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ABY WARBURG'S MISSING LADIES: THE EXCLUSION OF MID-16th CENTURY NYMPHS

As many art historians know, Aby Warburg returned over and over again to the subject of a striding nymph, the motif of an antique-looking maenad with her fluttering drapery which so often played the role of a pagan accessory figure in some significant Renaissance paintings from the late 15th century.

Finally Warburg introduced this famous figure in his last big enterprise, *Mnemosyne-Atlas*, in screen number 46 which is devoted to the *Nymph*. In this panel there is a matrix of the visual motifs of a striding woman. The screen shows the ways to domesticate an Antique nymph in the Renaissance birth chamber – with some pictures as *Urformen* of the figure. It is important to note that the *Ninfa* here, as Georges Didi-Huberman says, is a kind of *héroïne impersonelle*[1] which took the role of a semi-protagonist in Warburg's studies and imagery.

When wondering how to apply or test the ideas Warburg put in use in his famous research around *ninfa fiorentina* of Quattrocento, we have to admit that there has been a stagnation in the recent research. Lately there have been published interesting studies on this "laufende Frau", on the maenad-looking *canefora* of Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Filippo Lippi, Pollaiuolo and others – studies of great precision, like those of Georges Didi-Huberman (2002, 2015), Charles Burroughs (2016) and Barbara Baert (2014)[2], just to name a few, but they do not touch the problem of the *Nachleben* of this bold nymph after Quattrocento, although the 16th century art would have given plenty of good examples of its appearances with a slightly different "costume". Especially in the mid-16th century, many interesting cases appear in Central Italian, and especially in Roman, imagery, which could give some food for the hypothesis of a new kind of striding maenad. By saying this I don't only mean the examples Parmigianino has given us – and that are so often referred to. There is even more to come – examples which also raise some methodological questions.

We know that Warburg didn't have much interest in the imagery of Michelangelo and his "miserable imitators" (*cattiva pratica*), as Ludovio Dolce (1557) called them. This was not only due to the fact that Warburg had no taste for – or interest in – Michelangelo's art,[3] but also because he didn't like the "Muskelrhetorik" of Mannerism and Baroque art and its "theatralisches Pathos".[4] In his late "Einleitung" for *Mnemosyne-Atlas* panels, Warburg was sceptical about art *after* Raphael and Michelangelo. For him there existed a kind of idling (*Leerlauf*) in art after Raphael. Warburg also referred to the "kanonische Formensprache" of the European Renaissance from the late 15th century up to the 17th century.[5]

Probably Michelangelo's "bad imitators" weren't bad enough! So, Warburg must have been sceptical also of an artist as a virtuoso, although in his time for example

[1] G. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Paris, 2002, p. 256. Cf. G. Agamben, *Ninfe*, Torino, 2007, p. 168: Ninfa is something between the original and the copy.

[2] See G. Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa fluida. Essai sur le drapé-désir*, Paris, 2015; B. Baert, *Nymph: Motif, Phantom, Affect. A Contribution to the Study of Aby Warburg (1866–1929)*, Leuven–Paris–Bristol 2014; Ch. Burroughs, 'The Nymph in the Doorway: Revisiting a Central Motif of Aby Warburg's Study of Culture', *California Italian Studies*, 6, 2016.

[3] Cf. J. Imorde, 'Warburg und die Hochkunst. Das Problem Michelangelo', in *Ekstatische Kunst – Besonnenes Wort. Aby Warburg und die Denkräume der Ekphrasis*, ed. P. Kofler, Bozen, 2009, pp. 242, 245.

[4] A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. G. Bing, Nendeln/Lichtenstein, 1969, pp. 445, 447, 448–449.

[5] A. Warburg, 'Einleitung zum Mnemosyne-Atlas (1929)', in *Die Beredsamkeit des Leibes. Zur Körpersprache in der Kunst*, ed. I. Barta, Ch. Geissmar, Wien, 1992, pp. 172–173.

Francesco Salviati (1510–1563) didn't appear to be a *virtuoso*, as he may be for us today, when we have a better conservation arsenal and good colour photos in our use. Now we can easily think that Salviati as a draughtsman was almost comparable to Michelangelo. In that way times are changing and we know that every age chooses its own artists from the history of art – and yet this does not mean that we must be anachronists in Didi-Huberman's sense.[6]

The problem of the atmosphere of the age was not an important factor for Warburg. During his stay in Rome in 1928–1929 he seemingly found much delight in reading Giordano Bruno.[7] Rightly or wrongly, he was not interested in the art of Bruno's time, not only because his theory of pathos formulas implies more continuity (meaning: synchrony) than radical diachrony (a spirit of the ages), but also because he evidently disliked the imagery of the late Renaissance. Taste is a tricky thing; it even affects how important we consider the pathos formulas of certain periods.

One might hope that the idea behind Warburg's *Gebärdensprache*, the gesture language of an image, and an interest in shaping the history of pathos formulas would be independent of the changes and differences in changing aesthetic tastes. However, at the beginning of the 20th century this kind of open attitude towards mid-16th century art was difficult even for those who were independent of the so-called "eternal aesthetic values", or formalists like Bernard Berenson and Lionello Venturi, whose standards were heavily dependent on the art of the so-called "primitive painters" before Raphael.[8] Despite the fact that Warburg detested Berenson's formalism,[9] he shared the same distaste for art after the High Renaissance, more or less. This meant: the age of Mannerism. In his old age Berenson made an exception. On October 29, 1950 he visited for the first time Francesco Salviati's exuberant frescoes in the Palazzo Sacchetti in Rome. It seemed that he got a small clue of the relativity of taste,[10] whereas Warburg had no time for the kind of late Renaissance imagery in Rome; life was short and he had to construct the *Mnemosyne-Atlas* project.

THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE CONCEPT OF THE PATHOS FORMULA

In order to understand why Aby Warburg never used his famous concept of the *Pathosformel* to describe the pathetic or emotional pictorial forms of Mannerism, we have to ponder the supposed elasticity of the concept.

Warburg's concept of the pathos formula (*Pathosformel*) was from the beginning linked to the pictorial form of a striding nymph in Ghirlandaio's *Birth of John the Baptist* (1485–1490) [Fig. 1]. The first time this connection was to be seen was in his *Ninfa Fiorentina* -file, in "Nymphenfragment" from the year 1900.[11] According to Claudia Wedepohl, Warburg most obviously used the concept *Pathosformel* for the first time in this famous file.[12] Right from the beginning the associative area of the concept was applicable to a large number of nymphs, from Salome to Judith, and even to the archangel Gabriel.[13] Later the formula could contain a rather large arsenal of different emotional charges, which can be "illogical" and "primitive" or which can unite Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of existence – and show the maximum of inner incitements ("maximales inneres Ergriffensein"),[14] and in that way could signify the intensification of existence.[15] As Moshe Barasch states, Warburg never defined the concept clearly or unambiguously.[16]

In his 2007 book *Ninfe* Giorgio Agamben defines *Pathosformeln* as relatively autonomous hybrids of architypes or "hybrids of matter and form" (*materia e forma*) which own both "*la primavoltità e repetizione*".[17] In almost the same way Claudia Wedepohl speaks of the two parts of the "Pathosformel" ("emotional *Pathos* and rational

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[6] See G. Didi-Huberman, '*Before the Image, before Time*: The Sovereignity of Anachronism', in *Compelling Visuality*, ed. C. Farago, R. Zwijnenberg, Minneapolis–London, 2003, pp. 35–38.

[7] See A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 7: *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, Berlin, 2001, pp. 394–396.

[8] See B. Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, New York, 1957 [1896], pp. 62, 64, 70–71; L. Venturi, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, Bologna, 1926; G. Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi. Dal Vasari ai Neoclassici*, Torino, 1989, passim.

[9] See C. Wedepohl, 'Berenson and Aby Warburg, absolute opposites', in *Bernard Berenson*, ed. J. Connors, L.A. Waldman, Cambridge, 2014, pp.157–167; see also: A. Kuusamo, 'The Idea of Art as a Form Behind Tactile Values: The Recuperation of Art in Art History c. 100 Years Ago', in *Towards a Science of Art History. J. J. Tikkanen and Art Historical Scholarship in Europe*, ed. J. Vakkari, Helsinki, 2009, pp. 122–124.

[10] B. Berenson, *The Passionate Sightseer: From the Diaries 1947––1956*, London, 1960, p. 25.

[11] A. Warburg, A. Jolles. Warburg Institute Archive, WIA III,55.1. *Ninfa Fiorentina,* 1900.

[12] C. Wedepohl, 'Wort und Bild: Aby Warburg als Sprachbildner der Besonnenheit', in *Ekstatische Kunst*, p. 25 (as in note 3); cf. eadem, 'Pathos – Polarität – Distanz – Denkraum. Eine archivarische Spurensuche', in *Denkraum. Formen, M otive, Materialen. Trajekte. Eine Reihe des Zentrums für Literatur- und Kulturforschung*, ed. S. Weigel, K. Barck, München, 2014, p. 36 (see: ref. 19).

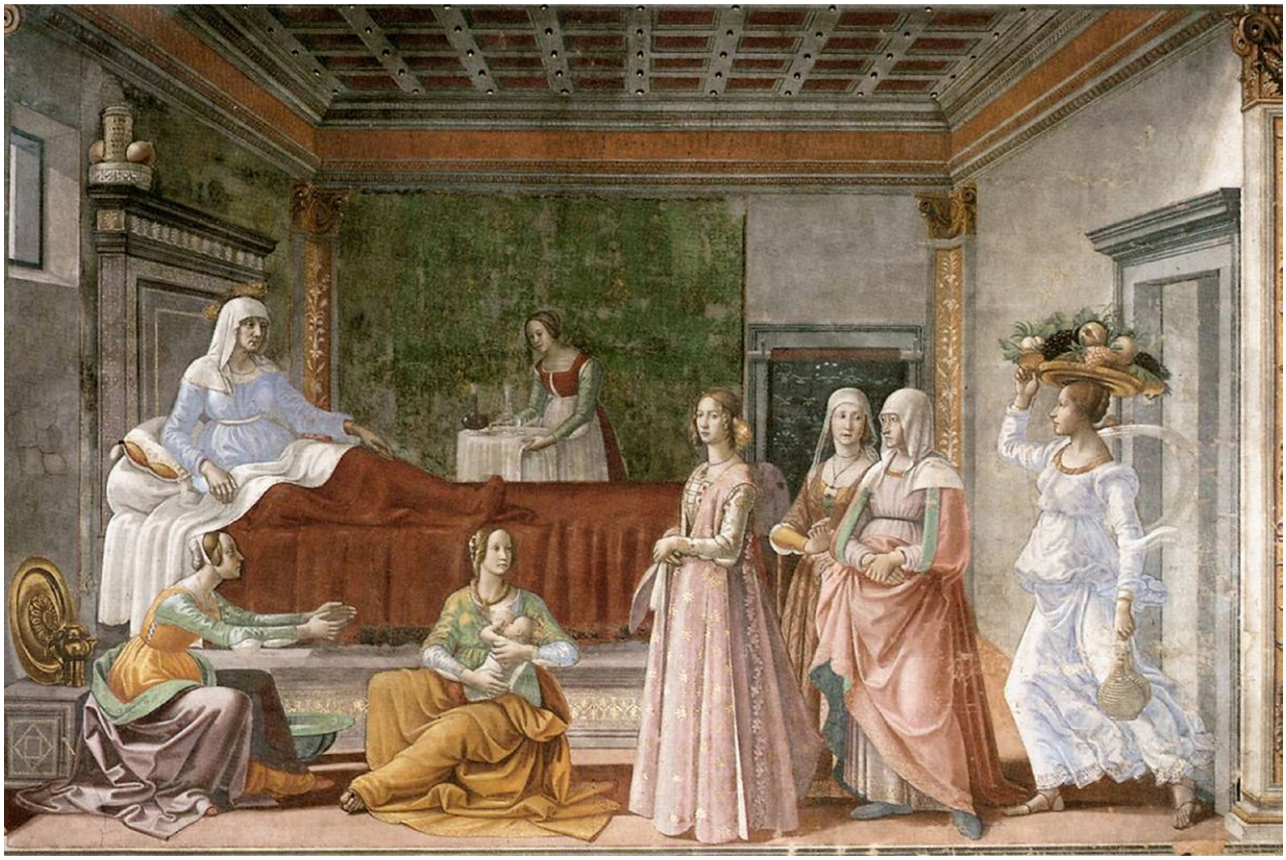
[13] Cf. A. Warburg, WIA III,55.2 [1].

[14] A. Warburg, 'Einleitung', p. 171 (as in note 5). Cf. C. Wedepohl, 'Pathos – Polarität – Distanz – Denkraum', p. 34 (as in note 12).

[15] See G. Careri, 'Pathosformeln. Aby Warburg e l'intensificazione delle immagini", in *Aby Warburg e le metamorfosi degli antichi dèi*, ed. M. Bertozzi, Ferrara, 2002, p. 51.

[16] M. Barasch, '"Pathosformulae". Some Reflections on the Structure of a Concept', in idem, *Imago Hominis. Studies in the Language of Art*, Vienna, 1991, p. 124.

[17] G. Agamben, *Ninfe*, p. 17 (as in note 1).



1. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Birth of St. John the Baptist*. Ca. 1490. Fresco. Cappella maggiore, the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence. Photo: Emma Micheletti: Domenico Ghirlandaio. Milano: Scala, 1990, 55

Formel").[18] Agamben reminds us that Warburg's concept of *Pathosformel* is a formula, which means that it contains both pathos and formula, meaning a "stereotypical aspect".[19] Or, as Agamben stated in 1975: "An emotional charge and iconographic formula" are intertwined in this concept.[20] In terms of method, Wedepohl speaks of terminological "Hybridbildung".[21] *Pathosformeln* could be seen as dynamic "Zusatzformen ",[22] or as *dynamisierenden Pathosformel(n) all'Antica*[23] or yet again as "dynamograms – metaphors infused with Bacchic, emotive energy that also… obey the grammatical form", as Christopher Johnson defines it.[24] The sense of superlatives in pathos formulas is essential. This is why pathos must have emotionally impulsive power in order to possess a capacity for reappearances.

According to Moshe Barasch, pathos formulas can be relatively separate from the thematic content of a picture.[25] Before I continue, I have to refer to the problem of polarization: how the same gesture motif can have a totally different meaning (referent) when it appears in the Renaissance time after Antiquity, and possess the so-called "energetic inversion".[26] Warburg has asserted that the contact with a new age produces these polarizations.[27]

The problem now will be this: Is this "energetic inversion" in Warburg's sense (*energetisch invertierte Sinngebung*)[28] possible at all times? Can we apply this formula of the *Pathosformeln* to the mid-16th-century Mannerism (in Rome) and many of its striding nymphs?

We can suppose that for Warburg the female nymphs of Mannerism couldn't fulfil the dimensions of tragic pathos, which was so near to him. Maybe all those twisted

[18] C. Wedepohl, 'Wort und Bild: Aby Warburg als Sprachbildner der Besonnenheit', p. 25 (a in note 12).

[19] G. Agamben, *Ninfe*, p. 16 (as in note 1).

[20] Idem, *Potentialities. Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and transl. D. Heller-Roazen, Stanford 1999, p. 90.

[21] C. Wedepohl, 'Pathos – Polarität – Distanz – Denkraum', p. 47 (as in note 12).

[22] A. Warburg, '*Vier Thesen*', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, p. 58 (as in note 4).

[23] Idem, 'Einleitung', p. 172 (as in note 5).

[24] Ch. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images*, Ithaca, 2012, p. 64.

[25] M. Barasch, 'Pathosformulae', pp. 124–125 (as in note 16).

[26] A. Warburg, 'Einleitung zum Mnemosyne-Atlas', p. 172 (as in note 5).

[27] P.-A. Michaud, '"Zwischenreich". Mnemosyne, o l'espressività senza soggetto', in *Aby Warburg e le metamorfosi*, p. 175 (as in note 15).

[28] A. Warburg, 'Einleitung', p. 172 (as in note 5).

2. Girolamo Siciolante Sermoneta, *Nativity of the Virgin*. 1560-61. Fresco. Cappella Fugger, Santa Maria dell'Anima, Rome. Photo: A. Kuusamo

forms of Mannerist figures seemed to possess aesthetically curious forms and also seemed to be superficial and didn't seem to contain much tragic emotion or "phobic engrams" – to refer to his famous words from the "Einleitung" of *Mnemosyne-Atlas* (1929). For him, Mannerism must have been the opposite of the "unrhetorische [sic]" modes of Piero della Francesca's frescoes – especially the *Victory of Constantine* (Arezzo).[29]

Nowadays, thanks to our interests in finding new aspects from those historical times which have been aesthetically neglected and thanks to our cultural anthropological interest to art, we can see the movement of Mannerism in a totally different light from the times of Aby Warburg. There was a change in the late 1970s when there arose a structuralist interest in fresco decorations of all ages, putting aside old modernistic taste prejudices. Be that as it may, today we are firmly convinced that all style periods are interesting for their "own" sake.

WARBURG IN ROME 1928–1929

Now, it will be interesting to find out what Aby Warburg wanted to see and what he didn't want to see in Rome during his stay there in the last year of his life. He was in the city with Gertrud Bing from mid-November 1928 until the end of April of the following year. Besides his main work with the *Mnemosyne-Atlas*, Warburg and Bing visited many palaces and churches. However, his attitude towards the Late Renaissance most certainly hindered him in seeing possible new continuities in terms of pictorial motif-*Wanderung*.

[29] Ibidem.

In his "Fragmente zur Ausdruckskunde" Warburg's stand on the Late Renaissance in Rome is quite uncompromising: "I cannot acknowledge (*anerkennen*) the so-called Late Renaissance in Rome; I know only delayed Renaissance-epigones (*Renaissancisten*), to love which does not require one to give them a style period of their own."[30] During his stay in Rome he does not pay any attention in his *Tagebuch* (1928–29) for example to Hermann Voss' important new book on the period in question: *Die Malerei der Spätrenaissance in Rom und Florenz* from the year 1920.

It would seem that for him the figure of the Renaissance nymph just suddenly died after Raphael's time and in the shadow of Michelangelo. And even if there were also some cases which seemed to copy the figure of nymph, he never saw these examples as interesting pictorial figures as such, or he remained silent about them. Although Warburg is famous for his anthropological approach, the distaste for Mannerism probably won his anthropological attitude.

For Warburg, artists like Francesco Salviati and Girolamo Sermoneta stayed below his aesthetic bar – although Gertrud Bing, his assistant in Rome, was interested in seeing Salviati's *Raising of Lazarus* in Galleria Colonna in Rome, 27. 12. 1928.[31] Warburg, who was also present, mentions only Guercino's *Tobias and the Angel*, probably because of the angel's connection to the theme of *ninfa* (in his *Mnemosyne-Atlas* panel 47) – despite the fact that the style of Guercino's painting must have seemed a bit "sweet". Although Bing was interested in Michelangelo's works and paid a lot of attention to the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, Warburg had an aversion to the praise of the genius, like Michelangelo: All those researchers, who were very fond of him, belonged to the "Polizeischutzgruppe der genialen Persönlichkeit", [32] like famous Michelangelo writer Ernst Steinmann, the director of Bibliotheca Hertziana, whom he met several times in Rome. Some drawings of Michelangelo were, of course, an exception.[33]

Be all that as it may, Warburg was affected by the aesthetic ideals of his own time, which closed his eyes to interesting possibilities for following pathos formulas of nymphs from the mid-16th century, pictures of those figures which filled his neighbourhood in Rome – for example Sermoneta's "nymph" in *The Birth of the Virgin* in Santa Maria dell'Anima (1560–1563) [Fig. 2], the "national church" of Germany in Rome, the pose which is so close to Alfonso Lombardi's (1525) "clumsy" relief in panel 46 (no. 15). Sermoneta also painted a variant of his nativity scene.[34] Even closer to Warburg's hotel was Gaspar Becerra's interesting fresco *Birth of the Virgin* (1548–1550, Cappella della Rovere, in Ss. Trinità dei Monti, Rome).

3. Francesco Salviati, *The Birth of the Virgin*. 1563. Fresco. Cappella della Madonna delle Grazie, San Marcello al Corso, Rome. Photo: Marcia Hall: *After Raphael*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 196

There were many other similar examples, only to mention Francesco Salviati's small fresco *The Birth of the Virgin* in San Marcello al Corso (1563) [Fig. 3] with its outstanding nymph looking straight at the viewer. An aesthetic bar is sometimes invisible, but effective. Anyway, these examples would have shed light on the question how the *ninfa* of Ghirlandaio's famous fresco behaved after Quattrocento, how it turned out to be a bit anonymous and tried to reach the centre of the picture plane, as in Sermoneta's and in Salviati's *Births*. However, at the end of June 1929, in Mantua, the Mannerist frescoes of the Palazzo del Te by Giulio Romano made an impression on Warburg, against his expectations: "preziös, aber nicht barbarisch".[35]

PROBLEMS IN PANEL 46 ("NYMPH")

In his little book *Ninfe* Giorgio Agamben calls the image of the Nymph "an image of the image" (2007, 16). This could also be a good definition even for some pictures in

[30] A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 4: *Fragmente zur Ausdruckskunde*, ed. U. Pfisterer et al., Berlin, 2015, p. 274.

[31] A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 7, p. 388 (as in note 7).

[32] See: J. Imorde, 'Warburg und die Hochkunst', p. 244 (as in note 3).

[33] A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 7, p. 414 (as in note 7).

[34] Later Sermoneta has painted the other *Birth of the Virgin* in San Tommaso in Cenci, Rome (1565), in Cappella di Valerio Cenci. This painting is more in tune with the Counterreformation.

[35] I am referring to the date 28.II.1929. See A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 7, p. 467.

4. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 46. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London

panel number 46 in Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne-Atlas*. Devoted to the *Nympha*, it was called: "Nymph. Hurry-Bring-It in the Tornabuoni circle; Domestification". In the centre of the matrix of examples of a striding woman from different ages there is an image of Ghirlandaio's *Birth of John the Baptist* (S. Maria Novella, Florence, 1485–1490 [Fig. 4]). The Nymph here, as Georges Didi-Huberman says, is "l'héroïne auratique".[36] Warburg also calls Ghirlandaio's fresco a *Domestizierung der antiken Nymphe oder Mänade in christlichen Grenzen der italienischen Frührenaissance*.[37] The nymph has many appearances and it is, as Wedepohl states, "also a symbol of its age loaded with tensions".[38] If this is the case we might easily think that the symbolic charge of the striding female figure should have a more demanding significance when thinking of the mid-16th century art!

The concept Warburg created for this accessory lady-figure is called *bewegtes Beiwerk* – accessories in movement. Indeed, this has ever since troubled the minds of art historians. By this notion he meant the expressive movements of the figures that are emerging from a marginal zone of the image in the late Quattrocento art. He held the view that these expressive elements in Renaissance art

[36] G. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, p. 256 (as in note 1).

[37] See E.H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography*, London, 1970, p. 299.

[38] C. Wedepohl, 'Wort und Bild: Aby Warburg als Sprachbildner der Besonnenheit', p. 25 (as in note 12).

were adapted from antiquity in a situation in which the Florentine festive culture was strongly affected by the relief-sculpture of Roman antiquity.[39]

Now we can ask: why were so many later *ninfa*-figures disqualified from panel 46? Or is it that Warburg didn't really know those later Roman examples? Although he saw that the origin of Renaissance was *heterogenic* (*heterogenischen Herkunft*), he didn't believe or care that the waning of the Renaissance could be even more heterogenous.

As an example of the *Nachleben* of the nymph, this particular panel 46, in spite of being crowded with images, is quite humble in terms of chosen variants and has too often been taken as given. Hence, the scene of the panel needs to be rethought, especially in a way which could be a *starting point for a wider considerations of the striding nymph* in the *mega*-period of the Renaissance.

The scope of the period represented in the panel culminates in Quattrocento: There are only three examples of nymphs that are from the 16th century, and the last Renaissance *ninfa* represented is from the year 1528. After that nothing, except a picture of a gipsy woman, who is not "striding" at all and is situated in the middle of the photo. In that way the panel uncovers all its exclusions. For example, we can ask: Where are Jules Chéret's famous dancing "maenads" in his posters from *la belle époque*, from Warburg's own time?

We can also ask: where are the Roman examples of Quattrocento in the panel? In his last year in Rome Warburg could have visited Santa Maria del Popolo to see a nice example of a striding nymph in the fresco *The Birth of the Virgin* of "Aiuto di Pinturicchio" (1489–1491) in the cappella Basso della Rovere. We can also seriously ask: Did the striding lady remain the same after the High Renaissance – and if not, how can we recognize her in her changing attire? As I mentioned before, the wave of images of nymphs from the mid-16th century is totally absent from the Warburgian mind-map. Moreover, those images are also absent from Didi-Huberman's many books on Renaissance nymphs.

The paintings of Sermoneta and Francesco Salviati could have given more evidence for Warburg's idea of the *ninfa* as a curious *ambivalent* and *vague* figure running into the birth chamber with fluttering garments and carrying a basket. As for iconography, Warburg thought that the figure of a nymph, not only a bystander in a picture but also a moving accessory, has a flexible capacity to change her costume. She can be Venus, Pomona, nymph, Victory, Judith or Salome.[40] Therefore for him the strict iconography was not a decisive factor here.

At closer look, panel 46 is characterized by the *lack of a precise iconography*, despite a kind of parasemantic reference to nymphs. Warburg didn't ask for the specific context of meaning in spite of the fact that at least six or seven

5. *Dancing Maenad*. 27 BC-14 AD. Roman Copy from an original by Kallimachos (406-405 BC). Marble. Musei Capitolini, Rome Photo: Museo dei Conservatori

of the pictorial fragments shown there were connected to the theme of *childbirth*.

In panel 46 at least three important aspects – mostly iconographic – are either missing or have not been taken sufficiently into account. Firstly, the overriding theme in the screen could be the theme of birth, the birth of the Virgin or of John the Baptist, not of Christ (there is but one picture on the subject). In a pictorial tradition a canephor is often connected to a *sacrifice* scene, to the rite after the child's birth (as in *Leviticus*). Secondly, many figures created after the High Renaissance are missing from the screen, as I said earlier, especially those made in Rome, images which could have given a lot of support to Warburg's basic assumptions about the *Ninfa*. Thirdly, that which definitely anticipates the Renaissance birth scenes is the motif of the birth of Dionysus in the Roman Antique sarcophagi. Although Warburg adopted the picture of the Bacchic maenad from the classical sarcophagi which represented a frantic maenad as a part of the Dionysian fertility procession, he didn't pay attention to the particular theme and motif of the *birth* of Dionysus as a part of the Bacchic imagery [Fig. 5]. There were some reliefs to be seen on this theme already at the time of the Renaissance. However, the problem was that many of those antique

[39] A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 66, 73–74 (as in note 4).

[40] Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, p. 161 (as in note 1).

reliefs which depict nymphs in the birth context, nymphs as bystanders, were found later. Anyway, he left the frantic Dionysian maenad he referred to so many times, off from the Nymph-panel. It can be found in panel number 6.

Later, in the early 1960s, prof. Nicole Dacos called attention to the subject-matter of a dancing maenad in 15th century painting. She focused on Filippo Lippi's famous tondo (as the first example of the canephor in antique disguise) and some other figures, all from the 15th century.[41] Neither did she pay any attention to iconography of childbirth (especially of *Mary the Virgin* and *John the Baptist*) lurking behind the maenad figures, nor to the theme of the birth of Dionysus. What is more striking: like Warburg, she was only interested in the nymphs of the 15th century, nymphs in their virginal state, not "spoiled" by a later style, Mannerism.

Dacos was not alone here. Indeed, a lot of attention has been drawn mainly to the nymph of *Ghirlandaio,* to the same nymph who was in the centre of Warburg's attention. Mid-16th century nymphs were still waiting for their turn. Inga Fransson has said, "A comparative study of all these Nymphs could throw more light on the problem of how the different artists have handled and interpreted the pathos-formula".[42] However, Fransson didn't refer to later figures of the 16th century. Since the 1980s I have tried to make a comparative study of those nymphs who strode into the picture after Ghirlandaio and Raphael.[43] The only nymphs after Raphael brought up many times as a paradigmatic model, are Parmigianino's nymphs in the fresco of Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma, 1533––1539 (in Fermor 1993, in Vaccaro, 1998 etc.).[44] Meanwhile interesting examples from Rome have been dozing.

VAGHEZZA, FURIA AND THE MID-16TH CENTURY PATHOS FORMULAS?

My task has been to apply – and test – the notion of the accessory figure *in movimento* to the mid-16th century imagery – as far as the nymph is of concern. Indeed, it has been challenging to look at pictures from Raphael on and locate Warburg's maxim of the „accessories in motion" as *a Pathosformel* a few decades later and observe the pictures of the same iconographic genre, the event in the birth chamber, in Roman 16th-century Mannerism. The first thing to ask is: If we can use the Warburgian hypothesis of the striding nymph for the early 20th century visual material (*la belle époque*), why not for the situation where these nymphs and *caneforoi* were closely related to the High Renaissance, to the point of "corruption"? And what could this "corruption" mean, then? Would this "corruption" mean simply a new concept of beauty, or a crisis of beauty?

As for subject-matter, we can find some noticeable similarities in the nymph figures of mid-16th century: The images of Francesco Salviati (1548, 1563), Girolamo da Sermoneta (1560–63, 1565), Becerra (1548), and also of Torbido (1538, Verona) and Prospero Fontana (1563, Bologna) are all paintings depicting the birth chamber. Yet we can easily see many changes: The number of striding nymphs in these pictures is increasing and at the same time they are getting more and more impersonal and ambiguous. In the drawing of Salviati *The Birth of the Virgin*. (ca. 1548, Albertina, Vienna) [Fig. 6], we can see at least three accessory ladies (*ancelle*) moving quickly.

In fact, it is not accidental that in his article "I costume teatrali per gli Intermezzi del 1589" Warburg uses the expression "vago" when describing Bernardo Buontalenti's drawings of *canefora*, and referring to Filippo Lippi and Raphael: "vago motive ornamentale".[45] Indeed, we can suppose that the imagery between the time of Raphael and that of Buontalenti (1535–1603) was filled with examples of those nymphs of whom Pietro Bembo had already called "vaghe – vaghe Ninfe, le vaghe donne" in his *Gli Asolani* (1505).[46]

Really, the term *vaghezza* (lovely, vague charm) might be a key concept when thinking of the sign-function of Warburg's concept "*Ikonologie des Zwischenraums*",[47] as the par-

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[41] N. Dacos, 'Ghirlandaio et l'antique', *Bulletin de l'Institute Historique de Rome*, 34, 1962, pp. 444–445.

[42] I. Fransson, 'Some Aspects on the Use of Antique Elements, especially Human Figures in Quattrocento Art', in *Kunstgeschichtliche Studien zur Florentinischen Renaissance*, ed. L. Larsson and G. Pochat, Stockholm, 1980, pp. 303–304.

[43] See A. Kuusamo, 'The Concept of *vaghezza* and the Carnivalization of the Dionysian Nymph in the Mid-Sixteenth Century Imagery of the Birth of the Virgin Mary', in *The Iconography of Gender*, vol. 1, ed. A. Kiss, G. Enfre Szönyi, Szeged, 2008 (Papers in English and American Studies, 15), pp. 80–95. Cf. idem, 'Meitä katsova canefora (Canefora looking at us). Nymfi ja manierismi, osa II', *Synteesi*, 4, 2005, pp. 3–23.

[44] It has become a habit to refer to the concept of "bewegtes Beiwerk" of the late Quattrocento as if it could give the only key to all later nymph-figures (Omar Calabrese, Sharon Fermor, Paola Tinagli, Inga Fransson, Gombrich, Dacos, Roland Kany, Patrizia Castelli, Claudia Cieri Via, etc.). Yet it is striking that hardly anybody has been interested in canephors of the mid-16th century – besides the famous images of Parmigianino –, probably because many followers of Warburg really thought that *Pathosformeln* were emptied and became somewhat too kitschy during the 16th century. However, we could easily imagine that in the mid-16th century the "camp" of *Pathosformeln* prevailed. It does not need much field work to find paintings of Mannerist nymphs in Rome.

[45] A. Warburg, 'I costumi teatrali per gli Intermezzi del 1589: i disegni di Bernardo Buontalenti e il 'libro di conti' di Emilio de' Cavalieri,' in *La rinascita del paganesimo antico*, ed. G. Bing, Firenze, 1980, p. 95.

[46] P. Bembo, 'Gli asolani', in *Opere volgare*, ed. M. Monti, Firenze, 1961, p. 76.

[47] Cf. S. Weigel, 'Epistemology of Wandering, Tree and Taxonomy. The system figuré in Warburg's *Mnemosyne* Project within the History of Cartographic and Encyclopedic Knowledge', *Images re-vues. Histoire, anthropologie et théorie de l'art*, 4, 2013, p. 6;

adigmatic meaning of the nymph in the middle of the 16th century, also. And it is noteworthy that Giorgio Vasari uses this expression for the first time when describing Filippino Lippi's complex frescoes: *"vaghissima invenzione"*.[48] In his book *Dialogo* dove si ragiona delle bellezze (1542) Niccolo Franco describes the quick movement of a lady with the term *vaga* or *vaghezza*.[49] For Franco, all his examples of the expression vaghezza refer to eccentric movements. La vaghezza is also connected to the concept *artifizio*, artificial, in G. P. Lomazzo's treatise[50], and to the concept of difficulty (*difficultà*) in Benedetto Varchi's treatise.[51] These characterizations also fit perfectly well to the Manneristic nymphs.

In Vasari's *Lives* the term *vaghezza* usually appears in the context of the description of the colours in a painting. However, in Perino del Vaga's life, the term shows up four times, and the last one is telling: When he describes the frescoes of Sala Paolina (Castel San Angelo, 1546), he asserts: "La sala è molto bella e vaga".[52] This is more than symptomatic for the twisted female figures of the fresco.

Most obviously, Michelangelo's concept of the *figura* serpentina paved the way for the more ornamented visual language of gestures. Richly ornamented gestures are a kind of Dionysian *basso ostinato* after the High Renaissance. David Summers states: "The identification of movement and ornament was not unique to the Renaissance".[53] According to G. P. Lomazzo, Marco Pino adapted the idea of *figura serpentinata* from Michelangelo: "[h]e ought always to make the figure pyramidical, serpentine and multiplied". [54] *Figura serpentinata* connotes extreme artifice – and as a gesture it is close to *furia* of the figures. David Summers writes: "It is far from being spontaneous, it is calculated and artificial, responding first of all to the demand for *varietà*".[55] According to Lomazzo, "the greatest grace and loveliness that a figure may have is that it seems to move itself; painters call this the *furia* of the figure. And to represent this movement no form is more suited than a flame of fire." So, for Lomazzo, "movements (*moti*) […] should always be represented in such a way that the body

6. Francesco Salviati, *The Birth of the Virgin*. Ca. 1548. Drawing. Photo: Albertina, Vienna

is serpentine, to which Nature is easily disposed".[56] For this reason Lomazzo was fond of twisted poses (*ravvolgimenti*), like many Mannerists before him. This is a way in which the *figura serpentina* is a part of *furia*, and *furia* connotes with conscious artifice *vaghezza*.[57]

The frame to all these concepts was *furor poeticus*, the premodern Ciceronian variation of Plato's *mania*. For Vasari it was *furore dell'arte*: "It seems often that in sketches (*bozze*), arising from the *furor* of art (*furore dell'arte*), the *concetto* (concept) is expressed in a few strokes".[58] *Furia, fierezza di moto* and vivid movements belong together as paving the way for nervous figures, nymphs of the followers of Michelangelo. Even if they broke the rule of *copia* of Alberti, they carried with them some new theoretical insights which E. H. Gombrich has always called a "crisis of the art theory" in the mid-16th century.

A good example of this new artistic view is a small fresco painting of Salviati, *The Birth of the Virgin*, in San Marcello al Corso, Rome (1563) [Fig. 3]. It yields a view in which a *canefora* has grown big enough to fill the left part of the picture, showing off her beauty, and, what is new,

cf. Ch. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images*, p. 139 (as in note 24); cf. A. Warburg, 'Einleitung', p. 171 (as in note 5).

48 G. Vasari, *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori. scultori e architetti*, Roma, 2001, p. 513.

49 N. Franco, *Dialogo dove si ragione delle bellezze*, Apud Antonium Gardane, 1542, 50r.

50 G.P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte del la pittura*, Milano 1968, pp. 126, 129, 146.

51 B. Varchi, 'Della maggioranza delle arti', in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento. Fra manierismo e Controriforma*, vol. 2, ed. P. Barocchi, Bari, 1962, p. 38.

52 G. Vasari, *Le vite*, p. 908 (as in note 48).

53 D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton, 1981, p. 91.

54 G.P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, p. 22 (as in note 50).

55 D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, pp. 61, 411 (as in note 53).

56 G.P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, pp. 22–23 (as in note 50).

57 See A. Kuusamo, 'The Concept of *vaghezza*', pp. 80–95 (as in note 43).

58 D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, pp. 62–63 (as in note 53).

she is looking straight at the beholder; she is no longer just a bystander. She seems to be a representation of the nymph and at the same time an allegory of all nymphs – and finally a kind of *exordium* (*proemio*) of the theme of childbirth.[59]

In the following chart we can see quite a few differences between the nymphs depicted by Ghirlandaio, Botticelli and Pollaiuolo and those painted by Salviati, Sermoneta, Becerra and other Mannerists. The chart tries to clarify cultural differences between the atmosphere of the late Quattrocento and the "soulless" Mannerist paintings, and how this "soullessness" could be regarded as a new *Pathosformel* in its own right – with its self-conscious view of art containing a new "artificial" approach: how to create distance to the self-evident themes and motifs of the High Renaissance.[60]

The right column pertains to works starting from the year 1538 when Salviati finished his *Visitation* (San Giovanni Decollato, Rome). In sum, the function of nymphs and servants (*ninfe, ancelle*) was changing during this time period, however not so much as it changed at the end of 19th century and during *la belle époque*. Taking this into account it is even more surprising that Warburg and his followers, mainly Didi-Huberman, have not paid any attention to this gradual change from High Renaissance to Mannerism – despite Warburg's idea of the striding nymph as a *flexible pathos formula*.[61] Moreover, a Dionysian impact in the mid-16th century seems to dwell under the guise of *vaghezza*, which means a changeable, lovely charm – even though Warburg most obviously saw Mannerism as an opposition to Dionysian elements in art.[62]

It is apparent that every generation will interpret, apply and see Aby Warburg's ideas of *bewegtes Leben* in a different light, and in this way will try to fill the blank spots in the research with new insights. I think it is time to reevaluate and fill in the lacuna of the 16th century-nymphs and see how the pictorial form of the striding nymph makes its way through this controversial time.

[59] See A. Kuusamo, 'Meitä katsova nymfi', pp. 3–23 (as in note 43).

[60] Idem, 'The Concept of *vaghezza*', pp. 93–95 (as in note 43).

[61] A. Warburg, A. Jolles, WIA,55.1.

[62] A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 445, 447 (as in note 4). Cf. C. Wedepohl, 'Pathos – Polarität – Distanz – Denkraum', p. 41 (as in note 12).

Chart 1

Differences in representing female figures as nymphs in birth scenes in Renaissance and Mannerist art

The end of the 15th century	**Mid-16th century (1538-1565)**
Low proxemic intensity	High proxemic intensity
Slow action	Quick movements
Domestic characters	Anonymous characters with anonymous characteristics
Small, intimate space	Large anonymous space
Acts are discernible	Acts and episodes fuse.
Horizontal space	Heterogenic space (from Sebastiano to Salviati)
Limited space	Unshaped space
Unity of action	Heterogenous action
Chorus figures in margins	Chorus figures take command
Few assistant figures (*dignità*)	Assistant figures fill the space (*copia*)
Leggiadria, grazia	*Vaghezza* – unbound movement
Controlled movements	*Furia* of movements
Metonymic clarity	Metonymic sliding
Homotopy	Heterotopy
Hypotaxis	Parataxis[58]
Bewegtes Beiwerk	The carnivalization of *Bewegtes Beiwerk*

SUMMARY

Altti Kuusamo
ABY WARBURG'S MISSING LADIES: THE EXCLUSION OF MID-16TH CENTURY NYMPHS

When thinking of the research which has been made on the *Nachleben* of the famous *Ninfa* in the Renaissance of which Aby Warburg was so fond of, there is a strange lack of interest regarding the pictures of striding women appearing in the mid-16th century Rome. Although Aby Warburg stayed the last year of his life in Rome he didn't include Roman examples of striding women in his *Mnemosyne-Atlas* project, in the panel number 46. Probably he didn't even know those ladies or was suspicious of all Manneristic images after Michelangelo. Warburg is not alone here: Also Georges Didi-Huberman does not pay any attention to these Mannerist lady-figures in his numerous *Ninfa*-publications. Because it is a common opinion that Warburg's concept of the Pathos formula is a flexible one, we can apply the formula to those anonymous striding women of Mannerist fresco decorations – those vague figures which can be characterized with the epithet of the time: *vaghezza*. It is also quite possible to call them nymphs of the day, different from those of the late Quattrocento, but interesting as such, especially when taking into account the changed cultural situation of the mid-16th century Italy.