ATLAS CARRIES

UTOPIA ON A TABLE

Master Thesis
Research Master in Artistic Research (Arts and Culture)

By

Linde Bast

Submitted to Graduate School of Humanities,
University of Amsterdam, 2017

Supervisor: mw. dr. M.I.D. (Miriam) van Rijsingen

Second reader: dhr. dr. J. (Jeroen) Boomgaard

Atlas carries

Utopia on a table

Atlas, by Michelangelo, circa 1530-1534

The fate of Atlas grieves me (dustukhô) – my own brother,
Who in far West stands with his unwieldy load.
Pressing upon his back, the pillars of heaven and earth (akhthos ouk euakalon)

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, translated by P. Vellacott, Penguin Classics, 1961, p.31.

Das Allgemeine
der einzelne Fall
das Besondere
millionen Falle

J.W. Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, oder Die Entsagenden,* Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, Stuttgart, 1821.

To Jentje Bast, always…
and turns out, truth can be found in so many stories.
And to my mom, Tiny van Soest, where I found the origin of all stories, because she gave me all the stories she can carry.

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Introduction:

For many centuries storytelling has been the traditional vessel for transferring and sharing knowledge, ideas and information. Although in the travel of words from one person to the other, face-to-face, the speaker - the storyteller - is in control of the nature of the told story, some stories seem to be told over and over again as they travel through the centuries. Traveling through time, the stories change their form, their format, because contemporary society listens to the form that, at this particular point in time, finds its most recognized expression within mainstream culture. Here the question occurs of what is transferred within a story and why some stories seem to linger longer than others. J.R.R Tolkien, a modern storyteller pure sang gives some examples in his essay *On fairy stories* (1939):

> "They are inclined to say that any two stories that are built round the same folk-lore motive, or are made up of a generally similar combination of such motives, are "the same stories." We read that Beowulf "is only a version of Das Erdmänneken"; that "The Black Bull of Norroway is Beauty and the Beast," or "is the same story as Eros and Psyche"; that the Norse Mastermaid (or the Gaelic Battle of the Birds and its many congeners and variants) is the same story as the Greek tale of Jason and Medea. Even Peter Rabbit was forbidden a garden, lost his blue coat, and took sick. The Locked Door stands as an eternal Temptation."[1]

Like Tolkien, innumerable authors, historians, philosophers and linguists tried to trace back the origins of particular narratives, trying to show the genealogy of a motif through time. Being told over and over again, those stories still find a point in which they resonate with a part of human culture that has been re-occurring through the ages and cultures - shifting slowly with every new appearance.

What we see in most stories is the representation of reasoning of how and why people act. As the story develops, the cause which makes a person act (such as a need or desire) shows itself as a *motive*[2]. But these motives do not necessarily point towards a reason why the story keeps repeating, but rather what the motivation of the protagonist or storyteller is, concerning the story told. What I am looking into is the repetition of more intrinsic *motifs* which finding their reappearance, traveling not just from person to person but also through history as they are retold again. These motifs are different than the motive of the story, and seem to have the ability of find a reappearing expression overarching cultures and time itself, since the definition of a motif is "a usually recurring salient thematic elements (as in the arts); especially **:** a dominant idea or central theme."[3]This definition raises the question of how to approach those central themes and which are the necessary circumstances for it to reappear.

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[1] JRR Tolkien, The *Tolkien Reader*. New York. 1966, p. 56
[2] definition of motive by Merriam- Webster dictionary
[3] definition of motif by Merriam- Webster dictionary

As an artist myself I am fascinated by the notion of history as a materialised object. Collecting and transforming such objects and putting them in relation to each other and in relation to the spectator, I seek to find an approach to what I would refer to a *resonating remnant of humanity.* Therefore, the notion of motif seems to be highly productive in terms of looking for a glimpse of a universally human condition.

Thinking from this background, I wonder if artistic practice could investigate and show those recurring motifs and shed light on the ungraspable - more than storytelling is capable of? In this regard, the core aim of this thesis, rather than only analysing different motifs, I seek to approach a method of how to find and secure them. I will focus on ancient stories which made it through different times and spaces and are still active in our contemporary society. Those narratives focus on the notion of the unknown and seemingly unreachable place, such as Terra Incognita and Utopia on which I will base my research in my thesis. My approach starts with looking at what happens in the re-telling of the story and the rereading of the form, as authors and artists have done since ancient times. How is the motif carried through the centuries and what remains exactly? Next to the narratives of Terra Incognita and Utopia, I will look at a figure which is renowned to be the carrier of the worlds and the heavens. After Atlas, an ocean (Atlantic), a mountain (Atlas), a sunken world (Atlantis) and numerous architectural statues design to support palaces (atlasses) were named. Thus, this figure appears to play a central role in the discussion of motifs, as he seem to be the fictive incorporation of one and the carrier of many.

My thesis will have the form of a discussion rather than an analysis. In combining literature theory, art history, art theory and discourse analysis, I approach the topic With various different methodological tools.

In the first chapter, I will look at mechanisms of storytelling, based on the theories of Walter Benjamin and JRR Tolkien. Further, I will summarize the history and content of some of the most popular and influential stories about places which are (yet) unknown. The next chapter will focus on the history of Utopia as a place which through its motive can never be reached - both geographically and idealistically. In chapter three I will discuss the repetition of a motif by looking at the mnemosyne Atlas by Aby Warburg. In order to gain a better understanding of the recurrence and re-readability of motifs passing through both story and form, his method and Didi-Huberman's re-negotiation of the Atlas will serve as my main theoretical approach. Thus, this chapter will constitute the core discussion in which I will attempt to articulate a method how to grasp and evoke motifs.

Chapter 1:   The repetition of stories

1.1 The intent of the story told

In order to gain a perspective of what the status of the message being transferred when a story is being told is, we have to look at the place, time and form in which the story presents itself. In his work, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), a German Jewish philosopher, essayist and cultural critic known for his enduring and influential contributions to the theoretical fields of aesthetic theory, literary criticism, and historical materialism, studied a range of different fields including a reflection upon the (re)telling of stories (1936) and the (re)production of form (1936), working his way up towards an approach to reflections of the discourse of philosophy of history itself (1940). Throughout his writings, we can often find elements of Marxism, Romanticism and Jewish mysticism occurring and influencing his thought process and body of work. To start my study of the retold stories, it is necessary to consider *The Storyteller* by Walter Benjamin, published in 1936.

In this essay, Benjamin approaches the impossibility of sharing experiences in his time, shadowed by World War I (WWI). Benjamin hereby points towards the change in society, marked by collective trauma, which could not be expressed due to the severe conditions in a very large-scale. This change left an unbridgeable gap in how to deal with emotions and experiences which were not communicable in the same way as it could have been done for thousands of years, in many ancient cultures and societies – collectively, orally and on a small scale, within a community, telling and sharing the story together.

Benjamin found himself reaching adulthood in a tumultuous time in human history, being in his early twenties when the WWI just started. Living on the cusp of all industrial and mechanical innovations that came with the early twentieth century developments, he grew up being a young man in the time where the information era reached a new stage of widespread technical advancement of communication, such as newspapers, photography, and other developments that could provide a linchpin in the ongoing war, the importance and availability of informational sources gave a new and broader perspective on the world, and found its way into the hand of every man and woman. Benjamin felt, that for the first time in human history, due to the technological advances and the waging of WWI, the culture of storytelling within the western world started to be jeopardized. In his *The Storyteller* essay, Benjamin thus accounts the fall of the tradition of the storyteller for the transmission of information, to the inadequate capabilities of people to reflect accurately upon their own experiences after four years of grotesque war. Because of this combination of circumstances, of inexpressible collective trauma and the very rapid developing mass produced forms of distribution of

information, such as newspapers, telephones, and photography, finding their way into everyday life in the early twentieth century, a shift occurred that changed the nature of how people interacted in communities, and the value of the story told:

> at the end of the war [...] men returned from the battlefield grown silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience. For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power.[4]

With the above-described accumulation of contradirectional collective experiences, the tradition of a collective oral communication showed the first signs of deterioration in history. Due to this shift, Benjamin noticed a change in the tradition of the transfer of experience of history and reflection of personal experience.

Here we find one characteristic of the story as Benjamin describes it, which is its oral nature of transmission. The story is the ultimate form of shared experience and gives humans nothing less than a vessel for sharing commonalities, a way to bridge personal experience and to connect to one another – and thus, gains a certain sacrality. Storytelling is an ancient form of community building, connecting, and sharing knowledge that predated written language by far. Furthermore, the beauty of the story being told allowed a way to transfer an experience and tell the listening party, the audience member, to integrate the story into his or her own experience.[5] In *The Storyteller*, Benjamin reflects upon the deterioration of oral storytelling by describing what was used to be the traditional *modus operandi* of how stories functioned in society, characterized by two basic types of oral storytellers. First of all, there are those who come from far and tell of their adventures (historical accounts) and secondly, those who stay at home and tell of events and histories from the nearest surrounding, for example the local tales and traditions – in other words, personal histories.[6]

Benjamin argues that all stories carry the purpose of transfer within themselves, whether the conveyed information is apparent and on the surface or more subtly embedded in the developing narrative in some way. To think about the value of stories means to look beyond their first appearance, the contemporary stories that present themselves around and between us are not mere gossip, but rather they spring from a basic human need to recount real-life examples in order to cope with the mystery of human reality – a form of transferring knowledge far preceding the tradition of the written word. In this respect," (i)n it (the story) was combined the lore of faraway places, such as a much-traveled man brings home, with the lore of the past, as it best

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[4] Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*, (1936) in Hale, Dorothy J, Ed. *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* 1900-2000. Malden. 2006, p. 362.
[5] Ibid. p.365.
[6] Ibid. p.363.

reveals itself to natives of a place."[7]

In an attempt to show a tradition – a lineage of the craft of storytelling – Benjamin looks at the nineteenth century Russian storyteller and writer Nikolai Leskov. He traces the craft practiced by Leskov back in time, into the lineage of the tradition of oral storytelling originating from Herodotus. The latter was a Greek historian who lived in the fifth century BC (c. 484 – c. 425 BC) at the same time as Socrates. He is being referred to as "The Father of History"[8] and the first known historian to break with then common Homeric tradition, originally developed by the Sumerians and then adopted by the Ancient Greeks 3000 years ago. In this tradition poems or verses were not meant to be written down but spoken and treated as historical subjects in terms of a method of investigation and not as a verifiable fact or true event. Herodotus was the first one starting to collect story material in a systematic and critical way to later arrange it into a historiographical narrative, based on reporting only what was told him. Leading to the principles and pillars of linear development of history and the value of passed on heritage and knowledge, which we can still recognize in the academic western tradition of historical discourse nowadays, his work became a cornerstone in the discourse of storytelling. For Benjamin, this marked the beginning of an oral tradition that would last for almost 2000 years.[9]

But what brings the storytellers, Leskov and Herodotus, together is not an ancient oral tradition of storytelling but an insistence on the "narrative amplitude"[10], the playground on which the event is retold. Both storytellers focused on the value and the extent of the stories told. This extent means that "real stories"[11], those closest to reality, as Benjamin wrote, are rooted and fixed in a time and a place, a set of conditions that allows them to resonate out into a broader world and time. They form a measurement, historical or local, to learn and experience by, reaching from ancient Greece into the interbellum years where Benjamin wrote his work.

What Benjamin recognized and noted in his essay is the appearance of a clear shift, away from this long-standing tradition in the aftermath of WWI. In post-war Europe, a turn in the tradition of communication emerged, accounting for an incapability to fully express, reflect and process the horror the world had just endured while simultaneously mass media productions flourished. These developments paved the way for a movement away from storytelling and towards a form of a rather one-sided flow of information. Daily newspapers came to be the preferred medium of gaining knowledge and learning about the world, giving the impression of immediacy and alleged clarity.

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[7] Ibid. p. 363.
[8] First noted by Cicero, De Legibus, c. 30 BC.
[9] Ibid. p.365-366.
[10] Ibid. p. 365.
[11] Ibid. p. 364.

Instead of sharing a story personally and get connected, the reader stopped listening and began receiving the news, isolating him- or herself in this very process and experience of knowledge transfer. For Benjamin, the loss of this connection meant the demise of storytelling.

In the following ten years, instead of talking with each other, slowly a wave of novels emerged telling the tales of war and terror. This form of written story, similar to all press based media, holds in itself a singular, one-way expression – an expression of telling a story to an outside source (audience) where no connection, feedback or incorporation is needed. For Benjamin, the stories that survived print the most were comprised of those that most closely stuck to a simulation of the centuries old oral sources. However, the multitude of papers and books produced, published and disseminated, covered the original mode of storytelling – namely their oral transfer. More and more consolation could be retrieved in the consumption of media leading to storytelling, which used to be a clear way to offer comfort, losing its place in the modern world.

> (w)e can recognize that with the full control of the middle class, which has the press as one of its most important instruments in fully developed capitalism, there emerges a form of communication which, no matter how far back its origin may lie, never before influenced the epic form in a decisive way. This new form of communication is information.[12]

The difference between the form of storytelling and forms of information, Benjamin argues, is that whereas storytelling always had a validity that required no external verification, it does not have to be true to serve its purpose, information must be accessible to immediate verification. For Benjamin storytelling differs from information in as far as storytelling does not aim to convey the pure essence of the experience in some distilled way, it rather soaks the story with the experiences and life of the storyteller.

> Information lays claim to prompt verifiability. [Whereas in storytelling] It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.[13]

In this respect, attributes of the storyteller cling to the story. With every retelling, small shifts occur as accents are put at other places than before, depending on the actor who transfers the story to the next interlocutor. According to Benjamin, this does not compromise the essence the story carries, as this is a process that occurs between the different actors involved in the place and moment where the story travels from one to

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[12] Ibid. p. 364.
[13] Ibid. p. 365.

the other. The form might change – through the linear movement in time, constant small adaptations and alterations transform the story and adjust it to a contemporary setting. However, the true essence of the experience is the core of the story traveling, repeating itself.

As such, Benjamin approaches the difference between storytelling and information, pointing to one of the primary differences between what truth a story had to offer, the transference and communicability of essence of an experience (forming of knowledge) and the truth of recoverable information, which offers no sense of counsel.

> [c]ommunicability of experience is decreasing. In consequence we have no counsel either for ourselves or for others. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. To seek this counsel one would first have to be able to tell the story. (Quite apart from the fact that a man is receptive to counsel only to the extent that he allows his situation to speak.) Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom. The art of storytelling is reaching its end because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out.[14]

His notion of a story is a form of guardian of collective memory entailing what can be circumscribed as instruction manuals and moral compasses. Stories have been the founders of religions and political systems, creators of wisdom as they were carried from one storyteller to the next. Considering, however, the turbulent times in which Benjamin wrote this essay, it is important to keep in mind the aspect of temporal and spatial setting influencing the form and narrative of the story in addition to the storyteller's contribution.

1.2 The repetition of the story of the unknown land

As stories travel through time, we can see by Benjamin's theory that they change their form of narrative. Finding their new outer shell, their temporary representation enters the contemporary society again in a form that at that point in time finds its most recognized expression within the mainstream culture. However, following Benjamin's argument, if the essence of experience is strong enough, if it still holds its value as an experience to be carried from one generation to the other, some stories linger. These stories bridge time, distance and cultures by being told over and over again, and still finding a point in which they resonate with a part of the culture, that has been recurring through the ages. To give an example, the motif of an island, which cannot be found, is detectable in many cultures at different times.

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[14] Ibid. p. 364.

- 1.2.1 Terra Australis Incognita

Terra Australis Incognita, "the unknown land of the South", was thought to be a continent for many centuries. It all began with Aristotle, who wrote the hypothesis that as there was the European continent in the Northern Hemisphere, the *Antichton*, to equal this out there should also be a similar mass of land situated in the Southern Hemisphere. Over many years, this assumed continent was named *Terra Australis Incognita*. This gigantic continent was presumed to begin somewhere in the vicinity of southern Africa and would continue as far as what we now know as Australia, the continent named after this originally hypothetical continent.

Figure 1: *Cosmographie Universel*, drawing by Guillaume Le Testu's in 1556, where the northward extending promontory of the *Terre australle* is called *Grande Jaue.*

The existence of *Terra Australis Incognita* was, until the discovery of Australia, was never based on any direct observation of landmass, but only on the idea that continental land in the Northern Hemisphere should be balanced by a continental mass in the south. Although most maps of *Terra Australis Incognita* derive from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the land has been documented in drawings as early as the fifth century, for example by Macrobius, in reference to the work of Aristotle.[15]

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[15] See J. Noble Wilford, *Mapmakers*. 1st ed. New York, 1982. p. 139.

The story of *Terra Incognita* repeats itself through history. Throughout the passing centuries, akin stories seem to share a comparable narrative of the existence of an island in the middle of the ocean. These stories finding their need for existence as knowledge and truth, traveling from far, just like Benjamin described in his essay. Since Aristotle's delivery of the story about *Terra Australis Incognita*, multiple stories have found their way into common lore, of mythical islands containing wonder, but as pointed out above, although they might have found their origin in the same fascination of unknown, hypothetical places, not all these stories point towards the same truth – while some convey an internal, socio-cultural message, others address an external fascination of exploring the world.

In the repetition of stories about an island existing somewhere in the – yet to be discovered – ocean, we can find accounts of ancient poets and writers like Plutarch, and Ptolemy, who wrote their testimony on the existence of the Canary Islands far before they were officially discovered. According to the historian Pliny the Elder (23-78 AD), when discovered, it was named by the Mauretanian king Juba II, due to the vast numbers of very big dogs (the canary is now known as a breed of dogs) living on the island.[16]

In the Middle Ages, we can see the emergence of newly formatted Christian versions of the same sort of tales, in search of an unknown island. Irish *immrama* stories spring to mind, a classical form of Old Irish storytelling, mostly concerned with the journey of heroic seafarers, orientated towards a search to the Otherworld, a mythological other place or other realm common in historical Indo-European religion present around this time. Among these stories we find the sea voyages made by sixth and seventh century missionaries, on their journeys to discover the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Missionaries like Saint Brendan and Saint Malo, in search for land and other worlds, leading to the legend of the phantom islands of Saint Brendan and the Island of Ima.[17]

The stories traveled, moving from country to country, as seafarers moved around, touching many nationalities and as such we can see the emergence of a mystical island somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean arising in many cultures. Medieval Andalusian Arabs have recorded stories of encounters with legendary Atlantic islands, shown through the legends of the ninth century navigator Khashkhash of Cordoba in tales told by al-Masudi, an Arab geographer, and historian, who due to his form of storytelling

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[16] See Beazley, C.R. *Review of The Dawn of Modern Geography,* London, 1897, p.230- 234.
[17] Nansen, F. *In Northern Mists: Arctic Exploration in Early Times,* New York. 1911, p. 9-54.

practice sometimes is referred to as the Herodotus of the Arab world.[18] Given the tendency of stories and legends to be carried with the travelers as they moved around, different seafarers – Greek, Norse, Irish, Arab and Iberian – caused an effect of cross-fertilization by influencing each other.

It is in this environment, of the perseverance of this story of a mythical island that the legend of Antillia emerged. *Antillia* (or *Antilia*) was a phantom island that was believed to reside in the Atlantic Ocean, during the fifteenth century fever for exploration. The existence and search for the island stem from an old Iberian legend. According to this legend, in c. 714 AD, during the Muslim conquest over Hispania, seven Christian bishops of the Visigothic Kingdom, a kingdom (fifth to eighth centuries AD) that occupied what we nowadays known as southwestern France and the Iberian Peninsula, embarked on a westward journey, into the unknown waters of the Atlantic Ocean, in order to escape the Arab conquerors that occupied their land.[19]
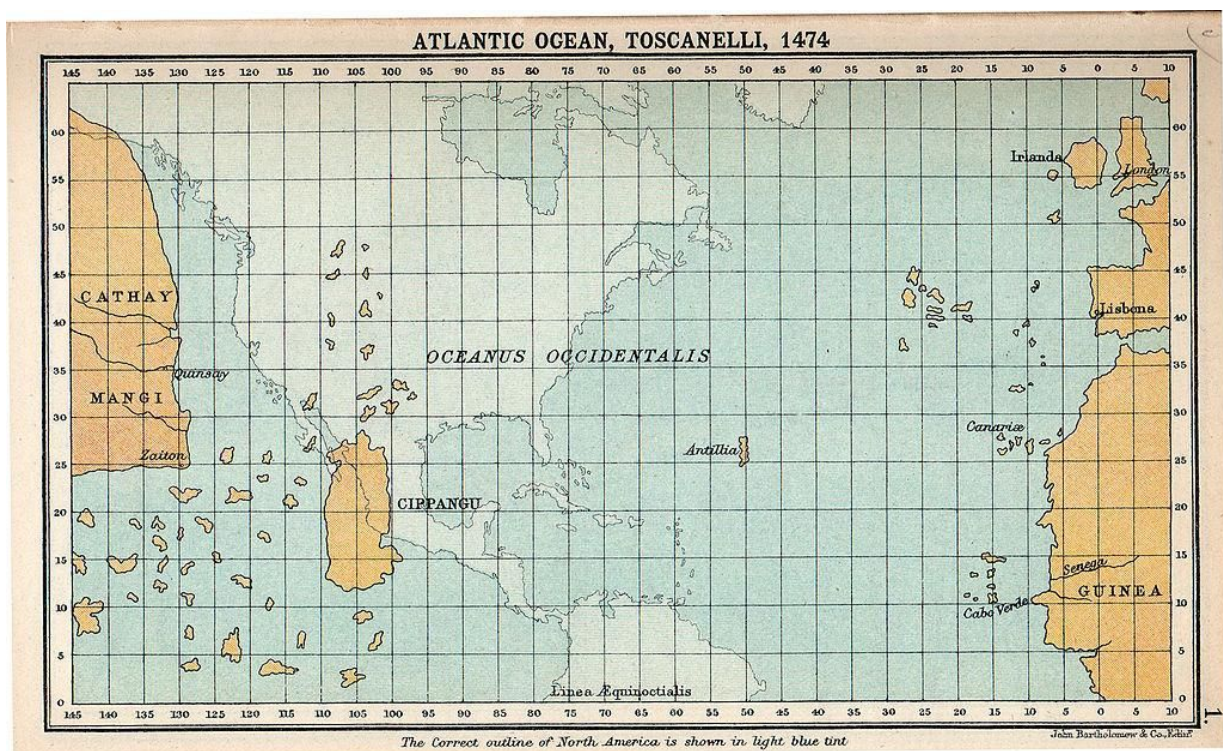
Figure 2: Map of the Atlantic Ocean according to Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli (1474), from *A literary and historical atlas of America,* by Bartholomew, J. G.

At the end of their long journey, they stumbled upon an island in the middle of the ocean and decided to stay and settle down. Influenced by Alexander the Great, who started the

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[18] Beazley, C. R, *Review of The Dawn of Modern Geography,* London, 1897. p.465.
[19] Cortesão, Armando, *The Nautical Chart of 1424 and the Early Discovery and Cartographical Representation of America.* Coimbra and Minneapolis. 1954. p. 140.

tradition by burning his ships on the Aegean shore in 356 AD[20], these travelers also burned their ships, in order to permanently cut their ties with their former homeland, never to return again. The bishops who accompanied the journey erected seven settlements known as the "Seven Cities" from which the second name of the island stems from.[21] Due to the innumerable accounts of cross-fertilization of this and similar narratives, it has left the story in a position that it seems impossible to disentangle the story from any form of exact origin or source, or where these stories first where shaped and found a voice. Stories as such, nevertheless, fascinated many a scholar, forming the basis of studies, such as comparative linguistics and comparative philology, in search for an explanation to the recurrence of the same stories.

- ### 1.2.2 Genealogy of stories with Tolkien

One of these theoreticians was J.R.R. Tolkien, an English writer, philologist, university professor – Professor of Anglo-Saxon and Professor of English Language and Literature – and poet, best known for his works *The Lord of the Rings* (1949) and *the Hobbit* (1937). In his essay, *On Fairy stories*, in 1939, Tolkien, investigates the repertory nature of stories and contemplate on the origin of fairy tales, in order to better understand the travel and adaptations in stories as they recur. In his essay, Tolkien writes about how he looks at the timeless construction of stories:

> In Dasent's words I would say: "We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled." Though, oddly enough, Dasent by "the soup" meant a mishmash of bogus pre-history founded on the early surmises of Comparative Philology; and by "desire to see the bones" he meant a demand to see the workings and the proofs that led to these theories. By "the soup" I mean the story as it is served up by its author or teller, and by "the bones" its sources or material – even when (by rare luck) those can be with certainty discovered. This "Soup" [...] is speaking of the history of stories and especially of fairy-stories we may say that the Pot of Soup, the Cauldron of Story, has always been boiling, and to it have continually been added new bits, dainty and undainty.[22]

Here Tolkien turns to George Dasent (1817–1896), a translator of folk tales, making use of the metaphor Dasent created in recognizing recurring motifs in stories that can be found at the core of the studies in comparative philology. Philology forms the study into language stemming from written historical sources, making use of a combination of history, linguistics and literary criticism as a practice to study literary texts and written records in order to establish what and where we could find their original form determine their authenticity and meaning. This discourse since the sixteenth century developed into the practice of comparative philology and later to comparative linguistics. Dasent and Tolkien made use of the practice of this branch of historical

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[20] Knauer, E.G. "*Vergil's Aeneid and Homer*", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 5. Durham, North Carolina. 1964, p. 61–84.

[21] Ibid. p. 140.

[22] J.R.R. Tolkien, The *Tolkien Reader*, New York, 1966, p. 52.

linguistics, to look at the compatibility of languages so as to establish if and how they could be historically related.[23]

This relatedness could imply a common origin, a proto-motif in the same sense as comparative linguistics points towards a proto-language. Forming a linear progression, say genealogy, of the origin is given through time. This form of tracing back an origin stems from the Darwinian approach of evolutionary survival and adaption, often making use of image production as a representation, showing a branch- like development (as seen in the pictures below).

Figure 3: Descent tree of the Indo-Germanic languages evolutionary by August Schleicher, *Die Darwinistische Theorie und die Sprachwissenschaft* (The Darwinian Theory and the Science of Language) 1863.

Figure 4: First diagram of a tree by Charles Darwin, *First Notebook on Transmutation of Species*, July 1837, public domain.

In the same way as comparative linguistics aimed to trace back the construction of linguistic families, Dasent and Tolkien were focused towards a linear progression of motifs in stories, as they were retold within a newly constructed contemporary form. Tolkien points to the bones as described by Dasent, as the core motif repeating over time, staying the same or leading back to an appointable origin. The aforementioned metaphor of soup is the product as it starts existing with the combination of the core on which the story is built and the contemporary form, the time in which the storytellers

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[23] See Rowe, and Levine, *A Concise Introduction To Linguistics*. 1st ed. Boston. Pearson, 2015, p. 340–341.

transverse the story from conceptual moral into actuality, of being told.[24]

In Tolkien's essay, he also gives some examples of stories in which he sees this repetition of motifs:

> They are inclined to say that any two stories that are built round the same folk-lore motive, or are made up of a generally similar combination of such motives, are "the same stories." We read that Beowulf "is only a version of Das Erdmänneken"; that "The Black Bull of Norroway is Beauty and the Beast," or "is the same story as Eros and Psyche"; that the Norse Mastermaid (or the Gaelic Battle of the Birds and its many congeners and variants) is the same story as the Greek tale of Jason and Medea. Even Peter Rabbit was forbidden a garden, lost his blue coat, and took sick. The Locked Door stands as an eternal Temptation.[25]

Tolkien approaches the comparison of narratives repeating throughout time and place as the same sets of motifs, repeated over and over again, only reshaped within the culture and method of favored translation fitting to their time.

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[24] Ibid. p. 340–341.
[25] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader*, New York, 1966, p. 56.

Chapter 2:   The history of Utopia

2.1 Avalon and Lyonesse (1099-1136 AD)

Repetition of the same kind of stories can be found throughout history. We can see a great example in the English recitations of the Arthurian legend, a popular account since the beginning of the late Middle Ages.

Avalon (/ˈævəˌlɒn/; originally: *Insula Avallonis*, meaning "the isle of fruit [or apple] trees") is an island featured in the legends surrounding King Arthur. The idea of the island first appeared in (pseudo) historical account *Historia Regum Britanniae* (The History of the Kings of Britain) written by Geoffrey of Monmouth in 1136. Geoffrey of Monmouth was a British cleric and one of the major figures in the development of tales of King Arthur and later English historiography. This phantom island is known for being the place where the priestesses of Avalon lived and King Arthur's sword Excalibur was made in. Also in later accounts, Avalon is the place where King Arthur was taken to recover from his injuries sustained during the Battle of Camlann.[26] Avalon was associated from an early date with mystical practices and supposedly existed beyond a veil around the area near Glastonbury Abbey, England. Avalon's believed religion formed a spiritual path that draws on a combination of modern paganism and what is generally more known as Goddess worship or Goddess spirituality/religion. After the fall of Arthur's kingdom, as Christianity has become the most predominant religion in England and legend states there is less and less place in society for the religion based on a Matriarchal system, Avalon fades back into a realm of its own, no longer accessible by the world as we know it.[27]

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[26] See Thorpe, L. Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Harmondsworth, 1966.
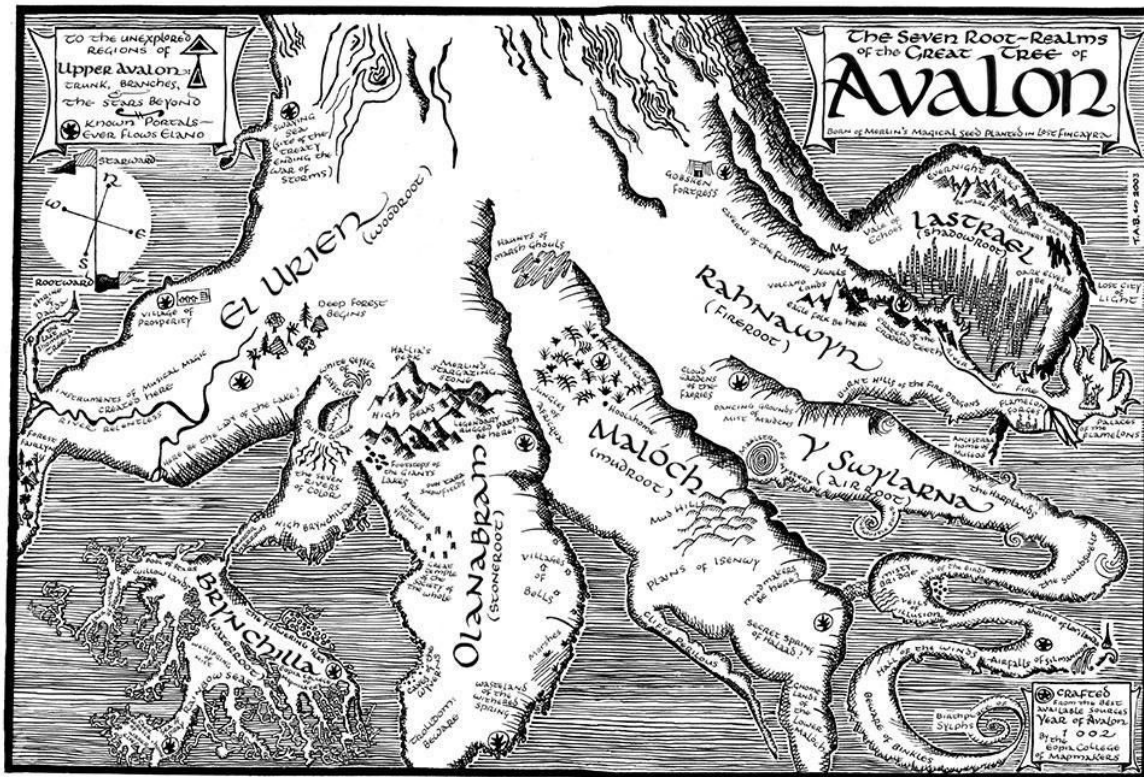[27] See Koch, John. *Celtic Culture: a historical encyclopedi*a, ABC-CLIO, 2006, p. 146-147.

Figure 5: Map of Avalon, by T. A. Barron,
from the book, *Merlin, The Great Tree of Avalon*, 2004.

Simultaneous to this story, a story of another island appears, embedded within the same temporal and mythological framework present at this point in time and place. The legend of Avalon is accompanied by another island, in the recordings of these this era: Lyonesse.[28]

2.2 The lost land of Lyonesse

In the Arthurian legend, Lyonesse formed the home country of Tristan, known from the legendary story of Tristan and Iseult. The mythical land of Lyonesse is now referred to as the "Lost Land of Lyonesse," as it is ultimately said to have sunk into the sea, lost to mankind. However, the legendary tale of Tristan and Iseult shows that Lyonesse is known for more than sinking into the ocean and that it had a legendary presence while it was yet to be swallowed by the sea.[29]

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[28] Ibid. p. 146-147.
[29] See Bivar, A. D. H. *Lyonnesse: The Evolution of a Fable*. Modern Philology, 1953. p. 162–170.
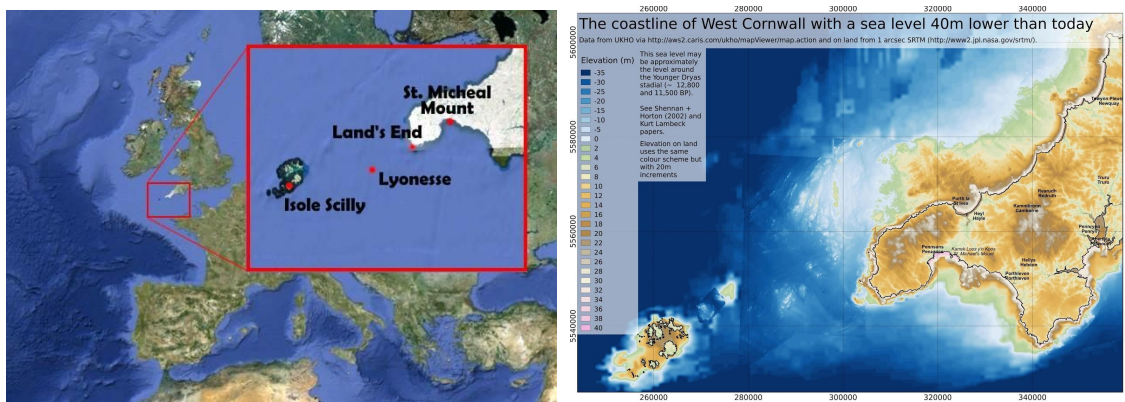
Figures 6 and 7: Satellite scans of the area between Land's End and Scilly, England.
INSPIRE portal from UK Hydrographic Office.

While Lyonesse is mostly referred to in stories of legend and myth, there is a basis for the belief that the land in the legends represents a very real city that sunk into the sea many centuries ago due to a sudden rise in sea level. There are some variations in the legends that surround the sinking of the land. Prior to its sinking, Lyonesse would have been quite large, containing 140 villages and churches. Lyonesse is said to have disappeared on November 11, 1099 (although some tales use the year 1089, and some date back to the sixth century). Once it was covered with water, the land never reemerged. While the Arthurian tales are legendary, there is scientific evidence that Lyonesse was once a very real place attached to the Scilly Isles in Cornwall, England. Satellite images and historico-geographical research show that sea levels were considerably lower in the past, so it is not improbable that an area that once contained a human settlement now resides under water. Fishermen near the Scilly Isles tell tales of retrieving pieces of buildings and other structures from their fishing nets.[30]

Here the two stories are closely related, however, while one – Avalon – points solely to a moral high ground, Lyonesse seems to be based on a natural manifestation. These clung by the sheer magnitude of the topographical change of an island being engulfed back into the ocean, and thereby seems to have been caught up into legendary tales present at the time.

Stories about the islands like this form, as we see in the tale of Avalon, have been reported via the legends that have resonated since classical antiquity. Utopian tales of a place, serenaded by poets like Homer and Horace, lead to the imagination of, for instance, the Fortunate Islands or Isles of the Blest. In the legacy of this overarching narrative, we find Plato and his account of the dystopian and legendary island of Atlantis.

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[30] Ibid.p. 162–170.

2.3 Atlantis (– 360 BC)

Atlantis (Ancient Greek: Ἀ τ λ α ν τ ὶ ς ν ῆ σ ο ς, "island of Atlas") is a fictional island described in an allegory on the arrogance of nations within Plato's works *Timaeus* and *Critias*. Atlantis represents the seaworthy adversary society that tries to besiege "Ancient Athens", the pseudo-historic representation of Plato's ideal state as mentioned in his work, *The Republic* (c. 380 BC). As this story tells, the city of Athens could resist the attack of the Atlanteans, making them more powerful and superior than any other nation that has ruled the known (western) world up until that time. This defeat was mostly due to the great superiority of Plato's concept and the creation of the perfect state as designed in *The Republic.*
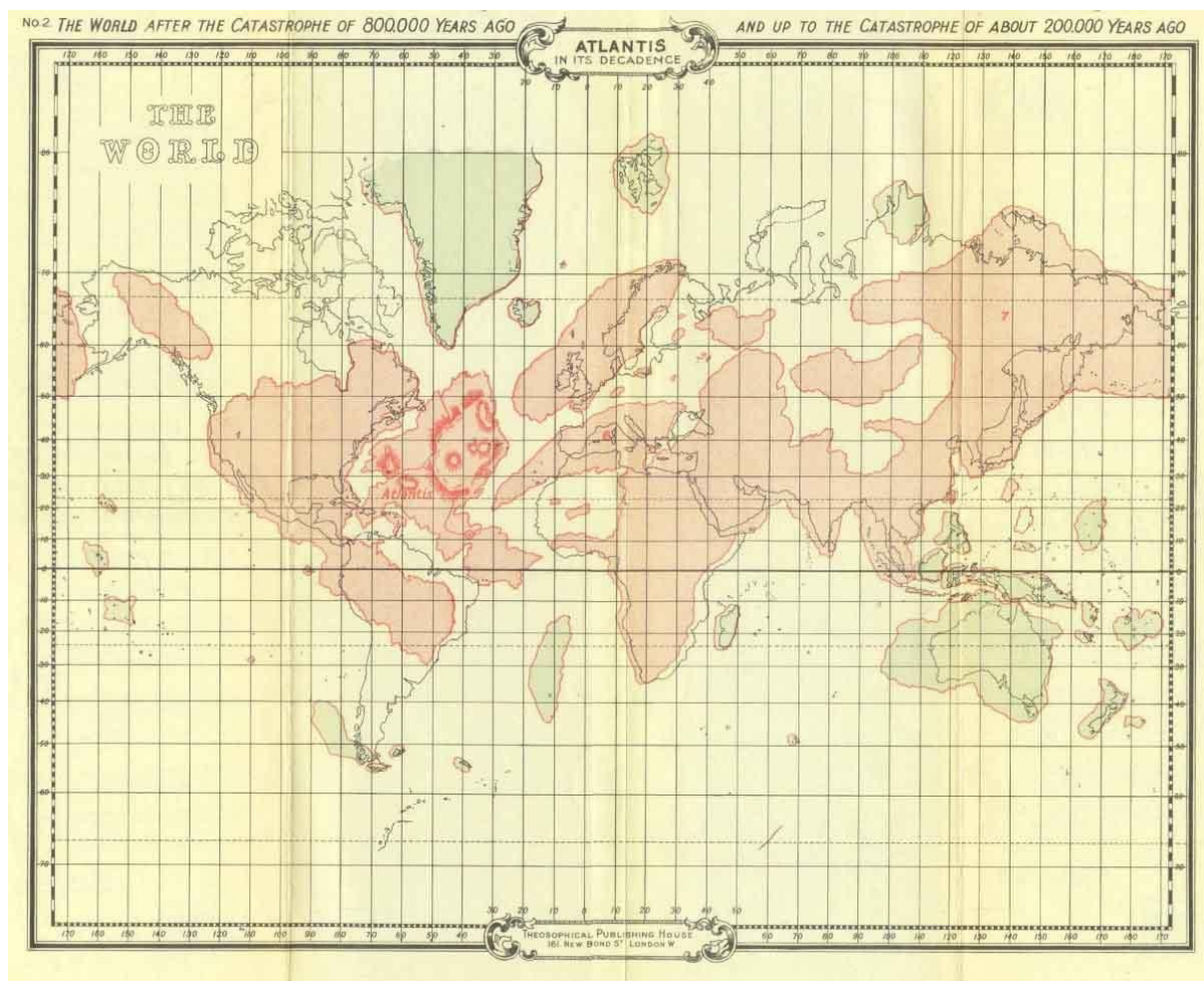

Figure 8: Map of the world and positioning of Atlantis according to William Scott-Elliott, *The Story of Atlantis*, 1910.

As a result of Atlanteans' defeat and their unjust behavior, the society of Atlantis finally fell out of favor with the gods and, by their will, was taken back and submerged into the (now Atlantic) Ocean.

Unlike *Terra Australis Incognita*, *Antillia* or any of the isles mentioned above, *Atlantis* seems to be a completely different story than the others. When looking beyond the occurrence of the island in both stories, the tale of Atlantis seems to be carrying a completely different motif and reason of existence in storytelling. What appears different in this island is less the concept of an unknown place to be discovered, but seems to be pointing more towards an intrinsic, moral purpose. It is not the island itself, and more specifically not the (fictive) discovery of the very same, but the isolation and moral society existing within the place which seems to be the symbolic message to be found carried on within the story. The motif of the story about *Terra Australis Incognita* seems to be based upon the idea of the great human explorer, leaning on the modern notion of the superior (hu)man species, whereas the story of Atlantis, points towards (a decline of) morality. The tale of Atlantis is based on the transference of the knowledge that no person or society should ever think that they are the greatest – if it is forgotten or ignored, consequences will follow. While the story about *Terra Australis Incognita* shows an external drive of the human nature, man as the great explorer, the tale of *Atlanti*s has its value in the internalization of wisdom and of a moral compass to navigate in society.

2.4 Utopia (– 1516 AD)

The name Utopia derives its origin from the Greek prefix "ou-" ($ο ὐ$), meaning "*not*", and the word *topos* ($τ ό π ο ς$), "*place*", with the suffix *-iā* (or *-ι α*), that is typical of toponyms. The name thereby literally means "*nowhere*", emphasizing its fictional state of being. The most information about *Utopia* was found in the book by the political philosopher Thomas More (1478–1535), it was originally published in 1516 in Latin, carrying the title, *Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo reipublicae statu deque nova insula Utopia.* This loosely translates to: "A truly golden little book, no less beneficial than entertaining, of a republic's best state and of the new island of Utopia".
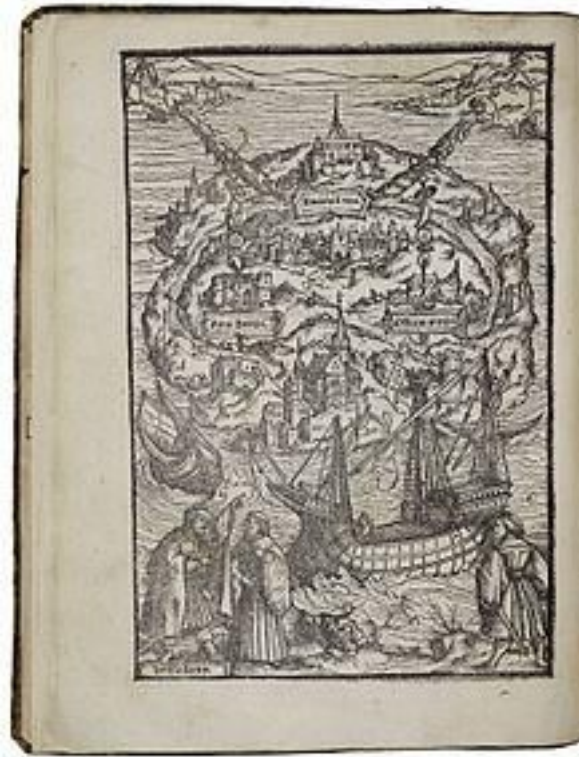
Figure 9: A woodcut by Ambrosius Holbein, illustrating a 1518 edition.
In the lower left, Raphael describes the island of Utopia.

Presented in the book by Thomas Cook, *Utopia* forms an imagined society that possesses qualities that are highly desirable or perfect for its citizens. The island forms a perfect state, of peace and harmony and coexistence.

Atlantis, Avalon, and *Utopia* share a completely different intrinsic motif, as not a land to be discovered, concurred or besieged, but as a moral high ground, a striving towards an ideal that has changed with the society as norms and cultures changed and developed. With these developments in societies, the format of the ideal state, changed with it, as the ideal changed through the movements through the centuries.

The stories about an island as seen in the examples like *Terra Australis Incognita* (Australia) and *Antillia* (the Netherlands Antilles now) do not find their basis in a striving towards an ideal or moral, but to the extrinsic discovery of the world humans inhabit. These stories of islands and the search thereafter made and aided the reality of finding undiscovered places. By the creation of the story, the unknown place imagined to be discovered, turned into actual, geographical places – imagination created reality[31], as the story made the discovery of these place possible.

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[31] this includes the name-giving phase since these stories constitute the collective subconscious of humanity and function as their reference when they meet something new throughout the history.

This said, the narrative of *Terra Incognita* refers to a place imagined being elsewhere, while the motif of *Utopia* (*Atlantis* and *Avalon*) must be understood as a fictive setting for an intrinsic, timeless morality.

One could say, here we see a split concerning what is carried within the story, as a shift between what is a *motive* or a *motif*[32] being carried as the most predominant form of that story. A *motive* is seen here as a psychological feature that incites and provokes an organism to action, thereby creating the reason for the action towards a desired goal. The motive of the stories like *Terra Incognita* or *Antillia* created the motivation that gave purpose and direction to the behavior of mankind's global discovery.

But in the stories of *Avalon* or *Utopia*, the story seems to have a different reason for moving down the centuries. The intrinsic knowledge contained within the story goes beyond a *motivation (motive)* and into a *moral theme repeating (motif)*, having different names but very similar elemental motif finding a repetition. Apart from being a symbol of motivation for internal reflection of oneself and/or society (action = motive), the idea of the island that could never be found or reached, hold within itself a repetitive *motif.*

As the story if based a design, a theme or idea that recurs as a pattern that consists of recurring shapes, contexts or colors.

We can thereby state that although stories might seem similar to each other and can share a list of common denominators in the development of the narrative, they do not necessarily point towards the transference of the same motifs. While the motif of *Terra Incognita* lies in the spatiality itself and thus, as mentioned before, is externally located, the intrinsic motif of *Utopia*, which transcends time, cannot be approached with Tolkien's project to finding a genealogy.. Thus, in order to detect the underlying repetitive nature of stories linked to *Utopia*, one must start looking for a different method to approach this recurrence. Here the immaterialist nature of the story does not provide the given evidence to study as one would hope to study what might lie beneath the repetition of these motifs, and we have to turn towards a broader perspective. A perspective constituted by more tentacle trace or remnant over time. Still in possession of motif, but carried by a different container. Motif presented through form.

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[32] Definition by Grammarist <http://grammarist.com/usage/motive-vs-motif/>. retrieved 13.04.2017

Chapter 3: Finding the repetitive motif with Warburg

Nowadays in the world of digital media, containing many centuries of human production, artistic or otherwise, the chance of an image or symbol being unique has been slimmed down to almost nothing; as copying, reproduction, and republication is the norm. We can merely say that the recurrence of a form in the last century became so frequent that we started to pass off the recurrences of image/object/gesture (all included furthermore under the title of "form") without questioning the new circumstances in which they find expression again. By this development, questions arise, like how to re-read these forms in the new contemporary contexts of occurrence, how to look at the multiplicity of these recurrences and if a form re-occurs within a different context, how to read the past and present forms represented with it?

What I mean to say is, how far does the repeated form' that is brought to the surface again to be reread, have to deal with the emotional conduction of the previous occurrence and construction of the old context? In other words, is there a part of the older context of constructed expression, say the previous expression meant by the recurring form, that clings to the new occurrence, just by association and adaptation? Or is there a pattern, a structure, in the sense that when mankind has used certain symbols, gestures of forms, we can find within them the same sort of elemental motif of expression? To see it not as an evolution of readable context by recurrence, but as a more essential, primal expression that lies at the core of specific forms, meaning that these forms might express elemental motifs, such as desire or rage.

Many different theories and concepts from mythology, philology, and history approach the notion of story. In addition to Benjamin's and Tolkien's understanding (of the development\origin\evolution) of a story, I will now focus on the aspect of the repetition of the motive. For a better understanding of the different predominating forms and motifs reappearing through time, we need a broader perspective on approaching form and symbol.

3.1 Warburg Mnemosyne atlas

The German art historian and cultural theorist Abraham Moritz Warburg, better known as Aby Warburg (1866–1929), significantly influenced a new approach to art history through his work on the recurrence of motifs. He cleared the path for studies in iconology, art history and the interdisciplinary approach of multiple social/cultural studies. Warburg originally stemmed from a banking family and as a young man he lived at the cusp of the acceleration of mass production, including the rise of modern forms of media (photography and newspapers). Warburg was a witness of the world entering a

new stage of (mass) production and globalization. This left him questioning the depth of which his chosen discipline, classical art history, could carry and professionally satisfy him, while so many discourses and cultures started entering the mainstream culture. Through the combination of his historical studies, developments in academic theory and cultural studies, the increasing accessibility to travel, the flourishing of print industry and mass produced media formats, Warburg found himself in a place where the academic society had not seen such a fertile acceleration of so many different discourses all developing at the same time. By this change of many colliding informational streams beginning to be available in the world, an accumulation of new information started leading to new fields of interdisciplinary interests. This led to the confrontation of discourses, or the questioning knowledge that till then had remained unchallenged across the studies in Humanities. Thereby the opportunities for a new development of interdisciplinary research formats started to emerge. Warburg was certainly aware of this as his career developed. He once stated that he found himself in "a great diversity in the systems of relations in which man is engaged".[33] This awareness would eventually lead to a new, much more inclusive reading of the history of art than the world had seen up until that point in time(1920's).

All these combinations of systems of relation, circumstance, and curiosity, triggered by travels into the mainland of Northern-America meeting the Pueblo Indians[34], gave Warburg the opportunity to challenge the ideas of how to look at new ways to study images and forms, creation and their occurrence. By now Warburg's most famed studies led to the creation of The Mnemosyne Atlas. This is an imagery atlas that consists of a series of plates presenting collections of images. They show a montage of different works of art, combining forms from the antiquity, the Renaissance, up to the contemporary imagery of twentieth century. All the collected images are black and white copies and photos from artworks, prints, books and newspapers.

In this work, Warburg made collections, or better put, conglomerations of images, of forms, that in his view resonated in the same expression in cultural tradition and social memory in a broader context than academic studies had done before. His Bilderatlas, as the *Mnemosyne atlas* was originally named by Warburg, was meant to place the world of image and icons in an organizational system where the single expression of form is part of a greater system of form, larger than itself or its nearby surroundings that might on its singular occasion create an unique situational context. It thereby seems to be a very logical choice for Warburg to develop his image database in the form of an atlas, a well-known and accepted format for information collection. The atlas has a long-standing tradition of image collecting and ordering, it finds in its practice a format that claims a systematic and academic method of knowledge collection. By choosing the

[33] Aby Warburg, *Miroirs de faille: à Rome avec Giordano Bruno et Edouard Manet*, Paris, 1928-9, p. 19-22.
[34] Warburg, Aby, trans.: Mainland, W.F, *A lecture on Serpent Ritual*, Journal of the Warburg institute, Vol. 2, No.4, April 1939.

Atlas as his preferred format for the transference of his ideas, Warburg, as an scholar, shows an awareness of the multitude of (academic) methods at his disposal. But furthermore, he shows an understanding of the nature of objectivity presented through different discourses and their *modus operandi*.

3.2 The objectivity of an image

Objectivity within a scientific practice or method, as Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison state in their book *Objectivity* (2007), has a history. As the Enlightenment culminated, a range of ideas centered on reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy, the image started to be included as a source and method of transferring empirical knowledge. Although empirical research had been practiced since the mid to late Middle Ages,[35] in the age of Enlightenment, the prominence of philosophy and science increased, leading to an acceleration of scientific research topics and discourse developments. Images gained importance as a means to document and study the world, forming a new way of collecting and documenting scientific facts and of producing knowledge. Here we find the origin of the idea of objectivity within research as a scientific ideal, stemming from mid-nineteenth century scientific practices and the struggle towards objectivity as one of the main epistemic ideals inherent to main scientific development at the time. In these times, the discourse of objective observation overarching many scientific practices found common ground in the creation of the scientific image, whether referring to the knowledge transference incorporated in geographical mapping (cartography), as well as botany, astronomy, physiology, or anatomical drawing, pointing towards what to look at in the construction of body (whether referring to flora or fauna). Many fields of study incorporated the scientific image as a trustworthy and accurate tool for the transference of empirical knowledge, to be used as reference standards, to teach the future generations a framework of where and how to look.

Within their book, Galison and Daston, both historians of science (Harvard University and Max Planck Institute, respectively) look into the developing history containing the concept of objectivity and the scientific image as the carrier and translator of empirical value. Daston and Galison argue there are three different representations of image production within scientific practice. These three representations, of the image as a source of knowledge, can be approached by the division into three sorts of categories, namely *Truth-to-Nature, Mechanical Objectivity,* and *Trained Judgement.*

To show the development of the image as an "objective" tool in developing scientific practice, Galison and Daston, use the example of botanical drawings as an example

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[35] See the writings of Roger Bacon (1214-1294) an English philosopher who placed considerable emphasis on the study of nature through empirical methods.

portraying a *Truth-to-Nature* representation. These drawings stem from an older practice that found a new fertile, scientifically based ground in the early eighteenth century climate of research. These images, Galison and Daston state, were drawn in order to portray "the underlying type of the plant species, rather than any individual specimen. It is an image of the characteristic, the essential, the universal, the typical…"[36]
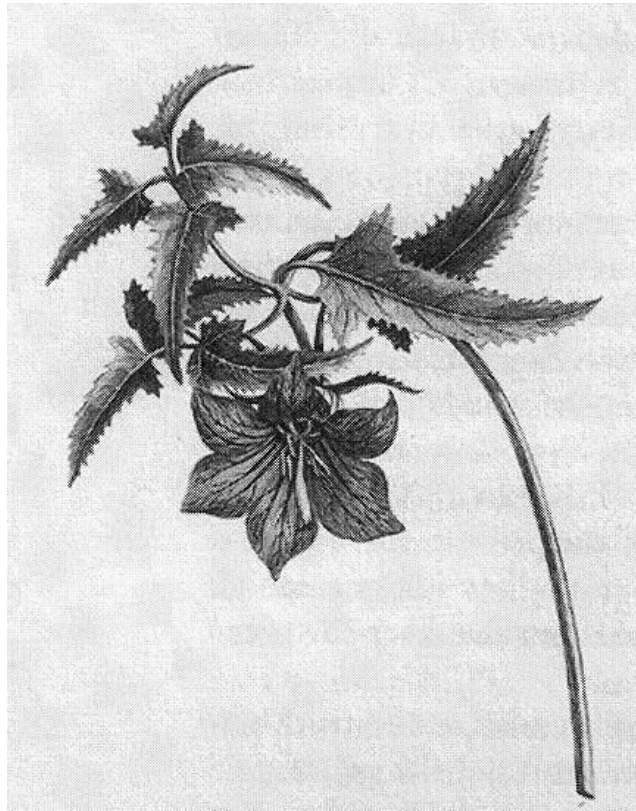

Figure 10: *Campanula folis hastatis dentatis*, Carolus Linnaeus, Hortus Cliffortianus, drawn by Georg Dionysius Ehret and engraved by Jan Wandelaar in 1737.

An example of the second representation, *Mechanical Objectivity,* can be found in the production of an image of a snowflake. This image is shown "with all its peculiarities and asymmetries in an attempt to capture nature with as little human intervention as possible…"[37]

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[36] Galison and Daston, *Objectivity.* Zone books, New York, 2010, p. 20.
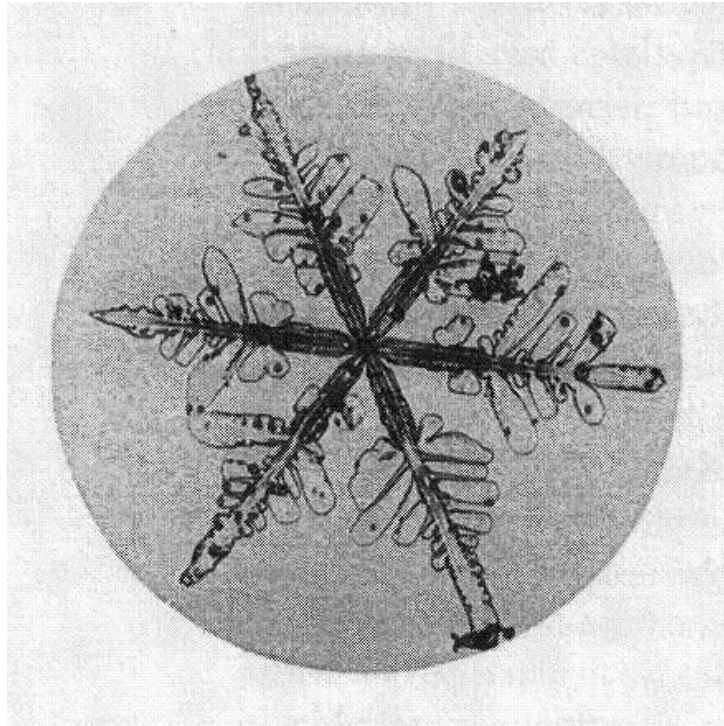[37] Ibid. p. 20.

Figure 11: From Gustav Hellman, with microphotographs by Richard Neuhauss, 1893.

The third image portrays what Galison and Daston mean by *Trained Judgment.* It shows an "image of the magnetic field of the sun [mixing] the output of sophisticated equipment with a 'subjective' smoothing of data – the authors deemed the intervention necessary to remove instrumental artifacts…"[38]
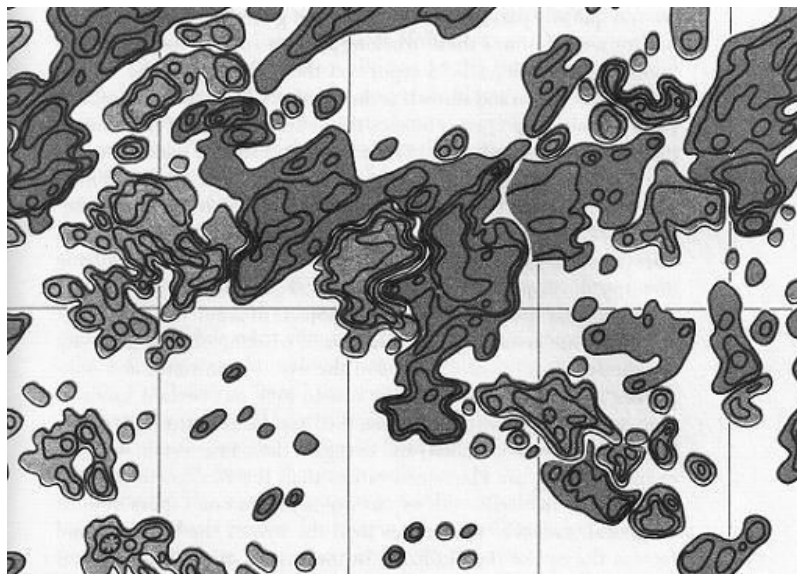

Figure 12: By Robert Howard, Vaclav Bumba, and Sara Smith, *Atlas of Solar Magnetic Fields*, 1959, derived from the Observatories of the Carnegie Institute of Washington, DC.

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[38] Ibid. p. 21.

Although the *Mechanical Objectivity* of image production, a photo or scan, for a long time was thought of as the most objective determination of visual knowledge presented, through their research Daston and Galison unearth the flawed notion or assumption of objectivity that seemed to be attached to a production of the scientific image. Within both the production of the images as well as the (re)reading of the image, the human as actor is involved in the translation of the perception and the production (representation) of that observation into the scientific evidence created. By the mere fact the human is the initiator and the interpreter to carry the findings into a visual form of knowledge, the knowledge created is by the many systems of thought present due to the sheer fact of existence and understand in which the human consciousness lives, means that thereby all created image is inevitably influenced and stem from multiple other systems of thoughts. Thereby no image, even the photo, as the picture is framed by making it, could ever reach a complete state of scientific objectivity and neither can be read like this. Daston and Galison's argumentation shows an awareness of the multitude and complexity of systems that are present at any time and thereby the inability of complete scientific detachment between the existence of information and the writing down – or drawing, or photographing – of information gathered.

> "To pursue objectivity is simultaneously to cultivate a distinctive scientific self wherein knowing and knower converge. Moreover, the very point at which they visibly converge is in the very act of seeing not as a separate individual but as a member of a particular scientific community."[39]

In other words, the many steps taken in the travel from an object being observed, to being acknowledged as valuable source, to being copied, created in a production unavoidably based on human interference, leads to a loss in translation, (as also seen in stories), a contamination by traveling, or at least loss of scientific objectivity, inherent to the production of the image[40] as objective scientific tool, as numerable actors and translations were present in the very production of the image.

Coming from this point of view, Galison and Daston argue that images, including the images presented on maps and in Atlases, shape the *subject* depicted as well as the *object* of science being studied. Both production and observation in any field are being produced from within one – or more – structures of thought already present, ideas of what is important to pin down. The actor creating or reading the image is always, by the mere fact of being able to participate and/or review is inseparably connected to numerable (scientific) communities of thought development present within their reading of information presented.

That is to say, to look and interact with an image, whether in order to the making or

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[39] Ibid. p. 1.
[40] For background information, see Chapter 1.1

reading the image as a tool of transferring knowledge, means that there is no escape from a reading of the image outside a multitude of collectively developed systems of thought present in all intelligent actors. This means that embedded in the images presented in a research format such as the atlas, we can find the traces of many significant choices made throughout history about the development of knowledge and its transference.

Warburg must, in his choice of the naming and format of his own border crossing research, have been aware of the multiplicitous nature of referring to Atlas, including the versatile readability of the image coming from different systems of thought. Whether focusing on the value of the images presented, its origin as ancient mythological source, and the form of organizational discourse presented in his work. In the structuring of the atlas, a collection of images are bound together as the format to show and challenge the complex notion of not only one image, but the entire nature of image production and (re)readability. This seems to offer the fertile ground for Warburg to challenge the images showing a repetition of motifs which he recognized as overarching and transcendent culture, place, time and even system of thought. Warburg, in the same way as Daston and Galison, shows within his research a whole new way of looking at the historical readability of images, challenging the nature of the images and their relation with each other.

Therefore the question arises: what are the many facets present within the concept of the Atlas, as *the* scientific method of dealing with collections of images, as a conceptual playground, scientific tool and rendezvous point of images?

Figure 13: Installation view, "*Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back*"
(Atlas ¿Cómo llevar el mundo a cuestas?), 2011.

3.3 The atlas: A visual form of knowledge

To dive into the beginnings of Warburg's research, we must start with the question of what exactly defines an Atlas? Where did this form of visual image information found its origin and legitimacy?

The definition of an atlas according to the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, one of the oldest dictionaries available and chronologically consistent with Warburg's time, is:

> 1: capitalized: a Titan who for his part in the Titans' revolt against the gods is forced by Zeus to support the heavens on his shoulders
>
> 2: capitalized: one who bears a heavy burden
>
> 3: a: a bound collection of maps often including illustrations, informative tables, or textual matter
>   b: a bound collection of tables, charts, or plates[41]

Here we encounter three clear definitions of what the word Atlas may entail, and these definitions can be explained as follows, keeping in mind the inclusive nature of the word in how Warburg might have chosen and understood his format of the atlas.

1 + 2: Within Greek mythology, in the beginning, giants named the Titans, ruled the world in the early age of existence. After a mighty battle with other gods resulting in the change of power. The rule of the Titans was overthrown. Atlas was one of these original giants, he was the son of the Titan Iapetus and the Oceanid Asia or Clymene. Atlas and his brother, named Menoetius sided with the Titans in their war, fighting against the Olympians. When the Titans were eventually defeated, most of the Titans, including Altas' brother Menoetius, were confined by the Olympians to Tartarus. However, Atlas was forced by Zeus to stand at the western edge of the Earth (Gaia) and hold the sky upon his shoulders for eternity, to prevent the earth and sky from resuming their primordial embrace from which creation first arose. Thus, the Titan Atlas became *Atlas Telamon*, "enduring Atlas," the Greek embodiment of the celestial axis around which the sky, the heavens turn around the Gaia, the World.

A common misconception is seen here, as the story is most commonly known of Atlas being forced to hold the Earth upon his shoulders and not the sky. Classical artworks such as the Farnese Atlas (Figure 13), a Roman copy of Hellenistic original (second century AD) which shows Atlas holding the celestial spheres, not a globe. The later known version of Atlas his story led to this common misconception, most likely came into existence by this renowned Farnese Atlas, a second century Roman copy made out

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[41] Definition of dictionary by <merriam-webster.com/dictionary/atlas>, retrieved on 18-03-2017.

of marble. This sculpture is the oldest statue of the Titan Atlas known and shows the oldest known representation of the celestial sphere. Because of its round shape, it is most likely that here the first wrong explanation of the representative mass is based on, as the globe could be mistaken for the earth instead of the heavens.

Figure 14: *Farnese Atlas*
(Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples)
Roman Copy of Hellenistic original, second century AD.

But this understanding of atlas might not be the first inclination to be had when being confronted by the word Atlas. Today, when "atlas" is mentioned, the first image that might pop up in one's mind is the printed version of maps or parts of the world (the book that is recalled from primary school). The book contains a broad collection of maps of the world, it depicts in detail how the earth is shaped with land, mountains, and oceans. This format of collecting imagery is a form of organizing information by visual means, instead of written language. It is thereby meant to give a clearer picture of the information that needs to be transferred.

So where does this tradition of making maps, of collecting an overview of parts of the

world as we know it today, stem from?

Here the third definition comes into play. In the sixteenth century AD, German-Netherlandish cartographer, cosmographer Gerardus Mercator, born as Geert de Kremer, published a now famous collection of maps called the Mercator Atlas. For a long time, this was the most accurate map of the then known world. On the title page of this work, Mercator showed a picture of Atlas supporting his burden. Mercator gave the book the title Atlas, inspired by the drawing of the Titan. Many collections of maps created since that time included similar pictures of Atlas, and thus the presenting format of collections of maps came to be called atlases, resulting their name from this one original source.

Figure 15: Gerardus Mercator, *Atlas sive Cosmographicae Meditationes de Fabrica Mundi et Fabricati Figura, Atlas,* 1595.

The first great atlases were developed around the beginning of the seventeenth century, in order to map the world and claim foreign fertile lands. Since then the overall interest in documenting and ordering the then known world and all that it entails kept on spreading, being fuelled by the feverish archival instinct that sparked since the

Enlightenment had started in the eighteenth century. Western researchers have since been fascinated by organizational systems in order to classify the world, motivated by the idea, or assumption of being able to find, organize and understand the world through a system and/or order. As a way to view and map the great creation of God, the accepted norm for the reason that all matter existed, as he created the heavens and earth and all that it entails, was the common motivation for research at the time.

This is the genealogy from which the format atlas as image collection is born. But within this format, big oppositions occur, such as the idea that the aesthetic image can hold a truth in the same way as empirical knowledge can, as shown in the arguments by Daston and Galison, in their book *Objectivity*, as mentioned before.

In the book by George Didi-Huberman, "*Atlas, how to carry the world on one's back?*" (2011), we can find a in-depth re-reading and re-interpretation into the atlas of Warburg. This book addresses dealing with the multiplicity of creating, the reading and re-reading the image, in both its singular form but foremostly in collections of images relating to each other. Here Didi Huberman opens his book by elegantly stating that the atlas is:

> "A visual form of knowledge, and thereby a knowledgeable form of seeing […] combining, overlapping or implicating an aesthetic paradigm of the visual form and the epistemic paradigm of knowledge. The atlas in fact subverts the canonical forms in which each of these paradigms tried to find its own excellence and even its fundamental condition of existence."[42]

In its way of understanding the atlas, as a visual form of knowledge, the atlas has the ability to, in its framework, hold within itself a multitude of discourses, of disciplines of systems (and styles) of thoughts. The atlas creates a place for visual knowledge, stemming from many different times, styles and orders, to meet and find relation with each other.

While placing the image in a discourse developed to form a foundational ground of research, a certain lacuna, an empty space or a missing part, call it a gap, can be seen to start showing from within the image. The images show flexibility, giving the possibility of giving conflicting, or at least diverse signs towards the empirical knowledge meant to be transferred in such an ordering format. Didi-Huberman recognized this in the reading of the images presented in an atlas, he states:

> "that against all empiric purity, the atlas introduces the sensible dimension into knowledge, and the diverse, and the lacunary character of each image. Against any

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[42] Didi-Huberman, How to carry the world on one's back. Madrid, 2010, p. 14.

aesthetic purity it introduces the multiple, the diverse, the hybridity of any montage".[43]

Figure 16: Aby M. Warburg, *Mnemosyne-Atlas*,
Boards of the Rembrandt-Exhibition, 1926.

Through this reading of Didi-Huberman, it appears Warburg's research into and choice for the atlas as the presentational method seemed to be a conscious decision. The format atlas offered an acknowledged discourse within the world of academically acclaimed research formats of representing collections of images, referring to the discovery of new terrain (territorially or philosophically), while still granting him the necessary space to access the plural nature of reading the image, to challenge the singular and collections of images presented on his plates. This is in order to access the laguna, as Didi-Huberman calls it, the necessary space needed to access the multiplicity of meaning existing inside and between images. This conscious choice of presentational format of the Atlas was not only on the level of image collection (overarching time, place, style, production etc.), but also functioned as a conceptual space for discourses and styles to meet and juxtapose each other, though still remaining inclusive, gathered within the format of Altas, offering a place for collections to meet and be presented together at its core. The level of understanding how broad this spectrum of what is collected within Warburg's Bilderatlas, is already clearly introduced and shown in the first plate of the collection, Plate A.
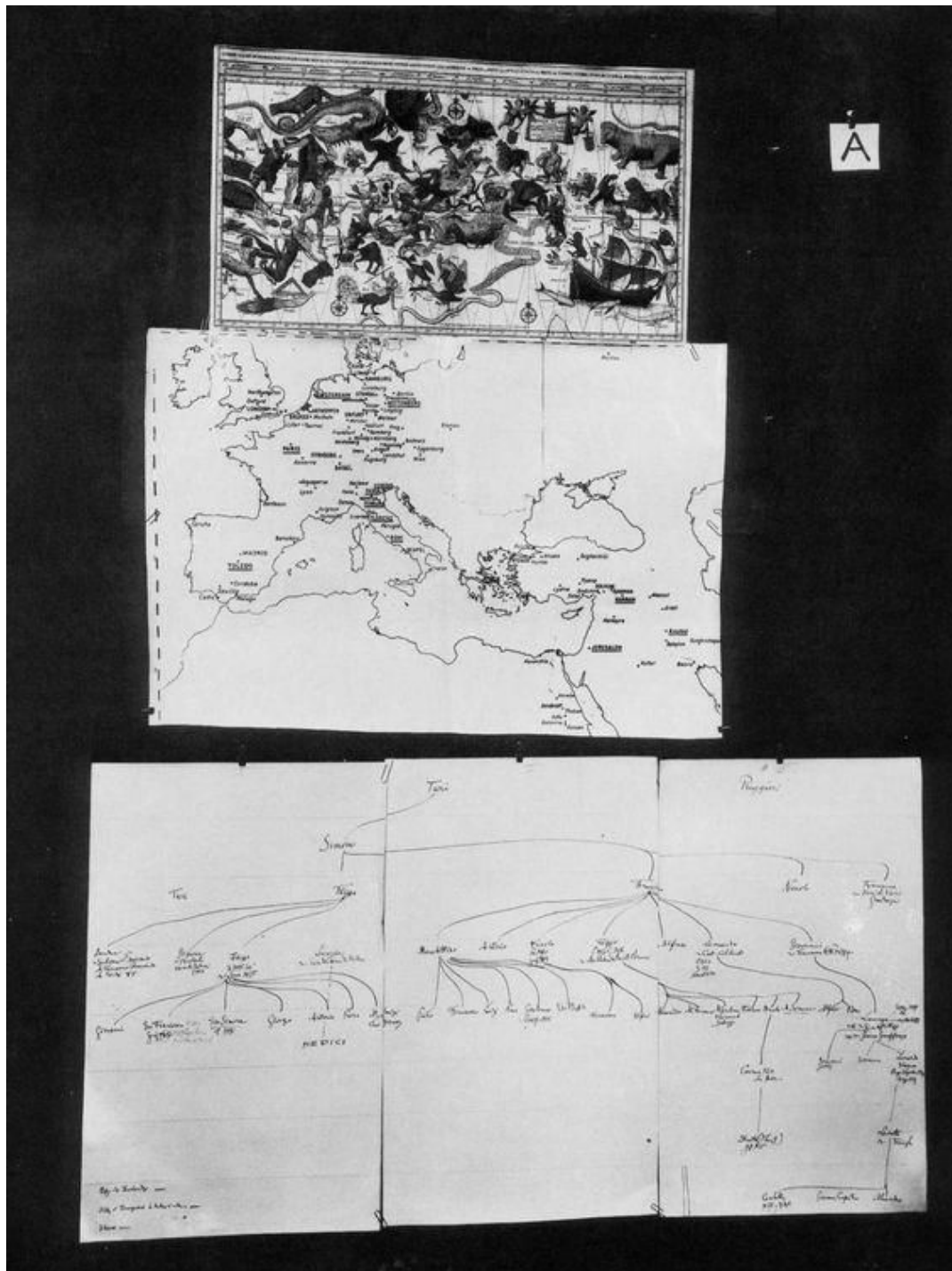
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[43] Ibid. p. 15.

Figure 17: *Plate A: Coordinates of memory,*
Aby Warburg, Mnemosyne-Atlas, 1926.

Here Warburg introduces and refers to his notion of how he uses his atlas as an inclusive system containing many systems within it. Warburg here presents a table containing the depiction of a carrier of the celestial sky. These images contain all kinds of constellations of the heavens but are also presented as animals depicted in the star signs, stemming from a diverse set of origins. Some points, pictures or stars are directly visual and some locked away behind nebulae clouding our direct view. Some are just

little points of light, vaguely visible due to their travel over great distances, or ricocheting off the back of another form. This plate (Plate A, the Coordinates of Memory) shows us the points by which Warburg saw the different levels on which his knowledge and constellation of components would form the first basic step of compiling his Atlas. Here a second geological map depicting Europe and the Middle East is shown underneath the celestial map, and by being put upon the same table is forced in a meeting with the map containing the collection of animals revering to the constellations as found in star signs. The third picture shows a genealogy of family members of a Florentine banker family, most likely referring to Warburg's own genealogical lineage. What we see here is an introduction to the atlas, showing a broad awareness of Warburg, of the many orders intercrossing and forming the constellation in his atlas, including his awareness of their origins on multiple levels. Within this singular example, Warburg already confronts and thereby already shows an awareness,

1. of the historical as the constellation of pictures are placed in the tradition of map making, referring to the earlier explained name Atlas for sets of informational image collections,
2. showing a collection of animals referring to different constellations of the star signs, pointing towards the mythological story of the Titan Atlas, carrying the sky on his back, being responsible for the continuation of the existence of the world (separating sky and earth), and
3. the social, economic and genetical origin of personal existence (namely Warburg himself) leading to this precise accumulation of view, form, moment and circumstance, choosing and forming this Atlas.

Warburg thereby shows us, within this introduction plate, to be aware of the fundamental complexity of the task he had started. Plate A formed as an opening statement, a presentation and confrontation schematic approach of three different mapping principles upon a table,
1. astro-cosmographical,
2. topographical, and
3. genealogical.

Figure 18: *Mnemosyne Atlas, Plate A, B and C,* 1924-1929.
The coordinates of memory.

Plates A, B and C together, furthermore present yet again three different approaches to the organization of the thematic and conceptual threads running throughout the entire Bilderatlas, forming a perspective overlapping and colliding organizational approaches or systems at play while searching for some sort of order in the entire history of the art. Plate B shows the depiction of the discourse of the anthropocentric perspective created by mankind. This plate shows the development of how, since the dawn of mankind, humans have assumed the position of placing themselves at the center of knowledge production. This view leads to an understanding of seeing humans as the most significant entity within the Universe and as such interpret or regard the world in terms of human values, experiences, and systems of thought. Referring within the images collected, Warburg shows the changes occurring concerning the movement from the astrological anthropopathy as can be seen in the Middle Ages (as seen above including the Cosmic men) into the anthropopoiesis development seen in the Renaissance, the idea that human beings only become fully completed by means of obtaining and mastering culture.

In Plate C, Warburg presents the path Western tradition took, dealing with the acquisition of technical knowledge. Here the pictures show yet again a different way knowledge was developed and folded into new discourses through time. It has been absorbed and incorporated as a way to predominate minorities and has been used as an active tool throughout Western history. For example, knowledge as the weapon of conquest, a practice originating from the Titan Prometheus, who stole fire from Mount Olympus and gave it to mankind as a tool. This discourse of using knowledge, of appropriating foreign ideas and practices includes not just the development of the sciences and astronomy but also social and economic understandings. This way of reflecting upon and using outsider knowledge and points of view within mainstream culture, of assimilation, led to the result of understandings being able to be used both in

destructive and constructive manners, showing knowledge as a tool capable of possessing double-natured forces. Both as it is the discourse in which it is used and not the independent and empirical knowledge itself that imposes its importance and value of usage.

The first three plates together seem to suggest new ways of interpreting and understanding reality. They show an introduction of a collection containing many forms, styles of thought and discourses active in mankind's understanding of the world. In plates A, B and C, Warburg introduces his research as a new method of following newly constructed guidelines through the multitude of themes, myths, symbols and figures that represent the entire body of work created in Western classical tradition, and the reappearances of form and motif since the Antiquities.

These first three plates show Warburg's understanding of willingness for the inclusion of all traces of the known repertoire of the Western tradition, to be placed and represented in his Bilderatlas. For instance, these introductory plates show Warburg's grand aspiration to try and incorporate a diversity of as many discourses and practices of image, image production, their relations and appropriation of the knowledge inherent to them, as he could found to be showing since the Western civilization started developing. As Warburg reflected upon it in his own writings in 1927, as an early phase in the process of the creation of the Mnemosyne atlas, his research is meant to show an understanding of the inclusiveness of the grand "diversity in the systems of relations in which men is engaged".[44]

Warburg strove for the entire Atlas to be the place to develop a system to lure out glimpses, of the possible appearance of motifs. Motifs are present within the image but undetectable without creating a resonate, a relation between other images or forms to lure them out. Warburg, by juxtaposing and confronting images depicting a multitude of forms, presented to the viewer in black and white pictures of sculptures, drawings, photos, or paintings, he created a homogenous readable format to look for underlying motifs ready to reveal themselves by the images on the plates finding correspondences and relations among each other.

Topics of his plates, ranging from the many forms of thought and observation (as presented in plates A, B, and C), to the expression of more specific emotions or experiences, such as suffering or domestication (plate 2 and plate 46), find their inclusion in the corpus of his research.

The atlas as a format formed a way for Warburg to transcend the limitations clinging to singular systems of thought and to show his striving towards a certain amount of clarity, an overview able to incorporate the utterly complex presence and manifestations of

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[44] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p. 8.

knowing the world.

The atlas gave Warburg nevertheless a framework in which could still stay within a form of presenting his studies, as learned and accepted by the academic circuits while breaking the traditional frame open at the same time. Thereby being able to access more than just one singular strain of information, empirical or aesthetic, but he could rise to a new level of understanding in a format that could accept an oscillation of signifiers, creating movement and an enlargement of an expression locked deep inside all human exploration or verbalization.

What Warburg created in the end, by making use of the atlas, was a way of organizing on form, creating an overarching system, while still maintaining a way to look at images beyond their local or situational boundaries. To look at a way of "speaking the world" through imagery and icons, that was done before. For Warburg, to speak the world is something too complicated to read in a book or find in a singular image or expression, for as Didi-Huberman formulated it,

> "to read the world is also to link up the things of the world according to their 'intimate and secret relations', their correspondences and their analogies".[45]

These relations, correspondences, analogies that can exist between certain images, can only be created by the creation of plates or tables, a non-fixed space, a table as playground. This is the place where the images can move, can start relating and corresponding, to find a vibration, a resonance echoed in the lacuna inherent within all images, to exemplify the elemental expression, resonating deep inside. For Warburg this meant collecting and dealing with a large body of images and research, in order to approach looking at the underlying motifs, motivations and gestures. Forms able to reach out and beyond their own, towards the other, reaching beyond culture, location or time. Thereby showing, by forming larger collections of reappearances presented on Warburg's plate's, motifs that by his idea overarch of all mankind.

3.4 The tables on which images move

Warburg's atlas reached the size of about 1,200 black and white pictures collected on 97 plates. These plates, each one of them containing the recurrent forms and gestures that Warburg collected, seemed for him to be all pointing toward the communication of different core elements, elementary expressions, found beyond any borders, now surrounded by similar entities and organized into specific collections of images. This way of categorizing them, gave Warburg a clearer overview, to look for a clarity overshadowing all image production known to humankind. Every plate of the atlas was

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[45] Ibid p. 17.

covered with a black cloth to form a monochrome and negative colored background, thereby forcing the focus to be only on the forms appearing on the plate and the pictures presented. But what is the relation the images have towards each other on this surface? How can we approach the space made available on these surfaces and how do the images relate among and towards each other?

As Warburg was very conscious in his choice concerning the format in which to collect and connect his collections of visual knowledge and motifs, how did he approach the singular format of a presentational method, as the pages of his atlas? Is Warburg dealing with a simple plate on which to present, as his covered surfaces are often referred to, or is it a different conceptual space on which the images are collected? Do these surfaces form a table or even much more of an artist's tableau? Here the question arises of how to approach their differences, in relation to this atlas.

> 'To make an atlas', Didi-Huberman writes in the exhibition press release, 'is to reconfigure space, to redistribute it, in short, to redirect it: to dismantle it where we thought it was continuous; to reunite it where we thought there were boundaries."[46]

The presentational boards are covered with simple black cloth, leaving all attention on the images pinned in place. The terminology "plate", by the dictionary defined as "a smooth flat thin piece of material"[47] that might have the ability to completely cover the connection between the physical location and theoretical approach, on which the collections of images of Warburg collection are presented. This is because it is not the blackness of the cloth but the space given upon this place that defines the named format of presenting. What happens in the place where these images meet is that they are entered and positioned into an arena where space and meaning itself find a flexibility and can be modified. The images, confronted and relating to each other by being placed in this situation of being clustered, get the opportunity to change the meaning of their appearance within the arrangement of the images made and pinned down on the board. So are they thereby comparable to (re)presentations made by artists, in 2d composition, making use of a designated or framed surface to present and elevate a finished work?

Here we have to make a clear distinction between the spaces available on the table or that upon an artist's *tableau*. The *tableau*[48], here seen as a graphic description or representation, a French translation of the Latin word *tabula*, meaning plank or board, started out as the same way as a table as Warburg uses it, but has already formed "a work". The state in which the composition of work is presented already shows a meaning produced as a result, it shows a presentation that has already been played out, has settled in its form and contains a definity within itself. The *tabula* is mentioned by

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[46] Ibid., 37.
[47] Definition dictionary by <merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plate>, retrieved on 27-04-2017.
[48] Definition dictionary by <merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tableau>, retrieved 27-04-2017.

Michel Foucault in his well-known book, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*[49], 1966. In his introduction, Foucault writes about a 1942 essay of Jorge Luis Borges, *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins*. In this essay Borges describes an example of an alternate taxonomy model, supposedly found in an ancient Chinese encyclopædia entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*. The pages of this encyclopedia, this atlas, are formed as an operating table, a common ground, for animals both existing and in motion, as well as fictional creatures, to meet and included while being juxtaposed towards each other. This text of Borges points out the impossibility – in its bringing together of seemingly impossible entities meeting upon the same table of order – to categorize all possibilities, all entities, methods or discourses at play, overarching any and all form, idea or construct concerning the entire history and understanding of the world in one order. This example chosen by Foucault illustrates his idea of the arbitrary illogicality of any attempt to order and categorize the world, as its order is always constructed from within the perspective and understanding of a preset cultural knowledge production. The foucaultian table (tabula) shows a presentation of:

> "all the familiar landmarks of thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old definitions between the Same and the Other".[50]

Warburg shows the same awareness of order presented; of the exclusion of existence fixed within the very existence of the *tableau* or *tabula*, as made abundantly clear by Borges' enumeration of the Chinese encyclopedia. The table is presented as a chart, where settings are placed and arranged, fixed within its known parameters, excluding the opportunity for alternative understandings or relations to occur outside of that order.

Being aware of these parameters, Warburg's plates are tables made very consciously on which things can still be moved around, as planes on which time, culture or understanding can still create new relations towards each other, as Warburg placed and extracted images to see what could resonate outside the fixed orders of contemporary understanding.[51] His tables are meant to be a workspace, a playground, an instrument of experiment on which everything can at any time and coming from any discourse can (be) play(ed) again.

As Warburg's process seems to show, seen from Didi-Huberman's re-reading into the

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[49] See Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* Paris, 1966
[50] Ibid. p. 17.
[51] Ibid. p. 16-17.

creation of the corpus of Warburg's work, an understanding that already seems to point towards an understanding concerning the construction and meaning in and of organizational systems spread over so many levels of understanding. Didi-Huberman, being a modern historian today, has the advantage in his re-reading of Warburg's work to include the studies of Foucault in the understanding of the conglomerations and systems being forced to the surface in Warburg's tables, reflects upon the table on which these forms and systems are placed together:

> "It is a determined place, framed like a templum in every possible expanse, capable of making heterogeneous orders of reality meet... An area possessing its own rules of arrangement and of transformation for relinking certain things whose links are not that obvious: and to make these links, once they are brought to light, the paradigms of a re-reading of the world."[52]

Warburg's work already shows an awareness of not just the empirical value in the represented image (the singular image), or the many ways the format atlas can be read (multiple discourses), it also seems to point towards an understanding of a greater order and disorder of things, present on all levels of production, knowledge, readability and understanding of the world, as Didi-Huberman refers to it.

Nowadays, when referring to the ordering of a multiplicity of images, forms or ideas, there is no way around the works of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, and his *The Order of Things (1966),* written about 30 years after the death of Aby Warburg.

In his book, Foucault's aim is to deduct and uncover the origins of human science development and production, to see how they are built up and found their so-called roots divided within the concepts of biology, economics, and linguistics ("life, labor, and language"[53]). This deduction is built around the central claim that all historically defined periods that define human existence, while all having their own temporal style, their own vogue at play, still all have possessed a certain underlying epistemological assumption that determined what was acceptable, whether in moral, social, linguistic or scientific discourse. What Foucault developed here was a very *structuralist* focused (although Foucault did not think of himself as a structuralist) idea of discourse development concerning the history of science, the history of how to think of discourse development itself. Foucault, just like Warburg although with a different field of interest as a starting point, was interested in asking the most epistemological question of all: Where does this modern form of knowledge research and production, moral codes or language – spoken or form-development stem from?

While looking at the plates – as pages – presented in Warburg's atlas, it is worth to keep

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[52] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back.* Madrid, 2010, p. 40.
[53] Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences.* London; New York. 2008. p. 272

our current understanding through the reading of Foucault in mind. Although Warburg died far when Foucault's first print of *The Order of Things* was published, Foucault was not even in middle school at the time, being born 1826, Warburg's research can be understood as a beautiful example and experiment which already portrays so many of the same epistemological questions as Foucault would later raise, finding an awareness in the production of every plate left by Warburg we can now study. Although the plates now stand vertically, originally and conceptually the plates of the atlas were arranged as if on a horizontal level, as objects/forms meeting each other on a table, being added, removed, reorganized in the freedom of a collage being put together. Here we can see Warburg's historical awareness of a great many discourses of ordering information that are present in dealing with colliding styles, times and systems, but also the consequences that framing or freezing forms together. We can imagine the pictures being moved around on a plane created by Warburg that can be understood as independent or detached from the known and commonly accepted systems of knowledge production. This appears in the same way artists might look for the moment at which images start to correspond. Warburg's practice also consisted of looking and moving of the images, looking for the moment of correspondence, of intimate relation, to occur.. This table is a form of equipment for Warburg, an empty plane of existence to experiment with the confrontation of histories, orders or discourses to meet. This table gives Warburg a place to present, in a non-fixed, spontaneous and playful way, different orders and systems at play in the world and thereby attempts to reach a viewpoint above and beyond a singular discourse or representation that produces a truth fitting to that style of understanding. We can see this strive towards a viewpoint above all others, to create a discursive overview, a method, occurring on all levels of Warburg's research, whether it being his choice for the atlas as a tool, the table as a place or the broad range of systems of thought present in the images he places on those tables. Warburg in his atlas shows a research into looking for a plane above all others, to an overview, to look at the history of the form of expression as a whole, in the same sense as Foucault will later do in his research into the history of science.

Warburg seems to have created, without the now so well-known and broadly studied concepts of Foucault discourse and order studies, a free/pure play for different informational systems and time periods to meet, and interrelate, to behave as in a state of play, to see what will then still rise above, in search of the possibility of there being a new order, to be established overarching the entire expression of elemental emotions throughout humanity's existence.

3.5 Glimpses of a real: To see what is visible or to glimpse at what is visual

The question remains, why are Aby Warburg and George Didi-Huberman in their re-reading of the atlas, so interested in the format on which the collected images are presented? What can happen in this open plane, this *templum*[54] as Didi-Huberman calls it, some space cut off and separated, a created open area, in which these forms can meet?

Looking from this perspective, Didi-Huberman, like Warburg, never refers to an "image" as a singularity, but to conglomerates or groups of images. Images are always relative and fleeting in Didi-Huberman's theory. They perform precise functions in specific contexts, in the momentum in which they are read. They are symptoms or gestures with an incomparable historical value, that help us to think and take a position in front of the "real", being presented to us. But we need the conglomerations to make space for the capacity of the "real" to come out. One fleeting glimpse cannot give testimony to a "real" that lies beyond the singular image. Didi-Huberman reflects upon this effect of expressing the real, in the same sort of way as Roland Barthes (1915-1980) expresses a similar study into the expression of the real within literary expressions and the study into the theory of literature. In this essay *The reality Effect* (1968), Barthes argues the capacity of the written expression to bear testimony of the "real" as being affected by the *effect of reality.*[55]

Roland Barthes' foremost field of investigation throughout his oeuvre was the study into the theory of literature, much rather than philosophy or the field where philosophy and history meet. However as time gave way to the development of discourses, spreading and deepening the understanding and intertwinedness of neighboring disciplines, the distinction between developing literary theory and philosophy (also the philosophy of language) has become to be more blurred. The fact that literary theory and philosophy came to meet is no wonder, as the complexity and the multifaceted nature of the written expression deserved the attention of linguistic philosopher to be studied closely.

Within his research, Barthes did not seem very interested in common statements about the structure of language. His dominating concern laid in the identification of a textual device that concerned itself with establishing literary texts as realistic. As shown in a reviewing essay upon this subject by Ankersmit, a professor of intellectual history and historical theory at the University of Groningen,

"the vehicle of a morality, of an ideology, or of a view of reality unsuspected by writer and

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[54] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back.* Madrid, 2010, p. 27.
[55] Barthes, R., *The reality effect.* in Dorothy J. Hale, The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000, Paris. 1968. p. 230-239.

reader alike – in short, of what Barthes likes to call, rather dramatically, mythology."[56]

As Akkermans points out, Barthes aims to present this so-called mythology, these manifestations of psychological, social or cultural truths, through language as a quasi-natural phenomenon that occurs in the transference of content from writer to reader. The text, not the people, thereby proves to be the founder and architect of this quasi-natural reality. The central idea in Barthes essay is that;

> "experience of the reality of the past must be linked to a so-called reality effect, an *effet de réel* which is created by irrelevant details mentioned in the historical text".[57]

Although Barthes writes about this representation of reality, the correspondence is directly visible between Barthes' theory, of the details pointing towards the expression of an effect of reality, and the way Warburg points to the gestures and/or forms repeating within the corresponding images presented on his tables of the atlas.

These traces in details, Barthes points at in his essay, point towards an effect that happens in and between the text, in the same sort of way as Warburg's research directs towards the relations and thereby the effect existing in and between the images. It is a trace, to be read in *the between*.

> a symbolic form ... is not some "intermediary" in a process of "communication" that transmits the meaning intended by the author to the audience; it is instead the result of a complex *process* of creation (the poietic process) that has to do with the form as well as the content of the work; it is also the point of departure for a complex process of reception (the *esthesic* process that *reconstructs* a "message").[58]

Where Barthes talks about a literary form of pointing towards the expression of the "real", Warburg, and Didi-Huberman in his re-reading of Warburg and his atlas, points towards the gesture or movement caught in the framed moment of the pictures or words. Both Barthes' text and Warburg's form confirm a contingency between the expression and the concrete world, as an absolute reference. The expression being an "as close as possible" expressing of the real as can be found, thereby needing almost minimal to no justification.

However, not all images in all combinations have the capacity to show a "real" beyond

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[56] Ankersmit FR, *The Reality Effect in the Writing of History: The Dynamics of Historiographical Topology*, Amsterdam. 1989, p. 139.
[57] Ibid. p.140.
[58] Nattiez, J.J. *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (*Musicologie générale et sémiologie),* 1987. translated: Carolyn Abbate. Mercer County, New Jersey. 1990. p. 17.

their singular form. Here we see a division of images, not all being the same. At least not all images have or show the same accessibility towards the small movements and gestures within their translation from thought into the form that can show us the reality beyond their contemporary form. But what this means is that some images do, and can show us glimpses, niplet of things, that appear before our eyes as our gaze passes them, forming splinters, for just a second. An image fades in, appearing within a millisecond, appearing as at the same time already on their way out of existence again. Here we can very clearly point out the difference of time in which the image and the glimpse live.

> "To glimpse, which does not mean 'to see less well' but, on the contrary, to see from the perspective of 'intimate and secret relations of things, correspondences and analogies".[59]

It can also be understood as,

> "there is structural transformation because, in the very precise spatial and temporal setting of the *templum,* the thing as visible unit, makes room for a system of multiple *figural relations* where everything that is seen is seen only by means of detours, relations, correspondences and analogies".[60]

This, by Didi-Huberman's understanding, constitutes a different seeing, a seeing into an existence apart or beyond our normal glance, reaching an existence of meaning present in a different space and time. Here a glimpse leads to a perspective beyond the frame of reference we trust, know and understand by the developments and discourses establishing the image as shown in Chapter 3.2, the idea of objective readability of the image. In other words, to glimpse does not mean seeing less, but from a new place, a new point of departure then when the thing to be seen has already become an object of observation, as these have already been positioned and is already watched and examined. To glimpse is to see only in passing, to barely see, already losing it while the view is still being cast. It is a seeing constituted on filling the empty spaces appearing within the quickness of our glance, filling these with form/concept associations, with relations/correlations, existing and being carried within us. The difference being the aspect of time, that the glimpse finds its identity in that the snippet of the moment that already slipped away, awakened a fascination, a stirring, a recognition of form. Presenting a form we can already recognize and fall in love with, somewhere within the seconds before it even was truly formed and instantly already lost again.[61]

Not all that can be seen passing by contains the glimpse that is referred to above. The thing that appears, in the small moment before it disappears again, as a small trace, a

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[59] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p. 37.
[60] Ibid. p. 37.
[61] See Didi Huberman, lecture, Division of Philosophy, Art & Critical Thought at the European Graduate School EGS, Saas-Fee, Switzerland. 2015.

residue of a question, evoking a memory or desire, finds a resonance with something within our consciousness, waking and stimulating a recognition, a resonance, a relation, within its fleeting moment of passing by. Leaving a trail of stirring, of emotion at the same moment it finds its way in and out of existence. This trail, lingering for just a bit longer than the form that has appeared in the just past glimpse. One of the great vocalizations of this phenomena can be found in the works of Charles Baudelaire, art critic and one of the great poets of the age of Enlightenment in French literature, his works hold within them elements of both Romanticism and Reason, as Baudelaire lived and worked at the junction of changing movements, in art, culture, economics and politics. In his poem *À une passante* (*Fleurs du mal*, 1868) Baudelaire gives voice to the glimpse. By doing so, giving testimony to the growing awareness concerning our human understanding and consciousness, as it was changing how people and society saw itself and the world around them.

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son oeil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair... puis la nuit! — Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! jamais peut-être!
Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!

The deafening street roared on. Full, slim, and grand.
In mourning and majestic grief, passed down,
A woman, lifting with a stately hand
And swaying the black borders of her gown;

Noble and swift, her leg with statues matching;
I drank, convulsed, out of her pensive eye,
A livid sky where hurricanes were hatching,
Sweetness that charms, and joy that makes one die.

A lightning-flash, then darkness! —Fleeting chance
Whose look was my rebirth — a single glance!
Through endless time shall I not meet with you?

Far off! too late! or never! — I not knowing!
Who you may be, nor you where I am going —
O You, whom I might have loved, who know it too![62]

What Baudelaire recognized in his poem, Warburg, although concerning different media, also recognized and put in play on the tables of his Mnemosyne atlas. Warburg created tables filled with collections of glimpsing moments, of expressing of details, caught by artists in frozen vocalization or expressions, in the same way, Baudelaire described in his famous poem. Warburg kept developing his studies, finally forming the (unfinished) atlas as can be studied now, up until his sudden death in 1929. All tables were created towards a more humanly collective interpretation and understanding of form expression. In its construction, Warburg discovered multiple themes, repeating forms or gestures expressing elemental emotional understandings of our humanity,

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[62] À une passante, C Baudelaire, *Fleurs du mal*, 1868. Trans.: Roy Campbell, *Poems of Baudelaire*, New York. 1952.

evoking by a glimpse appearing between the relations made on the tables, emotions such as desire, rage and hope. Although not all images or forms presented on the tables are alike at first glance, Warburg shows, table by table, theme by theme, small forms representing a transcendent motif, finding their way into expression through movements (wind for example) or gestures (a figure bearing a heavy burden, like Atlas) Every plate in Warburg's atlas develops, step by step, constantly further along, a research constructed out of a constant renewing of the temporary made image-constellations. These image - constellations were meant as Didi-Huberman so elegantly put it,

> to bring back into play: to reshuffle, to redistribute the cards – of art history – on some table and to gleam from this redistribution, the ability – which Baudelaire called the quasi divine, but I have come to understand to mean "quasi divinatory" – to re-read time in the disparity of images, in the always renewed parcelling out of the world.[63]

Expression overarching many different cultures over eons of expression through art, gesture or symbol. Forming expressions of elemental messages through a more primordial evocation, a summoning of a ghost out of dormancy, a presence that re-enters the surface again, showing confrontations and relations of cultural traditions and social memory, as they are places together on the tables created in the atlas.

However, the question remains how did Warburg recognize and see these forms corresponding? How to deal with a multitude of these evocative glimpses of elementary expression? What do these glimpses exactly hold within them that we recognize under the right circumstances? These were the questions leading to the creation of Warburg's understanding of his *Pathos formeln* and the afterlife (*nachleben*) in images.

3.6 Warburg's Pathos formeln and the Nachleben der Antike

- ### 3.6.1 Pathos and Pathos Formeln

Warburg began to understand that all the forms collected on the tables of his Mnemosyne atlas shared a similar *pathos*, to be defined as:

> "1: an element in experience or in artistic representation evoking pity or compassion
>
> 2: an emotion of sympathetic pity"[64]

The groups of images together creating what Warburg viewed as sets, all sharing the

[63] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p. 46.
[64] Definition from Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, retrieved on 02-05-2017, pathos as seen since Aristotle work on understanding.

same *Pathos formeln*[65], the same resonance of form accessing a specific motif or understanding, accessible through undergoing, or carrying the same sort of evocation within them. These selections made by Warburg's hand, show images presented together that share a similarity of glimpses, as recognized by him by the tools created in his research. All the images placed on the same table were selected on sharing the same ability to transfer motifs and understandings through the same sort of evocation present within the image. The evocation I talk about here is defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, as:

> "the act or fact of evoking: SUMMONING: such as
> a: the summoning of a spirit
> b: imaginative recreation an *evocation* of the past"[66]

In the construction of every plate, Warburg strived towards the ideal of creating an atlas that would form the beginnings of a *working mechanism,* a way that would show the mechanisms of tradition in form or analogies of image through time. For Warburg this meant the creation of a new anthropological way to (re)view form and the entire history of art production by regarding form as a way to carry timeless transcending expression and understanding, not bound to a culture or a time, but as a state to be accessed by evocation, *pathos*. This entailed the introduction of a new way of perceiving art, passed its status of being the product of just the culture from which it spawned, into a working model, to view the very image carrying at its core a transcending understanding overarching universal art production. To rephrase this, Warburg, through his *Pathos formeln,* approaches a new way of understanding, reading and re-reading the production of image and form, spanning from the antiquities, overarching the entire Western-American art production, up to contemporary form (seen up till 1929, the year he died), as contemporary (modern) production was just finding a new emergence of the same evocation, of the same *pathos* expression, just in a different space and time.

In order to understand and support this new understanding of art history, Warburg points to an entire range of primary emotional stirrings, such as *aggression, ecstasy, sacrifice, mourning, melancholia, triumph, defence, etc., to be* able to evoke through their depictions a greater understanding of the human condition. These emotions, Warburg found, showed their presence and expression through the revival of postures, movements, and gestures, seen in art since ancient art production. These images collected together a point towards the same *pathos* and laid bare what Warburg perceived as *Pathos formeln* – expressive repetitive forms as presenters of the most elemental, transcending understanding presented through form, lying at the core of our common humanity.

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[65] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p54.
[66] Definition from Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, retrieved on 02-05-2017.

- **3.6.2 Nachleben der Antike**

These forms collected in the atlas contained the reappearances of the same first clear models within them, stemming from ancient times, that formed the primary fascination and the core question of Warburg's lifelong studies, into the phenomenon what Warburg termed as *Nachleben der Antike*[67], or the *Afterlife of Antiquity.*

While Warburg's academic career started with his studies on Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*(1486), *Primavera* (late 1470s or early 1480s) and other works of art from the Italian Renaissance, in his later years, Warburg's attention, however, shifted and moved towards another point in time, the age of Enlightenment. As the age of Reason introduced a grand shift occurring in the Western society, the scientific revolution came to be accompanied by large political, economic and religious implications as well as big changes in art and in society in general. Warburg recognized these crucial moments in Western history, from the classical antiquity, the beginning of the Renaissance as well as the later age of Reason, as moments of great change, showing a transforming crisis. These moments, as Warburg studied them, formed in his view moments in which culture and cultural form opened up to rearrangement of all order and understanding of the present. This state of in-betweenness of redefining led to a climate for art to reflect and express happenings (both structurally in society as well as on an intrinsic and more personal level of understanding). In these times of transforming crisis, a new plane of re-understanding of the same motifs (both in a material and intellectual sense) that we saw primarily presented since classical antiquity, could come more easily and frequently into existence. Here society, culture, science – all orders of knowledge – seemed to be put on a table of their own, to form new constellations.

The moments in history that were affected by a great change formed a fertile ground for the occurrence of *nachleben* in Warburg's examination in which they became more frequently visible. The climate at these points in time, led to a grand rearrangement of perception and appropriation of subjects such as norm, of culture, of systems of thought and as a derivative result of form. The *nachleben* of forms, present in images, which Warburg built his research upon, were in his view created in archaic times, finding their first peak moment of expression in the cultural heydays of the classical antiquity and reappeared (under the right circumstances) over and over again in the entire production of form since that time.

How do we look at the afterlife, the longue durée of forms, the history of images and motifs? Warburg observed this by bringing together images, put on a table in order for images to find and construct new relations among each other, in which he recognized

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[67] Didi-Huberman, G. *"ARTISTIC SURVIVAL: Panofsky Vs. Warburg And The Exorcism Of Impure Time"*. *Common Knowledge* 9 (2). 2003. p. 273-285.

the same evocation of a primary human sense, some montages, and table experiments started showing a grand network, as forms collected and placed together showed,

> "motives transcend multiple turning points in historiography and boundaries between cultures".[68]

Warburg realized his model had to be built on another one which could suggest or assume a way of reaching far beyond a single expression based on religion or place, forming an unmistakable new anthropological way of conceptualizing and dreaming of the history of culture.

Around the same time, rethinking the image and its recurrence or reproduction including the concept of reminiscence and authenticity was not a topic that caught only Warburg's attention. Benjamin, who was significantly younger and not an art historian but a philosopher, essayist and art critic, was also fascinated and already working with the concept of a remanence in an image or artwork, and the production and duplication of form as it was changing since the dawn of modernity. Benjamin introduces the idea of the *aura*[69] of the original work, a presence, as he saw it, to be sucked out of reality[70] by the artist and put into the image. This aura, as Benjamin understood, was not transferable to a copy or reproduction as it was in the act of the artist's creation. The aura is forged by the artist by combining the technical and social creation and reception, and hence, the aura is created in the here and now of the combining of the conceptual and physical creation of the artwork. A copy or reproduction does not hold the same momentum and thereby can never capture the original *aura* in a reproduction. Benjamin wrote:

> in even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence – and nothing else – that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject… The here and now of the original underlies the concept of its authenticity.[71]

Although both authors are looking at a reminisce and essence lying at the core of the *je ne sais quoi*[72], this constant state of oscillation between imagination and reason, present in almost all great art pieces that can evoke an everlasting fascination, Warburg's *nachleben* of an image strive towards a much more art historical understanding pointing at a motif that comes from within the image. Benjamin, on the other hand, looks at a

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[68] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p. 74.

[69] Benjamin, Walter, trans.: Hannah Arendt, ed.*"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".* Illuminations. London. 1968. p. 214–18.

[70] Benjamin, W. trans.: Rodney Livingstone and Others, *Little history of photography,* Selected Writings Volume 2, 1927-1934, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1999, p. 518.

[71] Benjamin, Walter, trans.: Hannah Arendt, ed. *"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".* Illuminations. London. 1968. p. 221.

[72] English translation: 'I don't know what': a quality that cannot be exactly named or described

very precise moment of the here and now of creation of the artwork to retrieve the aura from that unique moment. In other words, in contrast to Benjamin's idea, of aura being *around* (coming from the sphere in which the work was created), Warburg's *nachleben* points to the remnant being present *within* the image, even so deeply embedded and carried in some forms, its motif, through repetition of form or gesture which can find a re-appearance in other artworks.

Stemming from this idea, Warburg deduced that in order for the motif to reappear, this would mean that somehow an elemental expression had to come from a kind of universal mnemonic trace left inside the images. By the evidence of their reappearance, there must have been left an *Engram*,[73] a residue of memory, within the *nachleben* that Warburg presented on his tables. *Engram*, here understood as forming a hypothetical means by which memory traces are stored, in a similar way as biophysical or biochemical changes in the brain (and other neural tissues of other organs) are stored and can respond to specific external stimuli, is a concept Warburg based on the work of the not-well-known memory researcher Richard Semon (1859–1918). These *Engrams* show their traces when getting confronted with external stimulation, causing an evocation of the information stored within. In this way, Semon argues that a memory of an expression, appearing as the aforenamed *Engram*, formed a permanent effect produced in the psyche. Only by this assumption, Semon would be able to explain the persistence of memory, and that, by the right stimulation, the mnemonic traces started to show themselves, in the repeating or succession of that form in future works or appearances. This way of thinking, by correspondence, by the comparison made to show such a similarity through multiple historical appearances, to draw an analogy between them, led Warburg to the idea that there is a similarity or relation between the manifestations of images, gestures, and forms through time. Here we encounter the survival or afterlife of the image or motif, as Warburg named this phenomenon which strongly resembles Semon's *Engram*. Here, the kind of "residue" as Barthes saw in his idea concerning the *effect of reality* within his research in textual language, the *nachleben* as Aby Warburg and the later thereby developed Warburgian school of art history would come to see it, finds its understanding of the underlying motif.

3.7 The Mnemosyne Atlas: Suffering under the burden of carrying the world

> The fate of Atlas grieves me (dustukhô) – my own brother,
> Who in far West stands with his unwieldy load.
> Pressing upon his back, the pillars of heaven and earth (akhthos ouk euakalon)[74]

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[73] Semon, R, Chapter II. *Engraphic Action of Stimuli on the Individual*, *The Mneme.* London. p. 24.
[74] Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, translated by P. Vellacott. 1961, p. 31.

Figure 19: *Plate 2: Atlas, Suffering / to carry the world,*
Mnemosyne Image Atlas, 1927-1929.

The same way the Titan is condemned to carry the whole order of the heavens and the entire axis of the world, the Mnemosyne atlas carries its own world and its own heavens. Introducing a (re)new(ed) understanding of the history of (Anglo- American) art, it entails a new psychology of human expression. On the black tables, creations are made containing figures that together overarch the Western traditions and expressions, freed from the dimensions of time and space. Each table seems to present a slice of a collected chaos, a section made out of all the orders, all the forms, in an attempt to strive towards a broader understanding of the world – images put into relation together and ordered by Warburg. Here we see collections of images bearing resemblances, both iconographic and/or ideological, as if pulled from the grand chaos of the world, to form on this table *a new plane of existence* – a form, by this act of being put on this table, freed from their space, their time, from the primary singular readability of their origins. Accumulating to each table images that together create their new plane of existence, as the afterlife of forms meet each other on this surface; Warburg approaches the concept of *Engram*.

Such an example can be seen in the images collected on Plate 2 (Figure 18), the plate of the Atlas. Here, the character of Atlas and others bearing a comparable burden are put in reference to each other by Warburg. The plate follows his usual train of thought, stemming from the idea of a *nachlebe*n of a specific and multiple recognizable expression, originated in antiquity, as an attempt to clarify the *Pathos formeln* present in the collection and confrontation of the meeting on the table. Here presented is the bearer of the burden, the figure carries and suffers in order to lend support to a great task. This, as Didi-Huberman states, is not an easy task:

> Carrying is possible only through the meeting of two antagonistic vectors: gravity on the one hand, and muscular strength on the other. Carrying shows the power of the carrier, but also the suffering the he endures under the weight that he carries.[75]

When looking at the Atlas, the force and suffering present in this figure is undeniable, and we can find a Farnese atlas presented in the top left corner of Plate 2, surrounded by other bearers of other burdens. Warburg on this table furthermore shows a very clear attempt to approach what he called the *denamography,* meaning "a state of constant conflict", of polarizing content, a double bind, existing within and/or between images collected. This *denamography* within images, as present in the figure which bears the burden, but stands his ground (suffering and power), reached far beyond their iconographical form and could, by the inclusive approach of Warburg, even be found concerning ideological and/or historical context dealing with the same appearance of this denamographic state of being.

The *denamography* present in the figure of Atlas, as Warburg approached it, stems from

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[75] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p. 62.

the myth of the ancient Titan, and can be found in a multitude of places. Other representations can be found in the depictions of the suffering of Saint Christopher, carrying the child Christ, the one holding the entire celestial sphere (a sign for power and glory) while carrying his own cross (a sign of devotion and humiliation)[76] (Figure 20), or a "man suffering from the French scourge"[77] (syphilis) depicted in a 1496 xylograph (Figure 21), by Dürer, carrying a celestial sphere atop his head, as a way to show simultaneously personal and worldly suffering obtained through an act of (careless) joy.

Figure 20: *Saint Christopher Carrying the Christ Child*, by Francisco Varela, 1638, Museum of Fine Arts, Sevilla, Spain.

Figure 21: *Syphilis man*, Attributed to Albrecht Dürer, 1496, Creative Commons.

The titan Atlas, for both Warburg as well as Didi-Huberman, as the origin from antiquities, lending his name and burdened back, seems to personify this pathos as being the clearest and most commonly known example (story). Both scholars

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[76] Ibid. p. 66.
[77] Warburg, A. "*Pagan-Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther". location unknown.* 1920. p. 222.

furthermore show a great understanding of how well the Atlas is symbolic for the entire exercise of the creation of Warburg's *Bilderatlas*. *The Mnemosyne atlas* was created as the place to allow the coming together of so many orders of understanding, discourses and visual aids and arts, as they depict and/or make use of this state of split characteristics present within, as the aforementioned arguments show in the chapter on Atlas(Chapter 3.3), performing and enduring on the edge of of his ability to bare.

On Atlas' shoulders and all the other depictions sharing in this *pathos formeln*, lies the capability to carry and survive (*nachleben* in its literal meaning), as he is the symbolic carrier beyond all means, and in this position, is able to transform space and temporal dimensions. His body and mass in contrasting relation to the Earth and heavens, whether referring to the character or the cartographical tool, has the strength and ability of (re)modeling space. His life is eternally locked in a human suffering and pulled out of progressing time.

Atlas' existence is locked away within the punishment and privilege of his duty. This is the "*formula of pathos*" present in the myths in which the figure (or character) Atlas is presented, on the verge of "being able", immeasurable strength glimpsing through the unending suffering that cannot be avoided. [78]

It is a conflicting condition that lures out the *pathos* within these characters. An understanding and emotion existing, however, created to show us a broader understanding of the world. Nietzsche also referred to such an understanding, as Didi Huberman mentioned in his work:

> To know the world, [...] is first of all to try to make it problematical. To do this, therefore, it is necessary to arrange things in such a way as to make their strangeness to appear within their contact with each other, made possible by the decision to transgress the pre-existing categorical limits, where things were more calmly "arranged". [79]

Here we find the lesson to be internalized – to learn from the many myths, the innumerable appearances that hold Atlas' story within them. A form of knowledge coming from turning a state of suffering into an immense knowledge – a new understanding, to be obtained by moving through a state of suffering, turned into an abundance of power, of possibilities, of knowledge and understanding.

Atlas' myth thereby also seems closely related to Warburg's own journey, his burden of suffering from manic depressions and multiple symptoms of schizophrenia and his hospitalization in a neurological clinic in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland in 1921 just before he started to work on the *Bilderatlas*. In his book, Didi-Huberman writes:

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[78] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p. 70.
[79] Nietzsche in ibid. p. 77.

How can we not think of Warburg who, from the depths of his madness, took himself for Kronos, and having returned home to his library, came to define himself as a "ghost" or "revenant" still chained to his burden of suffering, but invoking Mnemosyne – mother of the Muses – to bring his titanic to fruition.[80]

As seen on Plate A (Figure 16), by including his family tree as one of the organizational systems of how to approach a re-reading of the history of art and image, his Coordinates of Memory, Warburg also shows his awareness and inclusion of his own story, his own burden, and suffering. It seems therefore very plausible to assume that for Warburg, his own suffering, same as the Atlas, formed a portal, an access point, towards a re-reading, and a renewed understanding of the world. Both characters experienced knowledge obtained through a state of emotion, a journey made from *suffering* into *"dealing with"* moving from *myth* to *understanding,* from *imagination* into *reason.* This thinking was captured in one of Warburg's favored saying: "*per monstra ad sphaeram*"[81] to be translated as "*the gods have placed the monster [das Ungeheuer] before the idea.*"[82]

The monster present, studied and depicted can both be found in the works of Francisco de Goya, a Spanish romantic painter (1746 – 1828). Goya is often referred to as both one of the last of the old masters and simultaneously the first of the modern ones. During his lifetime Goya's work transformed immensely. Starting as a court painter at the Spanish Court in 1786, painting portraits of Spanish aristocrats and Rococo style tapestry cartoons, Goya suffered from an undiagnosed illness in 1793 which had left him deaf on both ears. Because of this his later work, after 1793, became progressively darker, showing studies and artistic expression new to his work, including the etching series *Los Caprichos* and *Los Disparates.* These works formed a critical reflection and condemnation of the foolishness of contemporary society as Goya view it and the universal follies clinging to the existence of mankind. One rather famous example of one of his etchings is a self portrait, named *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (The Sleep(dream) of Reason Produces Monsters) 1797-1999.

The full epigraph reads; "Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: united with her (reason), she (fantasy) is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels."[83]

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[80] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back.* Madrid, 2010, p. 80.

[81] Warburg, A. *Per la conferenza di Karl Reinhardt su "Le Metamorfosi di Ovidio", 24 ottobre 1924,* in A. Warburg, *Per monstra ad sphaeram,* ed. by D. Stimilli and C. Wedepohl, Abscondita, Milano, p.1924. p. 39-42.

[82] Idib. p. 39-42.

[83] Jensen, Robin M.; Vrudny, Kimberly J. *Visual Theology: Forming and Transforming the Community Through the Arts.* 2009. p. 39.

Figure 22: Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, *Untitled*.

Figure 23: Francisco José de Goya Lucientes, *The sleep of reason produces monsters*.

A nocturnal weight pushes down on the character's shoulders, his face not visible, as it is lying on the table, fast asleep. In the preparatory drawings (Figure 22) of this work the assumption is created that we are looking at a self-portrait of the artist himself. As the figure depicted sitting at the table, hunched over in a deep sleep, is being watched from above by another figure, seen on the left side above the sleeping figure. This figure shows a remarkable resemblance to Goya himself, looking down on his sleeping self.

While the dream can free the character from the bonds and horrors of his own fears of existence, the monsters presented in the drawings of Goya, moving and hovering above, refer to the artist's own demons, haunting him from within, images present in the dream, only to be dominated while awake by the power of reason. But the imagination that is presenting itself in the dream is ever present and the most visible in the artist's sketches. The drawing seems to be a dialogue, a reasoning between the two, two powers pulling, between imagination and reason. The *monstra* and the *astra.*

Goya, especially visible in the series of work *Los Caprichos* and *Los Disparates*, forms one of the first clear signs pointing towards a turn in the practice of art, as the movement of Enlightenment spreads and challenges the social, economic and scientific

understandings that are changing how mankind viewed the world and oneself in it. This point in time, social understandings, personal developments and scientific discourses were all in a state of movement due to so many discourses changing at the same time, stirred by the power of imagination. Goya, as Baudelaire would describe it, is an exemplary artist showing a paradoxical state of being within his work. This ability, to show the coming together of the *monstra* and the *astra*, to show them and let them be felt, to evoke, trigger and overcome this experience, be understood once more, that distinguishes the great artist, could open up new horizons.[84]

Images showing the burden and the power depicted of life experience transcending and undergoing, thereby moving towards and accessing new understandings or forms of knowledge, Warburg's *magnum opus* shows many trails, trickling down through history, crossing time and space showing recurrences of images and their makers pointing towards the same understanding. In Warburg's *Mnemosyne atlas*, over 1,000 images are collected, sorted in groups of conglomerations reaching the same level of evocation of the viewer, sharing and transferring the same accessibility of understanding anew. Following the figure who bears the burden on his back, the figure after Warburg's entire creation is named, the depiction of the ancient Greek atlas, he recognized the evocation repeated in the works of Francisco de Goya, lending his own burdens and knowledge into the creation of numerous of his works, including *The sleep of reason produces monsters, no: 43,* presented in the *Los Caprichos* series. Warburg, originally specialized in Ancient and Renaissance studies, recognized in the drawings of Goya, an artist questioning a dawning and renewed way of questioning and understanding the world, of a dialogue between intrinsic and external perception, fitting into a society, re-arranging itself through growing awareness of new knowledge. Goya's work, especially due to its two stages of development, in the early years of the practice mostly belonged to the old and classical form of art production, while later it found its expression at the peak of all change, and gave an artistic expression which introduced modernity.

> The figure of caprichos in Goya marks the apogee of this tradition and, at the same time, a point of no return that, with the Disparates and the disasters, make us enter fully the epoch to which Nietzsche, Freud and Warburg still belong, an epoch that no longer unilaterally agree with the powers of reason, but rather worries constantly about the powers, both knotted and discordant, of the imagination and of reason, of the monstra and the astra, of the darkness and the lightness.[85]

What Warburg's atlas and his entire body of work led towards, was the creation of a working model, a connection of knowledge, imagination, reason and its representation

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[84] Baudelaire, C. *Selected writings on Art and Literature*, (1846). translated by.: Charvet, P.E. 2006. p. 236-238.

[85] Didi-Huberman, *How to carry the world on one's back*. Madrid, 2010, p. 84.

in artworks encompassing time itself. Since the first spark of imagination found itself being born and ended up in the first drawing on the wall or clay being molded, imagination has formed the way of connection and incorporating forms of knowledge that reach beyond our own experience. Imagination became the driving force and vehicle through which knowledge could be evocated traveling from beyond our own complex framework of understandings and systems of thought. Imagination, traveling *through* the artist hand, *into* form wherein the right circumstances the knowledge incorporated and dormant presents itself yet again forming new relations and correspondences with its surroundings. What Warburg left us, is a new way to look at an anthropology or "cultural geology" of the immanence of image, an approach of how to look at the expression and understanding of motifs that since primordial times has been ever present but dormant, transcending every culture, every age. Through his working model, Warburg built a tool to recognize and evoke certain elemental expressions on a table, such as the knowledge through suffering that Atlas represents and can be re-read on continuous planes of existence. Warburg created, "A philosophical conception of relations between imagination and reason."[86]

> Atlas is therefore an organism for supporting, carrying or arranging conjointly a whole suffering knowledge to which the notion of nachleben refers, both as powers of memory and as potentialities of desires, and as knowledge of suffering, to which the notion of Pathosformel, for its part refers, making it possible for us to observe the gestures, symptoms and images.[87]

As the Atlas lives in a state of transition, between exhaustion and strength, humiliation and power, so carries the artist Goya, as he is one of the innumerable artists predating and surpassing him bearing the same awareness, a particular Pathos Formula which they inherited, stemming from the birth of imagination, as they translate then into the production of their works. The artist as a carrier of the imagination, as bearers of *nachleben* through the combination of their humanity, the education, and knowledge, their emotion, leaking through their hands into the lines and shapes and movements of their art. Bringing imagination to the work*table, as a tool,* and transform through a new arrangement, new relations, new correspondences, rootless in space and time, touching upon the universal, shows actual critical knowledge existing between the relation of the body (whether a body of work or human body) and the human mind.

> We could legitimately see the *Mnemosyne Atlas* of Aby Warburg as a tool for gathering, or for "sampling," by means of interposed images, the great chaos of history.[88]

Warburg, in his writing and his *Mnemosyne Atlas,* takes place as one of the systems of thought, as discourse and tool, to be placed on a new table, as one of the entities to

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[86] Ibid. p. 88.
[87] Ibid. p. 76.
[88] Georges Didi-Huberman, *"Sampling Chaos"*, *Etudes photographiques*, No 27, May 2011. p. 49.

rearrange and be rearranged, to be re-read, and inspire artist (as Camille Henrot) or new theoreticians dealing with contemporary practices (like Henk Bergdorf) reaching beyond Warburg's grasp, his time.

Figure 24: Camille Henrot. *Grosse Fatigue*, 2013; video: 13 min.
© ADAGP Camille Henrot. Courtesy of the Artist, Silex Films, and kamel mennour, Paris.

Conclusion:

The lasting impact of the stories and motives illuminated in this thesis account for their reality-shaping power. Terra Incognita became Australia - a geographically articulable nation - and the figure of Atlas holds not only the heavens, but an entire system of knowledge which entails its motif again. The internalisation of the morality of a story such as Utopia, shows resemblances to the story of Atlas, Utopia just as Atlas is trapped in a state of unattainability, never to be left or reached. Importantly, the form of those motifs can and does change constantly, as has been pointed out before. Thus, what shifts is not the motif itself, but the way it is formed and expressed.

Both Utopia's unreachability and Atlas' suffering turned into a suffering knowledge at the core of Warburg's understanding which meant to be expressed and put into practice through the use of the Mnemosyne Atlas.

In this respect, the Atlas is both the method to find a motif and a motif itself. Shifting into different forms - such as names for actual geographic places, containers of knowledge, architectonical and artistic objects, and of course stories - Atlas as a motif demonstrates the immense impact his pathos evokes. This awareness is crucial for my understanding of artistic practice as well. What remained for me ungraspable and too vague to articulate for a long time, received a shape through this discussion. Warburg's pathosformeln gave him a format of constants of form, of movement, of symbolism, pointing to a constant of similar human emotional expression, inherited down from ancient times, recurring within great works of art and design. This meant: to look at the portrayal or communication of emotions, movement and passion, through a repeatable visual, existing in a non-linear but accessible space, reaching beyond time and culture.

The tables of the atlas are the workspace for Warburgs universe, a place and method set to organize a rendezvous of the objects of humanity. Here all entities meet and arrange each other again, every time in new conglomerations and intimate relations, blossoming and growing into new readings, new understandings of the world, that tell and retell, and can be read and reread once more - never compromising the images in any way .

As such, the timeframe in which Utopia finds it's recurring motif repeated and transferred is not of importance. The circumstances much more so. Not all stories create a same "workroom" for intrinsic motifs to find their expression. But some, those who travel towards an elemental and internal understanding instead of a self fulfilling conquest, can find themselves resonating in the "workroom" created around a campfire. There, actors, situation and story, can form a "conceptual table" similar to the one Warburg created. But where the campfire becomes a *table*, it becomes mostly a tool to extract a motif. The actors present on this new plane become the signifiers still in play.

becoming the entities on the table, bringing all the orders and understandings they carry with /within them.

Atlas on the other hand, in the complexity of his being, is able to transcend the status of being played on a table, bringing forth just *his* motif. He is able to carry his own pathos, as well as carry innumerable other containers, of method, of knowledge, of motifs. He *is* a method to incorporate a multitude of motifs. And by being so, finds himself carrying Utopia, among countless other, as he is the holder, the carrier of infinite worlds. Being part and simultaneously supporting worlds beyond his own grasp.

Just as Atlas became the suffering carrier of the weight of knowledge itself, the artist aware of these ideas, has the ability of creating a table her- or himself which provides a plane on which motifs can be made visible, and can become a guardian or provoker of motifs being put or taken out of play within his or her works. Warburg's mnemosyne Atlas gives us an entire discourse of dealing, creating and understanding these tools, leaving me with the idea that artistic practice becomes the table - coming closest to an answer of what artistic research can be as well.

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