



EINE FUSSGÄNGERIN IN BERLIN
UND DER BUS M19
FROMA I. ZEITLIN

Born in 1933, educated at Radcliffe-Harvard (1954) and Columbia University (1970), retired from Princeton University in 2010 as the Charles Ewing Professor of Greek Language and Literature in the Department of Classics and Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature. Additionally, founder and director of the Program in Judaic Studies from 1996–2005. She is a specialist in Greek literature from Homer to Late Antiquity, with special interests in ancient drama and prose fiction, along with work in gender criticism, as well as the relations between art and text. Some of her publications also include essays on Holocaust literature. Her main work, however, consists of *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes* (1982; 2nd ed. 2009); *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (1996); an assortment of edited or co-edited volumes: *Before Sexuality: Structures of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (1990); *Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context* (1990); *Love, Sex, and Gender in the Ancient Novel* (2012), and numerous other essays. – Address: Classics Department, Princeton University, 104 East Pyne, Princeton, NJ 08544-5264, USA. E-Mail: fiz@princeton.edu

How many miles did I trudge over this last year, making my way from the Villa Walther to the Wiko – to lunches, dinners, seminars, concerts, with frequent stops at the library and sessions in German at the Villa Jaffé? And an equal number in returning along the Koenigsallee, whether clad in down coat and winter boots against the cold (for much too long) or greeting the change of season (at last) when trees and flowers burst into bloom? And how often did I greet the M19 bus with joy as it loomed on the horizon – right on

time, whether in either direction – a welcome sight indeed as a passport out of our sheltered surroundings, however idyllic they might be. I still see that little blue bridge, my landmark signaling the passage from and to my light-filled aerie on the top floor of the Villa Walther – stopping to see if I could spot a swan or two placidly gliding over the water, or looking for bushy-tailed foxes sauntering fearlessly down the street, and more often, spying big-eared red squirrels (unlike the gray and black ones we have at home). Home from my expeditions along the Ku'damm and beyond, sometimes pulling my laden shopping cart behind me as I plied my errands, and at other times returning from forays into this enormous city, whose geography seemed clear enough on the numerous maps I acquired but which continually, or so it seemed, challenged my meager navigational skills. I learned the routes of S-Bahns and U-Bahns, of changes from the M19 to other buses, but somehow every outing to a new location was a bit of an adventure (unless I cheated and phoned for a taxi that was comfortingly quick to arrive).

This was not my first encounter with Berlin. Far from it. My first visit was in the spring of 1989 and when I stood before the Wall separating the two Berlins, I remember I said to myself: “Never in my lifetime,” but four months later, suddenly and improbably it was gone. I recall venturing into East Berlin at the time from the Friedrichstraße U-Bahn stop and passing those eerie vacant stations as we hurtled to Alexanderplatz. I remember too the uncanny emptiness of the streets, with the feeling of hundreds of eyes peering out of windows of buildings still pockmarked with shrapnel, and a tingling sense of anxiety that I was alone in strange territory, since my friends had left the day before. But even in West Berlin, this first visit elicited a strong combination of curiosity, fascination, and apprehension. Here I was in the epicenter of the Third Reich – I, a Jew from New York, born in the same year that Hitler came to power. I had no family ties to German life and culture (my parents emigrated to the US as children from Eastern Europe before the First World War), but I had always considered myself somehow “a child of that time”. If I had been there, I would not have been here. Perhaps this is the reason that, in addition to my academic field of Classics, I have also ventured into Holocaust studies, not as a historian, but in teaching and writing about texts and images. And now I was in Berlin. And, as it turned out, it was not to be the last time.

A number of other visits followed. My son-in-law, a Chinese art historian (Wu Hung), curated several exhibitions at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures) and we came for the openings on several occasions. And then there were the conferences and workshops focusing on the Greek god Dionysos, whether in cult or in drama – my

fate it seems is irrevocably tied to explorations of this divinity, thanks to a fervent devotee (Renate Schlesier) at the FU, whose seemingly indefatigable energy in promoting this topic pursued me even during my time at the Wiko. Over these years, as a united Berlin grew and prospered, my engagement with this city – its history, its culture, and its evolution into a center of museums, concerts, theaters, lectures, and yes, its numerous memorials scattered over so many districts – endured and grew, modified by time. Hence the unexpected invitation to spend a whole year in Berlin at the Wiko was one I could not finally refuse. It was perhaps a simple coincidence that the year was 2013, the great anniversary of the fateful events of 1933 and my transition to octogenarian status. But I never imagined the extraordinary civic theme of *Zerstörte Vielfalt* (Diversity Destroyed) that took over Berlin in January (and ongoing until November), offering an amazing variety of exhibitions and events all over the city. But even as these reawakened the terrible past, even as the Gleis 17 memorial in my home base in Grunewald was an ever-present reminder, I could not help but admire the determination to remember and to do so with what seemed to be an endless reservoir of energy and imagination. Berlin of the past and Berlin of the present merged into an unforgettable year. Along these lines, I personally found several exhibitions among the most impressive: R. B. Kitai, “Obsessions”, at the Jüdische Museum, “Verfemt, verfolgt – vergessen?” (Ostracized, Persecuted, Forgotten?) at the Ephraim-Palais, and the overview 1933–1938 at the Deutsche Historische Museum.

Despite the fact that our Grunewald itself, with its lakes, forests, and stunning villas, had once been home to many Jews before they were dispossessed and driven out, and despite the scattering of *Stolpersteine* that gave names and facts to former inhabitants, the Wiko itself inhabited a space all its own. A magical place for work and play, for conversation and welcome solitude. I had spent a year at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and some time at the American Academy in Rome, but nothing prepared me for the extraordinary experience of living and working at the Wiko. I think of the remarkable staff that was always so eager to help us in virtually every facet of our lives: I could name so many whom I should thank personally in this report, but although I had more dealings with some more than others, the list would fill these entire pages (although I will recall a few in passing and at the end of this report). I think of the welcome each time I entered the Wiko, greeted by the glorious flower arrangements that changed each week and Vera Schulze-Seeger’s delighted smile. I think of the endless patience of the folks at the IT, the clever resourcefulness of the library staff, the many helpful services by those in charge of the Fellows, the cheerful home visits when necessary by those who

worked in maintenance, and so many more kindnesses. I think too of the cultural and sightseeing outings arranged for us, and, of course, I can't forget the German lessons (I must here mention Eva von Kügelgen by name), even if my progress in the language left me disappointed with my own shortcomings. And much more could be said. I can honestly say that I have never been so pampered before, and it was indeed a wrench when it was time to pack up and say goodbye. My gratitude knows no bounds.

But the other side of the Wiko was the companionship of the other Fellows. I think we were lucky in this respect. There must have been some years when the mix of Fellows from different fields, countries, and ages didn't quite work out to produce such an atmosphere, not just of collegiality, but of an unexpected congeniality that all of us this time enjoyed in one another's company. Whether at lunches or dinners, whether at seminars or other events, but above all, in the Villa Walther, where so many of us resided, there was always a sense that, beyond intellectual engagement, we could be counted upon to help one another and that one could knock at any door at any time if any of us were in need. And here I would like to name some names of those I particularly treasured to record them for posterity in this Jahrbuch: Daniel and Chava Boyarin, for special and frequent hospitality; Franco Moretti, my closest neighbor, with whom I shared exchange of goodies, ideas, and much more; Tony and Helen Reid, indefatigable travelers, who included me in their jaunts as well as frequently fetching my favorite beverage from the supermarket with their car; Bruce Kogut and Monika Knutsson (and Momo) for warm companionship and thoughtful favors; Sonia Sultan and Kendall Baker (and Jasmine), who appreciated my concern for them; Gillian Bentley and her kids, for helpful advice along with Cristina Lafont and Axel Müller; Jim and Leslie Costa, too, for excellent counsel; ultra-chic Delphine Gardey (and Dominique) for tasty surprises left at my window; Andrii and Olesia Portnov for sharing issues of their struggles at home and giving us Nadia; Kelly Askew and Ben Fortson (and spunky Cecilia), the first especially for introduction to her musical world; and, above all, José Burucúa, my partner on so many outings and late night films, especially, when we were both on our own. We shared too our interests in art; I will never forget our adventures on the Long Night of Berlin Museums in the freezing cold as we dashed from one venue to another. But I would also like to single out two more, who did not live in the Villa but who were such an important part of my life at the Wiko. Avi Lifschitz, a young and talented intellectual historian, and at the very top, Michael Squire (and his partner, Chris Whitton). I had known Michael before and had admired his precocious brilliance in fields that interested me most (more on that later).

The opportunity to spend a year with him was one of the best attractions for me at the Wiko.

I have left out so many others and I apologize for any omissions, but I should at least mention the joy of the Diotima Quartet in the fall and the incomparable presence of Alfred Brendel in the spring. The creative activities of our painter, Kamal Boullata (and Lily Farhoud); composer, Mark Andre; poet, Yang Lian; and sculptor, Kendall Baker, added to the enrichment of our year.

But now, what did I myself do at the Wiko? Why were so many books piled up in my name? What happened during the year and what stands out especially in my memory? So many Fellows in previous years (and this one too, no doubt) have written extensively about their intellectual interests and their progress or accomplishments of their year at the Wiko. I will be much briefer. My project was one that has consumed me for many years. Entitled provisionally *Vision, Figuration, and Image from Theater to Romance in the Ancient Greek World*, it consisted of six chapters that included an introduction, two chapters on Greek tragedy, and three on ancient prose fiction. All were in draft form; some had been partially published, and others awaited further revisions, with perhaps an addition of another chapter or two. My aim was to explore certain facets of visual culture in ancient Greece through some persistent themes and preoccupations found in literary genres from the archaic and classical periods (particularly Homer and the dramatic stage) to the world of Late Antiquity (prose fiction), as these intersect with the figurative arts, notably sculpture and painting. My interest was primarily directed toward exploring the uncanny powers of imaging and of figuration through a whole range of visual experiences that, beside works of art, also included dreams, visions, phantoms, epiphanies of gods, and theatrical scenes of mimetic reenactment. What drew these disparate phenomena into the same force field, as I argued, was primarily their role as agents of mediation that derive from an enduring set of imaginings in a culture, which gave gods human form and used the image of the body both to separate and cross the ontological lines that distinguish the animate from the inanimate, the illusion from reality, the dream from the waking state, the evanescent from the eternal, the self from the other, the living from the dead, the mortal from the immortal, and the past from the present.

To this end, the relations between word and image held a special place in my thinking, especially through the rhetorical device of ekphrasis, and I was fortunate that a group of us at the Wiko participated in a workshop, thoughtfully convened by Marianne Koos, that consisted of a group of disparate Fellows, who nevertheless shared some common

interests: our artists (Kamal Boullata, Lily Farhoud, Kendall Baker), art historians (in addition to Marianne: José Burucúa, Alessandra Russo, Michael Squire), classicists (Jonas Grethlein), specialists in Late Antiquity (Elizabeth Key Fowden), and intellectual historians (Avi Lifschitz). We focused on the question, “Was ist ein Bild?” through readings of some of the most important theorists of the image. At the end of the day, after all these encounters, many of them stimulating and significant, I realized that the endless debates about relations between word and image as such led me no further to my goal, but rather that two other concepts were more promising in my endeavors: the first was agency: to what degree do objects of art and the pictorial imagination itself draw their power from their status as agents: not passive representations but active forces in eliciting audience response in emotional subjectivity? The second was the idea of performance: that is, the performative aspects of techniques of visualization that theatricalize acts of viewing in framed encounters. The many conversations with Michael Squire helped immeasurably in my thinking, and while I cannot say that I fulfilled my ambitions in bringing this long overdue book to completion, I have made major advances in my year at the Wiko.

One of the innumerable pleasures of the Wiko amid its many intellectual opportunities was the workshops organized by former Fellows. These gave opportunities for true interdisciplinary exchanges, and the two in which I participated, “Irony” (led by Carlo Ginzburg) and “Hamlet and the Problem of Succession” (led by Stephen Greenblatt) were highlights of the year. The “Hamlet” project in particular turned out to be for me not just an opportunity to revisit that greatest of Shakespeare’s dramas, but also the most problematic in many of its facets (starting with its three different versions). It allowed me to make a personally rewarding contribution that, as a classicist, gave me a special relationship to the text. In refocusing the problem of succession on the Queen herself and the various complications of her status, in regard to her multiple roles (sister, wife, queen, heiress, but especially mother), I was able to turn the conversation to the question of matricide (inherited from Greek tragedy) that was an unsuspected undercurrent of the entire text. We were a motley crew (with current Fellows, Shakti Lamba, Bruce Kogut, Franco Moretti, along with other invited participants), combining specialists in history, literature, sociology, and evolutionary biology. And while no one could say that we were able to integrate all the different approaches, the experience itself was rich and rewarding – an example in miniature of what the Wiko does best. I hope that in the future, as a former Fellow, I will have the opportunity to participate in such endeavors, when they take place.

Otherwise, as I draw this report to a close, let me first extend my gratitude to Luca Giuliani and Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus for their intellectual leadership and cordial friendship that meant so much to me. Second, I append a list of my other activities during the year as well as essays I wrote or published during this time:

Essays published or in press 2012–13

- “Gendered Ambiguities, Hybrid Formations, and the Imaginary of the Body in Achilles Tatius.” In *Narrating Desire: Eros, Sex, and Gender in the Ancient World*, edited by Marília Pinheiro, Marilyn Skinner and Froma I. Zeitlin, 113–134. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012.
- “A Study in Form: Recognition Scenes in the Three Electra Plays.” *Lexis* 30 (2012): 361–378.
- “Landscapes and Portraits: Signs of the Uncanny and Illusions of the Real.” In *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel*, edited by Stelios Panayotakis, et al., 61–87. Groningen: Barkhuis, 2013. (Ancient Narrative Supplementum 17.)
- “Figure: Ekphrasis.” *Greece Rome* 60 (2013): 17–31.
- “Longus and Achilles Tatius.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic*, edited by William Johnson and Daniel Richter. Oxford University Press (forthcoming).
- “Romancing the Classics.” In *Marginality, Canonicity, and Passion*, edited by Christina Kraus and Marco Formisano (forthcoming).

Papers given in 2012–13

1. “Gender Trouble and the *Bacchae*: Male, Female, and Somewhere in Between,” at *Moderne Transformationen der Bakchen von Euripides*. Topoi, Berlin, 19–20 October 2012.
2. “Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe*: Intermedial and Intertextual Approaches to *Voir et Dire*,” at *Faire Œuvre dans l’Antiquité Grecque et Latine*, in honor of Philippe Rousseau, University of Lille 3, 9–10 November 2012.
3. “Dionysus, Theater, and Festival in Ancient Athens: Tragic and Comic Perspectives,” at *Zum Fest. Heyday of Emotions*, Einstein Forum, 13–15 December 2012.
4. “The Erotic Lures of Mimesis: Text and Image in the Ancient Cultural Imaginary and Beyond,” Basel, 16 April 2013.
5. “*Hamlet*: Succession and Generational Passage,” Wiko workshop, Hamlet, 24–25 May 2013.
6. “Jean-Pierre Vernant and Euripides’ *Bacchae*,” at 8th Dionysos Workshop, led by Renate Schlesier, Institute for the Scientific Study of Religion, Freie Universität, 24–25 May 2012.