<NEW RECTO><CH>**11. Grey Illuminations: Foucault and Warburg in the Kingdom of Shadows**

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'Genealogy is gray, meticulous and patiently documentary.'[1] The opening statement of Michel Foucault's 1971 essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' reiterates Friedrich Nietzsche's polemics against 'the genuinely *English* type' of genealogy, 'gazing around haphazardly in the blue,' launched in the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*.[2] As the antidote to the ethereal realms of the soul and sky hypothesized in earlier genealogies of humankind's development, the German philosopher advances his own gray tactics, determined to mine 'the entire long hieroglyphic record, so hard to decipher.'[3]

Turning away from human interiority and the perceived grand teleologies of Spirit and Reason, gray genealogy traverses the exterior margins of a vast and often discouraging terrain overlain with opacities, densities and minutiae, not in order to retrieve some transcendental signifier hidden beneath or beyond the 'field of entangled and confused parchments,'[4] but to demonstrate how the very idea of origins, essences and first principles has been retroactively constructed and subsequently covered over. As a general strategy, Foucault delineates his concepts negatively by cropping out what they are not. Discourse, he asserts, is

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[1] Michel Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" [1971] in *The Foucault Reader* trans. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon 1984) 76-100, 76.

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche's Preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals* [1887] in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* ed. & trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library 2000) 453 and 457.

[3] Nietzsche 457.

[4] Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 76.

not, 'a manifest, visible, coloured chain of words.'[5] Consequently the genealogist should 'not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity.'[6] In the two programmatic declarations made a century apart by Nietzsche and Foucault, grayness denotes the dense and disjunct strata uncovered in the genealogical analysis of descent, or what the opening sentence of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* describes as, 'the movements of accumulation and slow saturation, the great silent, motionless bases that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events.'[7]

The thesis that knowledge and reason are historically contingent, obeying the provisional and unconscious roots of a period's dominant episteme, was first formulated in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Working at the fringes of discursive formations, the archaeological method crafted by Foucault is not concerned with language as an instrument to express emotions or communicate ideas, nor with the content or message of individual texts, but as a framework that regulates the conditions of possibility of what can be said or thought at a given time. In the renowned analysis of Diego Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas* (1656) undertaken in the opening pages of the book, the author reflects on the limits of his own ekphrasis by appealing to a tenacious grayness. Rather than seeking to abridge the chasm between language and looking, the sayable and the seeable, verbal description and pictorial surface, Foucault insists that the lacuna that separates them must remain open and undecided:

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[5] Michel Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [1969] trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books 1977) 48.

[6] Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 81.

[7] Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 3

if one wishes to treat their incompatibility as a starting-point for speech instead of as an obstacle to be avoided, so as to stay as close as possible to both, then one must erase those proper names and preserve the infinity of the task. It is perhaps through the medium of this grey, anonymous language, always over-meticulous and repetitive because too broad, that the painting may, little by little, release its illuminations. [8]

The grayness of archaeology, congruently, results from an act of erasure, as digging inevitably disturbs the topsoil, breaking up the crust of proper names and events and blurring out the higher stratum of meanings and ideas. In his book-length essay on René Magritte a few years later, Foucault once more describes the indeterminate space between words and images, texts and figures, as a gray interstice. 'The slender, colorless, neutral strip,' he maintains, 'must be seen as a crevasse—an uncertain, foggy region.'[9]

Taken together, Foucault's methodological musings confer a double valance to grayness. On the one hand, it denotes the empirical materials submitted to archeological and genealogical investigation; on the other, the medium through which the analyses themselves are conducted. These two distinct meanings of grayness converge in the general critique not only of historical hermeneutics but also of language itself immanent to Foucault's project. The causal and progressive timelines of history, forged from random events and isolated accidents, are in part an effect of the linearity of written language. As an alternative to such a carefully wrought and intelligible order, designed to overcome discontinuities and replenish gaps, 'so

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[8] Michel Foucault *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966] trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge 1989) 10.

[9] Michel Foucault *This is Not a Pipe* [1973] trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 1983) 28.

that the chain of knowledge may be made visible in all its clarity, without any shadows or lacunae,'[10] archaeology and genealogy conceives of time as dispersed and scattered. Instead of summoning clear voices and colorful characters from archival records, it isolates these traces as monuments, as stony slabs abandoned by the past, inert, mute and gray, in order to stake out the distances of the unsaid that separates them.[11] The cartographic and topographic inflection so prevalent in Foucault's writings thus conjectures that language, rather than a transparent and representational medium, constitutes a territory in its own right, shattered by seismic shifts in the course of time and deposited into distinct and disjunct strata.

The plea to a 'gray science,' to paraphrase Nietzsche, immersed in the muffled background noise of the archive, may in hindsight prompt a consideration of the epistemological ground that Foucault's gray illuminations *of* the history of systems of thought obscured. As Friedrich Kittler has noted, Foucault's methodology grinds to a halt at the moment when the era of the book is over. While the sources traditionally analyzed by the historian may be heterogeneous and contradictory, 'extremely diverse in terms of addressee, distribution technique, degree of secrecy, and writing technique,'[12] they were nonetheless inscribed and preserved within the monopolistic medium of written language, the same medium

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[10] Foucault *The Order of Things* 96

[11] "Archaeology" Foucault explains, "does not treat discourse as *document*, as a sign of something else, as an element that ought to be transparent, but whose unfortunate opacity must often be pierced if one is to reach at last the depth of the essential in the place in which it is held in reserve; it is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a *monument*." Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 138-9.

[12] Friedrich Kittler *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* [1986] trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1999) 5.

through which the archaeologist conducted his critique of positivist historicity. However, as Kittler reprimands Foucault:

> Even writing itself, before it ends up in libraries, is a communication medium, the technology of which the archeologist simply forgot. It is for this reason that all his analyses end immediately before that point in time at which other media penetrated the library's stacks. Discourse analysis cannot be applied to sound archives or towers of film rolls.[13]

In media archaeology, the analysis of different genres of discourse is supplanted by the analysis of discourse networks, *Aufschreibesysteme*, the media-technological a prioris that subtend the discursive field and that function independently and indifferently of whatever enunciations are channeled through them. From the perspective of media archaeology, discourse is not formed and dispersed 'in the dust of books,'[14] but in the substrate of communication technologies; not deposited in 'the wavelike succession of words,'[15] but in analog waves, electric currents and digital pulses. A different spectrum of gray therefore confronts the media archaeologist. While the 26 letters of the alphabet effectively filtered out noise, the automated tools for inscription, storage and transmission introduced in the nineteenth century— photography, phonography and cinematography, all ending with the suffix *graphē*, 'writing'— drastically altered signal-to-noise and foreground-to-background ratios. With the indiscriminate recording of electromagnetic waves as grains, specks and sparks, Kittler says, 'media were engulfed by the noise of the real.'[16] But these grains also contained the kernel for a different articulation of the

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Foucault *Archaeology of Knowledge* 25.

[15] Kittler 6.

[16] Ibid. 14.

past, 'freed from the anthropological theme,'[17] as Foucault implored, and its causality-driven vectors.

Post-Kittlerian media archaeologies have subsequently uncovered the gray strata of techno-mathematical operations: the code layer of numerical algorithms; the physical layer of circuits, cables, sensors and servers; and the geological substrate of rare earth minerals out of which electronic media devices are wrought. The archaeology of knowledge and the archaeology of media are nonetheless programmatically allied not merely in their stance against anthropocentric and teleologic narratives, but also in the granular and unassuming nature of the material with which they engage, or what media theorists Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey simply denominates as 'gray media.'[18] In the first case, medical journals, bureaucratic files, administrative notes and memos; in the second, lines of code, protocols, data sets, technical patents and standards. Gray media are thus for all intents and purposes operative in the background, and therefore constitutively overlooked. The following pages likewise proposes to understand grayness as a medium in its own right. They will proceed, however, by assuming the opposite approach; not by attending to the obscured and unnoticed background, but by clinging to the phenomenological surface of photographic grayness.

The grayness with which the present inquiry is concerned constitutes a medium in three respects: in the etymological sense as a space in-between; in the spiritualist sense as a realm for communicating with ghosts and spirits; and in the heuristic sense as a tool for conducting archaeological and genealogical investigations. The discussion below is structured around two focal points. First with regard to some early responses to the projections of animated photograms at the turn of the last century, which on the one hand were reproached as

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[17] Foucault *Archaeology of Knowledge* 16.

[18] Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey *Evil Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2012) 1, 11-14.

a phantomization of the world, transforming living beings into anemic sleepwalkers, and on the other hailed as a reawakening of the dead, a resurrection of the past, and the source for a new form of history. From here, the discussion moves on to consider the significance of grayness in the photographic montage that was mounted by the German cultural historian Aby Warburg in the late 1920s on the black panels of his *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*. Tracing the afterlife (*Nachleben*) of pagan antiquity through recursive *Pathosformeln*, Warburg's coinage for psychic states of passion or suffering frozen in the movement and fossilized as gestures, the *Mnemosyne* project will be addressed as a particularly potent, if bewildering, exponent of a gray genealogy, historically situated between Nietzsche and Foucault. This discussion finally beckons toward a more elusive a priori, one that calls for an archaeology of the phantasmatic media of the imaginative faculty.

<A> Gray Magic

In the summer of 1896, Maxim Gorky attended the demonstration of the Cinématographe Lumière at the annual All-Russian Exhibition in his hometown of Nizhni-Novgorod. This is what Gorky had to report after his descent from the fairgrounds into 'The Kingdom of Shadows':

> Everything there—the earth, the trees, the people, the water and the air—is dipped in monotonous grey. Grey rays of the sun across the grey sky, grey eyes in grey faces, and the leaves of the trees are ashen grey. [. . .] All this is in grey, and the sky above is also grey [. . .] Noiselessly, the ashen-grey foliage of the trees sways in the wind, and the grey silhouettes of the people, as though condemned to eternal silence and cruelly punished by being deprived of all the colours of life, glide noiselessly along the grey ground. [. . .] Before you a life is

surging, a life deprived of words and shorn of the living spectrum of colours—

the grey, the soundless, the bleak and dismal life.[19]

Invoked no less than seventeen times in Gorky's review, a prodigious grayness defines the simulated half-life conjured by the cinematograph. It is worth recalling that this is the account of an aspiring author, subsequently to become the founder of the socialist realist movement, who bears witness to the shattering of the symbolic order of written language by the intrusion of analog media of technical reproducibility. Whereas the initial journalistic reception of the Lumière screenings that had taken place six months earlier in Paris extolled the medium's miraculous capacity to capture and reproduce life itself, even 'in color' as one exalted reviewer erroneously exclaimed,[20] Gorky scorns cinema as a gloomy travesty of the afterlife, caught in a loop of endless reruns. 'Curses and ghosts, evil spirits that have cast entire cities into eternal sleep comes to mind,' he writes, 'scraping together all the pigment of earth and sky into a monotonous grey colour.'[21] While quick to divulge the bleak and juddering chimera as a simple illusionist trick, Gorky nonetheless admits to succumbing to the mechanically induced sorcery. Internalizing the life-draining grayness, his 'consciousness begins to wane and grow dim.' Along similar lines, the Russian symbolist Zinaida Gippius speaks of 'the grey dead of the

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[19] Maxim Gorky "A review of the Lumière Programme at the Nizhni-Novgorod fair, as printed in the *Nizhegorodski listok*, newspaper, July 4, 1896, and signed 'I.M. Pacatus.' Translated by Leda Swan" in Jay Leyda *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (New York: Macmillan 1960) 407-9, 407-8.

[20] Review in *Le Radical* December 30, 1895, cited by Noël Burch in *Life to Those Shadows* ed. and trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1990) 20.

[21] Gorky 408.

cinematograph' in her 1911 novel *The Devil's Doll*, and in a short story published three years later, a character who has entered a pact with the devil is transported to a medially updated version of the infernal region, 'surrounded by a cinematograph: everything was black and grey, fast-moving. Agitated and voiceless, and I too was part of the cinematograph. I wasn't afraid, just bored.'[22] This fate befalls mankind in its entirety in Salomo Friedlaender's fantastic novel *Gray Magic* from 1922, which envisages a technology through which to take complete mastery over the mediating substance of ether.[23] Through this device, monitored by a telepathically controlled typewriter, the ethereal emanations of the human brain can be directly transmitted onto external reality, and the whole planet transformed into an achromatic and three-dimensional cinematic projection.

The Lumière brothers cunningly staged the passage from the old medium of photography to the new medium of cinematography as a magician's trick, opening their shows with the projection of a still photograph that, after a few moments of inertia, unexpectedly rippled into motion. As Gorky tells us, 'suddenly a strange flicker passes through the screen and the picture stirs to life.'[24] Stirring *anima*, a current of air or breath, into the frozen image, this gimmick inferred that life henceforth could be reanimated and reversed at will by the cranking of the projector. Where Gorky saw mere shadows, anemic undead inhabiting a permanent twilight, others eulogized the gray magic of sequentially projected photograms as a resurrection. In his 1898 appeal for the establishment of a national archive of animated

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[22] As quoted in Yuri Tsivian *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1998) 7 and 8.

[23] See Friedrich Kittler's discussion of Friedlaender's novel *Graue Magie: Ein Berliner Nachschlüsselroman* in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* 59, 77 and 248-9.

[24] Gorky 407.

photography, Boleslas Matuszewski, an early practitioner of the Lumière Cinématographe, compared the life conserved in the granular deposit on the celluloid ribbon to 'those elementary organisms that, living in a latent state, revive after years given a bit of heat and moisture.'[25] This emulsified life, Matuszewski says, is 'scarcely sleeping,' and 'it only requires, to reawaken it and relieve those hours of the past, a little light passing through a lens in the darkness!'[26] This notion prevails in André Bazin's canonical treatise on photographic autonomism half a century later, comparing the 'grey or sepia shadows, phantomlike and almost undecipherable,' embalmed in the silver-gelatin to insects 'preserved intact, out of the distant past, in amber.'[27] In Antiquity, it is worth to recall, amber was believed to be the product of sun rays moistening the topsoil, leaving behind an oily layer of film.[28] The classic Latin and Greek names for amber, *electrum* or *ēlektron*, we can further note, mean 'beaming sun.' In the light beam from the projector's lamp, Bazin continues, the life fossilized in each photogram is released from its 'convulsive catalepsy.'[29]

The magic moment at which 'the picture stirs to life' performed at the Lumiére shows may therefore be taken quite literally, as a stirring up of the sediments embedded in the

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[25] Boleslas Matuszewski *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire* [1898] "A New Source of History" trans. Laura U. Marks and Diane Koszarski *Film History* Vol. 7 No. 3 (Autumn 1995) 322-324, 323.

[26] Ibid.

[27] André Bazin "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" [1945] trans. Hugh Gray *Film Quarterly* Vol. 13 No. 4 (Summer 1960) 4-9, 8.

[28] Pliny the Elder *The Natural History of Pliny, Volume VI* trans. John Bostock and Henry T. Riley (London: H.G. Bohn 1857) 399.

[29] Bazin 8.

mineral solution, miraculously transformed into a lifegiving fluid. Despite Gorky's emphasis on the insubstantial and phantasmatic nature of the oneiric images, his insistence on their all-pervasive grayness ultimately points to their material condition on the molecular level in the oxidized grains of silver halide. Rushing before the projector's lamp, the illuminated grains of salt open up an ontological gray zone between life and death, presence and absence. In the procession of shadows that Gorky rebuked as a distressing daydream, Matuszewski instead recognized 'a new source of history.' The novelty was not only afforded by the camera's servitude as a neutral witness at the scene of significant events, but by its indiscriminate record of everyday life and its material surrounds. What Gorky describes as a levelling of figure and ground, grinded down into a uniform grayness, generates an archive of 'gray noise': the random noise that results when all frequencies are equally loud. Put differently, the automatic recording of history facilitated an infinite repository of accidents, contingencies and minutia, precisely the kind of source material mined by the new historian identified by Foucault.[30]

As our final interlocutor on photographic grayness before considering its role in the *Bilderatlas* constructed by Aby Warburg, we turn to Vilém Flusser's proposal for a philosophy of photography. With the advent of the first fully automated image, the photographic camera, the pictorial surface disintegrated into a field of grains. Thereby, Flusser asserts, history, the historical consciousness perpetuated by the linearity of written language, is formally over. The swarm of particles or 'pixels' (picture elements) brings about a post-historic spatialization of time, fragmented and dispersed. First and foremost, 'the photographic

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[30] For a discussion on cinema and contingency, see Mary Ann Doane *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press 2002).

universe is grainy,' Flusser says, made up of agglomerations of quanta, dots and granules.[31] The general grayness that results from the mixture of black and white, from the absolute absence or presence of light, which are reversed on the negative, does not correspond to any real situation in the external world but attests instead to the picture's origin in the theory of optics. With the progression toward lower grain, higher resolution and color sensitivity, this origin is gradually concealed. Uncolored photography is therefore truer, since it discloses the automated operations of optical mechanisms, dark room chemicals and silver nitrate processing. Theoretical fidelity comes at the expanse of chromatic high fidelity, it seems, or as Mephistopheles says in *Faust*, ''Gray, my dear friend, is all theory.'[32] Echoing this assessment, Flusser writes: 'Grey is the colour of theory: which shows that one cannot reconstruct the world anymore from a theoretical analysis. Black-and-white photographs illustrate this fact: They are grey, they are theoretical images.'[33]

From the discussion above we can infer three distinct affordances associated with the medium of photochemical grayness, all of which are pertinent to Warburg's *Mnemosyne* atlas project. First, it causes a dimming and dulling of vitality. Second, it enables a controlled form of reawakening of these diminished energies. And third, it constitutes a medium for theoretical speculation. For Warburg, grayness prepares the ground for a new form of historical knowledge that straddles the permeable boundaries between science and magic. In his own

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[31] Vilém Flusser *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* [1983] trans. Anthony Mathews (London: Reaktion Books 2000) 66.

[32] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe *Faust: A Dramatic Poem* trans. A. Hayward (Boston: Ticknor and Fields 1868) 93. I am indebted to Aron Vinegar for pointing out the connection between Mephistopheles' utterance and the "gray on gray" passage from Hegel to me.

[33] Flusser 42.

words, the image scholar assumes the role of a 'necromancer,' whereas the *Mnemosyne* atlas consequently comprises 'a ghost story for adults.'[34] This terminology suggests that Warburg was working in the tradition of the phantasmagoria as practiced by necromancers and ghost conjurers of the late eighteenth century.[35] Whereas the magic lantern horror shows abided to a simple didactic logic whereby terrifying images were first projected and then exorcised by flaunting their artificial nature, however, the *Mnemosyne* atlas cautioned the researcher not to fall prey to the fallacy that we are in control of images. On the contrary, the history of Western civilization offers ample evidence that the opposite is the case. The energies transmitted by the image must therefore be confronted with restraint, mediated and modified by a sobering grayness.

<A> Anemic Awakening

In the *Grisaille Notebook* (1928-29), the working journal that Warburg kept during the final year of his life, an analogy is established between the quattrocento technique of grayscale painting and the tactical deployment of photographical reproductions in the *Mnemosyne* atlas:

> The strength of the artist in keeping these forces at bay without forfeiting their vitalizing influence is symbolized in the artistic means of the *grisaille*. Here the artist makes use of the symbols of pagan frenzy without allowing them to

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[34] Philippe-Alain Michaud *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (Zone Books: New York 2004) 236 and 242.

[35] For a discussion of how optical ghost shows, gothic novels and spiritualist séances came to inform the arguments of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer, see Stefan Andriopoulos *Ghostly Apparitions: German Idealism, the Gothic Novel, and Optical Media* (New York: Zone Books 2013).

encroach on his peace of mind. He keeps them at a safe distance by not allowing these figures fully to come to life.[36]

Grisaille painting models its subjects in shades of gray of various brightness to emulate the three-dimensional plasticity of reliefs chiseled in mineral friezes. A certain minerality is thereby conferred to living bodies, rendering them as stony sculptures. What renaissance artists achieved through a delicate layering of tones, shades and tints, Warburg sought to recreate by means of black-and-white gelatin silver photographs. In both cases, his journal entry suggests, grisaille proffered a means of protection against the affective and animistic charge of the imagery. Before considering the tempering function of grisaille further, however, let us pause to reflect on the spatial and territorial tropes that inform Warburg's research in a dialogue with those subsequently advanced by Foucault. In the first case, the cartographic metaphor of a *Bilderatlas* and its concomitant terminology of image vehicles (***Bilderfahrzeuge*), image migration (*Bilderwanderung*) cultural pathways (*Wanderstrassen der Kultur*) and border guards (*Grenzwächter*). In the second, what Foucault glossed as his 'spatial obsessions,' seeking to describe and demarcate the formations, transformations and delimitations of discursive spaces through the inquisitive lens of regional phenomena, administrative practices, and territorial struggles.[37] My contention in what follows is twofold: first, that the spatial inflection evident across both sets of writing is indicatory of a methodological common ground; and second, that this spatializing approach is intrinsic to grayness as a medium.

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[36] Ernst Gombrich *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* [1970] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1986) 296.

[37] Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* ed. Colin Gordon trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books 1980) 69.

In the concluding paragraphs of the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault describes his mode of writing as the construction of 'a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself.'[38] The *Mnemosyne* was designed precisely for this purpose. Rather than a rigorously tabulated and taxonomized pictorial encyclopedia, it was intended to serve as a heuristic tool for navigation, pathfinding and tunneling. The atlas was thus conceived of as a form of spatial intelligence, or what Warburg, in a metaphor originally referring to Nietzsche, likened to a seismographic sensor.[39] This instrument was not merely primed to register seismic disturbances in the earth, however, but to actively provoke them; unshackling figures and motifs sedimented in the soil of Western culture so as to stir up and tap into their energetic currents. In common with the archaeologist described by Foucault, the iconographer 'is forced to advance beyond familiar territory, far from the certainties to which one is accustomed, towards an as yet uncharted land,' where he is to confront the 'dim mechanisms, faceless determinations, a whole landscape of shadow that has been termed, directly or indirectly, the unconscious.'[40] For Warburg, this unthought or unconscious dimension was the world of pagan antiquity, a domain that had been buried deep beneath the humanist discourse of art history and the hermeneutic tradition through which it operated. Inspired by the Apolline and Dionysiac polarity described by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Warburg's view of

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[38] Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 17.

[39] For an in-depth discussion on the implication of the seismographic metaphor, see Georges Didi-Huberman *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms* [2002] trans. Harvey L. Mendelsohn (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press 2017) 67-83.

[40] Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 39 and *The Order of Things* 355.

antiquity stands in stark opposition to the becalmed grace and perfection eulogized by Winckelmann and institutionalized by art historians of the nineteenth century. Rather than a rebirth of the virtues and virtuosity of the classical age, retroactively dubbed a *renaissance*, the 'reawakening of antiquity'[41] disclosed by the *Bilderatlas* is commensurate to a return of the repressed, erupting in agitated or manic gestures of terror and turmoil. The recursive phenomena of *Pathosformeln* are thus to be understood as performances of an invisible power, channeling the savage and superstitious undercurrents of European culture, or what Warburg simply referred to as the psychic pulsations transmitted by 'unchained, elemental man.'[42]

The propensity to translate temporal relations into spatial terms shared by Warburg and Foucault can in the first instance be understood as a reaction against, and a renouncement of, an orthodox dramaturgy of history, plotted and propelled by individual agents, authors and artists, elicited through lineages of influence and intentionality from predecessors to successors, and kept in check through the 'proper names' of biographies, oeuvres, epochs and canons, or what Foucault refers to as the 'pre-existing forms of continuity' that undergird the historian's effort 'to master time.'[43] These forms will shatter, however, if one instead pays sustained attention to the 'dispersions themselves.'[44] The formal principle that impels Warburg's final project is also succinctly paraphrased by Foucault in his brief but

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[41] Aby Warburg "Dürer and Italian Antiquity" in *Aby Warburg: The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* eds. Steven Lindberg trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Publications 1999) 553–558, 553.

[42] Letter from Warburg dated 26 December 1923 as quoted by Kurt W. Forster "Introduction" in *Aby Warburg: The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* 1–75, 25.

[43] Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 25 and 22.

[44] Ibid. 37.

influential proposal for a heterotopic approach to history, instigated as a shift from a linear succession of causally driven events to a spatial collocation and juxtaposition 'of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.'[45] Genealogical research is thus in both cases conceived of as a spatial, or space enabling, enterprise, devoted to open up new terrains of knowledge. These general comparative remarks now call for a closer consideration of the spatial dispositif of the *Bilderatlas*, and the role it conferred to the medium of grayscale reproduction.

The photographic collection that Warburg began to assemble in the 1880s drastically expanded as the *Mnemosyne* project gathered apace. At the time of his death, the image archive comprised some 400.000 items, out of which approximately 1000 were mounted on seventy-nine wooden boards stretched with black canvas that make up the atlas in the provisional, unfinished form.[46] This form was shaped by the dynamic principles of dispersal and distillation and, more pragmatically, in the photographic laboratory that was part of the library facilities. Artifacts of highly diverse provenance were first cropped, cut and magnified, then arranged and rearranged into ever-malleable constellations, not in order to arrive at a

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[45] *Michel Foucault "Of Other Spaces"* [*1967/1984*] *trans. Jay Miskowiec Diacritics Vol. 16 No. 1 (Spring 1986) 22–27, 22.*

[46] I am here referencing merely one of several documented versions of the *Mnemosyne* atlas, none of which is to be considered definitive. While two volumes of text and a bibliography were originally planned for the completed project, the *Mnemosyne* remains today primarily as a visual genealogy. For a discussion, see Katia Mazzucco "(Photographic) Subject-matter: Fritz Saxl Indexing *Mnemosyne*—A Stratigraphy of the Warburg Institute Photographic Collection's System" *Visual Resources: an international journal on images and their uses* Vol. 30 No. 3 (2014) 201-221.

conclusive interpretation but, on the contrary, to defer closure and the teleology that it implies. The inclusion of non-art imagery in the late iterations of the atlas, spanning antique coins and playing cards to contemporary propaganda flyers, newspaper clippings and commercial ads, reflects Warburg's resentment of 'aestheticizing art history,'[47] which reduces images to formal objects and thereby deprives them of life. Cut loose from the conventional criteria of art history and disseminated on the black fabric without regard to medium or artistic merit, 'surrounded on all sides by an immense region of shadow,' to borrow a phrase from *The Order of Things*,[48] subterranean morphological echoes emerged in a startling montage of anachronistic jump-cuts.

Technical reproducibility further underscored the key genealogical intuition 'that none of the images is the original,' as Giorgio Agamben points out, and that the emotive formulas therefore are not retraceable to 'an origin presupposed in time.'[49] Conversely, the psychic energies tracked on the panels are only observable in their singular and recursive effects, as events rather than origins, given as variations of a theme, not as archetypes. From another perspective, however, the atlas is patently un-photographic in the sense that it inverts the relation between photographic automatism and moving subjects. Instead of capturing bodies in the act of an expressive gesture, the camera was directed at already immobilized

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[47] Quoted from Aby Warburg's preparatory notes for his lecture on the serpent ritual *at the Kreuzlingen clinic and dated* March 14, 1923*, published in the appendix "Memories of a Journey Through the Pueblo Region" in* Michaud 301.

From Warburg's in the appendix to Philippe-Alain Michaud's *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* [1998] trans. Sophie Hawkes (Zone Books: New York 2004)

[48] Foucault *The Order of Things* 360.

[49] Giorgio Agamben *The Signature of All Things: On Method* trans. Luca D'Isanto with Kevin Attell (Brooklyn: Zone Books 2009) 29 and 32.

bodies: chiseled, carved, engraved, or otherwise. In order to confer motion back into these inert figures, we may therefore say that Warburg reversed the gimmick of the Lumiére brothers' projector, where life suddenly rippled through a still photograph. The *Mnemosyne* atlas did not engender movement through temporal synthetization but through spatial dispersion and paratactic connectivity within and across the panels. While liquidating the authorial aura of the reproduced artworks, levelling them with more mundane imagery, a different kind of 'aura' beckoned from the panels, an anonymous and unruly presence that Warburg sought to control through the medium of photographic grayness.

The result is intrinsically paradoxical. While the atlas was devoted to the visceral expressions of the human body and its accessories, what Warburg termed *bewegts Leben*, the world it charts is without hue, bloodless and disenchanted. In David Freedberg's disparaging appraisal, 'the images have little of their original force, and in their servitude to a curious kind of genealogical encyclopedism, all are strangely and improbably drained.'[50] While Freedberg deems the atlas as a failure because the images 'are drained and ineffective,'[51] reminiscent of Georg Lukács' categorical rebuke of the 'profound monotony' elicited by the compulsive juxtapositions of photomontage, in which 'the whole will never be more than an unrelieved grey on grey,'[52] this anemia should more accurately be considered as a calculated effect following from Warburg's acute apprehension that he was working with dangerous and active

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[50] David Freedberg "Warburg's Mask: A Study in Idolatry" *Anthropologies of Art* ed. Mariet Westerman (Williamstown, MA: Clark Institute 2005) 3-25, 17.

[51] Ibid. 17.

[52] Georg Lukács "Realism in the Balance" [1938] trans. Rodney Livingstone in *Aesthetics and Politics: The Key Texts of the Classic Debate within German Marxism* ed. Ronald Taylor (London: Verso 2002) 28-59, 43.

material. Desaturation was a means for neutralizing the energetically charged imagery by conferring to it the same overall temperature. Neutralizing thereby also occasions a nuancing, moving the material into a different register or shading that facilitates a common milieu for diverse forms to traverse and communicate across vast stretches of time and territory, instantiating, as Didi-Huberman puts it, 'the ground on which our very history of art in its long duration is played out.'[53] Hence, if the end result is paradoxical, it is because Warburg conceived of grayness as an inherently paradoxical medium; at once anemic and animistic, life draining and lifegiving, plastic and placating.

This gray field of immanence finally also approximates a chthonic region, reminding us that Mnemosyne not only was the name of the Greek Goddess of memory but also of a mythical river flowing through the kingdom of shadows in Hades. In this context it is worthy of note that grisailles often served as underpaintings on which successive layers of paint were applied. The gray substrate thereby produced a background shading that occasionally remained visible through the glazed, chromatic surface. In an essay from 1907, Warburg alternatively refers to the grisaille figures seen in the background of a fresco by Ghirlandaio as relegated to a 'shadowy midrealm,' or 'a shadowy existence,'[54] and in the *Grisaille* notebook some twenty years later, he maintains that the monochrome style, 'keeps the shadowy realm of the pre-stamped revenants at a metaphoric distance.'[55] Transformed from a medium of 'artistic

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[53] Georges Didi-Huberman *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science* [2011] trans. Shane Lillis (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press 2018) 16.

[54] Aby Warburg "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunctions to His Sons" in *Aby Warburg: The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* 223-262, 247.

[55] As quoted by Christopher D. Johnson in *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press 2012) 96.

practice to theoretical speculation,' as Christopher D. Johnson observes, grayness was thus tactically employed by Warburg both to summon these shadows to life, and to neutralize the destructive energetic currents that radiated from undead antiquity.[56] In its oscillating capacity to at once restrain and reanimate, freeze and fluidify, photographic grayness instigated a buffer zone and a relay switch between the dead and the living; a *Zwischenraum* in Warburg's term. Yielding a conjectural field of transcultural, transhistorical and transgeographical migrations, the *Bilderatlas* mobilizes grayness, in Charlotte Schoell-Glass succinct formulation, 'as a space-creating medium.'[57] While the desperate gestures of defiance and defeat gathered on the panels are all visibly aroused, the dampening of vitality aims for a different kind of awakening. Graying yields a low-level intensity that detracts attention away from stark figure-ground oppositions toward a shared ground that persists and extends across the ever shifting and ever deferred, and hence 'space-creating,' assemblages.

<A> A Curative Science

Let us now take note of a biographical connection. At the time of the defeat of the German army and the November Revolution in 1918, Warburg suffered a mental breakdown. Diagnosed with schizophrenia, manic depression and paranoid psychosis, he was committed to various mental asylums until 1923, concluding with a three-year confinement at the Kreuzlingen sanatorium under the psychiatric treatment of Doctor Ludwig Binswanger. In order to demonstrate that he had recovered from mental illness and was ready to resume his scholarly work, Warburg delivered a lecture to the staff and fellow patients at the clinic on

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[56] Ibid. 107.

[57] Charlotte Schoell-Glass as quoted by Johnson 95.

April 21, 1923.[58] Ironically, the main thesis of the lecture given by Warburg to verify his return to sanity postulated that human culture is irredeemably schizophrenic.

In 1954, at the age of twenty-eight, Michel Foucault published his first work in the form of an extensive introduction to the French translation of Ludwig Binswanger's 1930 essay *Dream and Existence*. Foucault's preamble was, in fact, more than twice as long as the original work it introduced, and thus a strong indication of the influence that Binswanger exhorted on the young philosopher, who not only assisted the translation from German to French, but also corresponded with the psychiatrist and visited him at the Bellevue clinic in Kreuzlingen. While Foucault never wrote a word of commentary on the work of Warburg, his early reflection on existential psychology, which simply added the word 'imagination' to the title of Binswanger's essay, offers yet another point of entry into the gray, interstitial spaces respectively navigated by Warburg and Foucault. 'Dream, Imagination, and Existence' ventures into the kingdom of shadows that we all inhabit while dreaming. Anticipating his argument against hermeneutics, Foucault here takes issue with the psychoanalytical practice of dream interpretation. While acknowledging Freud's insights into the opaque and overdetermined nature of oneiric images, Foucault criticizes psychoanalysis for seeking to abridge the distance between the image, gleaned by consciousness upon awakening, and the imagination from which it originated. With recourse to a symbolic relation, the dream content is by default referred back to some libidinal instinct or repressed desire that, Foucault objects, merely constitutes one of its possible meanings. In order not to foreclose the gap between the image and its secreted meaning, he proposes a shift of attention from the stilled image to the 'imaginative plasticity' of the space of imagination in its perpetual movements and currents of

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[58] Aby Warburg *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* trans.

Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1995).

becoming.[59] This furthermore entails a shift from the analysis of dreams as a set of inductive elements leading to the past to its anticipatory or prophetic function and ability to prefigure the future. This arcane space, which according to the Greco-Roman tradition of dream interpretation most vividly presents itself to the dreamer in the gray 'half-light' of early morning dreams, cannot be reified and resolved into 'a rhapsody of images.'[60] Repudiating the Freudian scheme, according to which latent dream-thoughts are distorted into picture puzzles to be deciphered by the psychoanalyst as the remnants of unconscious desires, wish fulfilments, and repressed traumas, the problem of the dream image as identified by Foucault lies instead in its tendency to arrest and restrain the free flow of imagination. The fixation on the 'crystalized image' therefore distracts us from a genuine engagement with the malleable and mercurial expressivity of the imagination, blocking our access to the emancipatory space of the dream and the challenge that it implores upon us to question the preconceived necessities of our waking consciousness of the world.[61] For this reason, he concludes, 'the aim of psychotherapy should be to free the imaginary that is trapped in the image.'[62]

According to Giorgio Agamben, this was precisely the task that Warburg assigned to the *Mnemosyne* atlas. 'The *Atlas* is a sort of depolarization and repolarization station,' he explains, 'in which the images from the past that lost their meaning and now survive

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[59] Michel Foucault "Dream, Imagination, and Existence" [*1954*] trans. Forrest Williams in Michel Foucault and Ludwig Binswanger *Dream and Existence* ed. Keith Hoeller (New Jersey: Humanities Press 1993) 31-78, 34.

[60] Ibid. 45 and 43.

[61] Ibid. 72.

[62] Ibid. 72.

as nightmares or spectres are kept suspended in the shadows.'[63] In common with a dream, the atlas exerted an iconoclastic agency through which the crystalized fears and phobias that paralyze our imagination are conjured back to life in order to break their spell so as to open up 'the space for an imagination with no more images.'[64] In fact, Agamben is here closely paraphrasing a formulation that first appears in the concluding paragraphs of Foucault's introduction to Binswanger. 'Poetic expression,' Foucault says, 'teaches us to break with the fascination of images and to reopen, for imagination, its path of freedom toward the dream that offers it.'[65] This text is also discussed at length by Agamben in his reflections on the methodology of the human sciences in *The Signature of All Things*, which concludes with a probing inquiry into philosophical archaeology. It is in his exegesis on Binswanger, Agamben proposes, that 'Foucault most precisely described—or foresaw—the strategies and gestures of archaeology,' and this is precisely because ''the movement of freedom' that Foucault attributes to the dream and imagination shares the meanings and aims of archaeology.'[66] To recap, in

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[63] Giorgio Agamben *Nymphs* [*2007*] trans. Amanda Minervini (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books 2013) 37. While Foucault's introduction to Binswanger remains curiously overlooked, Julian Reid's pensive contextualization of this work calls attention to its close affinity with Agamben's discussion of the *Mnemosyne* atlas in *Nymphs*. As Reid observes, "Agamben is effectively confronting the same problem as Foucault in his very first essay; the problem of how to rescue the imagination from its condition of present oppression; how to recover time where this is no time." Julian Reid "Foucault and the Imagination: The Roles of Images in Regimes of Power and Subjectivity" *Subjectivity* No. 11 (2018) 183-202, 199-200.

[64] Agamben *Nymphs* 61.

[65] Foucault "Dream, Imagination, and Existence" 73-4.

[66] Agamben *The Signature of All Things* 103.

brief, the gist of the strategies and aims shared between Warburg and Foucault. In congruence with Warburg's critique of art history, Foucault reproaches psychoanalysis for failing to acknowledge the vital energies immanent in the image precisely because it only considers the image in its crystalized and immobilized form. Conversely, anticipating Foucault's assessment of genealogy as a 'curative science,'[67] offering an antidote to positivist historicism by unmasking its claims to truth, morality, and reason, Warburg, the self-declared 'psycho-historian,'[68] conceived of the *Bilderatlas* as a diagnostic instrument for unraveling the pathological forms that holds the imagination captive. The atlas does not prescribe a talking cure, but a photographic ekphrasis of expressive forms, muted in the double sense of the word, silenced and grayed-out, laid out so as to clear a path out of the stiffening grasp of the image. Once more, then, a constitutive ambivalence, or grayness, lurks at the heart of Warburg's project. While the atlas on the one hand can be understood as an apotropaic and therapeutic project, designed to ward of the demons to which its maker had previously succumbed, the cause and the cure enter into a precarious relationship as the act of unmasking inevitably unleashes an unruliness that ultimately evades capture, containment and control, eluding the firm grasp of metaphors and comparisons. 'The problem in between,'[69] as Warburg laconically put it, the oscillatory phantasmagoria of polarized and unappeased *Pathosformeln*, must by definition remain unresolved, to which the unfinished, and unfinishable, Atlas finally attests.

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[67] Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 90.

[68] Warburg as quoted by Giorgio Agamben in "Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science" [1975] *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* eds. and trans. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1999) 97.

[69] Aby Warburg "The Problem in Between" [1918] in *Aby Warburg: The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* 727-8.

The Color of Dreams

In light of the topic of Foucault's first publication, let me conclude with a brief speculative remark that returns us to the paramount, but problematic, notion of the a priori raised in the introduction. During the first half of twentieth century, the realm of dreams was purportedly dyed in an all-pervasive gray. Numerous studies have reported that the vast majority of dreams during this period were black-and-white productions, and that dreams in color were a rare and dubious occurrence. As psychoanalyst Ángel Garma asserted in a 1961 article: 'Dreams are like the old silent films, without sound or technicolour.'[70] By that time, however, dreams had already begun to flow in polychrome. Subsequent comparative studies of different age groups unanimously predict that the gray dreamworld will disappear together with the generation that was exposed to black-and-white media during a formative period of their childhood. The assault on the imaginative faculty endured by Gorky in 1896, subjugated to the eye-straining grayness and dream-like nausea of the Lumière projector, in turn serves as an indication that the imaginary worlds previously conjured from printed pages, painted canvasses, stained-glass windows and Magic Lanterns had transpired in a more vibrant spectrum, utterly foreign to the monochrome visions introduced by early cinema. Hence, we may be induced to envision the faculty of imagination itself in geoarchaeological terms, deposited and furrowed into distinct chromatic and achromatic bands, somewhat like the multihued striations of the Painted Desert.

Research on the color of dreams hinges on an obvious uncertainty factor, however, since it draws its empirical data from the eminently malleable and unreliable medium

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[70] Eva Murzyn "Do we only dream in colour? A comparison of reported dream colour in younger and older adults with different experiences of black and white media" *Consciousness and Cognition* Vol. 17 No. 4 (December 2008) 1228-1237, 1230.

of memory. In other words, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that it is the recollections, rather than the dreams themselves, that are colored by dominant media standards. Maybe recent advances in brains scans and algorithmic reconstructions of the neural activities of dreaming subjects, which so far only has generated blurry results, will resolve this issue? Meanwhile, the nexus of dreams, colors and media raises a familiar conundrum. Whereas media archaeologists from Friedrich Kittler to Wolfgang Ernst emphatically insist on the technological a priori as constitutive of the epistemic a priori that preoccupied Foucault, the aspiration to isolate one layer from the other so as to establish a hierarchy of successive strata may ultimately be a misguided task. If media posit the material substrate of knowledge, our assumptions about media are always already engrained and embedded with activities of the imagination. Hence, the technical stratum can never be entirely disentangled from phantasmatic matter so as to assert the primacy of one layer over, or rather under, the other. This beckons our attention toward a path barely treaded, along which the archaeologies of knowledge and media fold together with what Foucault in his earliest publication names 'an anthropology of the imagination.'[71]

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[71] Foucault "Dream, Imagination, and Existence" 56.