



A YEAR OF ENCOUNTERS AND
EVOLVING IDEAS
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My fellowship year at the Wissenschaftskolleg has been shaped by a variety of encounters—with my Co-Fellows, Berlin- and Potsdam-based academics, Wiko alumni, and the dedicated Wiko staff. This environment fostered the development of new ideas, often sparked by unexpected inspirations. Beyond the formal Colloquia, workshops, lectures,

concerts, and panel discussions, the self-organised History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) group provided a vital space. Within this group, we shared both published and unpublished work, deepened our Colloquia discussions, and explored, and often transgressed, the boundaries of our respective disciplines.

Forging New Paths in Research. My overarching interest during the fellowship year centred on “Scientific Discourse in Medieval Vernacular Texts,” leading to several interconnected projects. A prominent endeavour involved securing the Momentum funding of the VolkswagenStiftung, with the application submitted in late September. This extensive project encompasses several work packages: developing a model study on inquiry-orientated dialogues; analysing systematically and with computer assistance medieval texts containing such dialogues; conducting a historical study on the access to inquiry-orientated learning; and creating a dialogue-based teaching format in collaboration with the respective medieval centres at Strasbourg and Stockholm universities. My presentation of this project to a jury in Hanover in January greatly benefited from preparatory discussions with the Wiko HPS group, which helped sharpen my presentation. The project started upon my return to Freiburg in the autumn. This Momentum funding offers the invaluable opportunity to recalibrate my research profile, allowing me to venture further into the history of knowledge and epistemology.

Further contributing to my overarching topic was a public hybrid lecture in early April, titled “Die Vermittlung von universitärem Wissen an ein sogenanntes Laienpublikum im Mittelalter” (Science communication to a so-called lay audience in the Middle Ages). This lecture was part of the public programme VHS Wissen, to which Wiko contributes annually. It was a great privilege to honour the work of the Volkshochschule through this lecture, recognising it as an institution dedicated to continued learning and a vital pillar of our democratic values and structures.

My second primary focus at Wiko, which I intend to continue pursuing, concerns the history and philosophy of “habitus,” an age-old concept experiencing periodic revivals. This research involved habitus workshops in Edinburgh in October 2024, in Lancaster in April 2025, and a smaller session at Wiko in May 2025. Working alongside Carmel Raz (Cornell) and Alexander Wragge-Morley (Lancaster), we were keen to continue these conversations, and we were thrilled when Anna Gil Bardají, Mathias Énard’s partner, joined our team, which meets regularly.

The habitus ideas also find place in an interdisciplinary paper co-authored with neuropsychologists and fellow medievalists, examining the connective features of the power of belief in medieval theology and its links to modern clinical practice in the placebo effect.

In June, I participated in a conference of the Tübingen-based CRC 1391 “Different Aesthetics,” presenting a paper that connects the medieval concept of *habitus speculativi* with bodily functions in scholasticism, titled “Körperlichkeit als Vehikel des Spekultativen.” The proceedings of this conference are currently being planned for publication.

My Wiko Colloquium paper, “Habits, Old and New: Meister Eckhart, Medieval and Modern,” served to connect my work on the history of scientific discourse with my habitus research. In this paper, I illuminate the historical conditions of the critical edition and their ongoing impact on contemporary research. I also study an unresearched manuscript housed at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, identifying its historical context through philological and codicological analysis. This work is given in tribute to Nigel F. Palmer, my academic mentor and friend who passed away in 2022. He guided me through the initial crucial steps in editorial practice and was instrumental in my pursuing codicology as a methodological approach in my work.

Publications and Editorial Activities. A significant part of my year involved redacting and preparing a volume manuscript from a March 2023 conference, which I organised with my Freiburg-based team, focusing on women’s reading and text practices in late medieval convents. The volume, titled *Women Read. Differently? Text in Women Convents from the 13th to the 15th Centuries*, is co-edited with Linus Möllenbrink and Meret Wüthrich and is slated for publication by V&R unipress within their series “Transatlantic Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Culture.”

My only trip away from Berlin to my base in Freiburg was for a workshop, colloquium, and concert I organised, celebrating Almut Suerbaum’s (Oxford) 65th birthday, with “dialogue” as its methodical and thematic core. This included a performance on February 21, 2025 in a Benedictine convent near Freiburg, featuring music by the 11th-century monk Hermann von Reichenau. Scholars from Britain, Canada, Germany, Israel, and Switzerland contributed to the ensuing workshop, engaging in dialogue with Suerbaum’s work. During my year at Wiko, I also co-edited a volume featuring essays by Suerbaum, accompanied by scholars’ academic responses and reproductions of selected art pieces. This volume, *Multivocality and Responsiveness: Medieval Literature in Dialogue*, has just

been published with De Gruyter as part of their “Festschriften, Occasional Papers, and Lectures” series.

I developed and wrote a paper on Bernard of Clairvaux’s use of the net as a metaphor for love, titled “Vom epistolarischen Eschaton: Ein Essay zum bernhardschen ‘Netz der Liebe.’” This contribution was published in *Vernetzungen – Relationen (in) der mediävistischen Literaturwissenschaft: Festschrift Michael Stolz*. It was a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge an inspiring scholar I studied with in my very first year at university, as he had introduced me to the study of early-medieval manuscripts.

A short piece exploring silence in medieval thought and religious orders, titled “Die Methode Bruno,” appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* XIX/2 (2025). I also worked on redacting a paper contribution based on a conference talk in Thessaloniki, given prior to joining Wiko, where I discuss the term “neuromedievalism.” This volume is forthcoming as *Cognitive Theories and Later Latin: Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period* in the series “Trends in Classics—Supplementary Volumes.” Additionally, I completed copy-editing and proofs for an article in the journal *Poetica*, co-authored with Linus Möllenbrink. This article, “Schön und schuldig: Kulturgeschichtliche und philologische Betrachtungen zum Körper der Maria Magdalena in ihrer spätmittelalterlichen Bekehrungslegende. Mit einer Neuerfassung des Überlieferungszusammenhangs,” explores a late medieval legend within its cultural context and systematically portrays its transmission details. I participated in a hybrid session of the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, MI, presenting a paper on the writings of the Helfta mystics as a form of “art criticism.” Despite being physically removed from the panel’s location, the discussion was vivid and provided a good opportunity to continue conversations about medieval visionary writing, a central theme of my book on Gertrud of Helfta (CUP 2021).

I devoted time during the year to organize two conferences in September 2025: one in Oxford on posthumanism (28th Anglo-German Colloquium: “Posthumane Perspektiven im Dialog mit vormoderner Kultur: Neue Zugänge zur deutschsprachigen Literatur des Mittelalters”) and another on the culture and literature of Lake Constance in the late Middle Ages (“Die Kultur- und Literaturlandschaft um den Bodensee im späteren Mittelalter”).

Ecstatic Postlude. The first third of my Wiko stay involved completing my book on ecstasy, *Berauscht der Sinne beraubt: Eine Geschichte der Ekstase*, published with Propyläen

at the beginning of 2025. In this book, drawing inspiration from medieval mystical treatises, I pair ecstasy with another concept in each chapter, highlighting the ambivalence of both the ecstatic experience and its accompanying discourse. The book's release was followed by a series of interviews in various national and local newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. I was particularly pleased with the positive reviews in the *FAZ*, *Deutschlandfunk*, *SWR*, and other outlets. The book was also recognised in "Best Non-Fiction Books" listings, received the Doxumentale 2025 award for "Best Non-Fiction Book," and was shortlisted for the Austrian Science Book Award in the category Medicine/Biology. Swiss TV (SRF) featured my book in a one-hour interview on *Sternstunde Religion*. A translation into Chinese is currently in the planning stages. Two readings took place in Berlin: one public, and a private one held in Wiko's vicinity, in the very place where the Fischer family once hosted their salons. This served as a momentous highlight of my year at Wiko. Being present in Berlin for my book's release allowed me to engage in a kind of well-balanced, hands-on science communication, drawing insights from the experiences of my Co-Fellows. Their willingness to share their disciplinary knowledge and offer tips on engaging with the media world was immensely helpful, and I continue to be inspired by their wealth of wisdom and generosity.