‘Die Neue Sachlichkeit Rembrandts’. Aby Warburg’s *Claudius Civilis*

Yannis Hadjinicolaou

Figure 1 Karl Schuberth, *Copy of The Conspiracy of the Batavians under Claudius Civilis*, 1926, oil on canvas, Warburg Institute, London (Photograph Yannis Hadjinicolaou)

I. A *Claudius Civilis* Picture

Positioned on a landing between two floors, a large painting unfolds its power – a picture almost every art historian knows: Rembrandt’s *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*, now at the National Museum in Stockholm (fig. 1). Meant to embellish the interior of the Amsterdam town hall, built in 1648, the painting was completed in 1661-2. Nevertheless, it was eventually rejected by the regents, removed from Jacob van Campen’s famous edifice, and stowed away out of public view.¹

The questions to be addressed here are: where was the photograph taken, and what is the painting that it shows. If it were in a museum, the wall label would carry information concerning the painting, yet it only contains the lapidary


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statement ‘Stairs up.’ A small arrow also indicates the upward direction. The Rembrandt picture is clearly not hanging in Stockholm. As the wall label is written only in English, the painting must be in an English-speaking country but not in a museum, because the hanging of the image neither seems to be dictated by security nor by the wish to offer the best point of view for the beholder. The photograph was taken between the third and the fourth floors of the Warburg Institute in London.

The name of Aby Warburg already delivers a second hint in identifying the painting. In fact, in 1926, the famous art historian – or rather image-historian (Bildhistoriker), as he called himself – commissioned the Swedish artist Carl Schuberth (1860-1929, a painter mostly of landscapes and history pieces) to make a copy of Rembrandt’s Claudius Civilis.2

The copy was meant to decorate the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg (KBW) in Hamburg.3 Soon after 1926, it was moved next door to Heilwigstrasse 115, Warburg’s private residence. There it hung in the staircase, as Carl Georg Heise recalls in his memoirs on Aby Warburg and as it is documented on a note by Fritz Saxl from the diary of the KBW.4

With the library’s later move to London in 1933 and its foundation as The Warburg Institute, the work arrived in the British capital via Amsterdam. It hung in various parts of the Institute until it reached its current placement, following Warburg’s thematic ordering, between the third floor (‘Orientation’) and the fourth (‘Action’). Action, as I discuss below, comprised a substantial part of Warburg’s lecture Italienische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandt’s (Italian Antiquity in Rembrandt’s Age), which he gave in May 1926 at the KBW lecture hall.5

2 This occurred after the director of the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, Alex Gauffin, recommended Schuberth to his friend Warburg. Warburg and Graf Kalckreuth (who actually wanted to make himself a copy of Claudius Civilis) in Hamburg were pleased by Schuberth’s work even if it was delivered a bit later than expected. Cf. Aby Warburg, Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg mit Einträgen von Gertrud Bing und Fritz Saxl, KarenMichels und Charlotte Schoell-Glass, eds, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001, 128 (17 August 1927): ‘Vormittags erschien Graf Kalckreuth, (...) zu seinem Erstaunen fand, daß die Copie des Claudius Civilis gut war (Er selbst hatte ja die Absicht gehabt das Bild zu copieren), und sodann bemerkte, daß ich durch meine Explicationen Rembrandt nicht in einer Abhängigkeit festnagelte, sondern vielmehr als eigenstes Organ der schauenden Welt herauszupräparieren versuche (...).’

3 Claudia Wedepohl, ‘Conspiracy in the common room’, The Warburg Institute Newsletter, 15, 2004, 2: ‘Accompanied by a photograph of one of Rembrandts preliminary drawings of the original composition, the magnificent work was mounted on the front wall of the elliptical reading room, above the lectern.’


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The audience was informed in the announcement of KBW’s forthcoming publications that Warburg would publish his lecture two years later in 1928. Yet already in 1926 he had decided not to do so. The copy’s importance for Warburg becomes clear in a letter written in 1955 by the Institute’s second director, Gertrud Bing, to Warburg’s son Max. Hoping to secure the painted copy of the Rembrandt for London, she described the *Claudius Civilis* ‘as a feature which figured prominently in the old Institute in Hamburg’.  

II. *Claudius Civilis* as an emblem for Warburg

In both the theory and historiography of art history, artistic practice is often ignored as if only written language played a role in theory, and the work of art only implied craftsmanship. Aby Warburg’s copy of *Claudius Civilis* is a perfect example of the contrary. As an *emblem* of the KBW in Hamburg, the copy of Rembrandt’s famous painting counterbalanced the term *ΜΝΗΜΟΣΥΝΗ*, which still adorns the building. As such the Rembrandt copy is a symptomatic work of art, revealing the roles of memory and history. The various ways it was received in each of its respective sites are a true crystallisation of Warburgian ‘afterlife’.

The significance of Warburg’s lecture, *Italienische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandts* was recently pointed out by Pablo Schneider, who in 2012 published the text for the first time. It was also briefly discussed by Claudia Wedepohl in 2004. Without developing her argument, Wedepohl contends that the painting was Warburg’s ‘personal icon’. Ernst Gombrich, fiercely attacked by Edgar Wind, was the first to mention the copy in his critical biography of Warburg. Recently, Charlotte Schoell Glass, Claudia Cieri Via, and Andrea Pinotti have written brilliantly on the iconographic and iconological importance of Rembrandt’s *Claudius Civilis* for Warburg. But my question in this paper is not about these issues, so

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much as it is about how the copy (as well as other reproductions of the work) engaged Warburg’s thinking and writing. Additionally, this entanglement of image, thinking, and writing also evidences a certain paradox (between iconophobia and iconophilia; see below) deeply rooted in Warburg’s manner of thought.

Figure 2 Frontispiece: John Kruse, *Die Farben Rembrandts*, Stockholm 1913 (Photograph Yannis Hadjinicolaou)

Thanks to a letter written by Aby Warburg in January 1927 to his friend, the Rembrandt specialist Carl Neumann (who had published a fundamental study on the Dutch painter in 1902), we know the circumstances under which Warburg became intrigued by Rembrandt’s *Claudius Civilis*. He saw a reproduction of the painting in John Kruse’s book, *Die Farben Rembrandts* of 1913 (fig. 2). Warburg indicated that it was the Rembrandt specialist Fritz Saxl who had drawn his attention to Kruse’s book. In 1915 Saxl had defended his PhD thesis on the artist in Vienna with Max Dvorak as his supervisor.

In Kruse’s study, the *Claudius Civilis* figures prominently as a frontispiece printed in colour and protected by rice paper, like paintings once used to be covered

12 Andrea Pinotti, ‘La sfida del batavo monocolo’, 529.
by curtains, thus engaging the beholder’s curiosity. The moment Warburg lifted the paper, it must have felt like an electric shock to him: the painting revealed itself as a culmination both of an action and the reception of antiquity north of the Alps, notions that he had been eagerly looking for (fig. 3). Already in 1905, in his Dürer and Italian Antiquity, Warburg introduced similar notions related to this other ‘Northern’ artist. In this text, he developed one of his most famous concepts, the Pathosformel.  

All the other photographs in Kruse’s book are in black and white. The fact is stressed by the author in his introduction – the paradox of discussing paintings using black and white reproductions, an issue to which I will return.

If one compares the London copy with the painting’s mechanical reproduction in the book, the similarities and differences are evident, especially by observing how the light emerges amidst the figures. (Even today, this latter remains a real challenge to everyone exhibiting the painting in question or printing a reproduction of it, something the very images of the present paper clearly show).

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15 Kruse, Die Farben Rembrandts, III.
The stimulus which the *Claudius Civilis* gave to Warburg’s thinking derived from both a painted reproduction (the original in Stockholm as well as the copy in Hamburg) and a photographic reproduction (from Kruse’s book).

Right after his first confrontation with *Claudius Civilis*, Warburg asked Saxl where he could find more information on the painting. In 1923, Saxl, Warburg’s ‘right-hand man’, had already published an article, based on his PhD, on ‘Rembrandt and Antiquity’ in *Oud Holland*. By comparing his arguments with those defended by Warburg in his lecture, especially his references to the *Rape of Proserpina* or *Medea*, Saxl – not for the first time – seems to have laid some of the foundations upon which Warburg could develop his arguments.

### III. Critical iconology

![Figure 4 Rembrandt, The Conspiracy of the Batavians under Claudius Civilis, ca. 1661, Pen and brown ink with brown wash and white body colour, 19.6x18 cm, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich (Photograph: Prometheus Image Archive, Humboldt Universität Berlin)](image)

A large reproduction of Rembrandt’s only known drawing for the painting (which is not simply a *modello*), now in Munich, hangs above the entrance door of the lecture hall (fig. 4). This is shown in a photograph, in which one also recognises,

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among other reproductions in the KBW, the ‘first dean of Aries’ from the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara. This was another highly important and emblematic work in Warburg’s talk of 1912 in Rome – a talk which is generally seen as the inauguration of the iconological method (‘Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara’) (fig. 5). The photograph perfectly summarizes Warburg’s research interests: Italy, Rembrandt, and the term Mnemosyne (that can be recognized – on the image – at the end of the room, on the other side above the door).

If the doors were open, part of the drawing or the copy would be seen in the background, creating a bridge between image and word (fig. 6). This very


18 The idea of hanging a Rembrandt for the library also derives from another context. A letter, dated 29 December 1924, by Ludwig Binswanger from Kreuzlingen to Warburg makes clear that the latter gave the Hundred Guilder Rembrandt print to his doctor as a present. He had the wish that it should hang at the library in Kreuzlingen, where Warburg gave his ‘Serpent Ritual’ talk (21 April 1923) as a proof that he was healthy again. See Ulrich Raulff, ‘Akten zur Korrespondenz Ludwig Binswanger–Aby Warburg im Universitätsarchiv Tübingen’, Aby Warburg, Akten des internationalen Symposions. Hamburg 1990, Horst Bredenkamp, Michael Diers and Charlotte Schoell-Glass, eds, Weinheim: VCH, 1991, 57: ‘Sie haben meiner Frau und mir mit dem wunderbaren Rembrandt eine sehr große Freude gemacht und wir werden Ihren Wunsch, den Stich in der Bibliothek aufzuhängen, gern erfüllen. Wir haben gestern schon den Platz dafür ausgesucht. Ich finde die Reproduktion ganz ausgezeichnet und freue mich, dass Sie gerade diesen Rembrandt gewählt haben, um uns eine Freude zu machen’. Warburg’s healing process through Binswanger functions in an
connection between image, word, and action was, in general, one of Warburg’s crucial desiderata,¹⁹ but also one which he concretely defined at the beginning of his Rembrandt lecture:

As long as the occasional correspondences between word and image do not fall into place in a systematic array of lighting installations; as long, also, as the relation between form and content, between art and the stage – as ritual, mime, theatre, or opera – are not recognized in their mutual illumination, let alone systematically seen as one, historicism must still be permitted to counter this accusation with the attempt to present and illustrate the spirit of the age in the voices and the forms of that spirit itself, and thereby to eliminate the self as the main source of error from the investigation of this connection between word, action, and image.²⁰


Some notion of Critical Iconology, directly related to the *Claudius Civilis*, seems already to emerge in a note of Saxl’s dated 12th July 1927 in the KBW register:

"wonderfully clear the position of Civilis a) in connection with Rubens, Caravaggio and Tempesta (the official nationalist world in the mirror of Antiquity); b) in the separation (regarding its content) from the revolutionary bourgeoisie; and c) in the rejection of Civilis by the official society of Amsterdam, which is no longer revolutionary and bourgeois but only nationalist."

Reading the note, one understands why in the 1970s Warburg and his circle were a central reference to the Ulmer Verein which, with Martin Warnke rediscovered Warburg from a socio-critical perspective. Warburg begun his 1926 lecture on Rembrandt by quoting Goethe, which may be related to Saxl’s note above:

"Every serious scholar who [confronts] a problem of cultural history reads over the entrance to his workshop Goethe’s lines “What you call the spirit of the age is really no more than the spirit of the worthy historian in which the age is reflected” (...) so far not all the methodological resources have been used to make the spirit of the age speak with the voice of the age itself."

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Stimme und Gestaltung des Zeitgeistes selbst zum Bilde beizubringen, um damit sich selbst aus der Region des Zusammenhangs von Wort, Handlung und Bild als größte Fehlerquelle auszuschalten’. See also another part of the lecture, where Warburg mentioned the relationship between image and word: ‘Civilis symbolisiert einen Augenblick, wo einerseits die gedächtnismässig in Wort und Bild festgehaltenen, antike historische Erzählung aus eigener Vorzeit…’. Warburg, ‘Italienische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandts’, 99 (see note 28).


The passage is central to the lecture as a whole.

As Warburg argued, in its rejection by the Amsterdam regents, Rembrandt’s *Claudius Civilis* revealed a new dominant taste in Dutch society from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. Warburg responded in a similar way to the new trends within the Weimar Republic, seeking to understand Rembrandt’s *Neue Sachlichkeit*, as he called it: ‘Rembrandt’s new objectivity overcame the hollow classical pathos formula which, deriving from fifteenth-century Italy, dominated the superlatives of Europe’s gesture-language.’

Here Warburg is referring to the *Rape of Proserpina* (today in Berlin). Somewhat later in his lecture he used the same notion regarding the *Claudius Civilis*.

It is the notion of movement and action, or we might even say emotion and its materialisation by Rembrandt that is so different from the extroverted Italian examples (such as in Florence, which Warburg knew well) with its non-classical *pathos formula*. Or, to make a more contemporary art historical comparison in the sense of Michael Fried, between absorption (Rembrandt) and theatricality (Italy).


25 Gombrich also underlines this fact with other consequences than the present argument. Gombrich, Aby Warburg, 316-317. The intrinsic tension in *Claudius Civilis* (and in Rembrandt’s late works in general) is carried out through the power of colour as the emotional interval between impulse and action. See Yannis Hadjinicolaou, *Denkende Körper – Formende Hände. Handeling in Kunst und Kunsttheorie der Rembrandtisten*, Berlin/Boston 2016, 255-312.

But Schuberth’s copy also induced Warburg to explore Rembrandt’s Neue Sachlichkeit. The performativity of the impasto in the original (fig. 7), the active role of the paint applied thickly, is lacking in the copy (fig. 8). The fact that, for Schuberth, the materiality of colour does indeed play a role as evidenced in his sketch of a Woman writing (fig. 9), shows clearly that the Swedish artist not only could but also would have tried to paint in Rembrandt’s heavy impasto style in his own version of Claudius Civilis — something that, in the end, he avoided. Could this be due to a wish on the part of the commissioner, and hence of Warburg, to concentrate upon Rembrandt’s New Objecthood in both motif and manner? Since one of the characteristics of Rembrandt’s late style is the thick application of paint, it can only be suggested (rather than proved) that it was the art historian who did not want or was not particularly interested in developing the issue further. I suggest that happened because he was focused upon the subject matter, and hence the problem of action in Rembrandt’s picture, and that the handling of colour was, at least in Warburg’s eyes, not dependent on this. The image’s dematerialisation is, paradoxically, materialised in the very thinking of Warburg himself and thus shapes it through visual stimulus.

The term Neue Sachlichkeit, created as a Stilbegriff (concept of style) in 1923 by the art historian Gustav Hartlaub, took root after the 1925 exhibition with the same
name. The term had a strong impact on Warburg’s circle of scholars. It inspired critical research and a critical response to contemporary political positions. This fact goes together with a respective lack of expressionistic or impressionistic materialities that would distract from the very subject itself as if one were participating in the debates between Protestants and Catholics concerning the nature of an image and its didactic and ethical role.

**IV. Triangle of memory: Tacitus-Amsterdam-Hamburg**

Thus, a triangle of memory emerged around *Claudius Civilis*, uniting the ancient historian Tacitus with 17th-century Amsterdam and early 20th-century Hamburg. Already in 1910, Warburg had written an article on the frescoes decorating the town hall of the Hanseatic city. In his view, they served to support the nationalism of certain segments of society. In this way, an analogy arose with the regents of Amsterdam who asked for similar works of art 250 years earlier. Govert Flinck’s depiction of *The Oath of Claudius Civilis* (finished by the German painter Jürgen Ovens after Flinck’s death), which took the place of Rembrandt’s painting, can be compared with the five large frescoes painted between 1901 and 1909 by Hugo Vogel for the banquet hall of Hamburg’s town hall (an exemplary of which is *The Christianisation of Hamburg’s Pagans by Bishop Asgar*) (fig. 10 and fig. 11). Warburg dismissed the frescoes as ‘pleasingly pasteurized impressionism’. What he asked for instead was a programmatic actualization of the past, something he believed Rembrandt’s painting had achieved. *Civilis* he wrote:

symbolizes the refusal of a genius to be tempted into Romanizing rhetoric or theatrical posturing, either by the memories of other illustrations of classical tales about the country’s past or by the tangible immediacy of mime shows and plays. The fact that the harsh and manly society of this picture of revenge did not find favour with the gentlemen of the Town Hall only goes to prove that then, just as at any other time or in any other country of Europe, those who want their art to serve the festive mood of certain

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29‘(... gefällig pasteurisierter Impressionismus’: Martin Warnke, ‘Lebendige Kunstgeschichte’, 112. See also Michael Diers, ‘Der Gelehrte, der unter die Kaufleute fiel. Ein Streiflicht auf Warburg und Hamburg’, *Aby Warburg, Akten des internationalen Symposions*, 49. The work by Flinck/Ovens may have more or less the same subject matter, nevertheless, stylistically speaking, it does something totally different than Rembrandt that also affects the content and so for instance the question of action. The Flinck and Ovens picture is more classical and hence would have been as a kind of a hollow pathosformula according to Warburg, pleasing the ‘manly society’ of the town hall in Amsterdam. In this sense it is not different from the works of Vogel in Hamburg.
occasions are reluctant to face the demanding challenge of a stirring experience.\textsuperscript{30}

Figure 10 Govert Flinck and Jürgen Ovens, \textit{The Oath of Claudius Civilis}, 1659-1662, oil on canvas, 5.5 x 5.5 m, Royal Palace, Amsterdam (Photograph: Prometheus Image Archive, Humboldt Universität Berlin).


In these lines, everything comes together. They connect Goethe’s dictum with Saxl’s note on Civilis and, last but not least, they summarise Warburg’s politically inspired views on Rembrandt’s Neue Sachlichkeit. It is not accidental that Warburg characterised Civilis as a ‘sittlich forderndes Kultbild’ (ethically demanding cult image). In this sentence, Kultbild (cult image) is connected to Warburg’s own critical research and his model Neue Sachlichkeit, which involves distance-making and is hence demanding in an ethical sense (sittlich forderndes).

**V. Historiography and Mnemosyne**

Besides Warburg’s role in local politics, his response to two opposing views in German art history is important as well. One of these was ‘The German Rembrandt’, the child of Julius Langbehn’s pan-Germanic historiography, partly supported by Wilhelm von Bode, the ‘tsar’ of the Prussian Collections. And there was also the Rembrandt of Carl Neumann and the Dutch art historian Frederik Schmidt Degener. That Warburg owed much to the latter is clearly seen in his lecture, especially regarding a supposed cultural rift in Dutch society, with the classicist poet Joost van den Vondel on the one side and Rembrandt on the other. In Warburg’s view, Claudius Civilis was a typical ‘northern’ work of art without Langbehn’s pan-Germanic colouring.

As already mentioned, the issue of moment and action in Rembrandt’s work was all-important to Warburg: ‘All we can take with us on this journey is the ever fugitive interval between impulse and action; it is left to us to determine how long we can extend this breathing-space with the help of Mnemosyne’. The painting’s interval between impulse and movement, before action occurs, the union of the Batavians against the Romans (symbolically rendered in the ‘northern’ ritual of the touching swords, occurring then and there) relates to the notion of Mnemosyne, which permits the viewer to extend this particular moment, the processuality of the union, and eventually effect the revolt against the Romans.

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33 Schmidt-Degener, Rembrandt und der holländische Barock., 44.
The *Mnemosyne*’s montage cannot be grasped without the role of photography and cinema, the new media used by Warburg. Such a combining of the media with black-and-white and colour reproductions played a major role in forming Warburg’s ideas on art history.

Rembrandt’s *Claudius Civilis* as a photographic reproduction also had a key role in his last and unfinished project of the *Mnemosyne* Atlas: ‘(...) I managed to gather material for an atlas with images (...) which will constitute the basis for the development of a new theory of human memory’. The project also engaged Warburg because of the moment of revelation he experienced when looking closely at the *Claudius Civilis* copy as well as its reproduction in Kruse’s book.

![Rembrandt Exhibition 1926, KBW Hamburg, The Warburg Institute, London (Photograph: Prometheus Image Archive, Humboldt Universität Berlin)](image)

This fact is also clearly seen in a picture of the library, in which the photographic material for the 1926 exhibition, following to a certain degree the

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systematic approach in *Mnemosyne*, is displayed (fig. 12). Not satisfied with the Rembrandt photographs for the Atlas, Warburg asked for better reproductions.\(^{37}\)

**VI. Manual and photographic reproductions in black-and-white and colour**

Besides benefitting from ‘reproductions’ (painted or photographic ones), Warburg also profited from the drawings made by his wife, the artist, Mary Hertz Warburg, which she made for his own investigations such as the Rembrandt lecture.\(^{38}\) Hertz made drawings on her travels with Warburg, for instance in Amsterdam’s town hall. This schematic drawing, with its pronounced outline of the Ovens/Flinck painting, shows clearly how much she stressed the power of the picture’s motif by insisting on black and white. Thus, more *painterly* effects are eliminated, for instance, the fact that it is a night scene (fig. 13). This is an exemplary collaboration between an artist and an art historian, uniting form (*schema* of Hertz’s drawing, the contour line) and content (Warburg’s argument), theory and practice.

Finally, the issues of colour and the reproduction of a work of art must be addressed. For Warburg, the importance of *Claudius Civilis* resided not so much in the palpability of its colours (though it was the late Rembrandt’s primary element of

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action as principal mover of the viewer’s emotions), as in its New Objectivity.\textsuperscript{39} For Warburg, the activity of colour was a ‘you live and do not harm me’ (\textit{du lebst und tust mir nichts}), protected through his ‘Thought-Space’ (\textit{Denkraum}).\textsuperscript{40}

Concerning an exhibition that was to take place in Hamburg, Warburg stated in 1907 that reproductions should be in colour when larger audiences were involved but not when used in scholarly analysis, another form of Neue Sachlichkeit or an estrangement technique, as Bertolt Brecht would say.\textsuperscript{41} Monika Wagner argued recently that the Mnemosyne Atlas could only function in black and white and not in colour, as its comparisons are based on patterns carrying the motif’s afterlife.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Tobias_Sergel_The_Oath_of_Claudius_Civilis_free_drawing_after_Rembrandt_1779_Nationalmuseum_Stockholm.jpg}
\caption{Tobias Sergel, The Oath of Claudius Civilis, free drawing after Rembrandt, 1779, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Photograph Prometheus Image Archive, Humboldt Universität Berlin)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{39} Concerning an Iconology that is not interested in questions of materiality and hence colour see: Monika Wagner, ‘Kunstgeschichte in Schwarz-Weiß. Visuelle Argumente bei Panofsky und Warburg’, \textit{Schwarz-Weiß als Evidenz}. ‘With black and white you can keep more of a distance’, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 2015, 126-144. Wagner mentions that it was known among the pupils of Panofsky, that he visited museums with sunglasses so that the colours would not dazzle him (page 139) showing among other things even in this anecdotal form Panofsky’s general distance towards colour.

\textsuperscript{40} Horst Bredekamp, ‘„Du lebst und thust mir nichts”. Anmerkungen zur Aktualität Aby Warburgs’, \textit{Aby Warburg, Akten des internationalen Symposions}, 1-7; Frank Fehrenbach, ‘„Du lebst und thust mir nichts”. Aby Warburg und die Lebendigkeit der Kunst, Hartmut Böhme and Johannes Endres, eds., \textit{Der Code der Leidenschaften}, Paderborn, 2010, 124-145.

\textsuperscript{41} Hensel, \textit{Aby Warburgs Graphien}, 43-44. As Schoell-Glass mentions ‘Warburgs Wunschraum ist ... durch Farblosigkeit als abstrahierend und dadurch distanzierend bezeichnet’ meaning that he did not think in colour enforcing the argument of the role of \textit{Claudius Civilis} and its matter of content in the already mentioned sense of an Iconology in black and white or even, as Schoell-Glass does in this case, in grisaille. Charlotte Schoell-Glass, ‘Warburg über Grisaille. Ein Splitter über einen Splitter’, \textit{Aby Warburg, Akten des internationalen Symposions}, 209.

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*The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* is the Janus-faced emblem of Warburg’s critical thought trying to find a balance, without eliminating any tensions, between Ethos (Apollonian) and Pathos (Dionysian), between scientific/objective (black and white, Mnemosyne) and private/subjective approach (colour in the copy). A drawing, a free interpretation of *Claudius Civilis* made in 1779 by the Swedish bacchic classicist Tobias Sergel, whose work Warburg does not seem to have known, appears as an interval (*Ikonologie des Zwischenraums*) with its eloquent chiaroscuro holding in productive balance the dialectic tension of the art historian’s thought (fig. 14).

Warburg characteristically concluded his talk on Rembrandt, which again underlines this paper’s argument:

> We must not demand of antiquity that it should answer the question at gunpoint whether it is classically serene or demonically frenzied, as if there were only these alternatives. It really depends on the subjective make-up of the late-born rather than on the objective character of the classical heritage whether we feel that it arouses us to passionate action or induces the calm of serene wisdom. Every age has the renaissance of antiquity it deserves.

*Claudius Civilis* reveals in a paradigmatic way that theory does not consist independently of any tangible reality, but of images and thought interacting with

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each other and playing a fundamental role in the building of any theoretical approach.

Gertrud Bing illuminated the concept of Pathosformel in her article on Aby Warburg in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (published shortly after her death in 1965) as one of the central features of warburgian thought. She characterized materials such as pigments or marble as having a Pathosformel quality, something that Warburg himself never defended, since, as it was argued in the present text, he thought more through the motive than the material agency: ‘The Gestures of classical art … are still able to call forth a corresponding emotional response, even in the attenuated form of pigments and marble in which they have come down to us.’ A material iconology of the blot as pathosformel will be a warburgian challenge for the future.

Yannis Hadjinicolaou is a research associate at the project Bilderfahrzeuge. Aby Warburg’s Legacy and the Future of Iconology, Warburg Haus (University of Hamburg). PhD 2014 Freie Universität Berlin on *Thinking-Bodies-Shaping Hands. Handling in Art and Art Theory of the Rembrandtists*, published 2016 by Walter de Gruyter in German. He is associate member at the Cluster of Excellence Image Knowledge Gestaltung (Humboldt University). During the summer semesters of 2015 and 2016, he taught (lectureship) at the Institute of Art History of Hamburg University as well as at the Institute of Art History of Basel University (2017). He was a research fellow in the Humanities at New York University in Abu Dhabi (2017-2018).

hadjinicolaou@bilderfahrzeuge.org

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