Aby Warburg’s *Pathosformel* as methodological paradigm

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the scholarly literature on Aby Warburg has exploded. Traditionally, he has been associated with the discipline of art history, recognized for his impact on other famous art historians like Erwin Panofsky or Ernst Gombrich. However, in the past twenty years, and increasingly so, scholars from a broad range of Humanities and Social Sciences have turned their attention to his interdisciplinary body of work and theoretical paradigms. To summarize, the recollection and revival of antique forms, particularly during the Renaissance, and in both high art and popular culture contexts, is the thread that wends through his research, publications, writings, and correspondence. Additionally, Warburg is credited with the establishment of a cultural-scientific research library, ‘inventing’ iconology, forging a new method for considering visual culture through his *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, and coining key phrases and concepts: *Nachleben der Antike* (the afterlife of the antique); *Pathosformel* (an emotionally charged visual trope); and *Denkraum* (a space for contemplation).

Above and beyond his accomplishments, the rediscovery of Warburg within fields as diverse as sociology and comparative literature also is due to his institutional affiliations and intellectual affinities with other, equally, or even more renowned thinkers of his time. The list includes luminaries like Jakob Burkhart and Walter Benjamin, who, like Warburg have crossed disciplinary boundaries. Warburg occupies different positions within different fields, and his appeal across the disciplines constitutes the first part of this paper. In the second half, I will explore the applicability of his concept of the *Pathosformel* as a mode of interpretation of relevance to a broad range of Humanities and Social Science disciplines using the national personification Germania as a case study.

My discussion of Warburg’s ideas proceeds from a contextualization of his work within academic discourse, beginning with its traditional home within art history, to show how scholars from diverse fields have engaged with his research. In the following sections, I demonstrate how his overarching preoccupation with the

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1 Silvina P. Vidal, ‘Rethinking the Warburgian tradition in the 21st century’, *Journal of Art Historiography* 1, December 2009, 2.

resuscitation of antiquity holds special relevance for understanding the visual culture of German national identity. Warburg lived through catastrophic moments in German socio-political history, and his work and legacy bear the imprints of major socio-political events including the Great War and the Nazi regime. Yet despite the specificities of his biography, his concepts have proved useful for scholars of different periods and societies, including those of non-Western cultures. My analysis of the personification Germania extrapolates from his writings on and exhibitions of *Pathosformeln* to shed light on the continual and mysterious appearance and reinvention of feminine allegories of nationhood both within Germany and across Western nation-states. I primarily refer to Warburg’s *Bilderatlas*; however, his exploration of expressive *topoi* had been introduced in his reflections on Classical visual imagery well before he began assembling the *Atlas*. Through my consideration of this material, I demonstrate how methodologies primarily used by art historians can find effective utility in other fields dealing with visual artefacts.

**Art historians’ reception of Warburg**

What, precisely, is at stake in the characterization of Warburg’s art historiographical contributions? The idiosyncratic and sometimes aphoristic nature of his investigations has created something of a stumbling block for the purposes of determining his significance for art history. This issue has proven particularly thorny for art historians reliant on a traditional ‘dual comparison’ of images that seeks to demonstrate stylistic continuities and neatly slots artworks into a chronology. And yet the very characteristics that make Warburg an uneasy fit within the canon of great art historians have ensured his relevance for other disciplines.

A single passage from Aby Warburg’s short essay ‘Artistic Exchanges between North and South in the Fifteenth Century’ (1905) exemplifies the ways in which he deviated from the art historical norm:

> Analysed from the viewpoints of stylistic criticism and cultural history, the engraving attributed to the so-called Baccio Baldini cast new light on the whole issue of artistic exchanges between North and South in the fifteenth century: an issue that hitherto—for all its importance to the historian of artistic style—has barely been defined. As a result, it becomes possible to assess this unresolved blend of Northern popular comedy, quasi-French costume realism, and dynamic, quasi-antique idealism in gesture and drapery movement as a symptom of a crucial transitional phase in the emergence of secular Florentine art.³

Most of Warburg’s preoccupations are at play in this passage: trans-disciplinary research; his consideration of visual culture outside the fine art canon; his

fascination with the way in which images and metaphors travelled temporally and geographically; his interest in the implications of gesture, emotion and expression; his identification of specific forms from the past as transmitting crucial information about the context and underlying psychology of the era in which they were revived; his blending and analysis of popular culture and high art in a spectacular display of erudition; and it even includes a subtle slight against the unalloyed stylistic judgment of visual phenomena. In short, Warburg’s approach challenges the canon as arbiter of significance, calls into question the relevance of periodicity, sets mass and popular culture on a par with fine art, acknowledges ways in which works of art allude to the ineffable or the profane, and, finally, subverts the role of the artist as creative progenitor of discrete and self-contained masterpieces of Western Civilization.

Present-day art historians are careful to emphasize the dissonances between Warburg’s approach to the study of visual culture and that of his famous disciple Erwin Panofsky.4 As is well known, Panofsky developed a rigorous and influential theoretical paradigm for analysing artworks. American art historian Michael Ann Holly calls Panofsky the ‘primary event’ in the historiography of twentieth-century art history and he ostensibly inherited, from Warburg, his ‘iconological’ mode of interpretation.5 Panofsky’s method is a three part exercise involving first of all, close looking, description and identification of the visible elements of an artwork including style, technique, and motifs; then a contextualization of the image by constructing linkages to other artworks, literary texts and concepts; until, finally, one reaches an understanding of the work of art as a subjective mediation located within a particular place and time. If Warburg forged a new space for the apprehension of images, Panofsky was indebted as much to eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and nineteenth-century art historical paradigms as he was to contemporaries like Warburg and Ernst Cassirer, the latter known for his philosophy of symbolic forms. Yet despite their differences, Panofsky and Warburg’s approaches to ‘reading’ visual culture rely on a level of erudition largely inaccessible to a mass audience, and historians, in particular, have been critical of academic practices that marginalize ordinary people from cultural discourse by privileging bodies of knowledge that are only available through an elite education.6

Compared with Panofsky’s rigor, Warburg’s investigations were expansive, open-ended, interdisciplinary, and less easily defined, although the presence of an erudite interpreter of art is central to both methods. It almost goes without saying that even the deepest and broadest knowledge of the most renowned and canonical cultural artefacts is subjective in the sense that sources are selected, apprehended and understood by an individual who is situated within a specific socio-cultural and temporal context. While Panofsky reinforces the connection of images to other elite artistic formats, Warburg’s concepts can be used to elucidate the utility of visual

forms. Indeed, Dorothee Bauerle noted that Warburg had described his Bilderatlas as: “‘Mnemosyne: A Series of Images for the Investigation of the Function of previously defined Expressive Values in the Representation of Life in Motion in European Art of the Renaissance’...” This passage clearly indicates Warburg’s interest in the inheritance and utility of visual forms; in the original German, the term ‘Ausdruckswerte’ connotes not expressive ‘significance’ or ‘meaning’ per se, but, rather, expressive ‘value.’ Value, furthermore, is a subjective construct rather than a given absolute, and to the extent that value can be viewed as a form of currency, representations can be seen as circulating within a specific economy of forms rather than settling in a fixed position. To be sure, many of the images Warburg considered originated within high cultural spheres, but even so, their referential matrices link them to popular phenomena as widely disparate as astrology and professional golf. While not just anyone in Wilhelmine Germany would have been granted access to an original Dürer, for example, just about everyone could gain access to the same tarot card topos that Dürer rendered (1494/5), and which Warburg included in his Bilderatlas. For Warburg, neither authorial talent nor the prestige of patrons, audience or source citations acted as primary or sole determining factors when coming to terms with the expressive values of a particular representation in European Art of the Renaissance.

To a certain extent, as present-day art historians and scholars from other disciplines have turned away from iconology, Warburg’s affiliation with Panofsky has placed something of a burden on his admirers. Panofsky’s method, often considered ‘narrow’, is now something to be dealt with or to overcome in order to achieve a better understanding of Warburg’s scholarly pursuits. Critics’ sweeping generalization that a facile and determinate ‘meaning’ of artworks can be puzzled out is unfair both to the iconological process and to Panofsky’s body of work. Yet it is this aspect of iconology—iniconographic interpretation, or the close description and the identification of the textual sources of signs within artworks—which scholars from other disciplines most frequently associate with art history, and which is most problematic for them when approaching art and artists from their own methodological perspectives. I will elaborate a bit more on these tensions later in this paper.

**Warburg and memory studies**

However insightful Warburg’s publications may be, his most enduring and impactful legacies were left unwritten: the first is his ‘cultural-scientific’ Hamburg

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library, removed to London in 1933 as the Nazis rose to power, and relocated to the University of London in 1944. The second is his Bilderatlas, which is the project most frequently cited in the literature of other fields. He began his Bilderatlas in 1924 and it was left unfinished at his death in 1929. Constructed in his library, it consisted of sixty-three wooden boards, covered in black cloth, to which he tacked, and then reconfigured, black and white reproductions of masterpieces and little-known works of art, literary tropes and conventions, allegorical figures and cosmological images, as well as newspaper and magazine clippings and advertisements, maps and assorted ephemera. As such, it constituted a means to chart the afterlife of ancient forms through time to his present day. Rather than publish this work, he presented his findings live, in conversations and talks to select audiences. Its format and usage guaranteed that it would remain a continually renewed, rather than finalized, project.

One aspect of the Bilderatlas frequently overlooked in the literature of the field is the performative nature of Warburg’s project. His decision to verbalize rather than inscribe his thoughts ensured that his creation was always located within the present moment rather than enshrined as a historical artefact. In a sense, his format spoke of its content, the culturally abiding but constantly changing and self-reinventing metaphors and images he took as his subject. It is this facet of Warburg’s body of work, which traces the ‘afterlife’ or ‘memory of images,’ that historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers have aligned with current-day inquiry into ‘collective,’ ‘social’ and/or ‘cultural’ memory. Outside the discipline of art history, there is a rich and vibrant discussion about his contributions to memory studies, which have now eclipsed his association with Panofskian iconology.

Warburg’s Bilderatlas groupings show not only the recollection of ancient forms, but also the migration of forms across cultures, which is a central theme in his writings as well. In his examination of the ‘cult system’ of astrological decans, for example, he traces motifs in Italian Renaissance art back to Egyptian, Indian, Persian, Greek and Roman antecedents. His global exploration of recurring visual metaphors has engaged scholars from outside art history, like Egyptologists Jan and Aleida Assmann. Indeed, his Bilderatlas compares Egyptian temple sculpture to Roman religious forms, but without interpretive text: he merely indicated the common tropes in visual art, regardless of their spatio-temporal specificities, through photographic reproductions.

The Assmanns’ theory of ‘communicative memory’, referring to the everyday interactions between subjects and their contexts, expanded the referential matrix for Warburg as a historical figure:

‘Communicative memory’ refers to the realm of living memories, that is, the memories of the recent past which members of the community produce and

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10 Johnson, 9.
11 Warburg, 569.
share in a more or less spontaneous and unorganized fashion, while ‘cultural memory’ encompasses more organized forms of social long-term memory. The range of communicative memory extends to up to three or four generations; cultural memory goes beyond this span to provide the members of a community with a sense of identity and unity by relating the present to collectively binding conceptualizations of the past.\textsuperscript{13}

In developing their concept, the Assmanns uncovered parallels between Warburg’s thinking and that of his contemporary, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Indeed, Jan Assmann has taken pains to verify that Warburg’s colleague Fritz Saxl had referred him to Halbwachs’ work.\textsuperscript{14} Both Halbwachs and Warburg’s teacher Karl Lamprecht proved influential for members of the French Annales School of history like Marc Bloch.

For Halbwachs, collective memory is generated through the interaction of subjects within a particular social context, involving a continual return to commonly held stories, images, myths and rituals.\textsuperscript{15} These form a repository to which members of a given society refer to reaffirm their in-group status. Memory is primarily a social event: individuals remember, but they do so as active participants within institutions, families, professions, religions, or social classes. Warburg’s concept of memory, on the other hand, is rooted in the persistence of certain visible formations. For Warburg, access to commonly held cultural forms, like cosmological symbols, provides a means to overcome ‘the phobic pressures of reality’. Halbwachs also sees the ‘dreamlike’ qualities of memory production as providing an escape from society.\textsuperscript{16} However, for Halbwachs, autobiographical memory is only part of the equation: remembrance never can be an entirely singular activity, for an individual’s memories are already informed by the collective memory.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, Warburg’s notion of contemplation is bound to fear, rather than nostalgia or a desire for ‘belonging’.\textsuperscript{18} The invocation and recognition of jointly held and familiarizing metaphors offers a means to collectively grapple with states of psychological crisis. The individual’s capacity to apprehend emotionally charged forms also keeps their powers at bay, creating a necessary space between the subject and its object of contemplation, in which rational thought emerges.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{13} Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, ‘Memories of the Nile: Egyptian Traumas and Communication Technologies in Jan Assmann’s Theory of Cultural Memory’, \textit{New German Critique} 96, Fall 2005, 119-120.
\textsuperscript{14} Jan Assmann, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, \textit{New German Critique} 65, Spring - Summer 1995, Footnote 1, 125.
\textsuperscript{17} ibid, 24.
Warburg as cultural historian

Scholars from different fields have approached the same subject from discipline-centric perspectives, and the definitions of key concepts like ‘cultural’, ‘collective’, or ‘social memory’ similarly have taken on the nuances of the discursive field in which they are embedded. As we see through the comparison of Halbwachs and Warburg, a sociologist defines and approaches the concept of ‘social memory’ using different data and rhetoric than that of a cultural scientist. However, this has not stopped cultural historians from citing the Assmanns, Halbwachs, Warburg and Marc Bloch in the same breath to forge an understanding of the significance of memory for history.

Just as Warburg is credited with initiating a new ‘cultural science’, his early influences, Jakob Burckhardt and Karl Lamprecht, are named as the originators of ‘cultural history’, a form of inquiry that transcended the self-imposed disciplinary boundaries of nineteenth-century German historical and art historical scholarship. Yet even as Warburg’s disciplinary transgressions are indebted to their precedent, the incomplete and suggestive nature of his projects are antithetical to the sort of totalizing narrative Burckhardt constructed with his ‘The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy’ (1860) or Lamprecht’s twelve volume German Historiography.

The relationship between memory and history, memory studies and cultural history and cultural history to history has been debated exhaustively, most notably within the pages of the American academic journal New German Critique (1995). In addition to categorizing cultural, collective, or social memory as facets of cultural history, historians have also fixed Aby Warburg’s place within the Pantheon of great cultural historians, which includes not only Burckhardt and Lamprecht but also Wilhelm Dilthey, Friedrich Meinecke, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer.

Seeing in Warburg a ‘pioneer’ of memory studies, scholars of modern Germany like Alon Confino and Jay Winter emphasize the psychological and emotional aspects of his thinking to conceptualize the process of commemoration, especially of traumatic events. Confino, a nationalism scholar and one of the forerunners of the turn towards micro-history, likens historians’ current enthusiasm for ‘memory’ to the 1970s preoccupation with mentalities, a hallmark of the French Annales School of history. He employs ‘mentality’ and ‘memory’ interchangeably, and for him, both terms provide a means for reconciling individual and group subjectivity with the process of creating historical narrative. At stake is the humanization of history through a reaffirmation of the primacy of the individual as a participant in, and agent of, history. Influenced by Warburg’s writings and Warburg Institute scholars, Confino sees enormous value and potential in the act of positioning individual and group memories in relation to the constellation of

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symbols ‘available to the society’. Furthermore, he has characterized Warburg’s contribution to the field of cultural history as providing a means to approach what can be understood about a culture’s mentality at a particular point and time through an understanding of paradigmatic signs and symbols.

Despite Confino’s appreciation for iconography and iconology, historians generally foreground art’s capacity for ‘socio-cultural representation’ rather than treating the visible components of a particular object as the source of valuable information. Instead of dealing with an artwork as a thing in and of itself, they tend to surround art or artists with context, and the least sophisticated interpreter will equate this context with the artwork to arrive at a ‘meaning’, usually political. In their rejection of formal analysis, historians have deprived themselves of a systematic way to approach art objects. Why, then, don’t historians borrow from art historical methodology with greater frequency?

Art history’s connection with iconography, aesthetics and stylistic critique holds little appeal for historians, who often dismiss art history as mere fetishization of elite commodities and artefacts of high culture, irrelevant for the majority within a given society. Instead of revealing insights into a particular time, place and community, high art merely reiterates the very operations of control and power that sanctify its vaunted position. And so it is precisely Warburg’s resistance to nineteenth-century art historical practice that attracts historians to his research. However, when generalizing about any discipline, exceptions stand out: in addition to Confino, Carlo Ginzburg very effectively employs iconography for history, and he also has written about both Warburg and Panofsky.

Warburg and the cultural studies project

The term ‘cultural studies’ in this section’s title is intended to broaden my discussion to encompass studies of a cultural nature carried out within different disciplines as well as including the field of Cultural Studies. These individual forays into art worlds are distinguishable from formal sub-disciplines like Cultural History on the one hand or Visual Culture on the other, and they take the analysis of visual culture, interpretation of artworks or discussion of famous art historians as their basis. That said, I will place Warburg’s ‘cultural scientific’ project alongside the field of ‘Cultural Studies’ in the kind of juxtaposition that art historians are so fond of making. While Giorgio Agamben calls Aby Warburg’s ‘discipline’ the ‘nameless science’, art historian Griselda Pollock sees Warburg as an antecedent for ‘Cultural Studies’ proper. Views cultural studies as...a project, an intervention, an interdisciplinary initiative within the forms of knowledge as well as a necessary

23 ibid, 174.
extension of engaged critical analysis of the formations of contemporary societies and the conditions of their existence/persistence/transformation’, her understanding of Cultural Studies is akin to Warburg’s exploration of the afterlife of antique forms. Kurt Forster, who introduced the edited volume of Warburg’s collected writings, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, also is happy to describe his work as ‘cultural studies.’

The comparison between Warburg and the cultural studies project seems to me particularly apt for this journal since the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was founded at the University of Birmingham in 1964. In the United States, at least, former Birmingham scholar Stuart Hall is Cultural Studies’ best known advocate. In his consideration of how culture might be defined, Stuart Hall arrived at this conclusion: ‘Even ‘art’ — assigned in the earlier framework a privileged position, as touchstone of the highest values of civilization—is now redefined as only one, special, form of a general social process: the giving and taking of meanings, and the slow development of ‘common’ meanings—a common culture: ‘culture,’ in this special sense, ‘is ordinary’…’ As research across the faculties becomes more interdisciplinary, Warburg’s examinations of the typical, as well as his ability to discern unexpected consonances across time and space, increasingly serves as a methodological model for contemporary investigations into visual cultural formations. This is despite, or perhaps because of, the very indefiniteness that lead him to his firmly grounded yet serendipitous insights.

**Pathosformel as methodological paradigm**

Tracing the myriad ways in which scholars from diverse areas of inquiry have claimed Warburg’s oeuvre for their own is a fascinating journey, yet mere comparison of various approaches to his work yields little in the way of actionable insight. Methodological legacies and the limited nature of historiographic discourse set scholars on paths already hewn by predecessors, creating discipline-centric dialogue even within realms of inter-disciplinary interest. To the extent that it is possible, or even desirable, to arrive at points of consensus regarding shared areas of research across disciplines, how might this aspiration be applied to Warburg studies? What can the various approaches to his body of work tell us about the methodological weaknesses inherent within different fields? Finally, of Warburg’s various projects and theories, which are demonstrably relevant across the disciplines? While Warburg’s considerations of visible forms do not constitute a method, salient concepts emerging within his scholarly practice nonetheless can provide theoretical foundations on which to construct new approaches to cultural studies in visual media. The second half of my paper will test the applicability of Warburg’s conceptualization of *Pathosformeln* to examine how icons of nationalism function within societies. Specifically, I will discuss the emergence and reinvention

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27 ibid, 16-17.
of Germania as a metaphor of national consciousness in nineteenth-century Germany, with particular attention to the post-unification period.

In this effort, I follow the example of Carlo Ginzburg, who interpreted modern political iconography through an analysis of Alfred Leete’s recruitment poster ‘Your Country Needs You’ (1914). Like Ginzburg, I use the Warburgian concept of the *Pathosformel* to show how Germania gave physical form to a collective crisis surrounding the promise and prospect of assimilation within a newly minted German state. Germania emerged in the late eighteenth century as a harbinger of dissention, despite her public deployment as a figure of national unification throughout the nineteenth century. Appearing in a variety of high art and popular culture formats throughout the 1800s and into the twentieth century, she embodied a range of meanings and political identities, all of which were contingent upon their context. Some images of Germania were intended for in-group consumption, but she was also exported to other nations as representative of Germany. Germania was not all things to all people, and her varied uses and connotations signalled the fraught nature of German collective identity just as much as she communicated commonly held national sentiments.

What is a *Pathosformel*, and how can Germania be positioned with respect to Warburg’s original idea? Agamben defined it as ‘…an indissoluble intertwining of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula in which it is impossible to distinguish between form and content…’ Warburg’s work described the journeys of antique topoi, figurations and myths, revived in later times as manifestations of collective psychological distress. His writings on the archaic origins of astrological decans and their reappearance in different spatio-temporal contexts is a prime example. Over centuries, people from every class and caste have invested cosmological symbols with the power to ward off the psychological impact of distressing realities. As ciphers of eternal ‘truths,’ the decans act as a vehicle for establishing the perception of control over the irrational, even as belief in their powers as portents is itself nonsensical.

‘Tafel 7’ of Warburg’s *Bilderatlas* identifies *Pathosformeln* rendered by renowned artists like Dürer and Mantegna as well as copies by lesser knowns. Topoi explored in previous sections of the *Atlas* like Fortune, Mercury, the Death of Orpheus, the Rape of the Sabine Women, and Hercules make an appearance, as do ‘corrupt’ or mass cultural artifacts. The capacity to first identify mythical figures and stories, and then to understand them as metonymic of a wider cultural context would require high degree of familiarity with their literary provenance. However, the *Atlas* also includes artifacts of popular mysticism such as Dürer’s copies of Italian tarot cards (1494/95), illustrated with ‘The Queen of Wands’ and ‘The Queen of Swords’. Derived from astrological symbolism, the Queens emblematize the Fire/Wand signs Leo, Sagittarius and Aries and the Air/Sword signs Aquarius, Gemini and Libra respectively. Some pairings within this *Atlas* page strike the eye as compositionally similar, like the Dürer’s *Death of Orpheus* (1494) and *Hercules*.

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31 Agamben (1999), 90.
32 Warburg, Warnke and Brink, 2003, 104-5.
Between Virtue and Vice (1498), in which the thematic conflict is organized around a central pyramid. Others are conceptually resonant, like Dürer’s Riders of the Apocalypse (1498), which Warburg situated directly above his representation of Kaiser Maximilian I’s Victory Chariot (1518). Again, ‘The Chariot,’ is also found within the tarot deck, where it signifies a need to gain control over a potentially disastrous conflict. It augurs a momentum that threatens derailment: a force, which, contingent upon its context and handling, ultimately could prove either catastrophic or rewarding. This theme is relevant to both Dürer etchings despite their very different subjects, in each case, they represent the terror and exhilaration inherent within the execution of absolute power. Regardless of their high or low cultural origins, the riders signify comparable psychic or emotional dynamics, which is the essence of the Pathosformel. In its boundlessness, and potential for endless contemplation and interpretation, ‘Tafel 57’ is entirely characteristic of Warburg’s enterprise. Just as much as it leads its viewer down a particular path of visual cultural heritage, the Bilderatlas is a map of worlds within worlds that is as reliant on the interpreter’s own repository of knowledge and subjective point of view as it is on an equally biased collective cultural memory.

Germania as Pathosformel

Contemporary scholars present Warburg’s approach as constituting a major shift in art historical inquiry from the time of Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Both Warburg and Winckelmann were obsessed with the Classical world and its representation, but they viewed their shared subject from opposing perspectives. Winckelmann was wholly entwined with the Enlightenment-era revival of antiquity, and his fetishism of the Greek ideal, its perceived passivity, stillness, and contemplativeness is out of synch with Warburg’s fascination with the restless and emotive character of figures and motifs from the classical era, as well as their capacity to carry and communicate psychological complexities through gesture, format and expression. While Winckelmann exalted Greek art and civilization as exemplary for his own period, Warburg discerned how ancient source materials demonstrated their resilience and relevance through time, but he also sought out examples of their altered states and corruption in wide-ranging contexts.

Warburg’s insistence on the emotive force of visual metaphor stands out as the most salient distinction between them. Warburg was a critic of the ‘…narrow Neo-classical doctrine of the “tranquil grandeur” of antiquity…’ associated with Winckelmann, which, in his view, obscured inquiry into the true essence of antique forms. By confronting and analysing the representation of emotional extremes in classical statuary, he bucked the idealizing tendencies of the German art historiographical tradition stemming from Winckelmann, a departure that was readily apparent in his treatment of the Laocoon group. He would go on to show in his Bilderatlas that expressions of pain, or Leidenpathos, played a conspicuous part in

the revival of the classical Laocoon theme by Filippino Lippi (1490-1495) and Marco Dente (1527) as well as little-known and anonymous artists.\textsuperscript{35}

A number of scholars have aligned Warburg’s concept of the Pathosformel with Friedrich Nietzsche’s Apollinian-Dionysian ‘primal unity’ contra Winckelmann’s idealism.\textsuperscript{36} Nietzsche’s conceptualization of a continually unresolved painful conflict inherent within a representational union of contained, constructive Apollinian and unfettered, impassioned Dionysian tendencies first appeared in his aesthetic treatise and work of classical philology The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music (1872). The entwining of mutually opposing forces brought about a simultaneously creative and destructive impulse, which was forever in the process of ‘becoming’, rather than simply ‘being’. Warburg’s Pathosformeln similarly were freighted and fraught with an inherent opposition between the consistent nature of eternally recurring yet static classical forms and the intrinsic drama of the psychological states they pictorialize. Like Nietzsche, Warburg also emphasized the transformative drive within cultural phenomena, which bore no relation to Winckelmann’s reverence for the ‘noble simplicity and quiet grandeur’ of Greek statuary. Warburg and Winckelmann bookend the ‘long’ nineteenth-century’s reverence for, and commemoration of, the Antique, and their distinct bodies of work indicate its evolving social, cultural, and political significance from the Enlightenment to the turn-of-the-century periods.

Germania’s provenance is antique, and national icons are certainly formulaic. Like astrological decans and tarot cards, Germania’s appeal crossed class boundaries: she was an artifact of mass or popular culture even as she provided a means for commemoration in high art. Her usage and appeal is certainly aligned with Warburg’s ambitions, which Cornelia Zumbusch succinctly has described: ‘Warburg was interested in all forms of pictorial representation, provided they revealed the ‘unintended symbolism’ of a period. Thus, Warburg’s psychological aesthetics, or ‘psychology of style’, is concerned not only with a few major artists, but with a whole epoch.’\textsuperscript{37} As I will show, Germania played a totemic role, articulating hopes and aspirations for, but also eliding and revealing shared feelings of distress and discomfort about participating in the new German nation-state.

Athenian myths of autochthonous births, in which ‘man-kind, or a man or men—rises up from the earth as a plant emerges from the ground or a child from the womb’,\textsuperscript{38} are archetypical for conceptualizing a collective sense of belonging to a particular nation-state. The earth, ‘meter’ in Greek (or ‘mater’ in Latin) provided the

\textsuperscript{35} Warburg, ‘Tafel 41a, Leidenspathos. Tod des Priesters.’, Warnke and Brink, 2003, 74.


'stuff of origin', in both generative and civic terms. Born of the city’s soil, Athenians claimed for themselves the privileged status of ‘true’ Greeks, while other residents were considered mere immigrants.

Autochthony was ‘Blood and Soil’ mythmaking at its most ardent and Pallas Athena, the patron of the Athenian city-state, informed the formal aspects of later national personifications. In her most famous incarnation, Athena Parthenos, she was venerated as a warrior maiden. Aside from some very specific attributes related to her role as a cult figure (such as the accompanying Athena Nike and serpent), the Athena Parthenos provided a clear antecedent to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century icons like Britannia, Polonia, Marianne, Italia Turrita, and Germania. They are all crowned with symbolic headdress, are frequently armed or carrying shields, and they were costumed in Greco-Roman-inspired togas. Oftentimes, as I will discuss further, they are shown in battle or portrayed defending their people. Embodiments of national identity modeled themselves after the virgin warrior, rather than earth-mother goddesses like Demeter or Cybele.

Winckelmann was Germany’s most renowned fanatic of the classical, but his enthusiasm was widely shared by members of the cultivated classes. German patrons of the arts avidly participated in the mania for all things antique; they subsidized artists who portrayed their aesthetic ideals and purchased prime examples of antique cultural heritage. As Crown Prince Ludwig I of Bavaria (1786-1868) elegized: ‘That I was not granted to live among you, Greeks! /Gladly I would relinquish the inheritance of the throne, if only I was a Hellenistic citizen /In my thoughts how often have I dreamed myself among you!’ In part, the insatiable appetite for antiquity was informed by recent archaeological finds.

The Parthenon sculptures were the most controversial and infamous examples of displaced cultural heritage, but Germany had its own version of this story. In 1811, archaeologists located a large cache of sculptures on the island of Aegina, which were scheduled for auction in November 1812. However, before the official sale took place, Ludwig purchased the lot for 10,000 shekels, including the jewel in its crown—the pediment statuary from the Aphaia Temple of Aegina (c. 500 BC). He underwrote their restoration and supplementation by the renowned Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844), and the pediment compositions were reconstructed so that in the center of one of the groupings, Athena towered over a fallen soldier lying dead at her feet. Ludwig presided over the opening of their exhibition at the Glyptothek in Munich in 1828, a culminating moment in the extreme and expensive lengths he had gone to import and showcase these relics of antiquity. As fragments representing the apex of Western Civilization, they transmitted the aura of Classical Greece to Bavaria via their costly rehabilitation.

40 Loraux, 51.
A nascent Germany’s path to the future detoured through the ancient world, and Ludwig’s ostentatious patronage trumpeted the message that the German principalities were on par with other states in economic, social and cultural terms. Often compared to the Elgin Marbles, the Aegina sculptures had been evaluated as lesser examples of Greek art. Nonetheless, they informed nineteenth-century German aesthetic discourse and well-known figures like philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) and the artist Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869) wrote appreciative commentaries. Designed by Leo von Klenze (1784-1864), the Glyptothek was one of a number of ‘Atheneums’ frequented by vacationing Germans in the nineteenth century. Intrinsic to the nineteenth-century German concept of citizenry was the notion of Bildung, or self-improvement through education, and visits to cultural institutions along with reading clubs for members of every class and other forms of community-based education cemented a collective social ideal. As Alon Confino has discussed with regard to the establishment and proliferation of Heimat museums, tourism promoted common cultural heritage as well as connecting regional locations and landscapes with the larger concept of a nation-state. Museums like Ludwig’s Glyptothek ensconced original relics of the Athenian polis, exemplifying the highest standard to which modern citizens could aspire. As Winckelmann wrote in his Gedanken (1755): ‘The only way for us to become great, or, if this be possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients.’

Atheneums constituted a site for performing what it meant to be authentically German, and as such, the Glyptothek was both a reliquary and a source of collective memory. Indeed, after its construction, Ludwig commissioned Ludwig Michael Schwanthaler (1802-1848) to sculpt a colossal representation of ‘Bavaria’ for the great hall. Modeled after Pheidias’ Athena Parthenos, ‘Bavaria’ was intended to reinforce the perceived line of succession from Athens and Rome to Munich.

Classicism provided precedent for Germania’s formal qualities and her provenance is also antique, yet it is the reconsideration of Germany’s ancient relationship to Rome by Weimar Classicists and later Romantics that proved most influential for her revival in the nineteenth century. As is often cited, her name first appears in the Roman historian Tacitus’ Germania (98 AD), a description of the geography, physical characteristics, and culture of Germanic tribes. Following Tacitus, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) also explored Germany’s Roman and tribal convergences. In ‘Heidelberg’ from Über Kunst und Altertum I (1816), he wrote that the chief colony of the original Germans, Cologne, was named after the wife of the barbarian leader Germanicus, Colonia Agrippina. Heinrich von Kleist penned his patriotic poem Germania an ihrer Kinder in 1809 and five years later, the neo-Classical architect Friedrich Weinbrenner produced a lithograph as one of a
number of renderings for a planned ‘teutschen Nationaldenkmal’ entitled ‘Germania den 19. October 1813’. His national monument featuring Germania would have commemorated the successful defense of Leipzig during the Napoleonic War.

![Figure 1 Karl Russ, Hermann zersprengt die Ketten von Germania (1813)](image)

Germania was not the only nationalist symbol, nor was Classicism the sole visual language of German identity. ‘Der Deutsche Michel’ and Hermann were also popularized as ciphers of nationalism. Germania was sometimes paired with Hermann, the Germanicized name for the historical-literary character Arminius, a tribal leader who routed the Romans in the Battle at the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD. Karl Russ’ (1779-1843) etching Hermann zersprengt die Ketten von Germania (fig. 1, 1813), entwines Germany’s tribal heritage, Roman associations, and the figure of Germania to commemorate twin moments of collective crisis. On one level, Russ’ work can be read as a depiction of Hermann liberating Germania from her servitude to the Roman Empire. Replete with the signal traits of ‘barbarism,’ including an animal pelt and topknot, Hermann trampled Roman standards underfoot as he broke the links binding a pliant Germania. She is shown here with a signature attribute, the ‘Mauerkrone’ or ‘castle crown’, representing the territories.

48 Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig. Inventory number VS1336.
encompassed by the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, the loose affiliation of German principalities that constituted the Old Empire (800-1806). 49

Viewing Russ’s etching by this light, art historians have also interpreted it as a metaphor for the ousting of Napoleon’s armies during the Battle of Leipzig in 1813, with Napoleonic France as Germania’s captor instead of Rome. 50 Allusions to Roman imperialism abounded during the French Revolution and Germany’s traditional role as ‘Other’ to the Roman Empire took on new connotations after Prussia’s defeat of the French. The collision of a tribal, if not quite autochthonous, German essentialism with an equally potent claim to an idealized Antique lineage produced complicated metaphors of identity, which baffle their interpreters to this day. Is Russ’s work Classical? Or Romantic? Does it portray an indigenous notion of Germanness? Or does it hearken back to Roman times? Which strand of German nationalist DNA does it represent? Russ created a messy metaphor, but its lack of clarity isn’t unique among nationalist representations. In this and many other instances, Warburg’s concept of the Pathosformel provides a more useful tool for understanding the nature and usage of revived tropes and myths during the nascent stages of collective identification with ‘Germany’ than do art historical terminology and stylistic chronologies. Within Warburg’s episteme, Pathosformeln are emotionally charged figurations of antique origin that appear as manifestations of communal crisis. More than any other political metaphor of its time, Germany performed this precise function.

At the very moment Germania came into common usage, the Holy Roman Empire was in the throes of a protracted death. Archaeological artifacts of Classical socio-political power concurrently also were being pillaged, reconstituted, displaced and relocated across the globe. By referencing the assemblage of visual attributes associated with the antique archetype, Germans collectively hearkened back to a collective Classical lineage at the very moment new political realities were struggling to assert themselves. Like Athena, Germania articulated the emergence and entrenchment of ‘in-group’ versus ‘out-group’ mentality in coded, martial terms. From her inception as a trope of German national identity, Germania signaled deep-seated political unease just as much as she provided a convenient format for representing unification.

As I have shown, Germania articulated German ‘difference’, set against both ancient Roman colonialism and nineteenth-century French imperialism. Each presenting a daunting obstacle for national unification, these external sources of stress were intertwined with internal tensions. The Napoleonic invasion levied pressure on received social hierarchies, and jolted Germans across the classes and principalities into a collective awareness of their commonality as ‘Other’ to the French. Yet, Napoleon’s armies also carried with them the democratizing promise of


the French Revolution. Increased class consciousness and the means for lower class political empowerment came along with a growing awareness of German collectivity. Consequently, even at its inception, German national identity was fraught with a struggle for position among competing stakeholders.

The breakdown of the Holy Roman Empire coupled with the Napoleonic Wars threatened established matrices of power, but the emergence of an increasingly potent underclass represented an equally foreign menace from within. As the century progressed and national unity became more likely, implicit agreements arose to serve different regions and classes, and, as I will discuss later, these were also dishonored or fell short of expectations. Germania came to represent a wide range of political positions and aspirations at different points in time. Just as German national identity developed, in part, as a reaction against the French, Germania became a pawn in a game of ‘differencing’ as various constituencies sought to define themselves against other groups.

Anti-French resentment informed German collective identity at various points throughout the nineteenth century, but the visual means of expressing this sentiment was not always straightforward. Artists portrayed Germania as a protagonist in the legendary antagonism between the two neighboring countries, and her relationship to the French national personification, Marianne, was also complicated. Germania and Marianne both personified the nation-state, but in different ways. Marianne allegorized the French Republic, but Germans still drew from a wide lexicon of political metaphors, including Germania, to represent various aspects of their national identity. Maurice Agulhon has demonstrated that Marianne incorporated academic pictorial conventions as well as elements from popular visual culture to appeal to a republican constituency in a way that crossed class boundaries and suggested inclusiveness.51 Marianne’s position within French political culture was not static, but her impact was consistently powerful. Germania, on the other hand, never achieved the same stability as a sign, and has been, for that reason, labeled the ‘vieldeutige Personifikation einer deutschen Nation’, or the multivalent personification of the German nation.52

Early high art incarnations, like Friedrich Overbeck’s (1789-1869) Italia and Germania (1828) or Philipp Veit’s (1793-1877) Germania (1835) were peaceable enough, but Germania’s representations became increasingly militaristic by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In contrast with Overbeck’s classicizing overtones, the figure atop Johannes Schilling’s Niederwald memorial (1871-1883), for example, appeared as a Valkyrie from Norse mythology.53 Lorenz Clasen’s Germania Wacht auf dem Rhein (1860), commissioned by the city of Krefeld, is often cited as the archetypical image of Germania as warrior.54 With her sword drawn and

52 Hoffmann, 1989.
53 Plessen, 33.
one foot firmly planted on German soil, Germania scans enemy territory. Along with her usual garments, including a cloak richly decorated in gold trimmings, a tightly fitted bodice, and a full skirt, she also wears a medieval chain mail shirt. A strand of laurel winds through her hair, signaling glory; the nearby scepter and crown are emblematic of the Prussian monarchy, as is the eagle emblazoned on her shield along with: 'The German sword protects the German Rhine'.

Through iconography, Clasen inseparably linked the Prussian crown’s dominion to the allegory of the nation in a way that sharply contrasted the French political tradition. Victorious against Napoleonic forces in 1813, Prussia emerged from the vestiges of the Old Empire with the most powerful military of all the German lands. In Clasen’s work, Germania stands in as a personification of the Prussian monarchy, ever watchful against intermittent threats from across the Rhein. Her diligence preserved the monarchical tradition and it conserved the Old Empire’s borders.

Germania’s antagonist is usually identified as France, but Clasen also painted his allegory in the spirit of Kleindeutsch partisanship, envisioning a federation of German states led by Prussia rather than the more powerful Austria. Clasen’s version of Germania entwines these two aspects of external conflict by supporting the Prussian monarchy in its ambition to dominate a united Germany. He personally took a Kleindeutsch stance regarding German territorial disputes mid-century, but his work also referred to another long-running conflict with the French. Popularized in the 1840s, the song ‘Wacht auf dem Rhein’ took as its subject Napoleon’s annexation of the German lands to the west of the Rhein, in a trade brokered with the last Holy Roman Emperor, Francis II (later Francis I of Austria, 1768-1835). The title of Clasen’s work explicitly cites this patriotic tune.

Like many members of the bourgeoisie, Clasen was an ally of the movement for popular empowerment both during and after the March Revolution of 1848. He commanded a group of armed citizens during the Revolution, and, in 1847, he helped establish a satirical illustrated journal in Krefeld. A friend of the leftist poet Ferdinand Freiligrath, he also exchanged correspondence regarding his military role with Ferdinand Lassalle, who would later found Germany’s first Socialist Party (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein). Their exchange demonstrates the extent to which the revolutionaries of 1848 occupied distinct political positions—from Lassalle’s championship of the proletariat to Clasen’s bourgeois liberalism. By and large, after their defeat in 1848, the proletariat felt betrayed by the bourgeoisie, which then allied itself with the aristocracy in pursuit of national unification to the detriment of its relationship with the working classes.

Clasen’s Germania emerged within a specific political context, but this particular representation, which was disseminated in a variety of popular cultural forms, became intrinsically linked to Wilhelm I after Germany’s unification in 1871. Indeed, Reinhard Alings has called it a ‘quasi-official’ State symbol as well as the

56 Clasen to Lassalle, 10. October 1848 in Mayer (1923), 3-4.
embodiment of Kleindeutsch aspirations for national unity. Its appropriation by the monarchy after 1871 underscores the idea that Clasen’s work, or at least its legacy, spoke not to the revolutionary potential of the people, but rather to the slow process of bourgeois ascendency. Detlef Hoffmann also showed that throughout the later decades of the nineteenth century, Clasen’s image functioned as monarchical propaganda, but he noted that the power of Germania Wacht auf dem Rhein waned after Germania appeared on the German Reichsmark in 1900. The significance of Hoffmann’s point becomes clear when considering the wide variety of commercial contexts featuring Germania in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Long before she decorated the Reichsmark, Germania appeared in advertisements, on packaging, and as a brand name for commodities. Her portrayal on currency is significant simply because the foundation of the Reichsbank in 1871 signaled the economic incorporation of various German lands just as Germania stood in for the idea of socio-political inclusion with a nation-state. From her origins as a means to distinguish Germany from her oppressors during the aftermath of the French Revolution, to her mid-century appearance as a metaphor for Kleindeutsch politics and later emergence as a guarantor of the newly unified nation’s commercial competitiveness, Germania demonstrated her versatility and multivalent character at numerous points throughout the nineteenth century. She was an allegory that signaled socio-political conflicts and incongruities, both internal and external, rather than a singular and static vision of national unity.

The alternative Germania: political satire in Der Wahre Jacob

Figure 2 Reinhold Begas, Germania im Sattel (1890-92; now destroyed)

Official monuments featuring Germania, such as Reinhold Begas’s (1831-1911) Germania im Sattel (fig. 2; 1890-92; now destroyed) promoted the image of a unified

58 Hoffmann (1989), 151.
nation, but illustrators in Socialist publications like Der Wahre Jacob used her for the purposes of political critique. In her discussion of satire, Ursula E. Koch noted that in the decades following the French Revolution, Germania rarely appeared in political caricature.\textsuperscript{59} This statement generally holds true for middle-class publications such as Simplicissimus, which typically used the eagle or aristocratic crests to signify the monarchy; in the more conservative Kladderadatsch, she only appeared in advertisements. Koch’s observation does not stand when applied to the working-class context, where Germania frequently appeared within the pages of Der Wahre Jacob, an organ for Socialist satire. Usually illustrated by H.G. Jentzsch, Socialist images of Germania represented not ‘the people,’ but the State.

The allegory of Germania had two separate connotations within Der Wahre Jacob. The first was that of a State caught between two mutually exclusive choices with regard to its domestic policy. In Jentzsch’s Nationale Studien (fig. 3; 1899), for example, Germania reviews the contents of anti-Socialist legislation in a well-thumbed book bristling with place-markers.\textsuperscript{60} Her attention is drawn not to the text, however, but to a lamp lit with the oil of a German industrial concern. The smoke swirling above her head coalesces to form the specter of Marx, along with the captions: ‘Abolishment of the Secret Ballot’ and the ‘Prison Proposal’. These referred

\textsuperscript{59} Plessen (1996), 70-1.

\textsuperscript{60} H.G. Jentzsch, ‘Nationale Studien’, in Der Wahre Jacob 332 (11. April, 1899), title page.
to calls in 1898 and 1899 by pro-labor representatives to establish and protect a ‘secret right to vote’ and to reject an anti-labor ‘law for the protection of industrial labor relations’, which would have granted the State the right to imprison strikers who had prevented other laborers from working.\(^6\) Entitled the ‘diminishment of liberality,’ the light cast on the book of anti-Socialist legislation was an inversion of the symbolic implications of ‘enlightenment,’ leaving Marx and the attendant political slogans shrouded in darkness. Embellished with monarchical emblems, as well as the traditional symbol of the Christianized globe perched atop her crown, Germania stands for a State that is inhospitable to Socialism and organized labor, and which relies upon aristocratic and religious rulers. She studied not the problems inherent within industrial production, here depicted as murky suggestions in the background, but instead focused her attention on repressive legislation that undermined the egalitarian aims of democracy.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 4 H.G. Jentzsch, *Der deutsche Sommernachtstraum* (1898)

Another example of this type, *Der deutsche Sommernachtstraum* (fig. 4; 1898), illustrated by Jentzsch and based on William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, criticizes ineffective half-measures enacted by social reformers working in

conjunction with the government. Germania is again depicted as the State, with the Prussian eagle displayed prominently on her gown, and Jentzsch also manipulated the laurel leaf halo traditionally associated with her figure to appear as though it were the crown. An ass, drunk on ‘social reform,’ is asleep in her lap, and it has all but abandoned the project of ‘domestic policy’. Insignia and emblems pinned to his jacket are suggestive of aristocracy, despite his debasement.

In Shakespeare’s play, Puck mischievously uses the juice from a flower called ‘love in idleness’ to cause various characters to become enamored with each other. Queen of the Fairies, Titania, for example, falls in love with a weaver, Nick Bottom, whose head Puck turned into that of an ass. As Germania/Titania recoils in Jentzsch’s illustration, a young girl called ‘Social Democracy’/Puck appears on the horizon with a magical flower. Dressed in red, and with medievalizing features such as soft knee-high boots, ‘Social Democracy’ insinuates itself as Germania’s next love, as if the allegory had no will of her own. Once again, Germania, or, the State, is faced with an irreconcilable choice: to continue tolerating an ineffectual and embarrassing ‘social reform’ ineptly carried out by a decrepit aristocracy, and through a nearly forgotten ‘domestic policy’, or to turn to the new and delightful opportunities presented by a youthful Social Democracy. Jentzsch’s illustration also implied, however, that if Germania were to select Social Democracy as a partner, her interest in their relationship might prove to be short-lived.

Exhibited within the public realm, that is to say, a space within which members of different classes might commingle and interact, commemorative artwork featuring Germania was nonetheless subject to the discriminatory policies of its commissioning agencies and the monarchy. ‘Public’ in theory, monuments were, in fact, artifacts of officialdom, representative of the series of alliances and negotiations between self-elected, empowered citizens and state-sanctioned political bodies. Already marginalized by Bismarck’s policy of ‘negative integration,’ which goaded dissenting social groups into submission through punitive exclusion, SPD representatives were absent from the process of monument construction, even after the lapse of anti-Socialist legislation in 1890.

For the monarchy and middle-classes, Germania represented national identity, but the illustrators of Der Wahre Jacob used her to both emblematize and criticize the State. Also a product of the French Revolution, the free press was conceptualized as a modern-day response to the open forum of the Classical era as well as a means for individuals to exercise their civil rights. However, like the organizations that commissioned artists to create public works, mass media operated under class-specific conditions. Publications were founded with different socio-political aims, and each appealed to a discrete sector of the population. Unlike monuments, images in the press were not produced under governmental auspices, yet they were still subject to censorship. Even so, bourgeois and Socialist journals frequently rebelled against authority in the interest of maintaining editorial integrity. Prevented from participating within the culture of monuments that

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featured Germania’s image, mass media therefore acted as a public site for the
description of working class political views, and Germania formed part of the visual
terminology through which the proletariat articulated its position on the nation-state.

Germania was an artifact of high culture prior to her inclusion within
working class media. Workers and the SPD appropriated and redefined Germania
for their own purposes, just as they incorporated and redeployed other elements
derived from the middle class milieu. On the one hand, Germania’s adoption
demonstrates the SPD’s willingness to participate in national political discourse
using mainstream symbolic language. But on the other, Socialist illustrators
employed her figure in a way that was antithetical to State-subsidized and middle
class precedents. Most studies of Germania focus on the ways in which she
articulates nationalist sentiment, but I have situated her as a figure that derives its
meaning from the context in which it is employed.

Conclusion

Germania never appeared in Warburg’s Bilderatlas, but the consonances between
State icons, national personifications, mass media and archaic figures certainly were
on his mind, not least as a consequence of the political conditions he endured as a
German citizen.

A letter to Fritz Saxl, dated 16th May 1927, actually provides several clues
about the last plate, of which there is no photographic documentation, and
about the use of diapositives: ‘The final stage of this pictorial journey will
immediately be clear to you when I tell you that, in conclusion, as specimens
of revival of Antiquity serving a practical political purpose, the stamp of
Barbados (mythical, Greek, metaphorical) and the Italian Fascist stamp
(heroic, historical, Roman, tropical) will appear next to each other.
Goethe’s relationship to the Quadriga (opposition between the agonal Nike
and the Roman Victoria) will also be included. This is why I would like you
to get me a photograph of Overbeck’s drawings of Neptune’s carriage
(original size and slide) for Barbados, of which you will find the relevant
supply in the large room…’

63 Uwe Fleckner and Isabella Woldt, “‘Die Funktion der nachlebenden Antike bei der Ausprägung
energetischer Symbolik.’” Hamburg, Kulturrwissenschaftlich Bibliothek Warburg 3–6. Juni 1927, Aby
Mai 1927 liefert immerhin eine Reihe von Anhaltspunkten sowohl für die letzte, fotografisch nicht
dokumentierte Bildtafel als auch für den Einsatz von Diapositiven: ‘Der Endpunkt der Bilderreise wird
Ihnen ohne weiteres klar sein, wenn ich Ihnen sage, dass zum Schluss einander gegenüberstehen sollen
als Typen der Wiedergeburt der Antike durch Indienststellung in die politische Praktik, die Briefmarke
von Barbados (mythisch, griechische, metaphorisch) und die italienische Fasizistenmarke (heroisch,
historisch, römisch, tropisch). Einbezogen soll auch werden: Goethes Verhältnis zur Quadriga
(Gegensatz zwischen agonaler Nike und römischer Victoria). Deshalb möchte ich, dass Sie mir für
Barbados das Neptungespann herausfotografieren lassen (Originalgrösse und Lichtbild), das bei
Overbeck abgebildet ist, dessen entsprechende Lieferungen im grossen Saal stehen […]’
‘Tafel 77’ of the Bilderatlas provided a clear indication of how constellations of renewed or recast antique forms expressed the political ethos of a particular point in time. This section is a compendium of images in which Delacroix’s Massacre at Chios (1824), postage stamps from Barbados, advertisements, seals and coins are tacked alongside each other in a seemingly random compilation. Yet despite obvious differences in function and form, certain themes begin to emerge through their contemplation and the process of association. Heads of State like Queen Victoria and Charles II are represented, each paired with a Classicizing element: Victoria rides in the mussel shell chariot typically associated with Venus and Aphrodite in two Jubilee postage stamps from Barbados (1897) inscribed with the phrase ‘and the British ruled throughout the whole world’, and Charles II is portrayed as Neptune on the reverse of an English monarchical seal from 1662. The postage stamps carry the implications of colonialism, as does the Massacre at Chios, depicting the Ottoman attack on the Greek island of Chios in 1822. Its creator, Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863), was perhaps better known for his large-scale painting Liberty Leading the People (1830), a totemic work of the French revolutionary period. While Delacroix’s Massacre portrays the Turkish subjugation of Greece, a coin from Syracuse (ca. 400-390 BC), Sicily, evidences ancient Greek imperialism, with its depiction of Nike crowning a charioteer. The allegory Victoria appears in an advertisement, and two postage stamps feature ‘Semeuse’, the sower, a personification of France created by Louis-Oscar Roty (1846-1911) that also appeared on French currency. Her Phrygian cap hearkened back to revolutionary times, and is an attribute explicitly associated with Marianne, the French national personification. Other images include references to the North Sea, and there are also two golfing images, one featuring golf master Erika Sellschopp.

‘Tafel 77’ contains a confluence of visual concepts surrounding State imperialism, late Capitalism, and the revival and afterlife of antique mythical figures like Athena Nike and Victoria. Additionally, the circulation of currency and postage stamps was significant for the capitalization and bureaucratization of imperial colonies. Similar to the transference of cosmological symbolism to tarot cards, characters from Classical myths were widely distributed as commonplace imagery through everyday objects. However, the association between the exalted sphere of deity and the mundane economy of money and power was not a complete corruption of the mythic archetype. The Parthenon, home to Athena Parthenos, was housed in the Acropolis, where the treasury of Athens was located. In addition to serving as the patron of her city-state, Athena also acted as the protector of its wealth.

In her final, most widely circulated and most banal incarnation, Germania represented neither Enlightenment nor Democracy, but, rather Capital. She appeared on the Reichsmark as well as postage stamps in the first decades of the twentieth century. One could argue that in this incarnation, Germania represented the elision of classes under the rubric of democratic capitalism, at last fulfilling the hope for national unification in economic and symbolic terms. However,

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64 Warburg, ed. Warnke and Brink, 128-129.
65 Alings, 175.
Germania’s antique origins were also monetary. The Emperor Domitian (51-86) took the title of Germanicus in 83 to commemorate his conquest of the Roman territories known as Germania, and he minted a coin in remembrance of his victory. The reverse side of his portrait depicted Germania weeping over a broken spear and shield, representative of Roman conquest of tribal territories. Centuries later, she appears in a nearly identical context, once again heralding the collapse and rebirth of Germany.

The art historian Ernst Gombrich described the *Atlas* as devoted to ‘twin processes’:

> The restoration of the Olympian gods and that of the restoration of expressive movement. The link between these two areas of interest was clear enough for Warburg when he worked on the art of the Renaissance, but however much he regarded the restitution of these two forms of images as one, he groped in vain for a formula which might subsume the two.

It may be true that Warburg had not fully achieved what he had hoped to through the construction of his *Bilderatlas*. Yet Warburg’s influence across the disciplines, which by now has surpassed Gombrich’s own impact on academic discourse within fields that deal with visual culture, suggests that perhaps Warburg’s labor of love was not undertaken in vain, after all. The cultural terrain remains as unsettled as it was in Warburg’s day. His *Bilderatlas* and *Pathosformel* may be incomplete in their format and indeterminate in their function; however, it is possible that his sketchy map and uncertain guide are not only sufficient but are entirely appropriate tools for orienting contemporary scholars.

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