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WARBURG'S GHOST

On Literary Atlases and the 'Anatopic' Shift
of a Cartographic Object

Filippo Trentin*

geographia oculus historiae.
Abraham Ortelius

The blind faith in maps is the marking feature of modernity.
Franco Farinelli

Air is now so full of ghosts that nobody can avoid them.
Aby Warburg

One of the most striking paradigm shifts of the last decades in the humanities has been the replacement of a method of knowledge rooted in historicist temporal constructions with one based on spatial models. Once monographs, literary anthologies, and books of cultural criticism tended to be structured according to chronological lines; now editors, authors, and publishers appear eager to distance themselves from what is perceived as the somewhat outdated methodology of the 'history of'. This locational turn of the human sciences seems to respond — at least at a superficial level — to the 'spatial turn' advocated by scholars of the postmodern, such as Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, and Edward Soja, and it finds in Michel Foucault's brief essay 'Of Other Spaces' one of its most cited theoretical bases.¹ Foucault's prophecy that 'the great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history' while 'the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space' seems thus confirmed by the proliferation of studies that spatialize knowledge rather than historicize it.²

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There is perhaps no better example of this movement from the temporalization to the spatialization of knowledge than the adoption of the atlas as a taxonomic term in cultural criticism. As bibliographical research on the term would reveal, in the last two decades or so the ‘atlas’ has been progressively used as a term for conceptualizing a method of knowledge organization that departs from chronological reconstructions in favour of horizontal and cartographical approaches. Among the vast number of projects placed under the umbrella-term of the atlas, suffice it to think of Giuliana Bruno’s *Atlas of Emotions*, Franco Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel*, Gabriele Pedullà and Sergio Luzzatto’s *Atlante della letteratura italiana* [Atlas of Italian Literature], Georges Didi-Huberman’s *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One’s Back?*, David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*, and Judith Schalansky’s *Atlas of Remote Islands*.³ While these projects are all very different in their genesis and aims, what they all seem to share is a necessity to depart from a chronological methodology of investigation in favour of a spatial one based on the atlas.

This article aims to provide a critical reading of the contemporary redeployment of the atlas through a specific focus on its afterlife in contemporary literary criticism. More specifically, I am interested in investigating the reasons underlying the re-emergence of the atlas as a form of knowledge organization, particularly focusing on the supposedly ‘anti-canonical’ use of cartography advocated by the proposers of the spatial turn of literature. While, as we will see, the aim of literary atlases is to trigger a shift in the study of literature from a methodology based on historicist reconstruction to one rooted in geographical knowledge — ‘see, my son, time here turns into space’, as the epigraph of Moretti’s atlas reports — this article questions whether this ‘cartographic turn’ is *really* capable of attacking linear and historicist reconstructions.

In order to do so, I will first investigate the ways in which three cases of geographical studies of literature — namely, Malcolm Bradbury’s *Atlas of Literature*, Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel*, and Luzzatto and Pedullà’s *Atlante della letteratura italiana* — have employed the term ‘atlas’. Then, in the central part of the article, I will read such cartographic uses in relation to the genealogical origin of the atlas — which can be traced back to the work of the sixteenth-century Dutch cartographers Abraham Ortelius and Gerhard Mercator — in order to detect the continuities and discontinuities between early car-

tography and the contemporary atlas. Once this epistemological shift is delineated, I will finally engage in an interpretation of Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, which I read as an 'anatomic' object that keeps troubling any purely cartographic use of the atlas. In my reading, by theorizing an antifoundational (and anti-identitarian) method of knowledge organization based on the morphological affect between disparate images and objects, Warburg's atlas foregrounds an anti-normative method of knowledge organization that leads to the deposition of the atlas as a topographical machine. My use of the term 'anatomy' in this essay is at the same time speculative and heuristic, and aims to capture the disorienting potentialities that are intrinsic in non-cartographic explorations of space, as I will clarify later in the 'Interlude' section. Thus, if critics like Jacques Rancière and Georges Didi-Huberman have shed light on the meaning of anachrony and anachronism for a nonlinear understanding of history,⁴ this article subtends the possibility of rethinking space through 'anatomy'.

I. LITERARY ATLASES

The field that has perhaps witnessed the most substantial resurgence of the atlas as a working method in the last couple of decades is, as already mentioned, that of literary studies. More specifically, Bradbury's, Moretti's, and Luzzatto and Pedulla's works attest the crucial importance of geography for rethinking the current coordinates of the study of literature.⁵ While these projects are all very different in their genesis and aims, they share an insurrectionary spirit that materializes in the privilege they accord to the horizontal and geometrical plan of cartography rather than to the chronological and vertical one of historicism.⁶ In his introduction to his *Atlas of Literature* Bradbury emphasizes the ontological importance of 'travelling' and 'mapping' for the very act of writing literature. Not only has travelling through space always been a *conditio sine qua non* for novelists, poets, and artists, but writing itself represents a form of mapping and of ordering the otherwise disparate nature of the space we inhabit. In his own words, 'Our poetry, our fiction, our drama is itself a mapping of the world.'⁷ Drawing on this insight, the aim of his work is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to reveal the strict relationship between geography and literature through an analysis of the impact that cities and places have for the authors ana-

lyzed. On the other hand, it contextualizes the plot and the characters represented in literary works within their own geographical position. The *Atlas of Literature* is thus scattered with maps, from Dante's Italy to Tom Wolfe's Manhattan, passing through Dickens's London, Faulkner's American South, and Existentialist Paris, among many other places. Bradbury's decision to name 'atlas' this work of literary criticism seems thus evocative and is dependent on the atlas's capacity to locate places within their correct 'topographical' position.

Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel* shares a similar faith in cartography. As the first paragraph of the introduction states, this atlas is characterized by the belief that space is not simply a container where stories happen but 'an active force that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth'.⁸ Moretti appears to take even more seriously than Bradbury the potential of geography for the study of literature, which materializes in his inclusion of more 'scientific' and topographically accurate maps and in his use of quantitative data on the circulation of texts in specific places and periods. The atlas is thus redeployed by Moretti as a tool for the articulation of a different understanding of literary forms, detached from the historicist credo in the 'spirit of time' and interested in exploring the spatial dimension of literature. More specifically, Moretti's atlas investigates the relationship between geographical space and literature both in its external dimension (the *ortsgebundene* or 'place-bound nature of literary forms')⁹ and in its internal one ('the semiotic domain around which a plot coalesces and self-organizes').¹⁰ Moretti's choice to name his book an atlas is thus dependent on his faith in cartography for destabilizing canonical reconstructions of literature based on linear chronologies: 'A good map is worth a thousand words, cartographers say, and they are right.'¹¹

Moretti's work remains undoubtedly a field-breaking study on the potential enabled by the geography of literature, and the sudden spreading of atlases of literature, theatre, and cinema that has marked the academic market — especially the Italian one — in the last decade can be partially read as a result of its extensive critical impact. The most important and ambitious successor of Moretti's pioneering study is perhaps the *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, edited by Sergio Luzzatto and Sergio Pedullà and published in three volumes from 2010 to 2012. This atlas represents one of the most ambitious and expensive editorial projects of the last years within the field of literary studies, not only in

Italy, and it reflects the publisher Einaudi's interest in the contemporary state and status of literature.¹²

Following the line of argument of the introductory essay, the *Atlante* originates in the crisis of modernity, which, according to the editors, is strongly related to the emergence of a historicist conception of temporality. The decision to name the project an atlas responds to the attempt to surpass a notion of literary history based on the ordering of tradition as 'a succession of books which are considered fundamental' or 'a sequence of the medals of illustrious men'.¹³ The atlas is here adopted as an apparatus that produces a new form of temporality that would overcome what goes under the label of 'teleological Hegelian historicism'. As Luzzatto and Pedullà write:

In a culture like ours, increasingly dominated by visual elements, geographical knowledge takes an advantaged position thanks to the (conceptual, but also mnemonic) force of cartography, and to the ability of a good map to organize data in a coherent and synthetic way.¹⁴

What is implied here is that a geography of literature based on the atlas is a more desirable form of knowledge than a history of literature.

In spite of their different aims and fields of exploration — 'world literature' in the case of Bradbury, nineteenth-century English and French novels for Moretti, and Italian literature for Luzzatto and Pedullà — these works share the application of cartographic procedures to the study of literary texts. Space here goes through at least three different though interrelated semantic meanings: 1) space as representational, i.e., as the location/s where a narrative story happens; 2) space as the cultural environment producing new literary forms, such as Paris for poetic symbolism or the London of the Bloomsbury group for the emergence of modernism; and 3) space as the geographical dimension in which texts are read and circulate. This suggests that the atlas is here re-conceptualized as a tool for the creation of a spatial rather than historical taxonomy of literature, in a discourse that frames, explicitly or implicitly, (Hegelian) historicism as hierarchical and conservative and the horizontal dimension of the map as radical and anti-traditionalist. In other words, the specific adoption of the atlas in the discipline of literary studies is characterized by an anti-normative ethos: the atlas here is employed as a spatial machine that dismantles the normative canon of historicism. At the same time, the geographical study of literature

aims to offer a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which genres, aesthetics, and poetics emerge *within* specific material contexts.

However, what I would like to problematize in this discourse is its reliance on cartography as a methodology that automatically challenges the conservative ethos characterizing literary histories. As I have emphasized above, the adoption of the term ‘atlas’ in these works imply that literary genres, forms, and movements emerge in specific geographical contexts and that such emergence is bound to a sort of *spirit loci*, what Moretti calls the *ortsgebunden* of literature. Thus, if Moretti supports his argument that ‘geography shapes the narrative structure of the European novel’ by mapping the location and the spatial circulation of Jane Austen’s novels or of British Gothic tales, Luzzatto and Pedullà taxonomize the history of Italian literature through the cities’ eras: the ‘Age of Padua’ is followed by the ‘Age of Avignon’, which is then followed by the ‘Age of Florence’, and so on. Put simply, what I am interested to question here is the geographical objectivism of this atlas trend: in this discourse space *is* the cartographic space of the map, as if the map were not itself the representation of something existing independently from its cartographic projection. It seems to me that such an approach risks forgetting that historiography and geography have already undergone a process of self-critique of their rationalist and positivistic origins. The acritical faith in topographic mapping characterizing these literary atlases seems indeed to obliterate their anti-normative aims through the reproduction of what Franco Farinelli calls ‘cartographic reason’.¹⁵ More specifically, these atlases perform the reduction of spatial knowledge to the cartographic projection of the territory represented in the map through the naturalization of Euclidean geometry and Ptolemy’s cartographic projection as unquestionable epistemological principles.¹⁶ In other words, knowing space is here analogous to projecting that space in the bi-dimensional projection of the map.

While it is important to recognize the interesting results of this spatial turn for opening up the study of literature to quantitative data and sociological analyses, it is also necessary to question the intrinsic risks in considering cartographic procedures as positive per se, or indeed historicist reconstruction as simply conservative. The reticence of these literary atlases to confront the ontological limits of geography seems to be based on a cartographic fetish that ultimately re-allows historicism in from the backdoor, thus jeopardizing the possibility of actually overcoming its outdated understanding of social and cultural for-

mations. Such a flaw is confirmed if we look at the temporal structure adopted by these works: while Bradbury's reproduces acritically 'historical' notions such as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Romanticism, etc., Luzzatto and Pedullà's atlas adopts a very conventional diachronic division, as revealed by the titles of the three volumes, which are respectively 'From the Origins to the Renaissance', 'From the Counter-Reformation to the Restoration', and 'From Romanticism to Contemporary Times'. In other words, if a cartographic study of literature is endorsed as a critical move with its own benefits, it also risks reproducing the positivistic aporias that are bound to the rise of cartographic reason, thus invalidating its potentially subversive move. What we might at this point ask ourselves is whether the impossibility of overcoming the limits of the historicist and the geographical models is embedded in the atlas as a form of knowledge, and if so, whether we should consider the atlas itself as the culprit of this project's flaws. In an attempt to answer this question, I should momentarily turn our attention to the genealogical origins of cartographic reason.

II. THE RISE OF CARTOGRAPHIC REASON AND THE BIRTH OF THE ATLAS

In his *Critica della ragione cartografica* [Critique of Cartographic Reason], Farinelli makes the argument that the shift from the classical world to our modern world is marked by the establishment of a cartographic rationality, based on what he calls a 'blind faith in maps'. He thus considers 'cartographic reason' as the proper marker of the Western subject in the movement from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance:¹⁷ 'Modern perspective is based on the a-critical adoption of the metrical space of Euclidean geometry, or better, on the principle of cartographic projection discovered by Ptolemy.'¹⁸ This process of 'objectivization' of Euclidean geometry and Ptolemaic geography would imply the constitution of a modern ontological principle rooted in homogeneity and thus the elision of differences, and on the subsequent 'evacuation of every concrete human being from the plane of determination'.¹⁹

As Farinelli underlines, while during the Middle Ages maps were conceived 'as literary metaphors and as tools in analogical thinking' rather than as topographies,²⁰ the first step towards a change in the mapmaking was caused by the rediscovery of Ptolemy's *Geographia*

(AD 150) within the humanistic circle of Coluccio Salutati in Florence between the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries.²¹ The *Geographia* followed a very different cartographic paradigm from those in use during the Middle Ages. Jacopo Angeli, one of the translators of Ptolemy's text in the Florentine circle of Salutati, immediately detected this aspect, underlining how Ptolemy's approach differed from that of Latin and Medieval geographers insofar as it adopted a mathematical rather than a descriptive-spatial approach. For Angeli, the most revolutionary aspect of the *Geographia* is its use of a measurable scale system based on longitude and latitude that allows for the construction of a cartographic representation (*pictura*) in which the relation between each part and the whole is maintained.²² Thus, if Latin geographers were more interested in collecting historical information about geographical territories, Ptolemy's mathematical maps added the possibility to represent a given territory according to a precise topographical scale that followed latitudinal and longitudinal patterns. In this regard, the emergence of modern cartography appears strictly linked to a process of objectification of the map as a holistic machine. To put it otherwise, the atlas is the editorial form that is able to grasp the ungraspable: the immense and swarming diversity of natural and human space is captured through an objective system that challenges nonmathematical modalities of spatial exploration. The exception, the detail, is here erased in favour of the whole.

The success of Ptolemy's spatial model, testified by the publication of numerous modern editions throughout all of Europe during the fifteenth century, should be read as the early symptom of an epistemological shift in the notion of space. If medieval *mappaemundi* 'were built on concepts that are described as "mythical", "non-scientific", or "influenced by Christian dogma"', after the Renaissance translation of Ptolemy's *Geographia* 'came a "modern" concept of space, of homogeneous and isotropic extension that did not vary according to location and could be enclosed within a network of meridians and parallels that made it possible to locate any specific place with scientifically calculated coordinates'.²³ The establishment of cartography as a discipline coincided thus with the rise of a specific type of geographical rationality dependent on the acceptance of isotropic and homogenous principles rooted in Euclidean geometry and on Ptolemy's cartographic projection.²⁴

Farinelli considers the birth of the atlas as the definitive victory of the cartographic model. However, both Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum* and Gerard Mercator's *Atlas sive Cosmographicae Meditationes de Fabrica Mundi et fabricati figura* testify to a more ambiguous relationship between the atlas's genealogy and the establishment of cartographic reason. While histories of cartography normally indicate Ortelius's and Mercator's collections of maps as the first atlases, they appear to omit the fact that both of these works are not just atlases in our topographic understanding of the term but rather complex instruments that attempt to link together a part (the fragment represented by a geographical territory) to a whole that exists in the non-locatable territory of the ultra-sensory. Focusing initially on Mercator's atlas, we could say that the intellectual tension characterizing this project is not simply that of placing cities, regions, and nations in their exact cartographic position but rather to speculate about their deeper and apparently unintelligible significance. In his preface to the first edition, Mercator explains that the purpose of his project:

To followe this Atlas, a man so excellling in erudition, humanities, and wisdome, (as from a loftie watch tower) to contemplate Cosmographie, as much as my strength and abilitie will permit mee, to see if per-adventure, by my diligence, I may finde out some truths in things yet unknowne, which may serve to the study of wisdom.²⁵

Mercator's project is thus entitled 'Atlas' as a form of dedication to the mythical King of Mauritania and son of Coelus and Terra,²⁶ who thanks to his high position — he lives in a 'loftie watch tower' — is able to have a privileged perspective on the entire world. The view from the 'loftie tower', together with his erudition and wisdom, makes Atlas the model for anybody who wants to know and experience the world. Mercator's aim is thus not simply to provide us with a precise topographical projection of the world, but to contemplate and to try to 'finde out some truths' about the appearance of the world. For Mercator, the atlas attempts to challenge the order of the sphere not simply through geography but by *drawing together* different epistemological orders. Significantly, 'Geography' features last in the indexical order of Mercator's atlas, after the categories of 'Cosmography', 'Celestial things in their ranke', 'Astronomy', and 'things Elementaire' (terrestrial regions). This taxonomy suggests that for Mercator, cartographic reason is still at the service of a higher principle that concerns the relationship between the

sensible (or the cartographic visible) and the intelligible (or the anatomic invisible). The mathematical order, which materializes in Mercator's cartographic projections of continents, nations, and regions, is here at the disposal of a different epistemological aim, which is that of speculating about the 'unknown' relationship between the sensible and the intelligible.

A similarly complex understanding of the relationship between visible and invisible — and between parts and wholes — marks Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, in which the cartographic projection of geographical territories is accompanied and interrupted by the visual presence of assembled quotations from classical texts, symbolic iconographies, and narrative descriptions of the same territories. Ortelius writes in his introduction to the *Theatrum*:

Because we thought it would be a thing nothing pleasing to the Reader or Beholder, to see the backsides of the leaves altogether bare and empty; we determined there to make a certaine briefe and short declaration and Historical discourse of every Mappe [...]. Moreover to these also we have added a Table of the names of all the Authors, that ever wee knew or had; out of which, those that are so disposed, may fetch a more ample and larger discourse and description of the severall Countreys handled by them.

Thus, the back side of the world map of the first edition is accompanied by a quotation from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, while the world map of its third edition is supplemented with five quotations from Seneca and Cicero.²⁷ The approximation of texts and images and the inclusion of symbolic iconographies and emblems suggest that rather than a collection of maps, Ortelius's atlas is an anatomic machine that aspires to produce knowledge through a montage of textual and visual elements.²⁸

In other words, Mercator's and Ortelius' works indicate that the genealogical origin of the atlas is the result of an unresolved clash between two ordering principles: a positive one that materializes in the attempt to reproduce the most precise cartographic map possible (what critical geographers term 'cartographic reason') and a negative one that is based on the attempt to transcend cartographic reason through the employment of montage procedures that displace territories and texts from their 'original' location (what I will here call the 'anatomic' drive). Thus, while the cartographic rationality of the atlas materializes in its attempt to project geographical territories onto the measurable space of

Euclidean geometry, its anatomic drive emerges in the interruption of such logic through speculation and montage, which produce what could be termed the 'unstable' morphological structure of the atlas.

III. INTERLUDE: WHAT IS AN ANATOPY?

The prefix 'ana-' is an interesting one in that it captures a multi-stable and oscillatory semantic movement.²⁹ As the nineteenth-century American philologist Thomas Hewitt Key noted, prefixes are linguistic forms that are easily corruptible: their meanings keep changing according to the special relationship that they acquire with the word to which occasionally they are attached. Prefixes 'express wavers between increased intensity and a privative character', and the 'more this corruption of a particle develops itself, the less capable does it become of maintaining the independent and separate character which it first possessed'.³⁰ Hewitt Key, lamenting the limits of dictionaries, recognizes at least thirteen possible uses of the particle 'ana-', all of which can be traced back to the idea of spatial distribution. The three main spatial meanings of ana- are thus related to the ideas of 'upwards', as in Xenophon's 'Anabasis', which narrates the return of the Ten Thousands from Babylon to the Coast of the Black Sea; 'backwards', which refers to the idea of going against a sequential rule, as in the original meaning of 'anachronism' (against the rule of time); and 'through', which is rather ambiguous and can refer both to the expression 'cutting through a place' and to a state in which life is suspended between animation and in-animation, as in the term 'anabiosis'.

In conceiving the notion of anatopy, it seems necessary to invest in the multistability of the particle ana-, and in the sense of spatial disturbance that Hewitt Key recognizes in this 'corrupted' prefix. Anatopy finds its *raison d'être* in the conviction that space never gives itself as something neutral or natural. Anatopy insists that there is always a variance, a difference — what in Italian is a '*scarto*' — between space and itself, or between the map and the territory, and that it is in this interstice that lies the possibility to engage critically against violent instrumentalizations of spatial borders. From this perspective, thinking space anatopically means believing that space, as well as time, triggers temporal interferences and produces meanings, patterns, and power configurations that go against topographic contiguity. In other words,

the dimension of anatopy is not the bi-dimensional space of the topographic map but the multi-dimensional space of a virtual palimpsest, in which stacks of overlapping strata cohabit. Anatoxies inhabit the map, and yet they reject its cartographic logic. They seek to discard codes of dominant narratives — the codes of cartographic reason — and perform what Paul Gilroy has called a ‘rhizomatic fractal structure’.³¹

As histories of cartographies explain, the destiny of the atlas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is intrinsically linked to the progressive separation of analogical and rational thinking, which represents an early marker of modernity. As a consequence of the further paradigm shift that the concept of spatial knowledge underwent, the atlas ceased to be a ‘composite form’ and became an ‘objective’ holistic system at the service of national and imperialistic aims. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have analyzed this process by linking the emergence of different typologies of scientific atlases during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (truth-to-nature, mechanistic, etc.) to the process of formation of ‘objectivity’ as a scientific paradigm.³² For them, it was in these two centuries that the atlas moved away from the epistemological domain of the resemblance and started to be applied to purely scientific taxonomic activities based on what Daston and Galison term a process of ‘policing of subjectivity’, that is, the rejection of any subjective and contingent modality of classification of reality, in the name of ‘mechanical objectivity’.³³

The process of disappearance of symbolic and anatomic elements from the map can be clearly visualized by comparing the composite and multi-stable surfaces of Mercator’s and Ortelius’s atlases with the arid and rigid surfaces of modern atlases such as the *Blathwayt Atlas* (1683), used by British colonial administrators during the reign of Charles II. The publication of this atlas, which includes only the areas of English colonial interest in the period (North America, some parts of South America and Africa, and Bombay harbour), was solicited by the Council of Trade and Plantations and responded to the need ‘to obtain exact maps’ of English colonial territories.³⁴ It goes without saying that such ‘objective exactitude’ coincided with the disappearance of the interpretative and affective elements of the maps, which were by then considered ‘subjective’ and therefore not worth being included. This ‘objectivist’ mutation of the atlas seems thus to respond to a mutation of geography into ‘a colonial and imperial science’, which led ‘the intellectual

dominance of environmental and racial theories in the period of high imperialism'.³⁵

In this regard, the historical trajectory followed by the atlas perfectly confirms Michel Foucault's individuation of a process of rationalization that wipes away a-rational elements such as resemblances, similitudes, sympathies, and analogies, which had characterized Renaissance epistemology, at the same time establishing a purely quantitative methodology of investigation: 'It is here that knowledge breaks off its kinship with *divination*'.³⁶ As Foucault wrote regarding the seventeenth century:

The activity of the mind [...] will therefore no longer consist in *drawing things together*, in setting out on a quest for everything that might reveal some sort of kinship, attraction, or secretly shared nature within them, but, on the contrary, in *discriminating*, that is, in establishing their identities, then the inevitability of the connections with all the successive degrees of a series.³⁷

The seventeenth century appears thus as a watershed between two very different epistemological domains of the atlas: while Ortelius and Mercator still followed the order of resemblance and thus tried to draw things together, from then on atlases were characterized by an epistemological paradigm rooted in 'mechanical rationality' and based on discrimination and on the establishment of borders and identities.³⁸

If we contextualize this argument within our analysis, we can start to notice that something progressively fades away in the gap between early atlases such as Mercator's and Ortelius's and the 'objective' form of the atlas that we have inherited after the modern epistemological break. Ortelius's and Mercator's attempts to trace correlations between the visible and the invisible, the geographical and the cosmographical, disappear in favour of a new epistemological order that discriminates against anatomic strategies of exploration, that is, strategies that go against a normative and 'objectivist' spatial order. Thus, by undergoing a process of purification from its non-measurable elements, the modern atlas loses its anatomic drive, at the same time paving the way for the establishment of 'cartographic reason' as its only structuring principle. It is worth underlining that, as Farinelli has shown, the emergence of cartographic rationality triggered a shift of spatial knowledge towards an ideology of the map that reduced the knowledge of the geographical world to the knowledge of the territory represented on the map. More-

over, what the rise of this rationality implicitly affirms is the production of a different type of sovereign subject who ‘objectively’ believes in the neutralization of material differences within a formal objective structure. In other words, what characterizes the atlas at the dawning of Western modernity is the naturalization of a stable formal principle — that of cartographic reason — into the social domain, which is by definition unstable and informal.

IV. ANATOPIC REMNANTS: ABY WARBURG’S *BILDERATLAS MNEMOSYNE*

The art historian Aby Warburg worked at a project entitled *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* during the last five years of his life, from 1924 till 1929. Warburg’s work, in particular his atlas of images, has been the focus of much critical work in recent years. This has unexpectedly displaced his legacy from that of the dusty founder of a strictly philological discipline such as that of iconography to that of a forerunner of disciplines like visual studies, cultural studies, German Kulturwissenschaft, and critical theory. Warburg’s curious destiny can be partially explained in terms of a cohabitation of Neo-Kantian and Nietzschean elements in his work, as his theorization of the concept of ‘Pathosformel’ (formula of emotion) demonstrates.³⁹ The almost schizophrenic afterlife of Warburg’s legacy is moreover confirmed by the enormous hermeneutic differences between the most important intellectual biographies dedicated to him: Ernst Gombrich’s *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (1970) and Georges Didi-Huberman’s *L’image survivante* (2002).⁴⁰ While Gombrich, in an attempt to exorcise Nietzsche’s influence, favours the positive and Apollonian Warburg, Didi-Huberman focuses on the ‘negative’ and Dionysian Warburg, making of the German art historian the precursor of an anachronistic and fantasmatic conception of history.

The troubled destiny of Warburg’s work and of his debated legacy are particularly interesting for the argument that I am developing here, in that the clash between diverging models of historicity and spatiality intertwine in the theorization of his atlas. While Warburg’s *Bilderatlas* is considered an important precedent of the atlas trend in the humanities,⁴¹ what inspires my argument here is the conviction that Warburg’s anti-normative reconceptualization of the atlas as a heuristic tool

remains unprocessed in the disciplinary expansion that this taxonomic term has undergone in the examples that we have analyzed in the first section of this essay.

Warburg's *Bilderatlas* is composed of a series of sixty-three black panels numbered, with some gaps, from one to seventy-nine, in which he assembled series of pictures that he had collected for more than thirty years in a photographic collection that contained 25,000 photos at the time of his death in 1929. What is crucial for Warburg is the principle of selection between the images collected in the archive and those included in the atlas, which is characterized by openness and has an unfinished quality. The images contained in the photographic archive could all be potentially moved to the atlas, depending on the forces of morphological correspondence looming over the singular panel at a specific moment in time. In psychoanalytical terms, the relationship between the archive and the atlas recalls the oscillatory movement between the conscious and the unconscious that is here reproduced in the fluid and open movement between a container of potentially infinite memories — the archived images — and the impression of those memories on the dark surfaces of the atlas.

Warburg's choice to name this project an 'atlas' is inspired by the first panel (Panel A) of the *Bilderatlas*, which is composed of an astrological map of the universe of the sixteenth century; a map of Europe and the Middle East (the geographic territories where the artistic materials included in the atlas appeared); and a genealogical map of the Florentine Tornabuoni family. As this first panel suggests, Warburg's project originated from the desire to orient oneself in time and space, an aim which, as we have seen, also marks the cartographic birth of the atlas.⁴² However, in spite of its centrality, cartography remains a starting point for Warburg's plan rather than its end. While Bradbury's, Moretti's, and Luzzatto and Pedulla's atlases are structured according to rigidly cartographical and historical coordinates, Warburg's atlas is built through a system of classification that overcomes spatial and temporal contiguity through the notions of survival, correspondence, and morphological similitude. Thus, rather than erecting borders between different geographical territories and establishing epochal divisions, Warburg aims to individuate the 'signatures' between images appearing in different temporal and spatial contexts.⁴³

Warburg's refusal to organise the atlas according to rigidly cartographic and historicist coordinates, and the effort to conceive of a dif-

ferent way of collecting images, emerge clearly in his late interventions and writings. In a lecture given at a seminar of his Institute on 28 February 1928, he argued:

Our efforts to understand, on the model of the Ancient, the processes which are inherent to stylistic development in terms of a psychology of art, must finally direct us towards a *critique of the definition of historical epochs*. We should ask ourselves whether there is a marked difference between Middle Ages and Renaissance that could be justified by a reading based on a psychology of styles? For sure, this attempt of definition cannot reveal any reliable parameter of periodization *if this is conducted through a purely chronological basis*.⁴⁴

Thus, for Warburg, the effort to interpret artistic objects should not rely on chronology, but rather focus on the individuation of a morphological function, internal to the work of art, which follows the logic of resemblance. This effort would lead to the dissolution of conventionally historicist categories such as the Middle Ages or the Renaissance that unify under the same category objects necessarily escaping synthetic classification. As Warburg underlines, the purpose of his atlas is to capture ‘the same object comparatively, at different times and in different countries’ in order to overcome a chronological understanding of historical eras.

Warburg mobilizes concepts such as ‘Nachleben’ (survival, after-life), ‘Pathosformel’ and ‘Bipolarität’ (bipolarity) in order to challenge linear and sequential methodologies of historical interpretation. In this regard, Warburg’s ‘psychology of art’ and his effort to transcend linear and geographical temporal notions point to a conception of history that overlaps in many points with Foucault’s archeology, in that they both strive to overcome paradigms of historicity based on the principle of causality and on sequential chronology. What in Foucault’s terminology is a ‘function of enunciation’ forming a specific ‘discursive regime’ appears to be something very similar to Warburg’s effort to individuate a ‘Pathosformel’ to be arranged under a morphological theme. We could indeed use one of Foucault’s description of archeological sets in terms of ‘series of series’ and his rejection of a synthetic understanding of history as a potential description Warburg’s *Bilderatlas*:

The problem that now presents itself [...] is to determine what form of relation may be legitimately described between these different series; what vertical system they are capable of forming; what interplay of cor-

relation and dominance exists between them; what may be the effect of shifts, different temporalities, and various rehandlings; in what distinct totalities certain elements may figure simultaneously; in short, not only what series, but also what 'series of series' — or, in other words, what 'tables' it is possible to draw up. A total description draws all phenomena around a single centre — a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of dispersion.⁴⁵

Foucault's method of general history — a 'negative' methodology of investigation that privileges voids and dispersions over totalities and wholes — appears thus as a sort of explanatory note to Warburg's *Bilderatlas*. Foucault's emphasis on individuating 'series of series' to be organized in 'tables', his attempt to identify the 'interplay of correlation' between different historical elements, and his challenge to totalities in favour of dispersion should thus be read in parallel with Warburg's effort to re-conceptualize historiography in the direction of an anachronistic and anatomic methodology of investigation.⁴⁶ To put it otherwise, Warburg's and Foucault's point of encounter lies in their capacity to overcome a system of classification based on a sequential notion of relationality (linear chronologies, historicist affiliations) with one rooted in a form of relation that transcends spatial or temporal contiguity and is rather bound to a formal, almost epidermic sameness — namely, what Warburg terms a 'Pathosformel' and Foucault the 'historical a priori'.⁴⁷

As Warburg's own words and this brief comparison with Foucault's archaeology suggest, the methodology of composition of the *Bilderatlas* constitutes an attempt to found a comparative discipline — a 'nameless science'⁴⁸ — that overcomes the narrow limitations imposed by both historicism and cartographic reason. In a very different fashion than that employed by the proposers of the spatial turn in contemporary literary studies, history and geography are elements that are impossible to disentangle from each other, in so far as the attempt to operate a redefinition of time has to be necessarily accompanied by the attempt to redraw spatial coordinates too. Warburg's atlas seems thus characterized by both an anachronistic impulse, as Didi-Huberman has argued, and an anatomic drive, in that 'space' is not characterized anymore by the rigid borders of cartographic reason, but as the *topos outopos* — the place without place — where the process of depolarization and repolarization of artistic forms occurs. Space is not that of the map

but the black void where the images of the *Bilderatlas* remain suspended, while waiting to reappear and disappear as a consequence of further historical mutations.

At this point, it seems compelling to ask what allows Warburg to arrange the different images of the atlas in thematic patterns via the individuation of that shared signature that he calls 'Pathosformel'. In other words, what force pushes him to select certain images from his photographic archive and not others, and what is the standpoint from which he imagines new relational modes between different images? Furthermore, where does Warburg find the authority to negate Euclidian space and chronological time in the name of the 'Pathosformel'? Attempting to answer these questions requires us to enter more deeply into the ambivalent relationship that Warburg builds up with his own archive. If Warburg's most intense effort is directed to cataloguing, collecting, selecting, and analyzing thousands and thousands of books and pictures, this is directly related to an attempt to save this iconographic material from the normative disciplinary forces of historicist reconstructions.⁴⁹

Warburg's dissatisfaction for such normative ordering principles emerges quite clearly in a passage of his draft of the atlas' introduction, in which he laments the lack of studies on the migration of forms from antiquity to the Renaissance:

Describing the survival of antiquity as the result of a new awareness of historical factuality and of an artistic empathy characterized by free will remains an insufficient *descriptive evolutionism* if one does not also try to plumb the depths of the instinctive knot which binds human spirit to the material which is a-chronologically stratified. It is only there that we can glimpse the matrix that forges the expressive values of pagan exaltation which spring from the orgiastic experience of the tragic Thiasus.⁵⁰

Warburg firmly rejects aestheticism and historicism, which he dismissively labels in terms of 'descriptive evolutionism'; instead, he proposes an investigation of the a-chronological stratifications of artworks that finds its initial marker in the tragic and divinatory origin of the artistic performance, thus implicitly linking his efforts to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. The atlas is for Warburg an instrument to search for the 'a-chronological matter' that characterizes artistic images. In this regard, Warburg's emphasis on a morphological correspondence that

transcends spatial and temporal contiguity is a gesture that directly challenges the institution of cartographic reason.

While it would be tempting to read Warburg's emphasis on 'a-chronological matter' as a pre-historical category — not uncoincidentally, various scholars have proposed a parallel reading between Carl Gustav Jung's notion of archetype and Warburg's 'Pathosformel'⁵¹ — what I am suggesting here is something quite different. In my reading, Warburg's 'Pathosformel' should be thought of not as something belonging to a fixed substance that pre-exists history but rather as a process of coagulation of essences that transcends temporal and spatial contiguity. In other words, the 'Pathosformel' should be thought of as immanently historical and at the same time transcendental to temporal progression. To put it differently, Warburg's atlas seems thus affected by the archival syndrome that 'works to destroy the archive' from within, which Jacques Derrida named 'archive fever'.⁵² While on the one hand, Warburg dedicated himself to the construction of huge archival systems — in 1929, the year of his death, his library contained 60,000 volumes and his photographic archive at least 25,000 images — on the other hand, he seemed possessed by an 'anarchivic' or 'archiviolic' drive that operates through a sort of unbinding of normative relational forces.⁵³ Warburg's 'anarchivic' tension is thus mobilized in order to suspend the cartographic rationality that characterizes the modern trajectory of the atlas and seems rather interested in recuperating the anatomic gesture of early atlases, which we saw at work in Mercator's and Ortelius's works.

Going back to my previous questions, we can say that the subject displacing images and pictures from the archive to the atlas should not be thought of as the biographical individual Aby Warburg (an individual who subjectively decides to construct a grid of images according to a principle of similarity) but as a de-subjectivized entity. The assembler of the *Bilderatlas* is a subject driven by an anarchivic force that, as in Derrida's 'archive fever', is located outside the internal limits of his own individual 'I' — the centred 'I' of 'cartographic reason' — and that rather springs from a process of evasion of the 'I' from the self. Indeed, one of the most frequent ideas expressed in Warburg's writings is the recognition of a de-subjectivizing tension between a structuring principle characterizing his own individual existence and an impersonal destructive principle leading to the dissolution of his 'I'. In a note written in 1923 while in Kreuzlingen, for instance, Warburg defines himself

as a machine composed by different pieces: a ‘seismographer’ rather than a subject: ‘I have the impression of being a seismographer composed by wooden pieces coming from a tree transplanted from the Orient to the fertile plains of Northern Germany which upon which was inserted a twig coming from Italy, I let flash out from me the signs which I have received.’⁵⁴

Warburg’s description of himself as a passive receptor of external forces reveals his attempt to overcome his own individual subjectivity. Geographical distinctions between Italy, Germany, and the Middle East are here resolved into a higher principle that dissolves the individual Aby Warburg into a much more composite set of cultural interferences. Here cartography survives only as a point of reference, but its inner discriminatory logic shatters, as much as the geographic atlas shatters in the fragments, the intervals, and the voids of the *Bilderatlas*. Warburg’s archive fever is therefore deeply imbued in a process of conviction to the death of the subject as a stable self — the subject as an identitarian category. It is this process of pouring out of an impersonal force from the ‘I’ which regulates the *dis*-ordering principle of the atlas, at the same time foregrounding a different model of knowledge formation based on the ‘Pathosformel’.

A bipolar tension between an ordering (cartographic) and a destructive (anatomic) principle seems indeed to characterize the entire genesis of Warburg’s atlas, which can be located in Warburg’s 1896 journey among the Pueblo Indians. Or better, in Warburg’s process of recollection of that journey while he was a patient in Ludwig Binswanger’s psychiatric clinic in Kreuzlingen in 1923. The presentation, which was published in 1939 with the title ‘A Lecture on Serpent Ritual’, was delivered by Warburg as a proof of his healing from bipolar psychosis and can be described as a convoluted analysis of the symbolic meaning of the Indians’ ritual dances. In a few pages, Warburg analyzes the production of drawings and images among the Pueblos in terms of a cohabitation between rational and magical forces. Warburg’s point in the essay is that cultural and artistic productions are always crossed by a bipolar tension between an ordering and a destructive principle, which characterizes religious societies such as the Pueblos as well as modern secularized societies such as twentieth-century Europe and America. However, for Warburg, while the Pueblos, by keeping alive associative and mystical attitudes towards the unintelligible, were able to keep open a channel between the rational and the demonic,

modern Western societies repressed such connection. As Warburg writes in one of the final paragraphs of the essay:

Where the technical explanation of cause and effect replaces the mythical imagination, man loses his primitive fears. But we should be loth to decide whether this emancipation from the mythological view really helps mankind to find a fitting answer to the problem of existence.⁵⁵

Warburg's recognition of the replacement of mythical imagination with a technical explanation of cause and effect in modernized societies can be read as the starting point for his own attempt to deconstruct the cartographic rationality of the atlas. What interests Warburg in the serpent dances in New Mexico is their potential capacity to open up a channel of communication with the 'a-chronic' and the unintelligible. The serpent rituals seem therefore to function as the inspiring source of a new method of historical understanding, which materializes in Warburg's statement that 'the masked dance is the danced law of causality'.⁵⁶ In this image-thought of a 'danced law of causality', what flashes up is the emergence of a different morphology of the rational, uncongealed and fluid, like the rhythmic movement of a dance. Warburg concludes his lecture lamenting how the disappearance of symbolic rituals marking modern Western societies has also corresponded to the loss of the relationship between 'man and the outside world'.⁵⁷ The fight between the rational and the demonic — what psychoanalysis explains in terms of an oppositional dialectics between the 'I' and the Unconscious — haunts the Pueblos as much as the Europeans, and Warburg's late intellectual mission can be explained as a way of conceptualizing a system able to activate a channel with the unintelligible (or the Unconscious) through a system of visual organization that dismantles the technical explanation of cause and effect.

V. CONCLUSION: THE 'AESTHETIC SUBJECT' AND THE COLLAPSE OF CARTOGRAPHIC REASON

Warburg started to work on his atlas in 1924, the same year that he left the Kreuzlingen clinic and one year after delivering the 'Serpent Lecture'. The significance of Warburg's journey among the Pueblos for the conceptualization of the atlas lies in his description of the Indians' dance in terms of 'danced causality' and in the method of assemblage adopted in the atlas, which could indeed be described as based on a

technique of ‘danced causality’. What really seems to push Warburg beyond the order of the archive and towards the aesthetic (dis)order of the atlas is the attempt to reactivate a channel with the repressed which is condensed in the ‘it’ of the unconscious. To use Warburg’s own words, the aim is to recompose the fracture between ‘man and the outside world’, in which the outside is precisely the realm of the demonic that the serpent — a symbol of death — represents.

Warburg’s interest in the serpent is strictly linked to the fever of a centred ‘I’ seeking to escape from its own self and reaching towards a demonic ‘it’. In this regard, Warburg’s intellectual mission can be better understood through the lens of Leo Bersani’s description of the ‘aesthetic subject’.⁵⁸ In *Intimacies*, Bersani underlines the individual’s possibility to exceed its own subjectivity through techniques of dispossession from the self that are typical, for example, of sexuality as much as of aesthetic creation. What for Bersani supersedes such activities is the emergence of a force, both psychic and corporeal, that is located beyond the conscious ‘I’ and is rather positioned in ‘the unconscious it, lodged within a subject that it vastly exceeds’. It is this force that for Bersani represents the ‘reservoir of the possibility, of all that might be but is not’.⁵⁹ Reading Warburg as a prototype of Bersani’s ‘aesthetic subject’ allows us to glimpse the potential emergence in Warburg’s *Bilderatlas* of a different conception of temporality and spatiality, characterized by a double process of archivization and anarchivization, and following a movement of the shattering of a stable and centered self. Following Bersani, we could describe this process in terms of an ‘It in the I [that] transforms subjecthood from psychic density into pure potentiality’.⁶⁰ This sort of abandonment of the ‘I’ in favour of the ‘it’ marks the loss of a static, personal, and intelligible principle of identity in favour of a virtual and impersonal one. The *Bilderatlas* is thus a vast reservoir of potential forces following anachronic and anatomic forces based on an act of de-subjectivization from both Warburg’s ‘I’ and from the canon of the discipline in which he operates. This aspect is perfectly captured in Didi-Huberman’s description of Warburg’s project as ‘an erratic atlas of memory, rooted in the unconscious, saturated with heterogenous images, invaded by anachronic or immemorial elements, tormented by the black of the panels which often assumes the role of indicator of empty spaces, of missing links, of memory holes’.⁶¹

At this point it seems worth linking together the examples analyzed here in order to understand what is at stake with the contempo-

rary re-emergence of the atlas as a method of knowledge organization. What Warburg and the pioneers of the geography of literature share is their mobilization of the atlas as a tool to promote a spatial shift of the human sciences. The 'archaeological' re-emergence of the atlas runs parallel to a sort of archival malaise for the literary canon in the case of Bradbury, Moretti, and Luzzatto and Pedullà, and for the historicist tradition of art history in the case of Warburg. The atlas is reactivated in all these cases as a method of temporal and spatial reconfiguration that can challenge linearity, teleology, and wholeness. However, while the literary atlases analyzed here challenge the historicist tradition through the uncritical adoption of the geographic tradition, ultimately reproducing the same aporias of the tradition that they try to overturn, the *Bilderatlas* keeps alive the vibrant tension between the cartographic and the anatomic principles that mark the birth of the atlas as an episteme at the end of the sixteenth century. The choice of the images, the asymmetrical positioning of the photographs, and the diagrammatic and diverse shapes that characterize the panels of the *Bilderatlas* do not depend on a pre-constituted set of geographical or temporal definitions but rather depend on the possibility to individuate a common thread, a signature, which pre-exists the fracture produced by the constitution of historiography and geography as scientific disciplines. In this respect, the notion of 'Pathosformel', that is, the cohabitation of a multi-stable and fluid force (*pathos*) with a frozen and static one (*formel*), is a nameless and impersonal force that keeps haunting our methods of knowledge organization. By introducing the performative gesture of the serpent rituals into the tradition of the atlas, Warburg provokes a collapse of the linear axiom of cause and effect in favour of an anti-linear principle of 'danced causality'. The 'Pathosformel' would become here as a 'pathetic' and non-dialectical form of dance-montage that follows the condensations, disappearance, and re-emergence of forms of expressions throughout history. The principle of selection, classification, and organization is crucial for Warburg when he constitutes the photographic archive of the Institute, but when the archive mutates into the atlas, such principle is replaced by a moment of 'passive divination' that breaks up the linear order of the photographic archive and of the centred and static subject guarding the archive.

In this respect, Warburg's archive fever triggers a process of 'profanation' of the cartographic tradition in the philosophical sense that Giorgio Agamben gives to this term. In his reconceptualization of the

term ‘*profanazione*’, literally meaning ‘out of the temple’ and thus non-sacred,⁶² Agamben argues that ‘[o]nce profaned, that which was unavailable and separate loses its aura and is returned to use’ and that profanation ‘deactivates the apparatuses of power and returns to common use the spaces that power had seized’.⁶³ Drawing on Agamben, we might say that the *Bilderatlas* destitutes the traditional apparatus of power that marks the cartographic tradition of the atlas: while the *Atlante della letteratura*, the *Atlas of the European Novel*, and the *Atlas of Literature* place themselves inside the temple of geography, the *Bilderatlas* exits its perimeter. In other terms, Warburg’s project liberates the atlas from its cartographic tradition through a disparative and anti-holistic aesthetic disposition, characterized by intervals, missing links, and voids. This new relational modality — rooted in unconscious and impersonal drives and characterized by a dancing law of causality — leads us to a better understanding of the broader effects of Warburg’s archive fever. In Warburg’s *Bilderatlas*, ‘what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives.’⁶⁴ Thus, what we might ultimately say is that Warburg’s atlas allows us to glimpse the potential to challenge the solid foundations of the building of historicism and cartographic reason, suggesting that only by undergoing a genealogical critique of the way in which we produce signifying chains — the way we produce temporalities and spatialities, the way in which we link together data, images, words, and narratives — will we be able seriously to challenge normative modalities of production of knowledge, that is, of production of subjectivities, identities, and life forms.

NOTES

- 1 See Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, trans. by J. Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), pp. 22–27; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989); David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
- 2 Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 22.
- 3 See Malcolm Bradbury, *The Atlas of Literature* (London: De Agostini, 1996); Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotions: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (London: Verso, 2002); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas: How to Carry the World on*

- One's Back?* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2010); *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Sergio Luzzatto and Gabriele Pedullà, 3 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 2010–12); David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (London: Sceptre, 2011); Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (New York: Verso, 1998); Judith Schalansky, *Atlas of Remote Islands: Fifty Islands I have Never Set A Foot on and Never Will* (New York: Penguin, 2010).
- 4 See Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps: histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2000); Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante: histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2002); Jacques Rancière, 'Le concept d'anachronisme et la vérité de l'historien', *L'Inactuel*, 6 (1996), pp. 53–68.
 - 5 While for problems of 'spatial reason', I will focus on these three examples, the list here is much longer. See, for instance, Barbara Piatti's on-going project 'A Literary Atlas of Europe', <<http://www.literaturatlas.eu/en/author/bpatlasteam>> [accessed 10 January 2016]; *Atlante della letteratura tedesca*, ed. by Francesco Fiorentino and Giovanni Sampaolo (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2009); and more broadly, the almost endless spreading of geographical studies of literature. For a discussion of the spatial turn in literary studies, see Ernest W.B. Hess-Lüttich, 'Spatial Turn: On the Concept of Space in Cultural Geography and Literary Theory', *Journal of Theoretical Cartography*, 5 (2012), pp. 1–11.
 - 6 In this respect, it should come as little surprise that many of the above-mentioned scholars were trained in Italian universities, which have traditionally been a stronghold of 'historicism' applied to the human sciences.
 - 7 Bradbury, *The Atlas of Literature*, p. 8.
 - 8 Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*, p. 3.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 - 10 *Ibid.*
 - 11 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 - 12 Einaudi is the same publisher that supported *Il romanzo*, ed. by Franco Moretti, a five-volume monument of what goes under the discipline of 'World Literature', released between 2001 and 2003 and translated in English as *The Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). For a thorough analysis of this project, see Robert Gordon's review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 6 December 2013.
 - 13 Luzzatto and Pedullà, *Atlante*, p. xvii: 'una successione di libri reputati irrinunciabili', 'una sequenza di medaglioni di uomini illustri'.
 - 14 'In una cultura come la nostra, sempre più dominata dagli elementi visuali, il sapere geografico si avvantaggia della forza — concettuale ma anche mnemonica — della cartografia, e della capacità di una buona mappa di organizzare un'abbondanza di dati in forma sintetica e coerente' (*ibid.*, p. xxiii).
 - 15 See Franco Farinelli, *La crisi della ragione cartografica* (Turin: Einaudi, 2009); but also Gunnar Olsson, *A Critique of Cartographic Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
 - 16 See Farinelli, *Crisi della ragione cartografica*, p. 38. See also p. 44: 'La mossa

- cruciale della storia moderna dell'Europa, paradossalmente, consiste [nella] trasformazione del mondo in una serie di tavole, cioè di modelli limitati'.
- 17 Ibid., p. 66.
- 18 Ibid., p. 38: 'la prospettiva moderna si fonda sullo spazio metrico della geometria euclidea, anzi sul principio della proiezione cartografica rivelato da Tolomeo'.
- 19 Ibid., p. 35: 'sgombero di ogni concreto essere umano dal piano della determinazione'.
- 20 J.B. Harley, 'The Map and the Development of the History of Cartography', in *The History of Cartography*, ed. by J.B. Harley and David Woodward, 3 vols (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987–2007), I, pp. 1–42 (p. 1).
- 21 See Patrick Gautier Dalché, 'The Reception of Ptolemy's *Geography* (End of the Fourteenth to Beginning of the Sixteenth Century)', in *The History of Cartography*, III, pp. 285–310.
- 22 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 291.
- 23 Ibid., p. 285.
- 24 See Farinelli, *Crisi della ragione cartografica*, p. 44.
- 25 Gerhard Mercator, *Atlas, or Geographick Description of the World*, facsimile edition of English trans. by H. Hexham (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1968), 2 vols, I, pp. 36–37.
- 26 Mercator follows Diodorus's account of the myth.
- 27 See Lucia Nuti, 'The World Map as an Emblem: Abraham Ortelius and the Stoic Contemplation', *Imago Mundi*, 55 (2003), pp. 38–55 (p. 40).
- 28 The critical geographer Denis Cosgrove seems perfectly aware of the anatomic nature of Ortelius's atlas when he argues that 'the shifting balance between mathematical and descriptive cosmography was reflected in unstable relations between globe, map, text and graphic illustration both within and between works'. See Denis Cosgrove, 'Globalism and Tolerance in Early Modern Geography', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93.4 (2003), pp. 852–70 (p. 865).
- 29 On multistability, see Christoph F.E. Holzhey (ed.), *Multistable Figures: On the Critical Potential of Ir/Reversible Aspect-Seeing* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2014).
- 30 Thomas Hewitt Key, *Philological Essays* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1868), pp. 1–2.
- 31 See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 5.
- 32 Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007).
- 33 Ibid., p. 147. It seems worth underlining how this process was also observed by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 121: 'The map gradually wins over these figures [glosses, pictorial figurations, fragments of stories, etc.]. Transformed first by Euclidean geometry and then by descriptive geometry, constituted as a formal ensemble of abstract places [...] the map [...] pushes away into its prehistory or into its posterity, as if into the wings, the operations of which it is the result or the necessary condition. It remains alone on the stage.'

- 34 See Jeanette Black, 'The Blathwayt Atlas: Maps Used by British Colonial Administrators in the Time of Charles II', *Imago Mundi*, 22 (1968), pp. 20–29.
- 35 Cosgrove, 'Globalism and Tolerance', p. 866.
- 36 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 59.
- 37 Ibid., p. 55. Emphasis mine.
- 38 Ibid., p. 54.
- 39 A basic definition of the 'Pathosformel' could be 'formulas of emotion characterized by the dialectical cohabitation of formal and destructive principles'.
- 40 See Ernst Hans Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Warburg Institute, 1970); and Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*.
- 41 For a study of Warburg's influence for the contemporary reconceptualization of the 'atlas', see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas ou le gai savoir inquiet* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2011).
- 42 See also Christopher D. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 10–11: 'The Bilderatlas functions cartographically, too, as it explores how meanings are constituted by the movement or translation of themes and styles between east and west, north and south. Transforming the cartographic notion of an "atlas" [...] from his earlier studies of the history of astrology and humanities' efforts at Orientierung (orientation) in a hostile cosmos, Warburg makes it serve as a conceit to yoke together cosmographical and art-historical material.'
- 43 See Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of all Things: On Method*, trans. by L. d'Isanto and K. Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009).
- 44 See Aby Warburg, 'Zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Methode', *Warburg Institute Archive*, III.113.4.1 (1928): 'Unsere Versuche, auf dem Hintergrund der Antike die Vorgänge innerhalb der Stilentwicklung als kunstpsychologische Notwendigkeit zu begreifen, müssen uns schliesslich zu einer Kritik der weltgeschichtlichen Epochen-Abgrenzung führen. Gibt es z. B. eine durch stilpsychologische Interpretation gewonnene exakte Abgrenzung zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance? Ein solcher Abgrenzungsversuch, rein auf die Zeit bezogen, kann keine zuverlässigen Einteilungsprinzipien zu Tage fördern'. This unpublished essay, which Warburg wrote while he was finalizing the first public presentation of his atlas *Mnemosyne*, can be found online with an Italian translation at <http://www.engramma.it/engramma_revolution/56/056_war_seminario.html> [accessed 26 January 2016]. Emphasis in translation mine.
- 45 Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 11.
- 46 See Didi-Huberman, *Devant les temps* and *L'image survivante*.
- 47 See Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, pp. 145–48.
- 48 See Giorgio Agamben, 'Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science', in *Potentialities*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 89–103.
- 49 See Agamben, 'Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science', p. 89: 'Warburg is

- understood to have displaced the focal point of research from the study of styles and aesthetic judgment to the programmatic and iconographic aspects of the artwork.’
- 50 Translated from the first Italian edition of Aby Warburg’s ‘Introduction to the Atlas *Mnemosyne*’, in *Mnemosyne: L’Atlante della memoria di Aby Warburg*, ed. by Italo Spinelli and Roberto Venuti (Rome: Artemide, 1998) <<http://www.engramma.it/warburg/scritti/italiano/testi/introatlante.html>> [accessed 10 January 2016]. An official English translation of this passage is yet to be published. Emphasis in translation is mine.
- 51 See, for instance, Daniela Sacco, ‘The Braided Weave of *Mnemosyne*: Aby Warburg, Carl Gustav Jung, James Hillman’, *engramma*, 114 (March 2014) <http://www.engramma.it/eOS2/index.php?id_articolo=1521> [accessed 26 January 2016].
- 52 See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by E. Prenowitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), p. 10.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Quoted in Didi-Huberman, *L’immagine insepolta*, p. 337. Translated from the Italian: ‘ho l’impressione di essere un sismografo fabbricato a partire da pezzi di legno provenienti da un albero trapiantato dall’Oriente nella fertile pianura della Germania del Nord e sul quale è stato innestato un ramoscello proveniente dall’Italia, lascio uscire da me i segni che ho ricevuto.’
- 55 Aby Warburg, ‘A Lecture on Serpent Ritual’, trans. by W. F. Mainland, *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2.4 (1939), pp. 272–92 (p. 291).
- 56 Ibid., p. 291.
- 57 Ibid., p. 292. Thus, for Warburg the serpent symbolizes a destructuring and unintelligible force that allows the Indians, through a performative ritual, to create a bridge between themselves and the demonic — or in other terms, between the conscious self and the unconscious non-self. The Indians’ attempt to create a connection with the unintelligible force of nature through the symbolic interaction with a tree: ‘The little tree hung with feathers which, as I said, is the real focus of the dance is called Nakwakwochi. [...] The function is to establish a connection between man and the natural forces, to create a symbol, that is, to link them magically together by means of some intercessor; and in this case the intercessor is a tree, which is nearer to earth than man because it is rooted in the earth. This tree is the fitting mediator leading to the powers below’ (p. 285).
- 58 Bersani theorizes the ‘aesthetic subject’ in different works, including Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips, *Intimacies* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008); Leo Bersani, ‘*Is the Rectum a Grave?*’ and *Other Essays* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010); Leo Bersani, ‘Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject’, *Critical Inquiry*, 32.2 (2006), pp. 161–74.
- 59 Bersani and Phillips, *Intimacies*, p. 25.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Didi-Huberman, *L’immagine insepolta*, p. 444: ‘atlante della memoria erratico, regolato sull’inconscio, saturo di immagini eterogenee, invaso di elementi ana-

cronici o immemoriali, assillato da quel nero degli schermi che, spesso, assume il ruolo di indicatore di spazi vuoti, di missing links, di buchi di memoria'.

62 The term comes from the Latin *pro* + *fanum*, which means in front of the temple, which refers to something which is external to it and therefore non-sacred.

63 Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. by Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 77.

64 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 18.

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