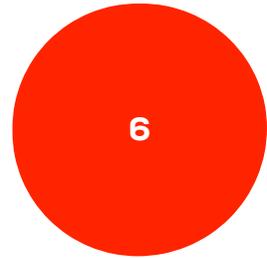


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Pathos-Image

Until recently it seemed that we live in an age in which any excessive expression of emotions or instance of lofty rhetoric would be met with a mocking smile, or shrugged off by liberal ironists. The words "pathos" and "pathetic" typically invoke largely pejorative associations of superfluity and exaltation. As Fredric Jameson showed, amongst the many affects brought on by the arrival of postmodernism was a sense of relief that provoked "the release of a new productivity that was somehow tensed up and frozen, locked like cramped muscles, at the latter end of the modern period." [*Postmodernism*, 313] This bodily metaphor points to the fact that the postmodern specter of emotions generates, or even requires, a loosening of sorts—resulting in pathos being perceived as not flexible enough, or as overly entwined with grand narratives and affects.

Surprisingly, the censorship of pathos found its way into multiple models of critical thought, whose theorists tried to emphasize the gravity of their mission by eliminating everything that would place human subjectivity in a world of illusive ideology. The reiteration of Brecht's estrangement effect eradicates all that is uncritical, emotional, engaged, that is incapable of acquiring distance from the deceptive tropes of contemporary culture. By remaining in a sphere of pure reflection free of affect, critical theorists deprive themselves of the possibility of actively influencing reality and actively producing images. That is precisely why theory seems incapable of responding to ever more frequent – and increasingly disquieting – returns of repressed pathos, often arising out of traditional figures and national, class, ethnic, and religious identities.

In the sixth issue of **View** we reflect on the languages of pathetic expression hidden in the history of the last century, ones that may still prove useful in contemporary contexts. This seems a crucial step to make if we want to surpass the dialectic of the repression of pathos (be it postmodern or critical) and its return

in its most regressive forms. It seems that the theory most suited for understanding this movement is that of Aby Warburg. His modes of analysis travel through time and space and result in the creation of images of pathos formulas, which to this day remain one of the most intriguing methods of examining visual culture. They prove that an image always simultaneously contains an element of extreme emotion and a restraining distance resulting from its form. The communication of the representations of pathos should thus also be marked with an intensity that reaches beyond both stable identities and ironic distance, as well as critical asceticism.

That is why, in the **Close-up**, every essay draws to some extent on the theory of the German art historian Georges Didi-Huberman, who has been engaged in a creative reinterpretation of the Warburgian method for some time. He examines the relation between pathos and history, as well as contemporary models of historiography, which call attention to the value of emotions in the process of creating knowledge of the past. Sylvia Sasse compares Warburg's theory of pathos formulas with Sergei Eisenstein's theoretical contemplation of the pathos of cinematic composition. The director of *Battleship Potemkin* is also the protagonist of Elena Vogman's essay, in which the author compares his work with experiments seeking to combine human expression with the expression of the machine. Agata Pietrasik reflects on the relation of Warburg's methodology with the writings of Richard Semon, a German biologist and the creator of mneme theory. It is difficult to reflect on 20th century pathetic expression without touching on what Eisenstein called the "antipathetic" – comprised of trivial genres, which contain and rework formulas from previous eras of sublimity. Isabel de Sena Cortabitarte uncovers the potential of bringing Warburg's analysis to bear on Walt Disney's early Mickey Mouse films. Paweł Mościcki sets out to show how pathos and comedy intertwine in the work of Charles Chaplin. Our authors also touch upon contemporary cases of the expression of extreme emotions.

Agata Sierbińska writes about the political connotations of the crowds gathering in Warsaw after the crash of the presidential plane in Smoleńsk in 2010. In the **Viewpoint**, Paweł Mościcki examines the photographic series of Mathieu Pernot, in which the artist documents scenes from the surroundings of contemporary prisons.

The articles in the **Panorama** section reflect on the representation of affect, drawing on other theoretical tools than Warburg's methodology. Grzegorz Niziołek looks at contradictory emotional responses, produced and communicated by a theatre play, using as his case study Adolf Rudnicki's review of the production of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Play Strindberg*, directed by Andrzej Wajda in 1970.

Iga Gańczarczyk analyzes the work of Anna Baumgart and the way that the personal and emotional story is interwoven with the political and historical realm. The issue is completed by three reviews – Agata Zborowska writes about new publications on theories of material culture; Roma Sendyka examines the workings and distortions of memory in relation to the exhibition *Lucky Jews*; and Kathleen Cioffi reflects on the Polish drama collected in *(A)pollonia: Twenty First Polish Drama and Texts for the Stage*.

Editorial Team

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