqué par l'ample bâtisse de l'autre côté de la haie. Au printemps, il dardait ses feux sur moi à travers les branches dénudées, m'aveuglait tant et si bien que je devais me résoudre à tirer les rideaux. J'appréhendais l'été et sa lumière crue, mais, maintenant, les rayons venus du zénith ne frappent qu'une mince bande le long des fenêtres. Doux et quiet, l'éclairage est idéal pour l'étude.

Long trait noir contrastant sur le blanc, un ichneumon est suspendu au plafond. Je dois à nouveau me munir de mes outils, une feuille et un verre à pied, pour le capturer puis le relâcher à l'air libre. J'ai acquis une certaine dextérité dans l'exercice, pour l'avoir tant pratiqué sur les asilides et les guêpes, surtout, qui venaient me rendre visite. Autant les cris des enfants, les grincements de la balancelle, le frou-frou du robot tondeur ne me

dérangeaient pas, autant le zonzon des guêpes avait le don de m'agacer. D'une mouche on a toujours l'espoir qu'elle parte d'elle-même après quelques tours de piste, mais la guêpe s'entête contre la vitre. Elle a décidé d'aller dans cette direction, elle ira, inconsciente de l'obstacle qui se dresse. Elle vole, vole, constamment retenue, et s'épuise. Dérangé par ce bourdonnement incessant, incapable de me concentrer sur autre chose, il me fallait chasser l'intruse et sauver la captive. Le tout sans me faire piquer.

En parlant de piquêre, je me souviens de ce moment de frayeur lorsque l'air s'emplit d'un bruit terrible. La guerre aux portes de l'Europe frappait-elle finalement ici ? J'attribuai à une machine ce vrombissement sensationnel, mais ma méprise fut de courte durée. Un frelon fonçait vers moi. Imposant par sa grosseur, terrifiant par ses bandes jaunes et noires, les ailes battant une cadence infernale, il allait me percuter pour sûr. Il entra dans la pièce – je fis un mouvement de recul –, vira de bord et repartit, aussi rapidement et bruyamment qu'il était arrivé. Je fermai précipitamment la fenêtre et pus savourer le dénouement inespéré de cette attaque imprévue.

L'ichneumon enfin enclos dans l'hémisphère de verre, je ne résiste pas à la curiosité de le détailler. Quelle étrange bestiole tout de même. Un corps allongé recouvert par des ailes aux reflets irisés, des pattes oranges et noires, des yeux exorbités prolongés de fines antennes. Elle pourrait malgré tout passer inaperçue, n'était-ce cette tarière, long fil qui prolonge démesurément son abdomen, au point qu'on pourrait confondre appendice et principal. J'enlève la feuille, elle s'envole, elle chassera mieux dehors.

Je m'appuie sur le rebord de la fenêtre et m'attarde sur ce coin de verdure maintes fois contemplé. Le ballet des syrphes se poursuit, immuable. Chacun stationne dans la bulle qu'il a délimitée, attentif au moindre mouvement, prêt à défendre son territoire aérien. L'un d'eux, averti par un signal repéré de lui seul, brusquement fonce vers la menace, déclenchant par ricochet l'alarme et le mouvement des autres. Ce sont, pendant de brefs instants, des traits qui fusent, des vols en piqués, un roulé-boulé d'ailes et de pattes, avant que chacun reprenne une position stationnaire, jusqu'à la prochaine incartade.

Des coups sourds me font lever les yeux. Je connais cette branche qui part à l'équerre du tronc du robinier-acacia, avant de s'incliner et de se diviser en rameaux moussus. Morte, elle semblait toujours prête à casser lorsque l'écureuil, sa queue rousse en étendard, la dévalait pour mieux sauter plus loin. Tout près du tronc, elle subit désormais les attaques rythmées d'un bec puissant, porté par une tête noire, à la tache blanche entourant l'œil, rehaussée d'une nuque ponceau. Fermement agrippé, le pic épeiche déchiquette l'aubier, découvrant une marque claire sur l'écorce sombre.

Plus bas, une demoiselle visite les feuilles du charme, fragile bâton bleu virevoltant de l'une à l'autre. Ah, le charme ! Je ne l'avais pas remarqué au début. Dépouillé par l'hiver, il se tenait coi, jusqu'à ce que, poussé par le lieu, il s'insinue peu à peu en moi. Ses branches caressaient mes fenêtres, pénétraient mon espace, je ne pouvais que m'en remettre à lui et me placer sous sa coupe. Quel être fantastique, quelle chimère ! Son tronc tourné vers l'ouest se déplie à étages réguliers avant de se perdre dans la houppe, des lianes courent en son long, baleines rugueuses d'un corset de verdure. Il en résulte une mosaïque de couleurs, de ports et de textures ; s'entremêlent le vert profond du lierre et le tendre du charme, les rameaux dressés et ceux courbés, les bords lisses et dentés, le satiné et le froissé.

Je mis longtemps à comprendre qu'il était le chemin qu'empruntaient les fourmis que je retrouvais dans mes brouillons, lorsque je consultais mes notes, intrigué par ces passagères errantes, visiblement égarées dans ces couches de papiers. Aujourd'hui, pas de fourmis. Certaines feuilles ont jauni, d'autres sont minées par les chenilles, entortillées par les nymphes, et les fruits nombreux, protégés par leur gaine trifide, font ployer sa silhouette, promesse d'une perpétuation.

La petite lampe qui, les après-midis d'hiver, éclairait mes lectures est inutilisée depuis longtemps. Dressée, raide, peinée, me reprochant peut-être mon abandon. Une épeire diadème en a heureusement fait son tuteur et a tiré de longs fils jusqu'aux montants de la fenêtre. Cette charpente accueille une spirale d'une surprenante régularité, soutenue de fines traverses. Je regarde l'épeire au centre de son domaine, la tête vers le bas, ses quatre premières pattes courbées vers l'avant, deux horizontales et deux encore laissées en arrière. Elle attend je ne sais qui, je ne sais quoi, et me montre son ventre orangé, l'extrémité noire de son abdomen, ses pédipalpes. Ses pattes translucides sont cerclées de noir. Je ne veux pas déranger le piège patiemment tissé qui la nourrira et dois me contorsionner pour apercevoir la croix de taches blanches qui orne son dos. Elle est bien installée, elle passera l'été ici. Je donne un tour de clef définitif à mon bureau.

Je descends et sors par la porte de côté. On part à la dérobée, comme si l'on ne partait pas vraiment, comme si l'on pouvait toujours revenir. Un geste anodin, tel un propriétaire quelconque portant sur le trottoir les branchages taillés de son jardinet, un pas au-dehors, un pas au-dedans, hésitant sur sa destination finale. N'est-ce pas moi Grimm, dont le nom est négligemment inscrit sur la boîte aux lettres, sur une plaque qui semble, comme moi, être là depuis toujours ? Sortir par l'entrée principale serait par trop solennel : parcourir l'esplanade, descendre quelques marches comme on quitte un festival, défiler entre ces deux murailles, la façade sévère et brune, rehaussée de son portique à l'antique et de sa

tour qui me regarde de travers, son pendant de verre, ondulé et transparent comme un rêve moderne, hésiter sur le chemin à prendre pour contourner l'érable, franchir d'un pas qu'on souhaiterait décidé le seuil de la propriété mais se retourner vers la plaque de l'insitution, soupirer et ne pas s'empêcher de saluer les mânes de l'ancien maire, quel sens cela aurait ? Mieux vaut encore la petite porte.

Je longe le mur, les yeux fixés sur mes pensées. La vigne vierge le recouvre de ses rameaux, morts et vivants entremêlés, lancés dans une extension sans cesse reprise et sans cesse contrariée. Mon regard erre sur les pavés brunâtres, mon pas mal assuré trébuche sur leurs aspérités. Les pavés eux-mêmes semblent agités d'un tremblement, je les vois bouger, sautiller, aurais-je la berlue ? Je reprends mes esprits et un petit carré bondit à mes pieds. Quelques moments de concentration et je discerne des pattes qui s'élancent, un corps verruqueux qui les accompagne, tiré par des yeux globuleux. Minuscule comme une phalange, un crapaud croise ma route, si parfaitement camouflé que j'ai manqué de l'écraser. Quelle transhumance a-t-il entreprise ? Vient-il du lac de droite, se dirige-t-il vers le lac de gauche ? Parviendra-t-il seulement à destination ? Il poursuit ses sauts, oublieux de ma présence, tendu vers son but, et se perd dans le lierre qui rampe au sol. Un moment encore les feuilles bruissent de ses bonds, le silence retombe. J'ouvre le portillon, je me retrouve dans la rue. Je suis parti.



FLORA'S SMILE
EKATERINA PRAVIŁOVA

A native of St. Petersburg (Russia), Professor Ekaterina Praviłova received her doctoral degree from the Russian Academy of Sciences. She was a research scholar at the Academy of Sciences and taught history at the European University at St. Petersburg from 2002 to 2006. In the fall of 2006, she joined the Department of History at Princeton University. Her research interests vary greatly, ranging from the development of Russian law, economy, and governance to the study of imperial art and historiography. Praviłova is the author of an award-winning book, *A Public Empire: Property and the Quest for the Common Good in Imperial Russia* (Princeton University Press, 2014), and of *The Ruble: A Political History* (Oxford University Press, 2023). She is currently working on a project on the epistemology of truth in late Imperial Russia. – Address: Department of History, Princeton University, 111 Dickinson Hall, Princeton, NJ 08544-1017, USA. E-mail: kprav@princeton.edu.

“The Germans and the great Bode have found a way to acquire and enjoy the treasures of Christian art of all sorts and kinds,” wrote Russian art historian and collector Ivan Tsvetaev to his Moscow correspondent in July 1910 after visiting the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum. Tsvetaev could not conceal his admiration. “Take, for example, the cabinet of Leonardo da Vinci with his sensational Flora, for which Bode paid 180,000 marks and which many other critics consider a forgery. [...] There are different opinions about whether this is his [Leonardo’s] Flora or not, but there is no doubt that Flora’s face and her smile, the shape of her mouth are Leonard’ish.” Amazed by the fineness and grace of Flora’s facial features, Tsvetaev ordered a plaster copy of the wax bust in the size of the “original” for the collection of the new Moscow Museum of Fine Arts. “Perhaps our

descendants will be luckier in a final solution of this interesting riddle,” wrote Tsvetaev, although he was not very interested in establishing Flora’s authenticity. The collection of the Moscow Museum consisted predominantly of plaster copies of world-famous sculptures and included several artful imitations and fakes.

I visited the Bode Museum in 2023, and Flora was still standing there, smiling mysteriously. She had been ousted from the magnificent Italian floor that houses the masterpieces of Donatello and Verrocchio to the special exhibition on the ground floor. Showcased in a glass box with her back mercilessly open to reveal the entrails, Flora appears now as a historical curiosity rather than a piece of art; her smile no longer charms and mesmerizes. The computer tomographic image of Flora’s head testifies to the attempts to solve the mystery of Flora’s provenance. Yet the museum’s attribution label still betrays the indecisiveness: “Flora, in the style of Leonardo da Vinci, 16th or 19th century.” Perhaps Tsvetaev would be pleased to see that Flora keeps her secret. Looking at her bust, I thought that Flora’s fate illustrated our attempts to balance beauty and truth, belief, and the pursuit of objectivity, storytelling, and analysis.

I came to the Wissenschaftskolleg in the fall of 2022 with the immodest intention to write a book about authenticity and truth. My project analyzes Russia’s fin-de-siècle epistemological culture and the debates about truth in jurisprudence, historiography, art history, and theater. Wiko offered an ideal environment for my research, encouraging me to probe new analytical languages and borrow methods from other disciplines. I enjoyed listening to the stories of dogs, insects, flowers, and genes punctuated by scientifically mined data, graphs, and tables that illustrated the results of laboratory experiments. I learned much about the contemporary epistemology of social, cultural, and anthropological research. Wiko Fellows strike an ideal balance between applying strict methods and relying on intuition, showing nature’s beauty, and revealing its inner mechanisms. Science is impossible without imagination, and the temporary suspension of rules is necessary for seeing and creating a bigger picture of natural and social phenomena. However, it is essential to remain mindful of this suspension, to watch and show the reader (or the observer) the gap between facts and stories.

Thinking about scientific analysis and research methods helped me find the nerve of the Russian debates about truth. In my Tuesday Colloquium, I talked about Ivan Tsvetaev’s contemporaries – theater directors Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and their project of the Moscow Art Theater that, in many ways, paralleled the story of the Fine Arts Museum. Like Tsvetaev’s museum that boasted

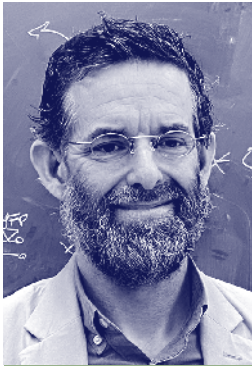
the “scientific authenticity” of the copies of art, the Moscow Art Theater famously tried to achieve perfection in showing historical and psychological truth on stage. The MAT’s directors experimented with various methods and techniques, creating new regimes that distanced themselves from conventional “representation” of reality. “Representing means lying,” thought Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. The only way to achieve truthfulness was to re-live events and emotions on stage as if in real time, recreating the material and physical environment of human actions and experiences. A new sensation of truth on stage enthralled the audience, yet many critics pointed out that MAT deceived its spectators by camouflaging the gap between illusion and reality. As Stanislavsky’s critics wrote, the truth consisted of trusting the audience and allowing it to decide what is truthful and what is not. The “unnecessary” truth was sometimes disturbing and unwelcome. Not only Stanislavsky experienced the temptation of absolute truthfulness, erasing the boundaries between illusion and reality. Ivan Tsvetaev, an admirer of fake Flora, in his pursuits of exactness and what he called the “mathematical precision” of his plaster collection, also fell into this trap when he reconstructed the lost elements of classical sculptures and concealed the additions. Tsvetaev worshiped the beauty of form instead of historical authenticity. Yet such was the hazard of the pursuit of objectivity: while Tsvetaev’s endeavor had many admirers, museum visitors often complained about the deathly aura of plaster figures amassed in great numbers in the magnificent halls.

Coincidentally or not, the stories of the Moscow Art Theater and the Museum of Fine Art intersected in Berlin. Berlin was the first European city that saw MAT’s performances in 1906. It was also the capital of plaster casting. The famous Gipsformerei opened in 1819 in Charlottenburg served as a source of inspiration for the Moscow Fine Arts Museum, and Tsvetaev visited it multiple times. Tsvetaev was particularly impressed by the techniques of coloring the casts that made plaster look like terracotta, wood, bronze, or marble. The Gipsformerei’s “Hausmaler [Franz] Schroeder” prepared several colored replicas for the Moscow museum. In the summer of 1907, Tsvetaev’s daughters – the poetess Marina Tsvetaeva and her sister Anastasia, both teenagers – came along. Marina later wrote about their adventure at the Gipsformerei – how they played in a “forest” of angels, hiding sticky lollypops in the open mouths of white sculptures.

I was putting off my visit to the Gipsformerei until the last weeks of my stay at Wiko. Finally, we – my friend Maria Stepanova, a poetess and Wiko Co-Fellow, and I – walked into the old building with brick walls and tall windows. Outsiders, we were not let inside the workshop, left to observe the rows of plaster figures for sale in glass showcases with

price tags. Colored casts cost more than white ones; I immediately thought that Tsvetaev's critics argued especially ardently against painting white plaster and erasing the distinction between the fake and the real. These arguments echoed the criticism of Stanislavsky's excessive and eerie truth. We looked at the plaster cast of Franz Liszt's right hand and the death mask of Friedrich II. Death mask making was a big deal in Russia: the facial features of most famous writers (Alexander Pushkin, Lev Tolstoy, Fedor Dostoyevsky, Vladimir Mayakovsky, etc.) and political figures were sealed in plaster, providing material for scores of sculptural portraits and monuments, multiplied and distributed across the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union. Pursuing authenticity, objectivity, and truth has its benefits and hazards: documents and casts are the crutches of memory, yet they inadvertently destroy the subtle truth that cannot be documented, molded, or shown on stage.

Russian intellectuals, artists, and scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century argued endlessly if truth could be "wrong" and if there could be any virtue in deception. These questions surprisingly resonated with many debates in Wiko this year: is true scholarship possible without imagination? Can science exist without storytelling? Is the propensity to lie unique to human beings? No one could answer these questions with certainty, leaving them for the future cohorts of Wiko's Fellows. The wax Flora keeps smiling, symbolizing the persistence of doubt that upholds creativity and academic research.



A TIME TO RECALIBRATE DAVEN PRESGRAVES

Daven Presgraves is an evolutionary geneticist and University Dean's Professor of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering in the Department of Biology at the University of Rochester. His undergraduate training was in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Maryland at College Park; his Ph.D. at the University of Rochester; and his postdoctoral research as an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich and, later, as a Ruth L. Kirschstein Fellow at Cornell University. His research program focuses on the roles of selfish genetic elements in the evolution of genetic transmission, genome evolution, and speciation. – Address: Department of Biology, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627, USA. E-mail: daven.presgraves@rochester.edu.

The Wissenschaftskolleg is just as advertised – an academic haven in the leafy outskirts of Berlin where one gets the quiet, the time, and the books to sink into a project. Before arriving, I was determined to make the most of it, to be cloistered, disciplined, and productive. During the year, however, there are the inevitable temptations: to attend German classes; to explore Berlin; to linger after lunches with economists, historians, sociologists, and philosophers; and to chase down readings that have nothing whatever to do with my project. Returning home, friends and colleagues want to know: “How was your trip?” But it's not a trip. It's a year of life – the ordinary and the extraordinary – that I've found impossible to summarize. So, instead of trying, I'll sample some highlights that have stuck with me from the personal, the professional, and the intersection.

First the personal. My wife, two children, and I arrived in Berlin in mid-August, travel-weary after a six-week trek along of the west coast of Vancouver Island, through

the Canadian Rockies, to the badlands of Alberta, ending with a long flight from Calgary to Berlin. What a relief, then, to settle finally into our lovely third-floor flat in the Villa Walther, with its windows that open into the treetops and look onto the Herthasee and its resident family of swans. After a few days, our kids began their own adventures, matriculating at the bilingual John F. Kennedy School in Zehlendorf; they would be stranded there for two hours after classes one day, as all local traffic was suspended to allow the transport and planned detonation of unearthed World War II bombs in the area. Welcome to Berlin, kids! As their year progressed, our effervescent sixth-grade daughter thrived (“You know, Dad, I could see myself living here someday...”), and our gloomy first-grade son did not (“God, I hate Germany...,” having stumbled over a cobblestone). My wife was thrilled to be in her “favorite city” and catalogued the ways in which Berlin life was easy, pleasant, and civilized. She schemed for ways to stay put. Meanwhile, after a few weeks of intensive German class, I settled into work: first, a grant proposal with an early November deadline, then my project. During the winter holiday break, I dragged the family on a pilgrimage – that’s the right word, I think, as an evolutionary biologist who teaches a course on human evolution – to the caves in the Lonetal, near Ulm, where Neanderthals dwelt ~125,000 years ago and, later, a modern human carved the exquisite Löwenmensch figure from a mammoth’s tusk ~40,000 years ago. By late February, the speaking and travel engagements that I’d pushed off came due. At year’s end, school let out and, after a monotonous and gray winter, we visited the sunshine in Crete – the palace at Knossos, the Samaria gorge, and the crystal-blue waters of the Libyan Sea. We returned home to the Villa Walther for a last, lugubrious week of goodbyes in Grunewald.

The year at Wiko prompted two professional recalibrations, one about priorities, the other about my project. As a graduate student and postdoctoral researcher in the sciences, one’s schedule is simple. The jump to a faculty position entails a jarring adjustment to a complex schedule, one fragmented by teaching duties, lab meetings, committee meetings, departmental duties, letter requests, review requests, editorial duties, grant writing, etc. A stay at Wiko licenses Fellows to slip these regular demands – to reclaim the simple. And doing so, I found that I did not miss most of the things that had previously crowded my calendar. I’ve returned to normal life intent to reclaim, and defend, a simpler schedule. The focus of my project likewise made a kind of return to student days. I began my graduate career studying behavioral ecology, a branch of evolutionary biology formerly known as “sociobiology” until overheated controversies about its implications for human nature prompted a rebrand. Sociobiological ideas can be deep and insightful, but the data

are often difficult to obtain, wanting in quantity or quality, and, consequently, less than compelling. I therefore pivoted to one of the “big,” classical problems of evolutionary genetics – speciation – where the experiments, data, and analyses are in general more rigorous and scientifically satisfying. Modern evolutionary genetics is based on the reconciliation of Darwinian natural selection and Mendelian genetics. Darwin’s natural selection gives organisms the appearance of design, and Mendel’s genetics involves heritable particles that are transmitted “fairly” – the paired gene copies in individuals (one from mom, one from dad) have *equal probabilities* of being transmitted to progeny. So long as Mendel’s rule of fair transmission holds, natural selection favors only genetic variants that enhance organismal adaptation. My project focuses, however, on mutations that *violate* Mendel’s rule, biasing transmission to more than their fair share (>50%) of progeny. These non-Mendelian mutations – known as “meiotic drive elements” – spread through populations by virtue of their transmission advantage, not by adaptation. In fact, they’re considered evolutionarily “selfish” as they can spread even if they undermine adaptation (by, for example, reducing fertility). Despite Mendel’s rule being a rule (or, often, a “law”), meiotic drive elements are found throughout the tree of life, including in many plants, fungi, insects, fish, and mammals. Their presence has been underappreciated because they’re hard to observe directly – their population dynamics are fast and they typically lack an easily detectable outward phenotype. (It’s worth noting that Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* could report no *direct* observations of natural selection, for similar reasons.) However, as new model organisms come under laboratory scrutiny and more genome sequences accumulate, the evidence for meiotic drive has begun to pile up.

The initial aim of my project was to synthesize the growing empirical evidence, theory, taxonomic distribution, genomic consequences, and evolutionary implications of these selfish, non-Mendelian meiotic drive elements. I finished the year with less black-on-white prose than I’d hoped for – a few crudely drafted chapters – but encouraged that there’s more to the project than I’d envisioned. I’ve had to recalibrate. What began as a project prompted by new data has shifted to one that aims to resuscitate and redeploy some not-so-new ideas. And this brings me back to the sociobiology of my early student days, as the evolutionary conflicts of interest between selfish genes and their organisms are not unlike those between selfish individuals and their social groups. Put differently, just as we have to explain how individuals evolved sociality, we have to explain how Mendelian inheritance itself evolved. How, in particular, did the “society” of genes in the genome evolve into a cooperative collective characterized by division of labor and

regulated, fair transmission? The answers are in the particulars of how natural selection acts at different levels of biological organization – in ideas that crystallized during the sociobiology revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

My closing highlights come from Wiko's carefully crafted culture. At first the social atmosphere is naturally more professional than personal, but of course by the end comes round to the reverse. Hastening that development, the intensive German courses serve as early, pretense-stripping levelers – German grammar instills humility. Friendships are made over wine and meals with visiting Fellows and permanent Wiko folks. (To my delight, the Wiko kids formed their own raucous cohort, together conspiring against the babysitters, hunting for Easter eggs, and playing hide and seek around the main admin building.) The Wiko seminar mandates are cleverly contrived. Having Fellows introduce Fellows fosters community, and inviting presentations on unfinished projects invites vulnerability and openness. With such a diverse and accomplished audience, presenters can strive to be maximally intelligible – to mitigate the Two Cultures' mutual incomprehensibility problem – yet still be unprepared for the range of questions. (After my own seminar on Darwinism and Mendelism, one of our philosophers observed, "I detect several vocabularies in your presentation..."; and, of course, he had identified something I hadn't noticed myself.) Another Fellow privately opined that the seminars should try to "teach us something or be beautiful." The most inspired seminars managed both: modern classical music inspired by Dante; prose by the true artists of our cohort; innovative schemes to feed a world with diminishing resources; and jokes excavated from 8th-century rabbinical texts that still work.

Wiko is a place of contradictions: quiet yet social; professional yet personal; serious yet playful. That Wiko seems to balance these contradictions so perfectly is an illusion; the trick is in the freedom we Fellows get to customize our experiences – we can choose to be hedgehogs or foxes (to borrow an allusion from yet another Fellow). Nothing I write here can express my deep gratitude for that experience: for the Wiko staff, who made life easy and my family feel at home; for the administration, who established a warm and stimulating atmosphere; and, of course, for the community of Fellows – a happily "boring" class – who through their intelligence, generosity, and good humor gifted me new memories, friendships, and perspectives.



MAY IT STAND STRONG, AND LONG
SURABHI RANGANATHAN

Surabhi Ranganathan is Professor of International Law at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. Educated in Delhi, Bangalore, New York, and Cambridge, she has also taught at Warwick University and, as Visiting Professor, at the Graduate Institute, Geneva. Author of *Strategically Created Treaty Conflicts and the Politics of International Law* (CUP 2015) and Assistant Editor of the *Cambridge Companion to International Law*, her writings on the oceans, treaties, and global governance have been published in, among others, the *European Journal of International Law*, the *British Yearbook of International Law*, the *American Journal of International Law*, and the *Journal of the History of International Law*. She is currently at work on a book and several essays on the history and politics of a changing ocean and assorted techno-utopian imaginaries and on two major editorial projects: *The Cambridge History of International Law in Asia* and *The Battle for International Law in the Neoliberal Era*. She has also co-edited a special issue of *SAACL*R on Colonial Loot and Its Restitution. Ranganathan is Editor-in-Chief of the *Leiden Journal of International Law*, Deputy Director of the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law, was a visiting fellow at the Center for History and Economics, Harvard, and is part of the Aurora Centre, Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø. – Address: King's College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB2 1ST, United Kingdom. E-mail: sr496@cam.ac.uk.

“So, is it like college, more or less?” I visited my home institution a few times over the course of the fellowship year – Berlin is a little too well connected to Cambridge for the distance to entirely loosen the tug of institutional duties – and invariably my efforts to describe the Wiko environment led to this question. For I spoke at first of its obvious features: a multidisciplinary

fellowship, which dined together every day, sometimes with wine, always with dessert. A regular seminar, where we discussed a bewildering range of research projects and consistently found our way to questions like *what is life* and *what is truth*. A big, beautiful period building, where we had sets, small or large, as suited our circumstances. Sylvan surroundings of course, and bodies of water, in which could be espied swimming, possibly fishing, though never punting. Swans. Bikes. Occasional post-dinner lectures.

“Yes, I suppose it is, but, you know, no long-term context.” A feature both remarkably freeing, as also lamented, by the cohort was that our time at Wiko was so limited. A short 10 months – an interlude, in which we could live differently from our usual lives. In the absence of a long-term context, we could talk at meals not about college policies or other pressing institutional matters, but at constructive random. With fewer obligations, we could read more and pursue side interests, long-forgotten skills, and indeed, open ourselves to entirely new fields. Then too, when we missed, as we did of course, our students and colleagues – and in some cases, families – we could tell ourselves it is really only 10 (for some, 3 or 5) months; I’ll be back in the summer.

It is summer now, and having dropped my bags off at my college set, I am visiting my family in India. I am writing this sitting in Munnar, up the Western Ghats in Kerala, South India, where my partner and I have come away for a week’s vacation. The slower pace here – each morning, we stroll downhill and wheeze our way back, the point of our walks being to meet little Pinky, whom we thought a pup and a stray, but have since gladly discovered to be well-seasoned and cared for by some local people – allow us to reflect on the past months of my leave and the upcoming months of his. It is early August, and with the start of the new term over six weeks off, still too soon for me to fully process what a year away in Wiko has meant. But it is already clear that the change it offered from my Cambridge college was not about the absence of a long-term context *in general*. Rather, what I had enjoyed was the absence of the particular circumstances that have shaped the experience of being an academic in Britain in recent years.

For over five years, staff in British universities have been locked in dispute with our employers. The dispute is over falling pay, rising pay gaps and workloads, increased casualisation, and fragile pensions. Ours are not the only worsening working conditions. They are a pattern across sectors, affecting, among others, nurses and doctors, air, bus, and rail transport workers, schoolteachers, and civil servants. With multiple strikes, the winter that I spent in Berlin was reported as a “winter of discontent” in Britain, if different in some essential respects from its 1979 counterpart. There are of course differences in how

intensely the effects have been experienced both within and across sectors. At Cambridge, I am rather better off: my employer takes a more generous line on docking pay, whereas colleagues at some other universities have lost entire months' salaries for participating in the ongoing marking boycott, even if they fulfil every other aspect of their role.

But as I look ahead to the new academic year, with the prospect of a new strike ballot on the horizon – as I tell my partner (who is an academic too, but not in Britain) about it, on a wheeze uphill – I feel more intensely one essential aspect of the time off that Wiko gave me. This was time off not from teaching, which I missed; nor indeed from academic service or “admin,” which carried on. Rather, it was time off from the emotions – chiefly dread and exhaustion – that mark the experience of being in an industrial dispute.

Unsurprisingly, striking is not much fun. As academics frequently repeat, we would rather be teaching. We do not enjoy seeking understanding from batch after batch of students that our working conditions are their learning conditions; that we strike for the future of our universities, we strike in solidarity with our colleagues, that we strike for our individual and collective circumstances. Even though our students do generally understand, we do not enjoy the disruption that strikes pose to carefully planned papers. We worry when graduations must be held up. We do not like cancelling events. Nor do we revel in the sense of division, however respectfully we may approach it, between those striking and those choosing not to.

In place of the heightened anxiety that industrial disputes engender, Wiko offered something else entirely: a very protective and nurturing environment. There was Dunia Najjar's food: fresh, nourishing, delicious, and served with warmth. The gently patterned weeks, with the Tuesday Colloquium, sometimes a Thursday one, occasional evening lectures and receptions, and sessions of the Three Cultures Forum giving definition to vast fertile periods of time (ah time!). Magical housekeeping, reception, and financial services: right from the first day, when Vera Pfeffer waited for me to arrive by my late flight, with her 18-year-old son in tow to haul my bags up the stairs (a feat he accomplished in something rather less than the blink of eye). Top-notch IT. And a general climate of interest in (y)our work; with so many taking initiatives to place it into conversations Berlin-wide and beyond. In my case, one such initiative, spearheaded by Katharina Wiedemann, was a wonderful feature essay (for her magazine *Köpfe und Ideen*) complete with photos that has allowed me the chance to luxuriate in a very perceptive reading of my work by Maxim Bönnemann, editor of the very fine *Verfassungsblog*.

And then there was the library. The thing that every Wiko alum sighed over when I asked them about the place, prior to starting the fellowship. It is not that Wiko's library

is big. Quite the contrary, it is what real estate agents like to call “charming”: two or three lovely rooms within the “White Villa,” its own collections running to perhaps two dozen shelves; on the floor above is an all-purpose studio where we did Pilates once a week. But this comes with the most magnificent research and borrowing services I have ever encountered. Wiko librarians are famed for their ability to procure – within days – practically anything you seek to read. And more: they will write to you, as Stefan Gellner did, offering their help to work out how *they* can advance *your* research, delivering to you, for example, a treasure of an annotated bibliography, or chasing down obscure facts and references.

It is hard to articulate just how much all of this means for any individual researcher. The year is not of course about insulation; there is distance from our usual workplaces certainly, but not necessarily detachment. Nearly all Fellows were engaged in one or another of our standard activities – examining, writing institutional grants, supervising students, sitting on committees, following university strikes. Through our cohort members we also followed the personal as well as public dimensions of events unfolding across the world, from war to earthquake. We learnt from each other about the ways in which academia could be difficult, if rewarding, and the turns that higher education was taking in different jurisdictions. Some in our cohort were dealing with the brunt of authoritarian governments, some others worried about the future of their disciplines. But amidst it all, there was Wiko: enabling, facilitative, reminding us of the worth of scholarship, helping us make it happen. The comfort this gave me is indescribable; and I hope that the institution continues on its mission to expand its reach, opening its doors and opportunities even more to colleagues for whom this version of the academy is not so much a vanishing condition (as it is for us in the UK) as a never realised and now increasingly thwarted one.

The reassurance that Wiko offers against the crises of academia playing out in so many parts of the world is the product of many hands – I name some people above, but in fact I should be naming four dozen, from the Rector and her office, to the vast arrays of departments and teams that welcome us, settle us in, engage with us through the year, and lead to our misty-eyed farewells at the end. Everybody goes above and beyond, with patience and kindness even for the oddest queries and worries. But in addition is that fact that it *is* four dozen people, that there are *departments* and *teams*; and that it continues to stay this way, when the creeping McKinseyfication of the sector elsewhere – so many elsewheres, so many *sectors* – leaves smaller and smaller numbers to hold things together with grit and Sellotape. This too is part of what is at issue in our UK strikes. And it is thus both important and heartening to see in Wiko the persistence of a different institutional imagination. May it stand strong, and long.



THE TREE OF TIME AND THE TREE
OF BOOKS
LUCIA RONCHETTI

Born in Rome in 1963, Lucia Ronchetti is a composer dedicated to music theater projects, opera, and dramaturgical choral works with commissions from the most important European institutions, Artistic Director of the Biennale Musica festival in Venice, and Professor of Composition at the Conservatory of Salerno. In 2023, the new opera *Das fliegende Klassenzimmer* made its debut at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein under the direction of Ilaria Lanzino, and the Staatsoper Hannover presented new performances of *Pinocchio's Abenteuer* under the direction of Maria Kwaschik. The choral opera *Chronicles of Loneliness*, commissioned by ACHT BRÜCKEN | Musik für Köln, premiered at the Kölner Philharmonie; Thomas Guggeis conducted the premiere of *Studio di ombre* for orchestra, commissioned by the Frankfurter Museums-Gesellschaft for the Oper Frankfurt; and the vocal ensemble The Present performed *Albertine* and *Blumenstudien* in their projects for the Neuköllner Oper. Two new opera productions will be presented in 2024, *Searching for Zenobia* for the Münchener Biennale and the Staatstheater Braunschweig directed by Isabel Ostermann and *Der Doppelgänger* directed by David Hermann for the Schwetzingen SWR Festspiele and Staatstheater Luzern. Website: www.luciaronchetti.com. – Address: Dipartimento di Teoria, Analisi, Composizione e Direzione, Conservatorio Statale di Musica “Giuseppe Martucci”, Via Salvatore De Renzi 62, 84125 Salerno SA, Italy. E-mail: luciaronchetti@gmail.com.

In my year at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I always worked starting in the early morning at a table placed in front of the large glass window of the balcony on the fourth floor of Villa Walther, the rectangle of light framed by the brown stone columns of the terrace in front of the extraordinary entanglement of the branches of the old linden tree towering above

the iridescent blue of the Koenigssee. I learned day after day to follow the intricate lines of the intertwining of branches, which enclosed leaves of the golden yellow and orange colors of sunset in September and progressively shed their leaves until November, revealing an ancient and deep grey, an existential color that seemed to be a quotation from Mondrian. The branches were then mantled in a candid white snow in December, before giving way to a layer of shining ice, reflecting the steel blue of the sky during the coldest period. In the awakening of spring, the tree's branches magically covered themselves with soft and warm emerald-green moss, a vegetable fur, and finally with a new green pregnant with buds and leaves, an explosion and luxuriance of new life that invaded the entire window in the last summer months of my stay.

This tree of time and life lived its metamorphoses day by day as the pages of my table filled with signs and symbols, pages stretched and piled up in the silence of my writing, my compositional despair and happiness. I composed every day, accompanied by this extraordinary evolution, invaded by the constant vision of the iridescent mosaic of the stained glass window historiated by a severe, ritual, and complex nature. These are works that I consider representative, such as *Chronicles of Loneliness*, a choral work for 100 male voices for ACHT BRÜCKEN | Musik für Köln, *Studio di ombre* for the orchestra of the Oper Frankfurt commissioned by Thomas Guggeis, and the chamber opera *Searching for Zenobia* for the Münchener Biennale and the Staatstheater Braunschweig requested by director Isabel Ostermann.

On the other side of the large room on the fourth floor of Villa Walther, another large table, where I always sat with my back to the large window, a table occupied by a tower of books progressively arriving from all the libraries in the world, requested by and searched for me by Anja Brockmann, angel of the library service of the Wissenschaftskolleg, one of the great wonders of our world. Anja researched for me all the texts that could highlight the evolution of new technologies related to listening to digital sound and to the artificial intelligence techniques related to its processing, thereby enabling me to prepare myself for the *Micro-Music* festival that I conceived for the Biennale Musica 2023 in Venice. The table of books with shimmering covers, new or worn spines, bindings thick and stiff or torn and curled by time, began to fill up in September 2022 and reached its maximum expansion in January 2023. Then it gradually faded down as I read and returned the volumes. It became my hourglass of books, my Tower of Babel, my tree of books, and it accompanied me until the official presentation of the festival in April 2023 in Venice. Between these two distant and antithetical tables, in the religious silence of the *Turris*

eburnea that the Wissenschaftskolleg offers its residents, I spent beautiful hours, dramatic hours, ferocious hours, and feverish hours; and I think that this room, with the tree of time on one side and the tree of books on the other, will remain with me forever.

But the Wiko is not silence, it is a soundscape made up of voices, many voices with marvelous inflections, accents reminiscent of millenary cultures and enlightened vocabularies, the voices of the many residents arriving from all parts of the world and from many different linguistic Babels. Their voices, during my stay, were interwoven and intertwined like voracious climbing plants united in unheard and unprecedented dialogues, generating enthusiasm and melancholy, moments of linguistic and intellectual shipwreck, and moments of joy and discoveries. Listening to these voices, I have travelled the world, space, and time; I have made journeys I would never have imagined, such as the one to the bottom of the oceans and of the international laws and treaties that regulate it in the virtuous, elaborate, and enveloping language of Surabhi Ranganathan; journeys into memory through the fascinating linguistic networks and deep poetic meshes woven by Maria Stepanova; journeys into the ideal society, chiseled by Susan Marks' rhythmic voice, structured and illuminated by precise conciseness, in search of the chrism of human dignity and its universal recognition; journeys into pure speculation through the elegant logical and linguistic labyrinths unveiled by Lorraine Daston with a crystal-clear and sculptural hyper-English.

Also impressive for me were the voices of Shai Secunda in his reconstruction of the Babylonian Talmud, a luminous, complex, sibylline language interwoven with linguistic grey stones, ancient Semitic words that seem to fall into the English grammatical net like sonorous diamonds; the profound, passionate, and prophetic voice of Thomas Kaufmann and his extraordinary reconstructions of the modernity of the use of the press in the Reformation; the eclectic, shining, dramaturgical voice of Njoki Wamai in her political search for "lessons and dilemmas" in the prevention of African conflict. The English that we all spoke together turned out to be an elastic, metamorphic, and living language that united in a polyphony of individual diversities a group of wonderful people who had landed on this salvific temporal ark of the Wissenschaftskolleg.

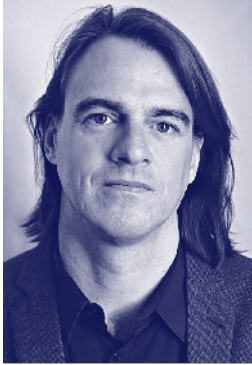
For me, the Wiko was a laboratory for experimenting with the voice, not only for listening to the extraordinary and virtuosic "arias" that are the Tuesday Colloquia, but also because its spaces became places of rehearsal, experimentation, and vocal performance for my new scores. With the complicity and support of Frank Nörenberg and Petria Saleh, I was able to record vocal samples and work with the soloists Olivia Stahn and Hanna Herfurtner, the Syrian vocalist Mais Harb, the countertenor Jan Jakub Monowid, and the

vocal ensemble *The Present*. In the spaces of the Wiko, I was able to discuss the dramaturgies of my future works with directors Isabel Ostermann for the Münchener Biennale, David Hermann for the Schwetzingen SWR Festspiele, Tobias Kratzer for the Hamburg State Opera, and with dramaturges such as Konrad Kuhn of the Oper Frankfurt, Keith Stonum of the Staatstheater Hannover, and Sarah Grahneis of the Staatstheater Braunschweig.

Isabel Mundry, in 2002/2003 the first female composer to be a resident at the Wissenschaftskolleg, marked my residency with her extraordinary presentation of my *Gesprächskonzert*, and Liza Lim, the composer in residence the year before mine, returned to the Wiko for her important Berlin premieres, and I was able to share my impressions and emotions with these two composers.

An important presence for me, since his return from New York in January 2023, has been that of Luca Giuliani, a former Rector of the Wiko and a person of extraordinary and profound culture. With him, I was able to appreciate the beauty of the Italian language, when it is purified and distilled thanks to its Tuscan origins, its distance from Italy, and the accurate and incessant study of archaeological antiquity: his Italian is a mechanism of high precision, analytical and creative at the same time, an instrument of intellectual telescoping that allowed me to understand much better what I was experiencing. With Luca Giuliani, I talked about my compositional projects, the treatment of different texts, and the risks and problems associated with different languages and historical references in musical dramaturgy. We discussed the reference to pre-existing scores, the sound modulation of words, the subtle distinction between the meaning and form of each linguistic sign, the potential melodic motion of each sound inherent and sculpted within words and their origin. As an archaeologist of enlightened and acknowledged experience, Luca Giuliani knows the weight of responsibility of every linguistic and compositional decision, even the apparently innocuous ones that every composer takes on when dealing with language, exposing and amplifying it in musical form; and talking with him about it was a necessary and founding therapy.

This extraordinary communicative experience within such a small, densely populated realm as the Wissenschaftskolleg is possible only thanks to Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, a democratic Rektorin but an absolute reference for all of us, because as a refined historian of modernity, she is an intellectual who discreetly and lucidly coordinates and supports the extreme diversity of thoughts and research and generates a constant basis of possible dialogue between all residents through an inclusive and analytical vision that seems to me to be the sign, synthesis, and deepest and permanent meaning of the Wissenschaftskolleg.



CRITICAL THEORY AND ONTOLOGY?
ABSTRACT MATTERS AND LOOSE ENDS
MARTIN SAAR

Martin Saar is Professor of Social Philosophy at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. He received his M.A. from the Freie Universität Berlin in 1997 and his Ph.D. and his Habilitation in 2004 and 2011 from Goethe University. He was a Visiting Professor teaching Political Theory and Philosophy in Bremen, Hamburg, and Berlin, has studied and taught at the New School for Social Research in New York, and was a Professor of Political Theory at Leipzig University. His areas of interest are contemporary political and social philosophy and the history of political thought (with special foci on Spinoza, Nietzsche, Marxism, Foucault, Critical Theory, Post-structuralism, and interdisciplinary research on collective memory, affect, ideology, history, nature, and power). His dissertation on Nietzsche and Foucault was published in 2007; his book on Spinoza's political thought came out in 2013. In Frankfurt, he is affiliated with the Institute for Social Research and the research center Normative Orders. – Address: Institut für Philosophie, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Norbert-Wollheim-Platz 1, 60323 Frankfurt am Main. E-mail: saar@em.uni-frankfurt.de.

I had anticipated that my year's project on "Critical Theory after the ontological turn" would not be too easy to explain (and sell) to colleagues outside philosophy. After all, at first glance this theme seems abstract and rather self-referential, rooted firmly in the intellectual history of a certain German philosophical tradition. The term "Critical Theory" (with the capital letters indicating the specific reference) here refers to the programmatic project of a "critical theory of society" originally designed by a handful of mostly Jewish Marxist intellectuals who were members of or close to the Frankfurt-based Institute for

Social Research and had developed this program in the early 1930s and continued it over several decades, with the Institute being reopened after World War II and its two most important members returning from emigration. It is only later and during the tumultuous debates of the 1960s that an intellectual identity and coherence was retroactively constructed under the name “Frankfurt School.” Jürgen Habermas’s enormously influential work is to be counted as the most important contribution of the second generation and, until today, there have been many attempts to, on the one hand, continue and, on the other hand, to revitalize this tradition or style of thought, sometimes from within the German academic cultures where it originated, sometimes in more unorthodox appropriations and re-readings.

My first interest in the topic is indeed almost exclusively historical and internal: How does this ultra-modern philosophical tradition and theoretical context relate to the problem of “being,” one of the oldest philosophical concepts and problems? On many counts, Critical Theory seemed to replace ontological questions with social-theoretical and historical ones, and this seems to testify to its critical and self-reflective form. Tracing Critical Theory’s long-standing aversion and resistance to classical ontology and any form of neo-ontological theorizing, documented best in Adorno’s polemical *Auseinandersetzung* with Heidegger, is the first reconstructive step to take. Moreover, understanding its logic can help gain a new perspective on some of the internal limitations many critical theories, historical and present, may face.

However, interestingly, the question of ontology (the study of what there is) has gained new prominence in the wake of the rather recent “material” and “ontological turns” in the humanities and social sciences. For many contributors to these debates, a new emphasis on things/materiality, on nature and forms of existence, has rightfully replaced the exclusive focus on (human) society, discourses, and norms. It seems striking that most prominent protagonists of Critical Theory today tend not to engage with the discourses that, even if from a somewhat different angle, touch on some fundamental issues of social theory: power, domination, practices, institutions, and the limits and dynamics of “the social.”

Therefore, my project also has a second, more systematic goal. Understanding and acknowledging the ontological dimension of and in social theory seems to me indispensable in order to fully articulate the stakes and potentials of Critical Theory. To put it rather bluntly: it seems that every theory of society will need (some) ontological elements, an assessment of the very objects it speaks about and a sense of the reality these objects possess. A critical theory of society has to be a material theory of society or social reality, a theory of social being and beings, as it were, and therefore cannot not be ontological.

Ontology, traditionally speaking, is the discourse concerning actually constitutive elements within a given field or realm of reality, their structural features and possible transformations, and possible connections between these elements. The ontology (i.e., the theory of beings/things, of subjects and objects) adequate for the description and understanding of complex and inherently stratified societies (and this is what a “critical theory of society” will try to provide) will be a processual or relational ontology that elucidates the complex interplay of material forces, social practices, and subjectivities. Since none of these elements is atemporal or ahistorical, the adequate social and political ontology (to be used in describing them) cannot be atemporal or ahistorical either.

The ontology corresponding to a critical theory of society will therefore most likely be dynamic and “materialist” in a certain sense, meaning that it in principle allows for and even requires propositions concerning material conditions for non-material events, states of affairs, and effects. This means to claim that how societies operate is conditioned by or premised on their material foundations (in the weak sense), presuppositions, and contexts (think of resources, infrastructures, means of productions, technologies).

For me, the philosophical debate on “weak ontology” in the early 2000s was a first step to account for the ontological dimension of theories that only seemed to be completely post- or anti-ontological and that were definitely anti-essentialist. It can be argued that Critical Theory (in its older and newer forms) performs theoretical operations that are, in this sense, “weakly” ontological yet anti-essentialist. Seen this way, notions like society, power, ideology, social structure, subject, and even politics and democracy have an ontological dimension and status: they define the objects of inquiry in so far as they are taken to be real, effective parts of social reality. And what they refer to shapes and conditions what can be experienced, lived, and thought in the social and political world.

Concepts or notions in their ontological usage refer to the structures, processes, and mechanisms constituting or “making” a common world, a shared space, a lived community. However, this is also what a C/critical T/theory is all about: describing, assessing, and problematizing constitutions in the social world. Even the theory of capitalism, an essential element of this discourse that has its roots in left-Hegelianism and Marxism, aims at something similarly deep: capitalist world-making and the making of a capitalist world, including its value(s), its practices, its subjects, its life-forms.

Not denying the factual ontological status, nor denying the possible reality-effects (i.e., the ontological power) of things, persons, and natures constituted in and by society, allows for critical operations indispensable for any critical social theory: de-naturalization (the

critique of domination in an ontological register), re-description (reassessing the ontological landscape of all the things, subjects, and objects in a given social world), and the discovery of agency (unleashing the ontological potential for transformation, i.e., for politics) where there seemed to be none. Critique and resistance therefore are in themselves ontological acts, acts of onto-critique and onto-resistance, one might say, i.e., material, specific, and concrete practices situated within the immanence of the social itself.

I do suspect that the seemingly restricted reflection on “nature” (in all the possible senses of the word) within older and current Critical Theory also refers back to its twisted relation to ontological theorizing. It might very well be that entirely non- or anti-ontological theories of nature remain insufficient. Not arguing ontologically often just prolongs implicit default commitments (to a status of nature as the other of the human or of history, devoid of agency, devoid of normativity, devoid of historicity). Arguably, within such a traditional framework, a social theory might not be able to contribute to solving some of the most pressing problems of our time.

The point of an ontological theory of critique is that it takes the material and the social to be two sides of the same coin and tends to localize domination in material reality (or nature) *and* in social normativity (or thought). Philosophy will never fully liberate itself from the material and natural world it thinks (but will also not be a mere reflection of it); the material and natural world as we know is utterly dependent on the ascriptions, meanings, and validities ascribed to it (but is also not fully reducible to those meaning-giving acts either). Critical Theory’s place, as I see it, is right in the middle of these struggles and dynamics, material and non-material, natural and social, human and more-than-human.

Have I succeeded in conveying my fascination for these admittedly abstract concerns to my colleagues from other fields and disciplines? (By the way, I may not even have convinced most of my philosophical friends and colleagues during the valuable discussions we had during the year at the Freie Universität and Humboldt-Universität in Berlin, and in Potsdam, Leipzig, and Kiel). I am unsure, but do not really worry. There were many instances in which and moments when unexpected parallels and shared concerns popped up and provided fascinating themes for discussion. In the work of Max Benz, I found a serious and similarly Foucault-inspired attempt to account for the historicity and the shape-shifting of subjectivity that is based on a conception of the self as a correlate of practices and self-relations, at the same time spiritual and material. I was thrilled to see how eminent colleagues from the humanities like Thomas Kaufmann, Ittai Weinryb, and Karin Leonhard (to name but a few examples) elegantly incorporate perspectives from

material culture into reading religious, social, and art history. In the work of the social scientists Kateryna Burkush, Deborah James, Insa Nolte, Arie Dubnov, and many of the historians of that year, I could sense a deep understanding of the ultra-dynamic variability of social institutions and meanings that is not antithetic to an appreciation of the robustness of power structures and the limits of identities set by their social contexts.

And it has been a deep educational experience, a *Bildungserlebnis* of the first order, to be exposed to discussions with eminent life scientists and evolutionary biologists from which to learn firsthand that the supposedly age-old dichotomies between nature vs. history or nature vs. culture have long ceased to dominate the natural sciences, even if it takes the humanities some time to acknowledge this. Discussions with Lynda Delph, Daven Presgraves, Oren Harman, Rose O’Dea, Michael Taborsky, Lorraine Daston (a leading historian of many of these issues bridging the disciplines), and others have confirmed this impression of mine, even if some of my interlocutors had the suspicion that calling something “nature” or not will definitely mean different things in different contexts. And while there still is some work to do to spell out if and how the material and the natural relate to or coincide with the ontological, as I conceive it, it seems clear that this will require discussions in which the contributions from the natural sciences, philosophy, and the social sciences, especially anthropology, will complement each other and in which empirical and conceptual concerns will merge in ways that call for tools no single discipline will be able to provide.

I brought home a book-sized notebook, imprinted with the Wiko logo, that I bought at the Wiko reception and have used for lecture notes and little reports during the year. My notes stop at page 103 (I have a rather small handwriting); the last event covered was the farewell lecture by the prominent cultural theorist Joseph Vogl at Humboldt-Universität, a week after the Wiko term ended, a quite important event in the Berlin academic calendar of 2023. Drawing on a plethora of literary and philosophical sources, Vogl insisted on the epistemological, aesthetic, and ethical value and function of *Schweben*, acts of floating, pending, or gliding, and argued forcefully for a style of thinking in recognition of it, not fully elevated from the ground, but not fully touching it either, for bearing with the dynamism and the vertigo of the instable. Looking through my notes from the Wiko colloquia and events, little references to art shows and theater plays and readings, I remain amazed at how much can fit into one (short) year: insights and thoughts that (hopefully) remain firm and stable, but also ideas and experiences that float, effortlessly, like the swans on the Herthasee.



UNFORGETTABLE TIME IN BERLIN
HENADZ SAHANOVICH

Henadz Sahanovich, born in the Brest region, Belarus in 1961, is a Visiting Professor of History at the University of Warsaw. After his firing from the Institute of History at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus for political reasons in 2005, he has held fellowships and a visiting professorship in Poland, Lithuania, and Germany. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of the journal *Belarusian Historical Review*. His publications include: “Contested Interpretation of the Battle of Orsha in 1514 in Belarusian and Russian *Lieux de Mémoire*,” in *Politics, History and Collective Memory in East Central Europe* (Hamburg: Krämer, 2012), “Die Vielgesichtigkeit Rutheniens im Großfürstentum Litauen,” in *Bunte Flecken in Weißrussland. Erinnerungsorte zwischen polnisch-litauischer Union und russisch-sowjetischem Imperium* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), and “On the Historical Foundations of Belarusian Identity,” in *Ricerche slavistiche. Nuova serie* 5, no. 65 (2022). – Address: University of Warsaw, Krakowskie Przedmiescie 26/28, 00-927 Warsaw, Poland. E-mail: h.sahanovich@uw.edu.pl.

I arrived at the Wissenschaftskolleg in the middle of September 2022 and stayed there for six months. All the departments of the Kolleg were truly kind and helpful during my entire stay. To settle in, I was offered a comfortable residence with a separate room for work in the Villa Jaffé, very close to the main building of the Kolleg and its library, which was pretty convenient. Together with more than forty Fellows from all over the world, we lived and worked in a villa district of Berlin I’d never been to before. Grunewald turned out to be such a beautiful, green, and quiet place that it was hard to believe we lived almost in the heart of a huge modern city. And at the same time, one could quickly

reach any other part of Berlin, due to the city's very well developed and convenient public transport network, which was really great. But most of all I loved going for a walk to the lakes, wild parks, and unknown areas of the city.

Wiko provided all I needed to make progress in conducting my research, first of all a lot of books, silent space, and time to read them. It was really amazing how the library service was organized. The library team could bring practically every item you need! As for me, I got all the books and articles that I ordered. I feel obliged to express my deep gratitude to the library team and especially to Stefan Gellner, who conducted for me a special bibliographical study, and to Anja Brockmann for her constant assistance of all kinds.

Thanks to the outstanding opportunities provided by Wiko, I could work for a long time without any disturbance in the silence of my office in the Villa Jaffé, under ideal working conditions. The IT services delivered and set up devices I needed to read photos of manuscripts and were always ready to support me. On working days, we all met for common lunches and Thursday dinners with delicious dishes. The always perfect meals made by Dunia and her team, as well as interesting conversations with Fellows while eating, are pleasant memories of my stay in Berlin.

The most essential form of common intellectual life was our Tuesday Colloquia, which brought the Fellows and the Wiko staff members together. Sometimes the colloquia were held also on Thursday. Though the talks on natural subjects prevailed and, as a representative of the humanities, I could hardly understand everything, the presentations given by the Fellows I attended appeared to be quite educational and enriched my worldview. It was easy to gain some knowledge in a field I have never dealt with before from the talks on various subjects, which were followed by live discussions. The very first one, given by the neuroscientist Giovanni Galizia, who managed to explain in simple words how bees see the world and even dream, impressed me to such extent that I shared its main idea with my colleagues in my country. What I also especially liked about our colloquia was the friendly atmosphere of discussions, which sometimes became very intense. There was nothing unusual in coming up with a question unexpected by the speaker and to leave it open. The Wiko workshops organized by Fellows also should be mentioned. One of the most compelling to me was a workshop, "Scholars at war. The past, present, and future of intellectual communities in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," organized by Arie Dubnov, Ekaterina Pravilova, and Martin Saar in February 2023. Participation in it gave me a chance to tell about the many Belarusian scholars who have to live in exile since 2020.

During my stay in Berlin, I greatly improved my German thanks to the wonderful classes given by Eva von Kügelgen. In our advanced group, we talked about what is really gripping, without boring textbooks and without grammar rule drill. Eva constantly provided us with materials related to German culture and history as well as the most recent events of Berlin's cultural life. Indeed, as a world city of culture, Berlin offered plenty of great theatres, museums, and art galleries to visit. To tell the truth, I remembered that my term would be short, and so I tried to focus on work in order to accomplish as much as possible. However, during my fellowship I made exciting trips to Leipzig and Magdeburg.

Regarding my project, which seeks to determine when a distinct collective identity of the population living on the territory of today's Belarus started to exist, it was essential to identify the most relevant paradigm to conceptualize the empirical part of the research study. In my view, the ethnosymbolic concept of the nation can serve as a promising theoretical perspective. As is well known, while the modernist approach prevailing in Western academia negates any relationship between nations and pre-existing ethnic groups, a theoretical perspective developed by Anthony D. Smith stands in opposition to that attitude. He insisted that the modern nations grew out of the cultural content developed within the ethnic communities existing before the modern era. So, my first task was to thoroughly analyse the ethnosymbolic concept presented by the British scientist on the basis of his texts, available due to the perfect service of the Wiko library. Then I tried to critically apply it to a context of the medieval and early modern history of the Eastern Slavs.

Though I did not write a book, a lot was done for its foundations. In addition, I wrote three articles on topics related to my project and submitted them to scholarly journals and the Mieroszewski Centre in Warsaw. During my stay at Wiko, I took part in two international conferences, entitled "The Grand Duchy of Lithuania – new research" (Vilnius, European Humanities University, November 2022) and "In the Shadow of the Soviet Union: Belarus in the 20th Century" (Berlin, November 2022). In Vilnius, I spoke as a Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg at the panel discussion "Statehood and nationality in early modern Eastern Europe from the 21st-century perspective," while in Berlin I gave a talk, "Dissidents in Belarusian historiography during the Khrushchev Thaw."

Regrettably, I had to leave a bit earlier than the fellowship expiration date. After departure, I observed nostalgically the intellectual and cultural life at Wiko from a distance, checking Wiko e-mails. Now I realize better how intense and really fruitful my stay in Berlin was. The six months spent in Grunewald seem to be the best fellowship in my life. Thank you so much for this wonderful and unforgettable time!



IMMERSION
ANDRÉ SCHNEIDER

I am a Professor of Biochemistry and former Director of the Department of Chemistry, Biochemistry, and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Bern, in Switzerland. I studied biology and did my Ph.D. investigating the cytoskeleton of the parasitic protozoan *Trypanosoma brucei* both at the Institute of General Microbiology of the University of Bern. I then moved to the Biozentrum in Basel to do a postdoc on mitochondrial protein import in yeast. In a second postdoc at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), I combined the expertise on *T. brucei* I gained during my PhD with the insights into mitochondrial biology I obtained at the Biozentrum and helped to pioneer the field of mitochondrial tRNA import, using *T. brucei* as a model system. After returning to Switzerland, I became an independent researcher at the Biozentrum and then moved to the Department of Biology at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, where I became a Group Leader and subsequently an Associate Professor. My work at the University of Bern focuses on both the ontogeny and the phylogeny of mitochondria, using *T. brucei* as an experimental system with the ultimate goal of shedding light on the origin of complex cells. During my career I have published more than 130 peer-reviewed research papers, but unlike my colleagues in the humanities and social sciences, I have no idea what it means to write a book. – Address: Department of Chemistry, Biochemistry and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Bern, Freiestrasse 3, 3012 Bern, Switzerland. E-mail: andre.schneider@unibe.ch.

“You will be a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin next year.” “But you need a lab to do your research. What are you going to do there?” That was the valid question my colleagues asked me after I told them that I had been accepted as a Wiko Fellow. When

I tried to explain that each Fellow would spend an entire academic year working on a research project of their own choice and that the only mandatory duties of Wiko Fellows would be to eat together every day in Wiko's own restaurant and to attend the Tuesday Colloquium, they looked at me with a questioning look and didn't really understand. I have to admit that I could not blame them, because even though I had read a lot about the institution, I couldn't really grasp what it would mean to be a Wiko Fellow. Also, I thought that there must be some hidden catch that I would only learn about when I was there.

To understand the reaction of my colleagues, one has to know that Wiko is a prestigious institution in the humanities and social sciences, but hardly known in the natural sciences. Thus, as a biochemist, I learned about the existence of Wiko only in late 2018 in a conversation with a former Fellow, a Canadian evolutionary biologist. At the time I spoke with him, he was still very much under the influence of his Wiko stay, which he described as life-changing. This prompted me to do some research on the institution, and I found the motto "Gain time to think" very appealing. The molecular life sciences are very fast-paced and competitive and I often felt that we should give "time to think" higher priority. I was also intrigued by the interdisciplinary nature of Wiko, and the opportunity to spend an entire academic year in Berlin seemed attractive. After contacting former Fellows, I learned about the application process, which seemed quite mysterious to me at the time, and almost a year later (also thanks to Covid) I was officially invited to apply for a fellowship, which I gratefully did. Finally, I submitted my application, including my research proposal, and was accepted as a Fellow after a few rounds of evaluation.

Let me tell you about my research project. My original plan was to write an authoritative review on how the cellular machineries that transport proteins across biological membranes evolved – a question that is highly relevant for understanding the origin of complex cells that all plants and animals, including ourselves, are composed of. In the first two months after my arrival in Berlin, however, I realized that this was far too ambitious. Much time had passed since I had submitted my research proposal, and a number of reviews on the same topic had been published by others. I also learned that remotely supervising my research group at the University of Bern would take more time than I had anticipated. After a while, however, the motto "Gain time to think" kicked in and I knew which project I wanted to pursue. I decided to write a review on the unusual mitochondrial genome segregation system of trypanosomes, the microorganism my research group works with. I had been interested in this topic for a long time, but due to lack of time I hadn't been able to follow up on this idea. Being a Wiko Fellow, time was now available.

This meant a lot of reading, much of which I did during my bike trips to the nearby beer garden in the middle of the Grunewald. The next step was to provide a concise description of the structure and function of the mitochondrial DNA segregation systems of trypanosomes. Moreover, and this was the main challenge, I had to make clear in the review that the seemingly unique DNA segregation system of trypanosomes is relevant for a deeper understanding of the most basic features shared by all genome segregation systems, including those of yeast and humans. The final manuscript contains a number of elaborate figures that took me a long time to compose and draw. During this process, I became interested in how to convey complex visual information in the simplest way possible. The many discussions I had with the other scientists, but also with the art historians in our cohort, proved to be very inspiring for this endeavor. The manuscript is currently being peer-reviewed for publication in a biochemistry journal, and I'm eagerly awaiting the reviewers' comments.

The most striking thing about Wiko, but also the most difficult to explain, is what happened to me (and I suspect to most of the other Fellows) as a result of being so deeply immersed for so long in a group of experts spanning the full range of academic disciplines. I had experienced a similar feeling at scientific meetings, but in those cases it was always in my own field and lasted only a few days. The immersion experienced at Wiko has a different quality; it is like living in an intellectual paradise. (This is not a very original statement, as a look at previous Wiko Yearbooks reveals that "paradise" is the most frequently used noun to describe Wiko). There are the classic academic events: the Tuesday Colloquium and others like the Three Cultures Forum. But for me, the most important element in fostering this immersion were the more than 200 meals I shared with other Fellows in the Wiko restaurant. Besides the excellent food and wine, in the case of the dinners, I had so many intense and highly inspiring discussions that were essentially always outside my comfort zone, because I was the only biochemist in our cohort. It is worth mentioning that based on statistical probability I would have expected that there would be at least one arrogant asshole among so many academics. But I think everybody in our cohort agrees that this was not the case; there was a lot of respect between all Fellows and partners. Everybody was very nice, approachable and open, even to critical discussions. (Disclaimer: I am aware of the alternative explanation, namely that I was the asshole and nobody told me.) – I learned so much at those dinners. I had no idea that art historians are trained in visual analysis in a way that scientists are not. So they may see things in microscopic images that scientists miss. I realized that I knew very little about

how historians work, and my vexing question about whether there were general patterns in history that repeated themselves was answered quite differently depending on which historian I spoke with. There was a time when I felt very foolish because I was the only one at the table (mind you, it was a big table) who had never heard of “Critical Theory.” Disclaimer: I still don’t know much about it, but I learned that the capital letters are very important. Another question that has been frequently discussed is the extent to which a researcher’s social and ideological background influences the interpretation of results in different research disciplines. It was clear to me that this is an issue in the humanities and social sciences. I was surprised, however, that although this is almost never an issue in my field of biochemistry, it is not necessarily the same for evolutionary biology and the study of animal behavior. Before my Wiko stay I would have associated the term “sottobosco” with an Italian dish, similar to “ossobuco,” a fantastic version of which was served in the Wiko restaurant. Now I know it means still life painting depicting the forest floor and that many artists in the 17th century used it to reflect on the archaic scientific theory of spontaneous generation. Considering the ever-growing and seemingly self-reproducing dustballs under our beds in the Villa Walther, this theory might have been abandoned too early. – A recurring theme in our discussions was ChatGPT and to what extent it will be a transformative technology. The reason was that artificial intelligence is highly relevant to all academic disciplines and that we all need to find ways to deal with it.

Did I like everything here in Berlin? No, not really. I could have done without the Berlin winter, when it is cold, uniformly dark grey during the day, and the sun already sets at four. That was tough at times and I will definitely appreciate the much better winter weather we have at home. Also the much-sung “Berliner Luft” is, at least from a chemical point of view (sorry I’m a bio-chemist) quite bad, the official air quality index is often insufficient and rarely really good. That is to be expected in such a large city as Berlin, but living in the very green Grunewald quarter, only ten minutes away from the large Grunewald forest, set in the middle of many lakes, one often forgets that.

Now my stay at Wiko is almost over. Tomorrow is the big party. Here are some final thoughts. When I came to Wiko, I didn’t know anything about medieval literature. After a year here, I still know nothing about it. But I fully understand the enthusiasm of the person who spoke about it in his colloquium. The same was true of almost all the colloquia. This is perhaps not surprising, since essentially all Fellows are interested in the same basic questions: Who are we? Where do we come from, and where are we going? The difference is in the aspects of these questions to which each scholar chooses to devote his

or her professional life. – When I came here, I had a lot of preconceptions about the humanities and social sciences. Has that changed? The answer is a resounding “yes” in many cases. But there are some exceptions. Apparently, trying to find repeating patterns or general principles is a no-go for some historians. I still have a hard time understanding this. In my research, I am also studying a very specific process in an exotic organism, but the motivation for doing so is the hope of uncovering general principles that apply to all organisms.

Can I now explain to my colleagues in Bern what Wiko is all about? I’m not really sure. – Not long ago, while procrastinating on a manuscript, I began to reflect on the many discussions we had about artificial intelligence, so I asked ChatGPT to tell me a joke about Wiko. The answer was: Why did Wiko organize a comedy night? Because even the most serious scientists need a little “Witz-senschaft” to lighten the mood! I found that joke hilarious, which clearly says more about me than it does about the joke. – But the friendship, wisdom, and inspiration I was able to experience at Wiko was definitely not artificial. – Wiko is one of those things that you have to experience firsthand to know what it is all about. And no, there is no hidden catch!



A YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING
SHAI SECUNDA

Shai Secunda is the Jacob Neusner Professor of Judaism at Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY). He is the author of *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014) and *The Talmud's Red Fence: Menstrual Impurity and Difference in Babylonian Judaism and Its Sasanian Context* (Oxford University Press, 2020) and a contributing editor at *The Jewish Review of Books*. – Address: Interdisciplinary Study of Religions, Bard College, 30 Campus Road, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504, USA. E-mail: ssecunda@bard.edu.

Towards the end of my year at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I found myself in the sunlit reading room of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, holding an Aramaic incantation bowl that I'd examined for possible inclusion in a Jewish Museum Berlin exhibit, for which I'd been consulting. The magic bowls, as these artifacts are sometimes called, were spirally inscribed regular kitchen bowls in late ancient Mesopotamia, many of them by Babylonian Jews writing in the same Aramaic dialect that we find in the Babylonian Talmud – the center of the classical Jewish canon.

The bowls are talismans, and their aim was to provide protection for the households in which they were buried. As with other ancient Near Eastern writings deposited in building foundations, reading the bowls is fundamentally different from studying other kinds of inscriptions. With the latter, one experiences the dizzying sensation of encountering words written long ago yet read many times since. With the former, you are accessing a text that was never meant to be conventionally read in the first place. Of course, the magic bowls were composed with care, and their language was perceived as powerful and

productive in controlling an “audience” of (mainly demonic) forces. The bowls’ power does not derive from an ability to directly reach human readers. Instead, it operates on another metaphysical plane.

The tradition of submitting a piece of writing for the Wiko Yearbook is something like producing a magic bowl. Of course, the text will be accessible to Fellows and friends of the Kolleg. Perhaps, like I did on some long winter Friday nights, a future reader may flip through a forgotten *Jahrbuch* resting quietly on an abandoned shelf in their Villa Walther flat. But I’m not sure that that imagined reader is the sole or even primary address of the writing. Just as the Aramaic incantation bowls were not written so that a mid-career Talmudist spending a year in Berlin could study them a millennium and a half later, the Wiko *Jahrbuchbericht* is not chiefly produced for an expectant audience of regular readers, eagerly consuming these nostalgic, playful, and performative essays.

This existentialist train of thoughts leads me to another, unsettling observation that our regular academic work is also not unlike the production of Aramaic incantation bowls. Especially for those of us working on hidden corners of the humanities, our journal articles and monographs are read by a vanishing community of specialists. This realization is rendered even more disconcerting by the attention lavished on us over the course of the year by the remarkable Wiko staff. The pampering, the celebrating, and most of all, the care with which our seminars are duly recorded and deposited for posterity is gratifying – and yet, also disconcerting.

Unlike a good number of my colleagues, I did not grow up in a family of professors where academic work was presumed to possess obvious importance. And in the corner of American academia in which I toil, it is teaching and advising undergraduates that is valued supremely, while the relationship between scholar and students (or should I put it in American terms: producer and consumer) is kept proportional. Research is admired but deemed as somewhat peripheral to our main role as teachers in the College.

Spending a year in Berlin reminded me that, in fact, rarified scholarly and cultural work *is* critical. The throngs of people crowding the Berliner Abend and enthusiastically cheering the Rector’s presentation of the Fellows, the presence of scholars and high-cultural icons in German life, the crowded museums, and the packed opera houses all renewed my confidence in the power of art and scholarship, even in our late, mindless age. *Regular* people in this part of the world continue to read, learn, think, and absorb deeply. Our scholarship and other elevated forms of cultural production provide an essential, irreplicable service.

The research project I worked on at Wiko, and which I will continue to work on for some time, examines the processes by which the many texts *included* within the Babylonian Talmud became the gargantuan, crystallized compilation we now know of as the Babylonian Talmud. Much of my research focused on “big” things, such as inventorying all the “digressive” materials that made their way into the Talmud despite having nothing to do with the regular aims of the compilation. Increasingly, I found myself also pondering a smaller-scale question of no less importance for understanding the formation of the Talmud – how did all the Talmud’s numerous traditions – ranging from remedies for skin-boils (“Take ginger, and slag from silver, and sulfur, and wine vinegar, and olive oil, and white naphtha, and spread it with a goose feather”) to information about the ports of Bahrain (“There are three ports. Two are Roman and one is Persian. The Roman one imports coral and the Persian one imports pearls. And it’s called the port of Mashmahig”) survive and circulate for so many years orally, until they were ultimately included in the Bavli – which, incidentally, circulated orally in the first centuries of its existence?

In February, I organized a Wiko-supported workshop entitled “Rethinking Rabbinic Textuality” in which a wonderful group of friends (including two former Fellows) – Galit Hasan Rokem, Eva Kiesele, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, James Redfield, and Dina Stein – came from near and far to help me think through this and related matters. One of the methods by which I came to approach the circulation and endurance of Talmudic traditions was by closely examining parallels between the Talmud and those magic bowls that were composed in Babylonian Jewish Aramaic and whose contents seem especially Jewish, and even rabbinic. Since the bowls were produced around the sixth century C.E., they considerably predate the earliest, surviving Talmudic manuscripts, often by more than half a millennium. More importantly, when the bowls’ incantations closely parallel Talmudic traditions, they do so from a position beyond the canon of rabbinic literature, and are thus valuable for contemplating the vibrant, independent existence of these traditions as lived texts, prior to their incorporation in the Talmud and the magic bowls.

In this way it became easier to appreciate how the spells, formulae, phrases, and teachings recorded in the bowls and the Talmud were not singular, ephemeral utterances that happened to survive for centuries, but traces of an endless, incessant chain of iterations surrounding the texts, reminiscent of the writing of the incantation bowls which spools out from the middle of the bowl to its outer rim. While the artifacts themselves were, indeed, written to be buried and never to be read by human eyes, the broader “textscape” of which they were a part was, like an organism in which the circulation of blood is essential

for life, alive in the distribution of ideas and formula between the people of Babylonia, subsequent generations of scholars and producers of “magic,” and, in some ways, until the present day in the form of devotees of the Talmud and “superstitious” peoples who continue to write amulets. In this sense, these traditions are not letters, dead and buried, which miraculously reached us, but representatives of vibrant textual worlds which continue to resonate.

And so, I submit this dispatch from a year of magical thinking at Wiko, with the realization that even if these particular words may be currently limited in their reach, the conversations they emerged from and which they engender embrace many more actors beyond the (valued!) reader reading these particular words. There are, of course, my “fellow” Wiko Fellows, the devoted, unforgettable Wiko staff, the friends I made and the friendships I rekindled in Berlin, and my colleagues, students, and other interlocutors back home and around the world, with whom I am lucky enough to weave new strands of conversation spinning out from my precious time in Berlin.



DIALOGUE WITH OUR GENES – MY YEAR
AT WIKO
BENNY SHILO

I am a research scientist, working as a Professor at the Department of Molecular Genetics at the Weizmann Institute, Israel. As a post doc at MIT, Cambridge, I worked on the isolation of human cancer genes and made the startling discovery that these genes have been conserved in the course of evolution and can be found in fruit fly and worm genomes. In 1981, I opened my independent lab at the Weizmann Institute of Science. My research focuses on the use of the awesome power of fruit fly genetics in order to elucidate the normal roles of these cancer-causing genes and the circuitry that triggers them. We have found that these genes encode proteins mediating communication between cells, primarily during the course of embryonic development. The cells are initially multipotent and assume their unique fate and structure only after receiving and sending information to their neighbors. Furthermore, these genes play a similar role in a wide range of organisms, carrying out functions that probably existed already in the ancestral multicellular organism over 600 million years ago. In addition to my research efforts, I also participated throughout the years in administrative duties at the Weizmann Institute as department head and dean. – Address: Weizmann Institute of Science, Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Building for Biomedical Research, Rehovot 76100, Israel. E-mail: benny.shilo@weizmann.ac.il.

At Wiko I have embarked upon a new project: the evolutionary conservation of genes that play a central role in cell communication implies that they have indispensable functions. However, it also suggests that more subtle alterations in their regulation may lead to abnormal, pathological consequences. Indeed, over 50% of the genes implicated in human disease can be found also in the fruit fly genome. I wanted to make the leap from the

laboratory realm and fruit fly studies to issues relevant to human disease. I was fortunate to meet an MD, the genetic counselor Dr. Ehud Banne. In our discussions it became clear that our views on genetics are highly complementary. He is seeing patients and looking for the best ways to trace the genetic basis of their defects in order to come up with possible solutions to their problems and those of additional siblings that will be born. I focus on the mechanistic basis for defects that are caused by alterations in these genes and how they affect their holders' development and physiology.

With the advent of cheap and accessible genome sequencing, it is currently much easier to identify the genetic causes of human disease. Thus, genetic counseling is having a major impact on human health by offering, in many cases, several alternative solutions. The decision on which track to follow, e.g. an amniocentesis test followed by a possible abortion vs. in vitro fertilization and embryo transplantation, depends on the cultural background and personal preferences of the family. In other words, these are decisions that must be made not only by the doctors; the families need to take an active role. In the broad public, there is very limited knowledge of the ethical and scientific basis of genetic counseling, and thus it is difficult for patients to make informed decisions. A popular book that will present these topics can fill the gap.

Dr. Banne and I are writing a book on genetic counseling that is based on case studies stories. It presents the different advanced technologies that are available to track genetic defects and possible solutions that follow the test results. The book provides a popular explanation for the underlying scientific basis, as well as elaboration on ethical issues that must be considered.

During my year at Wiko, we have greatly advanced in writing the book. Dr. Banne provided the case studies, and I wrote the scientific background for each chapter. We had many discussions on the way we would like to present the material so that it will be accessible to a broad public and yet sufficiently detailed and sophisticated to provide the essence of the exciting scientific background behind it. The book will have 23 chapters, like the number of human chromosome pairs; we have 6 more "chromosome pairs" to go in order to complete it.

The year at Wiko was such a novel and multifaceted experience that it is difficult to decide where to begin. In a nutshell, it was a perfect combination of continuous social interactions that were carried out in a stimulating academic background. It is important for me to place the experience in this order, to emphasize the pleasant environment in which the academic interactions were carried out. Each of the Fellows was in a setting that is

very different from the conventional situation of meeting colleagues in related fields. Thus, the whole issue of competition or “showing off” becomes irrelevant. At Wiko, you are among people who will appreciate you for your social skills, curiosity, and general intellectual capabilities, but not for your achievements in your specific field of research. It is so refreshing to be among such people, where lunch conversations can range anywhere from the history of art in China, through the composition of music for modern operas, to the evolutionary origin of cells. The Tuesday Colloquium, where each Fellow presented the essence of their field and their own contributions to that field, was the highlight of the week.

Expanding the gaze beyond the company at the lunch table, Wiko at large was amazing. The continuous input and interest from the Rector and her assistants were not only stimulating, but also made sure we progressed through the year on the right track. The dedication and devotion of the staff to every need was such a treat. Finally, the physical setting was amazing. Walking every day from Villa Walther along the lake to Wiko, I had to pinch myself to verify that this beautiful scenery is real. Not only was it real, but also constantly changing during the seasons. Following the life cycle of the swans during the year and meeting the friendly and curious fox on several occasions was thrilling. Finally, there was Berlin at large, with the list of countless cultural experiences it offers. Seeing the different ways in which each Fellow discovered the city and benefiting from the shared experiences was an important aspect of the year and a major discussion topic.

I am sure that every year at Wiko is very different, depending on the topics and personalities of the year’s Fellows. Indeed, it was clear how much effort is dedicated to the selection of the new Fellows, with an attempt to evaluate not only their intellectual capacity, but also their curiosity and openness to new fields and experiences. The addition of young Fellows in the College for Life Sciences was extremely important and influential. It expanded the age range of Fellows with young and enthusiastic upcoming scientists, who demonstrated an impressive maturity and ability to benefit from the unique environment at Wiko.

In conclusion, a year at Wiko is a once in a lifetime gift. An opportunity to be in a new and welcoming environment, to be open to new experiences and eventually return to your “regular life” not only with extremely pleasant memories and new friendships, but also with a novel perspective. My wife, Varda, and I are extremely grateful for the unique experience at Wiko.



NACH EINEM JAHR
MARIA STEPANOVA

Maria Stepanova, geboren 1972, ist Dichterin, Essayistin und Journalistin. 1995 schloss sie ihr Studium am Moskauer Institut für Literatur ab. Sie ist Autorin von vierzehn Gedichtsammlungen und drei Essaybänden und wurde mit mehreren russischen und internationalen Literaturpreisen ausgezeichnet. Ihre Meinungsbeiträge über die aktuelle politische und mediale Landschaft in Russland erscheinen in maßgeblichen europäischen Publikationen (u. a. *Financial Times*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*). Ihr dokumentarischer Roman *Pamyati pamyati* (2017, deutsch: *Nach dem Gedächtnis*, 2018), mittlerweile in 29 Sprachen übersetzt, wurde 2018 mit dem größten russischen Literaturpreis „Das große Buch“, 2019 mit dem russischen NOS-Preis und 2022 mit dem französischen Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger ausgezeichnet. 2023 erhielt Stepanova für ihren Gedichtband *Mädchen ohne Kleider* den Leipziger Buchpreis zur Europäischen Verständigung. Von 2007 bis 2012 war Stepanova die Chefredakteurin der von ihr gegründeten unabhängigen Online-Tageszeitung zu zeitgenössischer Kultur und Gesellschaft OpenSpace.ru. 2012 rief sie zusammen mit dem ehemaligen OpenSpace-Team eine neue Online-Ressource ins Leben, Colta.ru, die sich mit kulturellen Themen und ihren politischen Auswirkungen befasste. Die Website wurde im März 2022 von der russischen Regierung blockiert. – Adresse: c/o Ettore Recchi, 54 bd de Vaugirard, 75015 Paris, Frankreich. E-Mail: m.stpnv@gmail.com.

Heute, aus gar nicht so großem zeitlichem Abstand, scheint das alles unreal, als hätte ich es mir ausgedacht. Eine Art verzauberter Insel: der See und die Schwäne, die Brücke mit den riesigen, huldvollen Sphinxen, die blitzschnell auftauchenden Bücher, wie im Traum,

wo man kaum sagt, was man braucht, und tags darauf steht es schon im Bibliotheksregal; die Menschen, Gesichter, Gespräche.

Vermutlich wäre alles anders gewesen und mir zumindest natürlicher vorgekommen – wenn auch nicht weniger wundersam –, hätte mein Jahr als Fellow am Wissenschaftskolleg wie geplant stattgefunden, unter normaleren Umständen. Doch ich kam gerade in dem Jahr, in dem mein Land, Russland, einen Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine begonnen hatte; viele meiner Landsleute fanden sich in der Folge an den verschiedensten Orten wieder, meist in deutlich weniger idyllischer Umgebung als ich – in einem fremden Land, in Flüchtlingsunterkünften oder zur Untermiete, im Gepäck einen nicht zu stemmenden Koffer voll Schuld, Verzweiflung und Ratlosigkeit. Ich war keine Ausnahme, und der Umstand, dass ich das Los mit See-plus-Schwänen, Balkon und der Option auf stilles, ungestörtes Arbeiten gezogen hatte, verstärkte nur mein Gefühl, dass unsere Schuld auch meine war, und die Ohnmacht angesichts der allgemeinen Katastrophe. Es war wohl das seltsamste Jahr meines schon ziemlich langen Lebens – als fiel und fiel ich in einen dunklen Brunnen. Dass dieser Brunnen an das Kaninchenloch in *Alice in Wonderland* erinnerte, wo entlang der Wände bekanntlich Marmeladengläser und sogar Bücher standen, zum Lesen im Flug, machte die Sache nicht viel besser. Fliegen ist schwer, wenn man nicht weiß, wann und ob man je wieder landen wird.

Mein Balkon blickte rund um die Uhr aufs Wasser, oder eigentlich blickten wir gemeinsam, mein Balkon und ich: auf die gleißenden Herbstfarben, darauf, wie sie mit der Zeit etwas dunkler wurden, wie sich das Wasser mit einer dünnen Eisschicht überzog und dann unterm Schnee verschwand – ich saß da und schaute, und nur manchmal, wenn morgens der erste Bus der Linie M19 stadteinwärts vorbeirauschte, hell erleuchtet und leer, begriff ich, dass die Zeit trotz allem weiterging und ich mit ihr. Ich war wie erstarrt, wie Erde unterm Eis, und wahrscheinlich hörte ich deshalb mehr zu als ich sprach und war bei den gemeinsamen Lunches keine große Bereicherung – aber ich hörte aufmerksam zu und lernte nicht wenig.

Meine Situation erinnerte entfernt an etwas, das Karin Leonhard in einem Vortrag kurz vor Ende des akademischen Jahrs beschrieb – eine bestimmte Sorte Stillleben, die um die Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts plötzlich in Mode gekommen war. Neben der sorgfältigen Darstellung der lebenden und toten Bildgegenstände und der sie umflatternden Schmetterlinge tauchte hier auf einmal ein überraschendes zusätzliches Element auf: eine Landschaft, die dem Stillleben als Hintergrund diente. Wenn ich mich recht erinnere, waren das meist keine gewöhnlichen Landschaften, die man samt ihren Bewohnern hätte

zeigen müssen, sondern leere, unbewohnte Himmel mit ihren Gott weiß wem vorbehaltenen Lichteffekten. Das Bild unterzog die bekannte Welt einer simplen, aber radikalen Veränderung: Nahaufnahme und Totale blieben erhalten, aber die dem Menschen angemessenste halbnah Ebene wurde säuberlich aus dem Weltbild des Künstlers entfernt. Übrig blieb ein neues, befriedetes Universum ohne Menschen und selbst ohne Tiere (die Falter stehen im Grunde ja den Blumen näher als uns, sowohl der Größe als auch der Lebensweise nach), dafür aber mit einem nächtlichen oder abendlichen Firmament, vor dessen Folie Blumen und Früchte einen stummen Tod ohne sichtbare Spur des Bedauerns starben. Die Gegenwart des Menschen mit seinen Ansprüchen, seinem Unverständnis und seiner Fähigkeit, zugleich Gefäß und Werkzeug des Todes zu sein, hätte ihr fragiles Gleichgewicht gestört. Im 17. Jahrhundert, als der Tod alltäglich war (91 Kriege in hundert Jahren, wenn man Wikipedia glaubt), lag das vermutlich noch mehr auf der Hand als heute: Zumindest auf der Leinwand konnte man auf unsereins gut verzichten.

In diesen Monaten betrachtete ich sehr aufmerksam den Boden, offenbar hoffte ich, von der Erde etwas zu lernen – Geduld zum Beispiel und die Bereitschaft, lange Kältephasen zu überstehen. Ich sah, wie plötzlich Hyazinthen und Tulpen daraus hervorkrochen, wie sie mit ihren Köpfchen, anfangs noch schwach und blass, die Krume zur Seite schoben. Es war ein ermutigender, wenn auch etwas grober Anblick, er erinnerte mich daran, wie Menschenjunge zur Welt kommen – auch sie mit dem Kopf voraus. Überhaupt nahm alles, was um mich herum geschah, in meinem Kopf enorme Dimensionen an, es wurde mal Allegorie für irgendetwas Entscheidendes, mal direkte Handlungsaufforderung, nur verstand ich nie, wofür oder wozu genau. Also lief ich weiter herum und saß da, las und las und lauschte, als wäre ich wieder siebzehn und müsste ganz von vorn anfangen.

Ich lernte Deutsch bei Eva von Kügelgen, die aus irgendeinem Grund überzeugt war, dass die Sprache schon in meinem Kopf steckte, wie Hyazinthenzwiebeln in der Erde – mit etwas Wärme und Geduld würde sie bald ans Licht kommen und zeigen, dass sie weiter wachsen konnte. Ich hörte die fließend ins Tischgespräch übergewandenen Vorträge der Fellows und staunte, wie unsere Themen und Fachgebiete, zwischen denen es scheinbar keinen direkten Zusammenhang gab, durch unzählige Koinzidenzen, Entsprechungen, verborgene Reime verbunden waren. So öffneten sich überraschend Fenster und Türen, wo zuvor eine kahle Wand gewesen war, und egal was ich tat – ob ich reglos auf dem Balkon saß und mich selbst darüber ärgerte oder Material für das Buch sammelte, sortierte, prüfte, an dem ich seit ein paar Jahren arbeite –, alles wurde Teil eines

kontinuierlichen Gesprächs mit den Menschen, mit denen das Schicksal mich hier zusammengeführt hatte.

Viele meiner Kollegen hier – Historiker, Soziologinnen, Aktivisten – kamen wie ich aus Gesellschaften, die man gern *troubled* nennt, und von ihnen gab es auch jenseits ihrer Forschungsarbeit viel zu lernen: den Mut, den das Leben in historischen Zeiten von uns fordert, die Treue zur eigenen Sache und die Fähigkeit, unbeirrt diese merkwürdige Last zu tragen, die zur einen Hälfte aus Ohnmacht, zur anderen aus Entschlossenheit besteht – auch das eine Disziplin *sui generis*, wenn nicht gar ein Beruf.

Zu meiner Ehre durfte ich im selben Jahr hier sein wie die große ukrainische Dichterin Marianna Kiyanovska, die im Wissenschaftskolleg an einem Band neuer Gedichte, Essays und Übersetzungen arbeitete. In ihrem kleinen Studio sah ich ihre Notizhefte – viele hundert Seiten, die geschrieben werden mussten, um Worte zu finden für die Erfahrung eines Lebens im Inneren des Kriegs, im Inneren des Todes, um durch diese Erfahrung hindurchzugehen und sie zur Grundlage einer neuen, noch zu schaffenden poetischen Sprache zu machen. Die unzähligen Fassungen, die wieder verworfen wurden, ehe auf ihrer Basis ein kurzer endgültiger Text entstand, zeugten nicht nur von physischer Arbeit, sondern auch von der inneren Anstrengung, die es kostet, dem Bösen zu widerstehen: In der Konfrontation mit Gewalt kann die Kultur nur überleben, wenn sie nicht nur das eigene Grauen, den eigenen Schmerz überwindet, sondern auch die eigene Trägheit, wenn sie das Vorhersehbare umformt oder abtrennt und nur das Neue übriglässt – das, was überleben und neues Leben schenken kann.

Wie bei vielen anderen lief auch bei mir parallel zum Alltag ein anderes Leben nebenher. Es bestand aus den täglichen Nachrichten und Zeugenberichten *von dort*, aus der Ukraine, wo der Krieg die ganze Zeit über weiterging und bis heute weitergeht. Für mich machten sie ein eigenes Sprechen, eigene Äußerungen in gewissem Sinn unmöglich: Meine Sache war es jetzt nicht zu schreiben, sondern zu lesen, nicht etwas zu sagen, sondern zuzuhören. Ich zweifelte nicht etwa an der Legitimität meiner Arbeit oder gar der Sprache, in der ich schreibe. Ich stellte einfach nur fest, dass es in diesen Tagen und Monaten wichtiger war, mich selbst aus dem Gesamtbild herauszunehmen, wie die menschliche Gestalt zwischen Obstschale und Gewitterhimmel aus einem Gemälde – ich wollte jemand werden, der sieht und erinnert, ohne nach einem Standpunkt zu suchen, von dem aus ich etwas hätte sagen können. Es gab nichts, was *stand*, ich war weiter im Fall, mit offenen Augen. Es verging viel Zeit, bis ich doch noch meinen Rechner aufklappte und endlich anfang zu schreiben – aber das ist schon eine andere Geschichte.

Vergangene Woche war ich kurz in Berlin und fuhr, wie der Zufall es wollte, mit einem Bus derselben Linie M19 an dem Haus vorbei, in dem ich dieses seltsame, unvergessliche Jahr verbracht hatte. Auch das Haus selbst war seltsam und unvergesslich: seine Außenwände über und über verziert mit Götter- und Heldenfiguren, Putti und Kentauren, als sollte die Passantin sie lesen wie einen Gedichtband, in beliebiger Reihenfolge, dem eigenen Interesse folgend. Doch es hatte auch noch eine andere Besonderheit, die für mich vielleicht noch wichtiger war: Einer seiner Flügel, früher vermutlich ebenso mit Skulpturen geschmückt, war im Zweiten Weltkrieg zerbombt und dann Jahre später schnell und schmucklos wieder aufgebaut worden, pragmatisch und effizient. Das Haus war in diesem Sinn ein Überlebender – kein Opfer des Krieges vielleicht, aber dessen direktes Ergebnis. In seinem steinernen Körper verbanden sich sein *Vorher* und *Nachher*, die Erinnerung an das, was war, und die Fähigkeit, in Anbetracht dessen, was war, weiterzuleben. Die Wohnung, in der ich ein Jahr lang gewohnt hatte, lag just in diesem neuen Flügel. Der Bus rollte über die blaue Brücke, für einen Moment tauchte der Balkon auf, wo ich nicht mehr saß, und ich dachte: Ich glaube, ich bin endlich gelandet. Wäre das Wiko nicht gewesen, würde ich immer noch fallen.

Aus dem Russischen von Olga Radetzkaja



WONDER YEAR
MICHAEL TABORSKY

Michael Taborsky is a behavioural biologist, Professor emeritus at the University of Bern, and affiliated with the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Konstanz. He studies the evolution of social behaviour and cooperation, complex social organisation, and alternative reproductive and behavioural tactics. He identified three principal ways to succeed in resource competition: *scramble*, *power*, and *cooperation*. The latter has four alternative, mutually non-exclusive selection scenarios: *coercion*, *deception*, *by-product benefits*, and *altruism*. He clarified that *altruism* can evolve if payoffs for all involved parties correlate. Further, he found that *generalised reciprocity*, based on the decision rule “help anyone if helped by someone,” can create stable levels of cooperation under a range of conditions. He pinpointed selection mechanisms underlying genetic and conditional alternative reproductive tactics, established the social niche concept, and outlined the key functions of extended phenotypes as signals. He and his collaborators initiated several model systems to study the evolution of social organisation, including social cichlids, wild-type Norway rats, and fungus-cultivating ambrosia beetles. He has published 240 papers in peer-reviewed journals, edited several collected volumes, was editor-in-chief of *Ethology*, co-edited *Behavioral Ecology*, and published the book *The Evolution of Social Behaviour* (with M.A. Cant and J. Komdeur, Cambridge University Press). – Address: Ethologische Station Hasli, Universität Bern, Wohlenstr. 50a, 3032 Hinterkappelen, Switzerland. E-mail: michael.taborsky@unibe.ch.

My report on this sublime year at Wiko comes in separate parts, addressing different audiences.

*For my fellows and partners*²²

Cast the dice with a random bunch of intellectuals from as diverse fields as imaginable and let them do as they please. Feed them well and support their odd wishes. Prompt them to interact oftentimes over a year and see what eventuates. A bizarre idea doomed to failure, no? By no means! This is *the* Wiko recipe. As by a wonder, it works. And how! What appears like an omnium-gatherum of classmates develops into a terrific colloquy, in fact turning out to be damn addictive, and in essence, immensely informative. Sprouting especially at and around the collective meals, but that's not all there is to it.

The weekly colloquia provide excellent opportunity for fruitful exchange. *Prima facie*, they expose how the different academic cultures uphold their quirky traditions. Regardless of whether fabulous slides are accompanied by the extemporised ramblings of a natural scientist, verbatim read-off erudite texts are illustrated by incomprehensible miniature pictures in humanities' fashion, or a baffling philosophical treatise is complemented by a hand-out filled with exacting propositions – before grasping the content of it all, be sure to get into the swing of the style. Then you can wholeheartedly enjoy the intellectual treasures presented with zeal. And anticipate the subsequent vivid discussion, which may encompass lengthy speeches of bookish discussants that at times may challenge your patience. In any case, these hour-long discussions are among the highlights of the week: so much to gain from!

A revelation for me was to learn how different fields approach the quest for knowledge and understanding, not to say “truth.” I'm ashamed to admit that I had previously not thought much about alternatives to the reductionist approach we use in natural science. In essence, we attempt to establish causal relationships by rigorous experimentation, aiming to proceed toward an understanding of general principles. This is what I thought it must be. But how can this be applied to the acquisition of historical knowledge? Here I learnt that contingency, prudent interpretation, and source criticism are at the fore. Not that arriving at general principles should be neglected, but it is not the major, let alone “only acceptable” justification of academic endeavour. While in science we are obsessed with the “big picture,” supposedly using the special case just for illustration, the particularity of circumstances has priority in the humanities. In philosophy, instead, critical musings on the multifarious meanings of key terms and underlying processes seem to be the name of the game. The methods suited to promote our understanding of the world have priority over the knowledge itself, as a means to an end. The language of literary culture, fine arts, and music is again a different kettle of fish. Here the absolute often has a bearing on the personal, which is another viable approach to a deep understanding. Social sciences, on the other

hand, use disparate approaches that are based on either quantitative or qualitative evaluations, where some build on thorough quantification while others seem to have a distaste for it. Obviously, a critical validation of the methodological approach makes sense only within each of these different fields; no generalisation across disciplines appears to be appropriate. Quite a trivial insight it may seem, but important notwithstanding (even if only for me).

Some of the most revealing and enjoyable discussions arose on the 400m walk between Villa Walther and the main building, which often extended over much longer than the 5 min needed to cover the distance. I felt somewhat sorry for those who dwelled closer to the hub and thus missed such opportunities. These occasions allowed us to learn from each other's interests and predilections and to plan more formal exchanges on topics of mutual interest. Keen discussions off schedule also continued on our way to various cultural activities, including the diverting choir rehearsals, joint visits to museums, concerts, theatre performances, exhibitions, and public activities (like the Stolperstein-cleaning commemorating the Pogrom Night of 1938, just to mention one memorable example). This was another, important way to come to appreciate everybody and to make friends. Often the bus M19 or the city train S7 turned into alternative venues for enthusiastic discussions, whether sober or quirky.

Why did this all work out so miraculously? Obviously, it depends on the mixture of people. We were told every now and again that we were quite a special crowd. Well, this may be a predicate every cohort receives. If so, all the better. But truly, what is the secret of this success? I suppose first and foremost it is the character of the team players. In our group we luckily missed the overambitious ego, the personality trying to upstage the rest. As if by a miracle, we did not have a single one of these. This is not self-evident, even if as by design we were not competing for any resources. Modesty, open-mindedness, and mutual respect and interest characterised our fellows and partners. Everyone indeed! I really had the feeling that we all liked each other. Exaggerated, idealised, wishful thinking? No, I don't think so. I dare say it was a marvellous experience to get to know each and every member of our clique in all their distinctness and to really become friends. Such brilliant, kind, and broad-minded people – I am not above confessing that I miss you folks, already a few weeks after departure!

For those in charge and all the wonderful Wiko staff

The Wiko year 2022/2023: what an enormous success! Even after reading many reports from previous years, it was hard to imagine how well this might all work out. Clearly you are all cunning experts on how to successfully run this business. The course of action

seems clear and simple: invite merited scholars on the basis of promising project proposals, prompt them to interact intensively, and support both their demands and freedom. But how tough does it become if you think of each procedure in detail! How to determine the most auspicious Fellows among the vast crowd of those longing to come? How to compile a creative mixture of savants from diverse fields who are open enough to benefit from each other's expertise? How to find the ideal compromise between providing them with sufficient time for research and creativity while at the same time inducing fruitful interaction? And how to satisfy all their physical and intellectual cravings and needs to promote their progress? Coping with all this needs a prudent approach, genuine devotion, and fierce determination by everybody involved. Not to forget infectious joy and pleasure, as the atmosphere is half the battle. A toast to the whole Wiko team: you phenomenally succeeded!

The support we received at any time and in any circumstance was absolutely captivating. Regardless of whether you needed technical help in your flat or with the IT infrastructure, books or papers for your work, information about this and that, special food due to ailment – everything worked out instantaneously and in the best mood. Unbelievable and outright praiseworthy. Take the kitchen, for example. Not only that Dunia and her fabulous team produced a different delicate meal on every weekday over our entire stay – yes, there were NO repetitions! – but on top they indulged every wish or whim of us spoilt brats. Sure enough, in case of malady the meal was brought to your home door! Dunia's exceptional benevolence was so affecting that embarrassingly, when I bid adieu to her I was choked with emotion.

As for running the business, Wiko is obviously in the firm hands of historians. Even if surprising at first glance, this was certainly not to our disadvantage. If anything, the prevalence of historians may adversely affect only them; while the Fellows from other disciplines benefit from what they can learn from their historical expertise, historians themselves might not get as much back in return from the slightly smaller share of experts from other fields. To that end, the College for Life Sciences is a fantastic extension, what a splendid idea! Concerning the composition of Fellows, an extension toward other fields of science might be worth consideration. Theoretical physicists, mathematicians, experts from geosciences, chemistry, and computer science, for example – many of these folks might not depend on permanently having a lab at their disposal. And if they do, one might get desirable candidates just at the transition to emeritus state. This applied in my case, for example, which for me was a lucky punch.

The rules and traditions at Wiko hint at a thorough and prudent optimisation process. The diversity of Fellows is truly unsurpassable. This concerns every feature, from gender to age to origin to discipline, you name it. The selection process obviously succeeded to balance out everything. But prudence does not end at the preparative level. For instance, the scheme to pay for the joint meals even if not coming is a smart move, as is the tradition to have roughly two regular meetings a week. More may seem enticing but might rather get in the way of the progress of individual projects. The Three Cultures Forum is a terrific series prompting one to really think outside the box. If anything, there could be more of these. The explicit focus on the discussion parts of any form of presentation hits the mark; it makes perfect use of the phenomenal diversity of backgrounds, experiences, ideas, and insights represented in the group. And the policy to support the partners of Fellows just like the Fellows themselves is applaudably wise. Typically, the partners of Fellows are similarly absorbing, and fully including them in the procedures not only benefits the atmosphere, but also clearly enriches the merit for all.

Scope for improvement? Honestly, how can something so well attuned as the Wiko machinery be improved? Well, nothing is so good that it cannot be made better. Scope for advance might exist in the design of evening events, for example. I wonder whether something like the format of the Three Cultures Forum could also appeal to the evening spectacles. Something more in the form of a lively ping-pong of dialogue instead of a mere lecture or interview. Having said that, the evening events were still enlightening as they were! Another issue with scope for improvement is the information exchange about what is continually produced by fellows and partners during their stay at Wiko. The attention of Fellows is drawn to their talks and lectures outside of Wiko in the Calendar of Events, for instance, but in comparison, publications emerging during their time at Wiko are hard to find. Also, for external visitors to Wiko's web pages, the published scientific output of Fellows is inexplicably secluded. It is customary that academic institutions worldwide feature a "publications" button prominently on their homepage. Omitting this is a drawback, because the scientific community interested in the work done at Wiko may first and foremost seek information on just that. Also, for the general public, the taxpayer, and politicians, the productivity of Fellows during (and in consequence of) their Wiko year is an important record of their hard work and ingenious creativity that gives no reason to be concealed.

For the taxpayer (whether high-minded or sceptical)

How can the indulgence of a lucky elite of pampered academics be justified in the eyes of the hard-working taxpayer who settles the bill? This is a delicate question, as any argument must bear examination. In plain terms, what added value can be achieved by patching together a group of historians, biologists, philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists, economists, jurists, writers, musicians, and scholars of literature and religious studies from 32 nations to let them think, work, and interact with each other for a full academic year? Well, even if the result cannot be measured in centimetres, kilograms, or light-years, the progress achieved by such endeavour is truly imposing. Each and everyone in these professions is usually interacting among their own kind. This stands to reason and makes indeed sense. However, it inevitably creates tunnel vision. To think outside the box needs stimulation from different fields. Progress in science, arts, and humanities needs cross-fertilisation; this is as sure as death and taxes. The history of progress in human culture is a history of successful interaction between complementary expertise. No price seems too high to promote such interplay. Proof needed? Consult the list of publications from Fellows emerging during and after their Wiko year – thoroughly impressive: <https://www.wiko-berlin.de/en/institute/library/books-music-on-site/made-at-wiko>

For my own memory

Bringing Covid-19 unwittingly with us from Bern was not a good start at Wiko for Barbara and me. Missing all the initial get-to-know-each-others was not really helpful. So I enjoyed all the more the lunch conversations during the first weeks after recovery, which afforded so much to learn from my fellow diners. This was a key blessing, and in fact the highlight of every day. For months to come at the meals, no time was wasted with small talk or giddy chatter. Always a tricky decision whom to join – the fellow biologists? Sure, but there was often more to learn from Fellows with a different background. After a while, one had met everyone and the choice of company became less of an issue – without diminishing the intellectual elation.

One of the key challenges became the organisation of one's schedule, with so much time available between video sessions with left-behind collaborators. So much time? Well, I had a new book project and both of us several papers to write up and to conceive, but then – all the distractions! More important ones and less important ones, ranging from appealing conversations with fellows and partners to exploring Berlin and its pleasant surroundings – Grunewald is a magnificent starting point for that matter – from moving

early music recitals to absorbing theatre plays, from immersing ourselves in the copious museum landscape of Berlin to strolling through the political and historical centre of power, from jogging through the Grunewald to biking to Pankow or a refreshing swim in the Halensee (if temperature allowed...), not to forget the diverting choir rehearsals and enjoyable movie nights in the Villa Jaffé. In the end, it is not monastic asceticism we are here for, but for learning and to broaden our mind, full stop!

And then this other sizable threat of distraction – an enormous TV screen in our flat! For those who never had television at home in their life, this is a serious challenge. I now understand even better why we have never got a TV set. Such a waste of time, so difficult to resist the temptation of rather futile consumption. Not that one cannot benefit from informative programs like ZDFinfo or Welt TV, and even the late night talk shows in the main TV stations can be revealing. For someone who never had noteworthy history lessons at school, it was truly an asset to learn about historical world affairs and the turbulent German past, even if cast into a stogy narrative. But time flies, the project is falling behind, alas!

An achievement giving us great pleasure was the workshop we were able to organise on “Division of labour as key driver of social evolution” at the end of March 2023, with many Fellows and outside guest speakers participating. This was generously supported by Wiko and provided a great opportunity to treat an issue of common interest from very different perspectives, including all the cultures represented by our fellows and partners. Subsequently, the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B have luckily agreed to publish a special volume on the outcomes of this meeting, which is currently being implemented. Hopefully, something with long-term effect from a memorable Wiko event.

For forthcoming Fellows

It came as a surprise when, at an early wine reception, a member of the rectorate mentioned to me that succeeding with the envisaged project is not of primary importance – in fact, failing with this might even be better. The reason became clear soon after. There is so much to benefit from the interactions at Wiko that may broaden your view, ideas, and approach. Hence what you originally thought of may in the end take a back seat, and rightly so. My piece of advice: be open, and enjoy the marvellous exchange!

For the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Bettina Stark-Watzinger

Das Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin ist ein einzigartiger Leuchtturm im Wissenschaftsbetrieb weltweit. Kaum jemand, der nicht davon gehört hat, kaum jemand, dem die

Strahlkraft der Wissenschaftskultur in dieser Institution entgangen wäre. Nichts Entsprechendes in Umfang, Ausrichtung und Reichweite existiert anderswo in Deutschland oder Europa. Dabei ist die Funktion, die das Wissenschaftskolleg erfüllt, von unschätzbare Bedeutung. Nirgends sonst haben hochangesehene Vertreter aus Wissenschaft, Kultur und Gesellschaft die Gelegenheit, sich ein Jahr lang intensiv miteinander auszutauschen und ihren Horizont auf diese Art substanzial zu erweitern. Die Leistungen des Kollegs sorgen Jahr für Jahr für erhebliche Aufmerksamkeit in der Welt der Wissenschaft, den Medien und der Öffentlichkeit. Es zeugt von Vernunft und Weitblick, dass sich das Land Berlin und der Bund die Finanzierung der Trägerorganisation, der Wissenschaftsstiftung Ernst Reuter, paritätisch teilen. „Matching funds“ sind ein probates Mittel für die Finanzierung von Institutionen, die von öffentlichem Interesse sind. Sie funktionieren aber nur, solange die Partner miteinander kooperieren, also auch ein gemeinsames Interesse an der jeweiligen Institution haben. Ist das nicht mehr gegeben, blockiert ein Partner den anderen und die Institution ist über kurz oder lang dem Untergang geweiht. Unfassbar, aber genau dieses Damoklesschwert scheint nun über dem Wissenschaftskolleg zu hängen. Das Land Berlin hat sich zwar Jahr für Jahr bereit erklärt, die steigenden Kosten durch eine dringend benötigte Anpassung der Zuwendungen auszugleichen, was der Bund aber bislang unerklärlicherweise verwehrt. Dadurch gerät diese hochverdiente und nach allen Maßstäben erfolgreiche Institution in eine heikle wirtschaftliche Lage. Dies ist besonders prekär in einer Zeit, wo die spezifische Förderung geflüchteter Fellows aus der Ukraine und die Etablierung von Partnerinstitutionen in Osteuropa, speziell der Ukraine, zusätzliche Anforderungen stellt. Eine akademische Institution dieser Prägung kann man nicht gesund-, sondern nur krankschrumpfen, was über kurz oder lang ihr Ende bedeuten würde. Ich vertraue auf Ihre Einsicht, dass Deutschland dieses Risiko nicht eingehen sollte und Sie der erforderlichen Anpassung der Fördersumme an die gestiegenen Kosten – im Einvernehmen mit dem Land Berlin – zustimmen werden.

For the future

All this is such an asset – for all the world, keep in touch!



THE POLITICS OF MEMORY
FRANCISCUS VERELLEN

Franciscus Verellen is a historian of medieval China specialized in the religious culture of Daoism. His recent work has focused on the transition period from the Tang (618–907) to the Five Dynasties (907–65). Verellen did his doctoral studies at the University of Oxford and the École Pratique des Hautes Études. He taught at Columbia University and the École Pratique des Hautes Études and held various visiting appointments in North America and East Asia. He is Professor Emeritus and a former Director (2004–14) of the École française d'Extrême-Orient, where he occupied the chair in History of Daoism and served as head of the research centers in Hong Kong and Taipei. He was elected a life member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 2008 and of Clare Hall, University of Cambridge in 2022. Franciscus Verellen's most recent monograph, *Imperiled Destinies: The Daoist Quest for Deliverance in Medieval China* (Harvard University Press, 2019), was translated into French and Chinese. His new book manuscript *Famed and Defamed: Gao Pian's Military Trajectory and the Fall of the Tang* is currently under review at Cambridge University Press. – Address: 50 rue du Général de Gaulle, 95320 Saint Leu-la-Forêt, France. E-mail: franciscus.verellen@gmail.com.

Occasional visitors to Berlin in the past, Isabelle and I enjoyed gaining a deeper familiarity with the city's sprawling topography, vibrant cultural life, and international spirit. Following are a few jottings from our Berlin notebook:

Reichtum der deutschen Wissenschaftssprache wiederentdeckt. Shakespeares in freier Neuübersetzung bereut. Vergangenheitsschicksale vergegenwärtigt, Gegen-

wartskonflikte nähergebracht. Unerwartete Einblicke in das Verhalten des Insektes, zeitgenössische Komposition, russische Ideengeschichte, afrikanische Literatur, neue philosophische Ansätze gewonnen. Freundschaften geschlossen. Den halben Kantatenzyklus in der Gedächtniskirche einverleibt und das dreihundertste Bach-Jubiläum in der Leipziger Thomaskirche gefeiert. Jakob Ullmanns tonlose Grenzraummusik eben wahrgenommen. Mit Isabelle das Nachwort zu Famed and Defamed im Strandkorb auf dem Darß umfochten. Vergebens Sottobosco-Stilleben in Schwerin nachgespürt. Neue Stadtviertel durchlaufen. Relevanz der Begriffe „Mittelalter“ und „Neuzeit“ für die Geschichte Chinas nuanciert ...

The year also provided welcome opportunities for renewing or establishing contacts through lectures and visits with colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Humboldt Forum), the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, the Department of East Asian Studies at Leipzig University, and alumni Fellows. Ian Johnson, senior China analyst at the New York Council on Foreign Relations, joined me in a public conversation hosted by Wiko on “Religion, Zivilgesellschaft und Politische Macht in China – Gegenwart und Vergangenheit im Dialog.” The writer and filmmaker Folco Terzani visited from Florence for three days of discussion in preparation of a novel on Laozi.

My announced research project, “Transcending Turmoil: The End of the Tang (618–907) in the Testimony of Du Guangting,” on the intellectual and religious implications of dynastic change in medieval China, made less than expected progress. Instead, the final phase of researching and writing the previous book expanded to include an unplanned close scrutiny of Chinese official historiography and its treatment of contentious issues in times of regime change.

Now titled *Famed and Defamed: Gao Pian's Military Trajectory and the Fall of the Tang*, this book is organized as a military biography set in the same transitional period. It began as an enquiry into the breakup of the Golden Age of Chinese imperial ascendancy and civilizational splendor seen from the vantage point of one of the period's leading protagonists. A complex character – illustrious general, governor of large territories, engineer and poet, man of religion and the object of religious cults, Gao Pian (821–87) left a conflicted legacy. A hero and valiant defender of the embattled dynasty to some, to others he was a secessionist villain who betrayed the Tang. As the research progressed, the portrait

of Gao that emerges from contemporary writings increasingly diverged from the damning image of him that official historians presented to posterity. My new line of investigation focused on the sources of this disagreement and the motives that lay behind the historians' judgment.

The Standard History of the Tang was written in the Five Dynasties (907–65) period of division that followed the Tang. It was significantly revised after the reunification of the empire under the Song (960–1127). The eleventh-century editors of this “definitive” version were eminent men of letters as well as active statesmen. Due to the loss or destruction of archives and makeshift historiographical procedures during the last emperors' repeated exiles from the capital, later historians faced a gaping lacuna of official documentation on the dynasty's final five reigns. The scholar-officials tasked with portraying the Tang expected the writing of history to yield judgments assigning praise and blame to the actors of the past, which would be apt to illumine contemporary policymakers, sway the emperor's mind, or mirror the errors of political rivals. Staunch Neo-Confucians, their verdict assimilated Gao Pian with the late Tang “turncoats” and “secessionists” held responsible for the fall of the Tang. To safeguard the Song dynasty's hard-won unity, these historians were determined to inoculate their compatriots against such leaders.

In writing the last chapters of this book and revising the manuscript at the Wissenschaftskolleg, my objective was not simply to rehabilitate a maligned reputation, but to examine, first, what Gao's case reveals about the mechanics of an empire's unraveling and, second, the aims and methods of dynastic historiography. Loyalty formed with filiality the twin pillars of a socio-political edifice that sustained the Confucian imperial order. Up to a point, a well-honed rhetoric of loyalty could safeguard a faltering regime from the tremors of political upheaval. As Laozi, an early critic of Confucian moral philosophy, pithily observed: “When the six relations of kinship are in disharmony, filial piety and parental love come to the foreground. When the state falls into anarchy, loyal subjects make their appearance.” With the crumbling of the imperial compact of allegiance, loyalism was conspicuously in evidence in late Tang and Five Dynasties political discourse.

Illustrating the timeless tug-of-war between politics and history, the contemporary Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, who currently makes his home in Berlin and Cambridge, writes in his recent memoir *1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows*: “When I was growing up, my father rarely talked about the past, because everything was shrouded in the thick fog of the dominant political narrative, and any inquiry into fact ran the risk of provoking a backlash too awful to contemplate.”

History's partialities and moral pronouncements have long been in the sights of Chinese critics. The Qing dynasty advocate of "evidential scholarship" Wang Mingsheng (1722–98), in his *Critical Discussion of the Seventeen Dynastic Histories*, argued for a more probing and broadly-sourced historiography. Qian Daxin (1728–1804) held that "historical facts themselves should reveal whom to praise and whom to blame" and that "the process of laying blame should be analogous to the deliberations involved in deciding court cases. There must be no forced or self-serving use of the historical evidence to support political and dynastic prejudices."

Famed and Defamed lays the facts of Gao Pian's trajectory and his role in the fall of the Tang before the reader's judgment. The new evidence presented draws on a variety of contemporary writings, including a trove of official documents by Gao Pian's Korean secretary Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn, preserved in the latter's native kingdom of Silla. Barely touched by historians, this archive chronicles step by step the process and the conditions of Gao's disengagement from the imperial court, illustrating the unstoppable forces at work in the dissolution of the empire and the tenuousness of the historians' trials of allegiance. The light that these neglected records shed on Gao Pian's actions and personality does not reduce the complexity of his character, nor the difficulty of establishing his intimate motivations, but the authenticity of their testimony is incontestably more compelling than the official verdict, and the facts of Gao Pian's life are more captivating than the political fiction.

Attuned to different career stages, professional priorities, and unforeseen initiatives born from serendipitous encounters, the opportunities Wiko offered in 2022/2023 were as diverse as the set of Fellows and partners present. To me, it was above all a haven for writing in an enchanting natural environment under conditions that an enlightened institutional strategy, dedicated staff, exemplary facilities, and exceptional Fellows conspired to perfect.

*Im Anfang war das Wort. Dann zwei.
Zu Ende war die Langeweile
nach der ersten ganzen Zeile.
Meinungsaustausch, Bücherschreiberei,
Opernpartituren, Zukunftssträume
Inspiriert im Schatten hoher Bäume
die Musenfee
vom Halensee.*



IN SEARCH OF JUSTICE: ENCOUNTERING
BERLIN IN HISTORY AND IN PERSON
NJOKI WAMAI

Njoki Wamai is an Iso Lomso Fellow at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS) and an Assistant Professor of Politics and International Relations at the United States International University–Africa (USIU-A). Her research focuses on the politics of transitional justice, the International Criminal Court intervention, women, peace and security, and the decolonial methodologies in research in African contexts. Her doctoral and post-doctoral research examined the contested narratives of justice, victimhood, and security after the International Criminal Court (ICC) intervention in Kenya. She is currently working on her monograph and an edited volume on the legacies of the International Criminal Court intervention in Kenya. – Address: School of Humanities and Social Sciences, United States International University–Africa, Off USIU Road, Off Thika Road (Exit 7), P. O. Box 14634, 00800, Nairobi, Kenya. E-mail: nwamai@usiu.ac.ke, njokiwamai@gmail.com.

I arrived in Berlin Brandenburg Airport on an autumn afternoon on September 15, 2022. The concrete industrial office blocks and apartment buildings along the 40-minute drive from the airport finally gave way to huge mansions hidden by trees in what looked like the leafy suburbs of Berlin, and the driver announced, “We have arrived at Wallotstraße in Grunewald.” The gold, brown, orange autumn leaves lined the cobbled paths outside the main villa, which I did not recognize since it was my first time ever in Berlin and Germany. I was warmly welcomed by Vera Pfeffer, our lovely organizer, who showed me around the main building, White Villa, and my accommodation with a great view of the lake. I was tired but curious to explore the Berlin I had read about immediately on my places-to-visit list – especially the famous Berlin Wall. My anxiety about my nonexistent

German language skills did not dampen my curiosity for exploration. I knew only a few words in German: *guten Morgen, gute Nacht, wie geht's, auf Wiedersehen, danke schön, and Kindergarten*. I reassured myself with the Kiswahili words *roho juu*, meaning I was determined to learn and enjoy Berlin despite language limitations. I also signed up for the weekly beginning German classes with Wiko language teachers Eva and Reinhard.

I had taken three months at the Wissenschaftskolleg out of my university teaching in Nairobi to think and write on transitional justice and the politics of justice in Kenya. I thought both Germany and Berlin with their rich histories of justice and injustice would provide rich lessons to learn from when I was asked to make a choice between Germany and the United States. My short-term fellowship was sponsored by Wiko and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS) Iso Lomso Fellowship Programme in South Africa. I first heard of Wiko in 2021 from several people including the STIAS Programme Manager Dr. Christoff Pauw, former Wiko Fellow 2010/2011 Prof. Bahru Zewde from Ethiopia, and the Kenyan Iso Lomso Fellow 2021/2022 Dr. Nkatha Kabira, who shared their great experiences at Wiko. I looked forward to spending time in Berlin with such a rich history that was tied to my African story and in an intellectual academic community at the Wissenschaftskolleg. Despite never having visited Germany before Wiko, it was always a part of my imaginary, due to the Jewish Holocaust and the popular “Football Made in Germany” television show on Kenyan TV in the '90s. Long before English football leagues became popular, there was German football, and I remember hearing some of the teams' names like Bayern Munich and Dortmund on our Sunday TV.

Two significant events that happened in Berlin and their legacy in Africa were important signposts for my academic life. First was the “Scramble for Africa”; Berlin was introduced to us in school as the city where, between October 1884 and March 1885, the Berlin Conference was held that regulated the scramble. Otto von Bismarck and his huge white moustache were ever-present in our history books as the host of that famous conference that, as we later learned in university, divided Africa into colonies containing disparate groups of people who lived respectively as one state, leading to crises of the nation state and identity in Africa that endure to date. The second reason Berlin was important to me as a scholar of politics, peace, and security was the iconic Berlin Wall. The fall of the Berlin Wall signified the end of the Cold War and had lasting effects on African states. In Africa, the end of the Cold War challenged dictatorships, ended proxy wars, ushered in multiparty elections, and inspired conflicts and civil wars as the world ushered in a multipolar world after decades of bipolarity and the politics of the East versus West.

I was determined to see the two landmarks, the Berlin Wall and the location where the Berlin Conference was held. After getting oriented in the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, I spent most of my first weekend exploring Berlin. I saw remnants of the Berlin Wall, the museums and exhibitions on Unter den Linden, including the Humboldt Forum with Joyce, the Humboldt-Universität, and the Holocaust Memorial, and took a beautiful day trip to the Baltic Sea organized by Gunnar and Grit. A few times I erroneously took a wrong turn and stumbled onto a treasure; for example, one day, instead of taking the train towards Alexanderplatz from the Grunewald station, I boarded the train in the opposite direction, to Potsdam – to find Sanssouci Palace, which was such a marvel, as well as the University of Potsdam. This became a pastime over my weekends – randomly stumbling onto historic places while getting lost in the city. Beyond exploring Berlin's many memorial sites, a local Grunewald guide tour informed us about the history of Grunewald, where we learned about Gleis 17 and the stumbling stones, which I had previously stepped on without noticing them. These plaques in brass provided the names of those who lived in the houses before the Holocaust. It reminded us about the weight of injustice, the need for justice, and the place of memory.

As we settled down in the Kolleg, we were introduced to amazing people working at Wiko and the 2022/2023 Fellows. The Fellows' projects were fascinating – from art history, religion, identity and diversity, the gender of plants, and art history, to the poetics of death and evolutionary biology in bees, dolphins, and guinea fowl, among the many fascinating book projects, music compositions, and novels that would occupy the Fellows for a year in the comforts of Grunewald. Intellectually, during my stay at Wiko, I explored two themes: the legacies of the International Criminal Court (ICC) intervention and the politics of memory in Kenya after international intervention. The first project benefited from reading other case studies at Wiko on the legacies of Nuremberg and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The second project, on the politics of memory, was born from my being immersed in Berlin, a city of memories of injustice and justice. The library staff at Wiko was very useful in ensuring I got articles and books on time that assisted me in understanding the politics of transitional justice and the politics of memory in Germany as I reflected on Kenya. I explored in a journal article how memory is often contested and how sometimes state-driven public narratives of memory differ from everyday private memories. I was also invited to the inaugural meeting of the research network for black scholars, activists, and professors in Germany, who were involved in developing an interdisciplinary curriculum for Black Studies in

Berlin. The two-day conference in October 2022 was organized by a collective of black academics and activists including Prof. Maisha Auma from Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences to raise the visibility of Black Studies in the experience of German black scholars and activists. The research network was inspired by the invisibility of academics who are black and people of color and of studies on their fields in Germany, given the long history of such people and of their presence in Germany. I presented work on African feminisms there.

My time at Wiko was rewarding thanks to the Wiko team for providing the resources for us to take time out of “life.” In addition to the resources provided, I appreciate the thoughtfulness, love, and care invested by the Wiko staff led by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger in making our stay memorable and fulfilling. The team that was responsible for organizing our everyday lives was especially patient – *Asante Sana* (thank you very much in Kiswahili) Vera, Andrea, Nina, Maike, Vanessa, and Johanna. I loved my time at Wiko because of all the care and support I got from the staff, and I look forward to another session.

To the other Fellows 2022/2023, *Asanteni* for the comradeship, the great conversations we had on Tuesday and Thursday Colloquiums, and the great lunches and Thursday dinners created by Dunia and her team (shout out to the last table to call it a night on Thursdays – I miss our many “inspired” debates). I am so full of gratitude to everyone and to Berlin. I appreciated Berlin as a city that is self-reflective about its past and accountable for its future – which is so apt for my justice research. I could not have chosen a better city. In a sense, though I had encountered Berlin and Germany earlier in history lessons and through football made in Germany, my personal encounter in the search for justice was much better.



RECTANGLES AND LEAVES
ITTAI WEINRYB

Ittai Weinryb is Associate Professor at the Bard Graduate Center in NYC. He is completing a book on art and material culture circulating in the Black Sea region during the Middle Ages. Weinryb is the author of *Die Hildesheimer Avantgarde: Kunst und Kolonialismus im mittelalterlichen Deutschland* (2023) and *The Bronze Object in the Middle Ages* (2016). He is also the curator of the exhibition *Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place* (2018). He is the co-founder of the book series *Art/Work* which is set to narrate a new history of art founded in the study of objects, materials, and technology. Weinryb was a doctoral fellow at the Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence (2008–2009); a member of the School for Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (2012); a fellow at the Art Histories and Aesthetic Practices program, Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin (2014); a Mellon Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery, Washington, DC (2019); and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow (2019). Weinryb received his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 2010 and his BA from Tel Aviv University in 2003. – Address: Bard Graduate Center, 38 West 86th St., New York, NY 10024, USA. E-mail: ittai.weinryb@bgc.bard.edu.

ONE: The most central form of our daily life at Wiko was a rectangle. Beige in color, and measuring about 45 × 30 cm, it was stacked one on top of the other in the beginning of the food dispensary line at the dining room. The rectangular form, that we held on average almost 150 times during our Wiko year, was the form on which our hopes and dreams for conversation and exchange were amassed every lunch. Food was only secondary to our rectangles. This led to a daily exercise of organizing our beige companions on the dining

table. And after a while came to our resolution that the rectangles should be placed diagonally, leaning against the dining room wall. It made our dining experience partly a game of polygons. Rectangles lying around were indicative for a good lunch, a good conversation, and a good exchange of ideas.

TWO: The other rectangles in Wallotstraße were, of course, the books. And after playing with polygons in the dining room, we picked up our books at the library. For me, this was the best library in the world. Books ordered by 7 a.m. arrived before lunchtime from all over Berlin and beyond. Rectangles. Before I could imagine a book I wanted to read, it was already there. Books and food trays were the source of thinking in my *Wikojahr*.

THREE: While Wallotstraße was all about rectangles, our residence in Villa Walther, with its Adolph Menzel-like ornaments of decay, as well as the roads leading to the Grunewald forest, were all about leaves. Oval, truncate, elliptical, lancolate, or linear. Green, brown, grey, or yellow. Hanging from the trees or soaking wet on the path. The multiplicity of leaves was in dialectic opposition to the rectangular world of Wiko. Our hopes and dreams were different here. Aspiring to be anti-industrial but able to be, maybe, only anti-academic. Between rectangles and leaves, my year was shaped.

FOUR: In June before coming to Wiko, I became German. Through entangled family history, and by uncovering certificates we inherited in an old suitcase from my grandmother, I obtained German citizenship, or in German legal terms: I was restored. I had no idea what immense impact this new identity would have on me. No longer a foreigner enjoying the wealth of resources German academia has to offer, whether at the Max Planck Institutes or here at Wiko, but rather taking identity, in which I am now a new member of a group.

FIVE: I came to Wiko wanting to complete a book on the Venetian and Genoese presence in the Black Sea during the Middle Ages. It is now near completion, and I grapple with last footnotes. My perspective on the project has changed completely while in Berlin. In February, before coming to Wiko, Russia has invaded Ukraine. Writing on the Black Sea and especially on the Crimea from New York City was not so hard even during the time of war. From a distance one does not feel the suffering. But in Grunewald, and at Wiko, the war was real and present. My colleagues at Wiko were Ukrainians and Russians, some

were scholar refugees and some scholars in exile. Some were forced away from their homes, some chose to exclude themselves. And the streets of Grunewald were dotted with cars bearing Ukrainian license plates, which were obviously driven in haste, hoping to exchange the bloodshed for the serenity of western Berlin. My book project then became something else. The heftiness of contemporary politics had to be weighed into the historical account. Erich Auerbach noted how his book *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* was written in Istanbul, in exile, and if it had been written at home, in Berlin, it would have been a different book. Along these lines, my book project, written in New York City, was written in exile from the Black Sea, with critical distance, but without the real understanding of what it means to write about the Sea. I was now surrounded by newly made friends inflected by the horrors of war, and understood better what it meant to write about the Black Sea. Academics always aspire for critical distance; here my view has changed.

SIX: Running in the Grunewald forest is something I never imagined could have been such an experience. Nature, your feet, and yourself. Altogether. Occasionally I had my Wiko-friend André Schneider passing me by on his mountain bike, but otherwise I was on my own in nature. Daniel Schönflug was the leader of our Wiko running team. Through his instructive ways, I learned how to run, and through his immense knowledge, I learned so much about the forest. Now back jogging on the asphalt of crowded Central Park, running is just not the same.

SEVEN: Grunewald forest has a cemetery in its center, where Nico, lead singer of the Velvet Underground, my childhood heroine, is buried. Undoubtedly laid down in her *shiny boots of leather*, it is strange to think of that thick voice of hers, cigarette and whiskey engulfed, buried in such serenity. Like in an eternal *kogel mogel* of the morning after.

EIGHT: At Wiko I also published my first book in German. It centers on the colonization and conversion of the Slavs in northeastern Germany in the 11th century. Part of the argument of the book is that the colonization and conversion projects were part of a process of industrialization and deforestation. Running in the Grunewald forest, the indigenous lands of the Polabian Slavs, with the sights of the Havel and the Spree, I am reminded of that short verse by Franz Kafka: "*If one were only an Indian*, instantly alert, and on a racing horse, leaning against the wind, kept on quivering jerkily over the quivering

ground, until one shed one's spurs, for there needed no spurs, threw away the reins, for there needed no reins, and hardly saw that the land before one was smoothly shorn heath when horse's neck and head would be already gone."¹ The feeling of belonging, writing on Slavs not from my New York City exile, but from home. Becoming one with the place, that freedom of belonging, made my first book in German different. *If one were only a Polabian Slav.*

NINE: In 1933, my grandparents were fired from their jobs by the Nazi regime. They lived near Wiko, at Droysenstr. 13, Charlottenburg. I used to cycle there on the way to the *Wochenmarkt* on Karl-August-Platz. From Droysenstraße, my grandparents moved to Trieste, and eventually to Palestine and the U.S.A. I wondered how my life would have looked like, if they stayed, survived, and lived, and if all of that did not happen, and I could have gone and visit them on the weekends in their home in Droysenstraße, having some *Schokoladentorte mit Schlagsahne*. *If one were only a Berliner.*

TEN: Rectangles and leaves have shaped my Wiko year. Or just the longing for a sense of belonging.

1 Franz Kafka, "The Wish to Be a Red Indian," in *Franz Kafka: The Complete Stories*, translated by Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken, 1946), 148.



A BIRTH IN BERLIN
LEOR ZMIGROD

Leor Zmigrod completed her BA and PhD in Psychology at Cambridge University as a Gates Scholar and won a prestigious Junior Research Fellowship at Churchill College, Cambridge to develop an independent research program on the cognitive roots of ideological convictions. Leor Zmigrod's research focuses on the neurocognitive origins and consequences of ideological thinking, blending methods from cognitive psychology, political science, and neuroscience. She has held visiting fellowships at Stanford University, Harvard University, and the Paris Institute of Advanced Study as the Gretty Mirdal Junior Chair in "Brain, Culture, and Society." Her book, *The Ideological Brain*, will be published at the start of 2025. – E-mail: leor.zmigrod@gmail.com.

It was the sense of space that struck me first – and that is likely to linger in my memory and my work for the longest time. I'm sure it will fade last. The wide white desk that greeted me on arrival, the grand windows overlooking the quiet silver lake hugged by majestic trees – all this white space and white light were like a blank page. A blank page that I did not know I had been waiting for until I arrived in Berlin on a crisp and sunny September morning.

Writing a book always felt on the horizon, but the horizon is generally far, slippery, and out of reach. Writing a book is not a celebrated endeavour in my field – unlike in philosophy or history or other disciplines, experimental psychologists rarely write full-length books. And the book I had in mind was not one that departmental committees would easily digest or commend; I wanted it to be a book that could speak to the intersection of psychology, politics, neuroscience, and philosophy, a book that could be read by

multiple audiences and say something provocative to each of them, a book that I would love to write and – if miraculously written by someone else – love to read.

To my amazement and gratitude, when I arrived in Berlin, I immediately started writing. It was so immediate and so fluent that I had to stop attending my intensive German course halfway through, to my language tutor's dismay and my mix of shame and delight. In the years before Berlin, I would go through cycles of sketching the book out and starting fragments and then putting it aside when other academic commitments called. There was something liberating about Wiko's intellectual and physical space. Wiko advertises its freedom with a hushed glee, but it is coy about the sheer beauty of the space and how it teaches you to move – breath, cycle, run, amble, think, critique – in new ways.

As warm September melted into the icy sheets covering December, my book *The Ideological Brain* was born. It was a furious and untameable birth, and I'm grateful for my fellow Fellows and the wonderful Wiko staff for accommodating and attending to me so patiently and lovingly during the process. In the six months between September to March, I wrote over half the book and created a book proposal for publishers. A month after leaving Berlin, the book was bought by the Viking imprint of Penguin Random House and Holt of Macmillan – as well as by the publishers of more than 10 translation languages, including German (Suhrkamp), French (Flammarion), Italian (Rizzoli), Spanish (Paidós), Hebrew (Kinneret), Japanese (Toya Kezai), and others. The reception of the book has been beyond my wildest dreams, and I'm grateful for Wiko for the space to realize them.

The Ideological Brain hopes to elucidate how ideologies coerce human brains, and how we can unchain our minds from toxic dogmas. Melding psychology, politics, and philosophy, the book seeks to reveal how believing passionately in a rigid doctrine is a process that spills into our neurons, flowing into our bodies. Ideologies are not mere envelopes for our lives; they *enter* our skins, our skulls, our nerve cells. The book will offer evidence that totalizing ideologies shape the brain as a whole, not simply the brain when it is confronted with political propositions or debates. Science now reveals that the profound reverberations of ideologies can be observed in the brain even when we are not thinking about politics at all. There is therefore a danger that when individuals are immersed in rigid ideologies, it is not only their *political* opinions and *moral* tastes that are being sculpted – their entire brains are being sculpted too. The book will also uncover why not all brains are equally susceptible to the tyrannical logic of ideologies; why not all brains

embrace rigidity. The clues lie in our cells, our bodies, our personal histories. Since our brains learn to embody ideological indoctrination easily, and terribly quickly, social rituals can become biological realities.

History's most influential political thinkers hypothesized that ideologies render human minds "thoughtless," hollow and incapable of independent reflection or judgment. The true believer is "mindless," claimed the famous theorist Hannah Arendt. Indeed, as noted earlier, it is tempting – and convenient – to invoke metaphors of emptiness to describe the brainwashed and the misled. *Fools and empty-headed fanatics!*

Yet, I argue in the book, the new field of political neuroscience shows that such explanations are wrong and, more problematically, dangerous. A mindless mind cannot be held to account. A mindless mind is not responsible for its lies and fabrications, for its misbehaviour or confabulations, for its harassments and its crimes. Mindlessness is not a mechanism we can measure or assess, and it distracts us from the quest for a scientific explanation of how minds are altered by deep immersion in totalizing ideologies. The task is now to trace the precise distortions that happen when human brains internalize rigid doctrines and to identify the consequences for our biological bodies as well as for our political bodies.

This book is not a classic treatise about polarization or the decline of reason and society's takeover by demagogues. The book conveys a more subtle and radical message: that our politics are not superficial – politics can become cellular.

Building an argument that harnesses the political sciences and the biological sciences is wonderfully Wiko-esque, and I'm deeply grateful for the words of encouragement and confidence from the Fellows and Wiko staff that have allowed me to stretch in these interdisciplinary directions.

It is difficult for me to imagine writing this book anywhere outside Berlin. Berlin, for me, was a city of contradictions and dualities. A city made of the tensions necessary for creative eruptions. It was also the perfect place to think and write about ideologies. Berlin's tumultuous history is written onto every pavement – as one of my Wiko colleagues mentioned, blood seeps out between the cracks of every brick – and the ideological frictions are still evident today in the simultaneous forms of radical openness and conservative impulses that sit together in Berlin, side by side, delineating and carving out the city.

I will always be thankful for the freedom, the view of the lake from my desk as the seasons changed, and the atmosphere at Wiko that allowed me to write this long-dreamed-about book. I hope that the Wissenschaftskolleg continues to offer its junior

fellowship program at the College for Life Sciences, which has been life-changing, career-affirming, and immensely stimulating. The Wiko Junior Fellows are treated with equal seriousness and equal interest as the Senior Fellows, and I hope the institute will continue to nurture younger scholars for whom this opportunity is an unparalleled way to take genuine risks. It certainly allowed me to develop my voice and craft as a writer as well as a thinker and empirical scientist. After a long gestation period, the book was truly born in Berlin – and I hope the resonances with the city and the institute will be clear when it sits on bookshelves, especially the ones in the magnificent Wiko library.

WISSENSCHAFTSKOLLEG ZU BERLIN WALLOTSTRASSE 19 14193 BERLIN
TELEFON +49 30 89001-0 FAX +49 30 89001-300 WWW.WIKO-BERLIN.DE