



FINDING PAIN
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Daniel Weary spent his childhood in Quebec, the West Indies, Africa, and the Middle East. He studied Biology at McGill and Zoology at Oxford. After working for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for five years, Dan was appointed as a NSERC Research Chair and moved to the University of British Columbia to co-found the University's Animal Welfare Program. Dan's research focuses on animal behaviour and how animals perceive their environment. Much of his work involves applying this knowledge to improve how we care for animals. While at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Dan worked with the *Pain* Focus Group, developing better ways of recognizing and alleviating pain in non-human animals. – Address: Faculty of Land and Food Systems, The University of British Columbia, 2357 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1Z4, Canada.

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A typical day pre-Wiko: A hundred e-mails. Meetings. Deadlines. Phone calls. Frantic students. Marking. More marking. More meetings. Report to Dean. Report to granting agency. More meetings. Student in tears. Late for class. Ring, ring, ring. Knock, knock, knock. Late again. A hundred more e-mails. Knock, ring, e-mail, meeting, repeat.

I write this final report on the last day of the best (academic) year of my life, alone in my quiet office in Villa Jaffé. Here the phone never rings, students never knock on my door and endless meetings are only a distant memory. The e-mails still manage to filter through the wonderful cone of stillness that fortifies the Villa, but the Great Firewall of Wiko (together with a nine-hour time difference) somehow robs these of any sense of urgency.

This quiet room, looking out over the abandoned villa next door and an oak tree inhabited by great tits and red squirrels, has been my paradise for the year. I sip slowly from my cup of tea and browse through the piles of papers and inexhaustible books furnished by the library. I have time to daydream; my mind wanders with little sense of direction and no sense of urgency.

Even with the daydreaming, or maybe because of it, I feel that this is the first time in years that I have been allowed to be a scholar. To have time to think, to read broadly and to discuss the finer points with colleagues who also have the time and energy to engage with me.

And time to write. Writing cannot happen (or at least not very well) if it takes place in the dribs and drabs of time that are left in the daily life of the modern academic. Answer an e-mail, make a call, grade a paper, maybe even provide critical feedback on a student thesis – this I could do with the broken hours left to me in my old pre-Wiko life. But at Wiko I have had time to THINK! To happily bathe in “... the quiet still air of delightful studies.”¹

At Wiko, the days do not suffer from ordinary disruptions, in part because of the extraordinary efforts of the Wiko staff, who manage to remove from us the chores of day-to-day life (where to live – check; what to eat – check; travel plans – check; finding the hard-to-find book – check; organizing workshops, inviting colleagues, even booking opera tickets – check, check, check). Unlike other academic bureaucracies, where the administration seems to exist only to punish the academic with reams of forms, the friendly and efficient staff at Wiko seem to believe that their mission is to free us from the distractions and annoyances that otherwise fill our days. We arrive to a perfect apartment, furnished with even the breakfast items for our first meal in Berlin. They arrange our bank accounts, our visas, our residency permits, our insurance, our shipping items, etc. In addition to taking away the drudgery, they actually seek to enrich our stay by putting us in touch with previous Fellows and relevant scholars here in Berlin, by creating new linkages that open up new ideas and perspectives.

In coming to Wiko, I was expecting and found an academic haven (made bitter only by the expulsion from paradise that is now imminent). I was also expecting, and found,

1 From the inscription upon McGill University's Redpath Library. I'm not sure that I took advantage of this as an undergraduate, but at Wiko I have been making up for lost time.

smart colleagues who enjoyed talking with others outside of their own research area. But I was not expecting that these colleagues would also become good friends. I now see that it is no accident that close bonds are forged at the College, as much effort goes into bringing people together. Some of the approaches are as expected, including welcome parties and other social mixers. Other approaches are more subtle, yet brutally effective. A case in point is Wiko's very own hazing ritual, also known as the *Deutschkurs*. Now it may seem innocent enough to want the Fellows to learn a bit of German so that they can better appreciate all that Berlin has to offer, but I suspect that this goal is only secondary. Hazing – a form of shared, public humiliation – breaks down social barriers and brings together individuals to form a close-knit group. So what could be better than to take a group of proud, independent (perhaps even ornery) academics, who pride themselves on their fluidity and clarity of expression, and make them babble in a foreign tongue, collectively reduced to infantile pups (and sometimes tears). Of course all of this is done in the nicest possible way. Our capable and supportive *Lehrerinnen* are so positive that for a moment the more optimistic among us might think that we are actually beginning to get the hang of this, but soon reality hits and we realize that, in German at least, we are pathetic. Shared humiliation² is the glue that bonds us together.

And from this start, all is possible. No question is too daft to ask during the Tuesday colloquium (and apparently no question is too long to ask either, but that is another story). We are suddenly uninhibited about sitting with anyone at lunch, making new friends, inviting people to dinner. Never have I seen friendships blossom so quickly and deeply among a group of academics.

Regrets? I've had a few. One is that it took me many months to get a bike and once I did, I realized that Berlin is a most wonderful city to explore on two wheels. The paths are safe, green, and oh so direct. On a bike you get a completely different feel for this wonderful city. Berlin also offers a tempting jumping off point for travel to the rest of Europe and beyond, but to this temptation just say: no. A day away from Wiko can never be replaced. Paris, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Warsaw, Edinburgh, Dublin, Vilnius, Istanbul, Tehran – these will still be there when your Fellowship is over. And you will appreciate the time away from your regular life.

2 Another inexhaustible source of humiliation comes at the Ping-Pong table during and after dinner on Thursdays.

I feel a chill in the air. The light begins to fade from my office window at Villa Jaffé (earlier this week than even the week before). The distant and threatening hum of the approaching chaos can be felt more keenly. Meetings are scheduled, e-mails have become more desperate, and somehow I know that I will have crying students in my office when I return to UBC on Monday morning. I will stop at Kaiser's for tissues; these will come in helpful when I shed a tear of my own, closing the door to my office one last time.