



PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY  
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Nowhere have I been so sharply aware of the problem of memory as during and after my short stay at the Wiko in Berlin. In spite of some acquaintance with the German language and German literature, it is only living in the country that prompts a first-time visitor like me to make the effort to grasp local preoccupations or begin to understand their significance. Collective memories as well as their impress upon the present haunt public spaces like the *Bahnhöfe* or the pavements, public institutions like the museums and universities. When a stranger tries to navigate these spaces, she is weighed down by the sheer need to comprehend their pastness by filling in the gaps between the objective historical facts with the lived experience of the city's inhabitants. This may not be a problem specific only to Berlin; it may have more to do with inhabiting a city rather than relating to it as a tourist. For affording me a glimpse of this problem as a temporary resident of this fascinating city, I'm grateful to the Wiko.

Many months after my short stay, cut even shorter by an eventually fatal illness in my family back home, the personal memories of my sojourn in Berlin still retain a compelling quality. And a clarity that can only belong to the winter light of a dying year. The sharp yellows and reds of autumn leaves outside the Villa Walther, a late night on a near-deserted Ring platform in Prenzlauer Berg, the snaking paths of the Grunewald, the lakes covered with thin ice where one tried to skip pebbles and twigs, silent but spectacular snowflakes that enthralled the neighbourhood children, mugs of Glühwein at the Weihnachtsmarkt on the Ku'damm, the glowing Berliner Ensemble logo seen on a rainy night from Friedrichstraße station – moments of exotic respite from staring at the computer screen or from domestic anxieties. For these moments too, the Wiko is to be thanked.

As for my academic work at the Wiko, I did manage to write a draft introduction to my ongoing project on Hindustani music in southern India and to present it to a Thursday colloquium. Since my return home, I have been gloating over my large collection of 19<sup>th</sup>-century publications on Indian music, acquired from the Indological hoard of the libraries in Berlin. The splendid e-resources of the Wiko allowed me a leisurely browse through the available periodical literature and afforded me access to catalogues of material that I will examine in the future. My gratitude for all this goes without saying.

And all that the Wiko as an institution makes possible: the brilliantly-devised library system, the access to all the precious holdings of the German *Bibliotheken*, the collegiality of scholars from disparate academic and ethnic backgrounds, the opportunities to share thoughts and arguments, music and jokes. Not to forget (never to forget) the astonishing Thursday night dinners or the thoughtfully-prepared working lunches. I give thanks for all this and much more that my memories hold.