



MEIN WIKO-JAHR: BÜCHER, FORSCHUNG, DEUTSCH UND ZUKUNFT MEREDITH REICHES

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Bücher

Packing for a ten-month trip means thinking about the portable world in terms of weight, size, and fragility. Books are robust but heavy. Given the legendary resourcefulness, speed, and generosity of the Wiko *Bibliotheksteam*, it seemed wise to transport only those materials that I anticipated needing right away and without danger of recall. The volumes from home, therefore, form a sketch of the work I thought I would do: Arnold Weinstein's *Morning, Noon, and Night*, about literature across the life cycle; Peter Ellison's masterpiece on the ecology of human reproduction, *On Fertile Ground*; Shakespeare's

Romeo and Juliet and *Hamlet*; J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*; a circa-1930 edition of Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* canon; Kenneth Campbell and James Wood's 1994 edited volume, *Human Reproductive Ecology*. I envisioned a project that juxtaposed literary and biological accounts of adolescence, the dawn of reproductive potential, with theories and stories of people who choose not to reproduce. By putting the explicitly reproductive and non-reproductive – as well as the literary and biological – into conversation, and by drawing out the paradoxical centrality of death to narratives of adolescence and the centrality of non-reproductive characters to literary production, I hoped to arrive at a more capacious and complex view of the role of reproduction in human evolution.

What sirens, though, are the books one has not planned to read! It began innocently enough as “social reading” – a bibliography aimed at finding common ground with Fellows I admired and wanted to know better. It ended in a new conception of my own project. Through work by Michel Foucault, David Halperin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gayle Rubin, D. A. Miller, Michael Warner, Neil Bartlett, Kirk Ormand, Rosamond Lehmann, Alfred Gell, Sianne Ngai, Caroline Bledsoe, Lee Edelman, Ann Pellegrini, Janet Jakobsen, Katherine Dunn, Molly Hite, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Marshall Sahlins, among others, I came to appreciate the historically contingent nature of life sciences’ categories and questions. Specifically, I began to examine the contexts in which research on the evolution of human reproduction – and narratives about the origins of social structures that, like marriage, promote and sustain reproduction – are embedded.

Forschung

If all goes well, you will one day hold in your hands a book called *No More Marriage*. It should convince you that many prominent, contemporary evolutionary theories depict all adults in prehistory as “married” – itself a complicated term – and reproducing. Marriage and reproduction serve, in these arguments, as the fulcrum for human evolution. The assumption of universal marriage and reproduction is an artifact of history: ideas about marriage and reproduction in the prehistoric past derive from ethnographic observations and cultural mores of the past hundred and fifty years. Treating the local and contingent as universal and inevitable not only constrains our hypotheses about human origins, but also shapes our perceptions of what is natural in the present and possible in the future.

If I succeed, you will be able to translate from cultural anthropology to evolutionary thinking the idea that a statistically insignificant minority may have something significant

to say about social and biological systems fundamental to a society or species. You will look at literary texts from *Hamlet* to *Sherlock Holmes* as sites of alternative imagination about the roles that marriage and reproduction play in human societies. If I hit it out of the park, to be American about it, you won't be able to read either contemporary political rhetoric about the status of marriage and reproductive rights or popularized evolutionary accounts of human sexuality and reproduction without raising a historical, scientific, and ideological eyebrow. Wish me luck – and wish me interlocutors as thoughtful as those I met at Wiko.

The second project to be conceived at Wiko is a collaboration with Françoise Lavocat on fictional and historical populations in 19th-century France and England. Following a tradition established by adroit close- and distance-reader Franco Moretti, Françoise and I will describe the population structures of early 19th-century novels that were bestsellers in France and England. We want to know characters' genders and ages, the population density of the novelistic worlds, and how often writers depict demographic events such as birth and death. We plan to compare these fictional populations findings from historical demography, asking both to what extent the 19th-century novel lives up to its reputation for realism and how the choices about who counts and who does not – for instance, a person's death excludes her from the census but not from fictional presence – change the populations of the worlds in question. We look forward to presenting our work to literary scholars in France in Fall 2016 and to engaging with other former Fellows and colleagues about content and methodology – canon selection, “analog” as compared with computerized algorithmic reading, *und so weiter* – in a Fellow Forum workshop to follow.

Finally, I had the good fortune to participate in the most meta of all conversations, Christopher McCrudden's “comparing comparisons” group. We met periodically throughout the year to explore with different Fellows how each person's project and discipline employ – and reject – comparison. Given the centrality of comparison to my own work, along disciplinarily orthodox as well as transdisciplinary axes, I absorbed these dialogs with avidity. I look forward to the group's next chapter.

Deutsch

The German language teachers at Wiko – in my case, Nadja Fügert and Eva von Kügelgen – were every bit as crucial to imbuing the year with structure and meaning as the *Dienstagskolloquium* and the phenomenal meals. Thanks to Eva and Nadja, the A2/B1

group – Susan Rose-Ackerman, Hisa Kuriyama, Anne-Marie Marsaguet, Michel Chion, and Aden Kumler – occupied a magical point of equilibrium between the ludicrous (*Otto Mops trotzt! Der Tatortreiniger!*) and the highly productive. Eva turned the glorious anarchy of *Donnerstag*'s open course into a place where, miraculously, we learned grammar. I finally sorted out the differences among *Gesichte*, *Gerichte*, *Gedichte*, und *Geschichte*. Between German classes, private lessons, and *Deutschisch*, it became possible to venture out into the wider *deutschsprachige Welt* with confidence and a sense of humor. It would be hard to express in any language my gratitude for this.

Zukunft

The *Jahrgang 2014/15* included a significant number of early-career scholars – Pedro Bekinschtein, Anton Crombach, Florence Débarre, Shermin de Silva, Alexei Evstratov, Brandon Kilbourne, Veronica Lazar, Simone Reber, and Line Ugelvig (not to mention the marvelous Berta Verd, Ph.D. candidate with Fellow Yogi Jäger). This is, to my mind, an insightful choice on Wiko's part – thank you Admissions Team and Giovanni Frazzetto! Not only does career-stage diversity bring varied perspectives to colloquium discussion and informal conversation, but the inclusion of early-career Fellows also puts Wiko in a position to promote the work of young academics whose scholarship, as the award of the Fellowship suggests, merits a serious audience.

Many of the early-career scholars who come to Wiko are in moments of transition between some combination of postdoctoral and permanent positions. The gift of time allows Fellows to discover and apply for funding and employment opportunities. I believe that Wiko can strengthen its early-career Fellows' candidacies in other ways, as well. One of these is by increasing early-career scholars' visibility. Just as the *Abendkolloquium* forum brings the work of established Fellows to an enthusiastic wider public, perhaps a series of events aimed at showcasing the work of early-career Fellows could bring their innovations to the attention of more senior scholars in the region. The best way or ways of doing this, of course, would need to be worked out in consultation with the astonishing Wiko Public Relations Team and with the Fellows themselves.

A second route is through an extension of the Wiko's current infrastructure for network building. The Fellows' Club and Fellow Forum initiatives aim to maintain bonds within *Jahrgänge* and to forge connections among Fellows of different classes. A focus on connecting early-career Fellows with former Fellows who share research interests, for

purposes of conversation or with an eye to co-initiating a Fellow Forum, could strengthen the Wiko’s “intergenerational” Fellow class architecture while placing the work of early-career Fellows before new eyes.

A third approach would entail amassing Wiko Fellows’ collective knowledge about funding opportunities. As our collaborations and research communities become increasingly global, Wiko could help us to keep track of possibilities for research support through organizations and international structures we might not otherwise be aware of.

Thanks to the College for Life Sciences, and through the excellent conditions at Wiko that allow partners to double the intellect in residence, there was a strong contingent of women in the life sciences at Wiko in 2014/15. With many of the early-career Fellows listed above, and with the addition of Hilde Janssens and Caroline Pannell, we formed WIST, the Women in Science Tea. Never before had I had the experience of sitting around a table of biologists, all women, each of whom was born in a different country: Germany, England, Spain, France, Belgium, Denmark, Sri Lanka, and the USA were represented. We came from an array of intellectual backgrounds and were navigating pressing questions about how to re-enter academic science full-time after decades raising children, how to forge a career outside academic science, how to start a lab, and how to combine an international research program with a partner’s academic career and a young family. We spoke to mentors local – thank you, Sarah Stroumsa – and distant, consulting two successive gender advisors to The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. We workshopped one another’s presentations and grant proposals. We followed issues of gender and science in the news and debated them via e-mail – and, every other week, over tea and snacks. We drank to the jobs and grants we got and to the ones we didn’t.

I am tremendously grateful to Wiko for inviting so many stellar women scientists – I write this from the dining room table of one in Vienna, a second arrives tonight, and later this summer I will spend a month at the home of a third. I am grateful for the space we had in which to meet, for the technology that allowed us to share our presentations and to have Skype conversations with colleagues abroad, and for the wonderful photos of our group that Vera Kempa took. I believe that something powerful for Wiko could emerge from embracing a form like this, from holding it in mind and cultivating it among future *Jahrgänge*: in a world concerned with the representation of minoritized identities in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) professions and in the academy, an international group of woman scientists has much to offer and much to gain through institutional support and recognition.

Heim

Packing for a ten-month trip requires taking stock not only of the portable but also of the non-portable world in terms of weight, size, and fragility – what new relationships to people and places will form, and how will those from our prior lives fare? I came to Wiko with concerns about the wellbeing of faraway family members – including a 103-year-old grandmother who, as of this writing, is still exhorting her sons to stand up straight – and one venerable and elderly dog. The world has turned while I've been away: our family said goodbye to Xena, Warrior Puppy, and adopted a cat. The shy toddler who hugged me farewell in August has become an avid close-reader of Dr. Seuss ("But *why* does Sam-I-Am want the man to eat green eggs and ham?"). Babies have been born whom I have yet to meet.

The openness to friendship of Wiko members permanent and transient proved stronger and richer than I had dared to imagine. Wiko friends caught me when a family member had a health crisis in the first weeks of the year and I nearly packed my bags and went home. Wiko friends took my ethical and intellectual positions seriously and compelled me to argue them. They stood outside the door to an *Änderungschneiderei* in Westfälische Straße, laughing with compassion and embarrassment while I tried, to the bewilderment of the shopkeeper, to complete a German class assignment. They were "Poulets Libres" and *Wikofrauen für immer*. They nudged me toward helping to plan a *Karneval* party that showed our *Jahrgang* how much, on the whole, we love to dress up and dance. They lent me their children and trusted that their homes would recover from Play-Doh, face paint, and rubber chickens. They snuck me into the organ loft at the Konzerthaus and shivered happily when the percussion thundered under our noses. They puzzled with me over Berlin theater and opera, fed me chocolate at the intervals, and showed me the pleasure of late night, post-theater supper. They took me on tours of the Bode Museum, the Gemäldegalerie, the Museum für Naturkunde, and the Botanischer Garten. They discovered that the *Haus der 100 Biere* in Ku'damm is in truth the *Haus der 95-ish Biere*. They welcomed my friends and family. They understood that mourning – for Tsering Gyalpo, whom we miss and remember – may walk hand in hand with celebration.

Special thanks to Jannie Hofmeyr, Co-Fellow speaker. You are wonderful.