



NO WIRE HANGERS
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Spending a year at the Wissenschaftskolleg is like embarking on a ten-and-a-half month luxury cruise with some forty other people where the ship never leaves the dock, no one is allowed to retreat to their cabin for very long and dinner is always at the captain's table. A series of special events, such as guest lectures, are programmed by the directors to keep the small company entertained; various group activities are prescribed in which everyone is expected to participate, from a costume party for Mardi Gras to a farewell party at the end of the year; and shore excursions are organized in the form of architectural tours and

guided visits to museums. The result is a highly privileged if peculiarly hermetic and mostly inescapable social world – something like a cross between *The Magic Mountain* and *No Exit*.

Within this space of luxurious confinement, intimacy among the Fellows asserts itself subtly but with gathering force as the year develops. We make ourselves increasingly free with the details of one another's personal lives and daily comportment. As on any cruise, it is crucial to embark with a sufficient quantity of frocks for the number of mandatory social events. At the Wissenschaftskolleg, we quickly become familiar with one another's clothes and personal style. We instantly notice when someone is wearing something new or different, displaying an unfamiliar piece of jewelry or a novel haircut. We soon feel comfortable commenting on those details, praising or deplored them, and making suggestions for improvements. These sorts of observations, which in ordinary life might appear presumptuous, officious, or intrusive, become in the unique Wiko atmosphere unselfconsciously natural, an instinctive expression of our artificial intimacy.

The world outside the Wiko presents itself in two forms: Berlin and one's own work. There are structural barriers to both of them. West Berlin is easily accessible by the unfailingly regular and frequent M19 bus, but East Berlin and the more beguiling parts of Kreuzberg are an hour away from the Grunewald. Meanwhile, the highly regulated routine of the Wiko, especially the compulsory meal schedule, organizes the working day, preventing Fellows from following their own patterns of research and writing and taking up the most productive hours of the morning and the early afternoon. So it is hard to throw oneself into the life of Berlin or into one's own work, even as one feels compelled to do both.

These conditions also make the Wiko an ideal venue for collaboration. It is easy, pleasant, and extremely productive to bring colleagues to the Wiko for extended periods of time for shared work on a particular project. Berlin provides an enticing backdrop for such collaboration, and the social life of the Wiko offers a stimulating routine. Visitors to the Wiko enjoy the unparalleled ease of the research environment and quickly immerse themselves in the unique social world created by the Fellows. The latter are thrilled, relieved, and intrigued by the presence of someone new, while visitors respond warmly to the intense curiosity and interest that they elicit immediately on arrival. They take to the life of the Wiko with great enthusiasm and pleasure, and the Fellows treat them with special appreciation.

I seized that opportunity to do extensive work with three colleagues from the United States during the course of the Wiko year. In two cases we substantially completed our projects, and in the third case we made important progress.

When I applied to the Wiko I had only the vaguest idea of what I wanted to work on, but I arrived with something like six book projects. The book of my own that I wanted to write, on eroticism and erotic theory both ancient and modern, tentatively entitled *Love Against Sex*, took a back seat to the others, though I did complete a central chapter, based on the work I presented at a Tuesday Colloquium, called “What Is Sex For?” The final form of that chapter incorporated the astute responses and lively criticism that greeted my presentation and the many reflections on it that various Fellows shared with me during individual conversations over lunch in the days that followed. I plan to publish it as an essay before continuing to work on the book.

Otherwise, the bulk of my time was devoted to collaborative book projects. With my friend and colleague Kirk Ormand of Oberlin College, I returned to the editing of John J. Winkler’s dazzling last book, *Rehearsals of Manhood: Athenian Drama as Social Practice*, which Jack had left me to complete at the time of his early death from AIDS in 1990. Kirk and I were able to devise and to implement a strategy for integrating the published and unpublished portions of that book into a single, continuous version and for bringing the argument up to date. I wrote a Preface, in which I summed up our editorial decisions and reviewed the evolution of the manuscript both during Jack’s life and after his death.

With Damon Young, a friend and colleague from the University of California at Berkeley, I co-authored a short book on *Queer Love*, based on a graduate seminar Damon and I had taught at the University of Michigan during the last semester I spent there before coming to the Wiko. Queer theory may not have had a great deal to say about sex – contrary to what one might imagine – but it has had even less to say about love. Damon and I tried to begin to make good that lack, starting from some remarks of Michel Foucault’s about gay male love as an unknown territory and going on to examine works of gay male literature and film from the post-World War II era that depict particularly queer versions of gay love. The recent US Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage, we believe, far from settling the question of same-sex love and romance, sharpens the need to determine whether same-sex love fits the social forms devised for canonical versions of love and intimacy.

With the musicologist Roger Mathew Grant of Wesleyan University, I continued to pursue the book project we had begun, during the summer before my Wiko year, on gay men, bad taste, and popular culture. We made substantial progress on this project, but we

also encountered some daunting and well-reasoned critiques, so we reconsidered our work in the light of them. During the summer that followed the Wiko year, we completed an installment in the form of an essay entitled “Love Wins, Everything Else Loses: Gay Men, Pop Culture, and the Vanished Arts of Unseriousness”, which we have submitted to a journal for publication.

With my former student Trevor Hoppe of the State University of New York at Albany (who did not come to Berlin), I edited the contributions to a collection of essays based on the proceedings of a conference on “Sex & Justice” that Trevor and I had organized at the University of Michigan a few years ago. That volume, on the increasing regulation and restriction of various disapproved kinds of sexual expression in an era of otherwise expanding sexual liberties, is now called *The War on Sex*. To justify that somewhat polemical title, I researched and wrote a long introductory chapter, summarizing the work of the contributors and documenting the multiple assaults on sexual freedom in the United States (and elsewhere) in recent decades, emanating from both government and civil society.

Finally, I worked with Marie Ymonet, the French translator of my 2012 book, *How To Be Gay*, and wrote a substantial new introduction to the book for the French edition. The translation appeared in May of this year (2015), and I helped to see it through press; I also participated in a roundtable on the book in Paris.

So far, in this very brief summary of my stint at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I have not expressed appreciation to the Wiko and its staff for the extraordinary privilege of a year-long Fellowship. Nor have I expressed any gratitude to my fellow Fellows for their company. That is not because I am insensible to the benefits, pleasures, and luxuries of life on the Wiko campus in Grunewald during the last ten and a half months, but – rather the opposite – because if ever I should begin to enumerate the advantages I have enjoyed, I would not know where to stop.

But I do know where I would begin. When I first opened the wardrobe in my flat in the Villa Walther, I saw an impressive row of wooden hangers. The Joan Crawford in me rejoiced: no wire hangers! I knew then – as I have sometimes known before – that I was a lucky boy.

Thank you, Wiko, for everything.

On my last morning in Berlin, as I write this, the heady scent of linden blossoms floods through the open windows of my apartment in the Villa Walther. It is the scent I always associate with Berlin in the summer, and it offers an irresistible invitation to return to Berlin in summers to come.