

*Eine Vergangenheit, die lieber vergessen wird?*  
**Scholarly Habitus-forming, Professional Amnesia, and Postwar Engagement  
with Nazi Classical Scholarship<sup>1</sup>**

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In his recent overview of classical archaeology during the Third Reich, Stefan Altekamp has used the term ‘structural amnesia’ to categorise the establishment attitude to remembering the Third Reich during the immediate postwar period. Altekamp argues that, until the 1980s, the period in question was either completely omitted from historical overviews and deemed irrelevant, or an erroneous conception of the discipline and its lack of adherence to Nazism was peddled – tantamount to a complete whitewash. Then:

‘Throughout the 1980s, and even at the beginning of the 1990s, the disciplinary mainstream continued to cherish the understanding that (1) Classical Archaeology during the Nazi period did not produce anything novel, in contrast with the intellectually creative 1920s, (2) that it did not participate seriously in anything affirmative with respect to Nazi ideology, (3) that it differed from Prehistory and Ancient History in keeping its distance from the regime, and (4) that it was subjected to a constant threat of being oppressed by the cult of the “Aryans”. Four assumptions, four legends.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> N.B. As a ‘forum’-style think-piece, this essay deliberately aims to provide a (necessarily brief) case study, focusing in particular on the work of Volker Losemann and his recently-published collection of essays, rather than providing an exhaustive survey of the trend in question. Since the piece was submitted for publication, further literature has appeared which may be useful to those with an interest in pursuing these ideas further, including Roland Färber and Fabian Link, eds., *Die Altertumswissenschaften an der Universität Frankfurt 1914-1950. Studien und Dokumente* (Basel: Schwabe, 2019), and Michael Sommer and Tassilo Schmitt, eds., *Von Hannibal zu Hitler. “Rom und Karthago” 1943 und die deutsche Altertumswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Stefan Altekamp, ‘Classical Archaeology in Nazi Germany’, in Helen Roche and Kyriakos Demetriou, eds., *Brill’s Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 289-324, p. 290.

The trend in the history of ancient historical scholarship seems to have been broadly similar. The first major monograph on ancient historians under National Socialism, Volker Losemann's *Nationalsozialismus und Antike*, which is still the standard work today, only appeared in 1977.<sup>3</sup> In a recently-published volume reprinting many of Losemann's seminal essays on the history of university politics and classical and ancient historical scholarship during the Third Reich, entitled *Klio und die Nationalsozialisten*, we find repeated references, both in the encomiastic prefatory material by the editors, and by Losemann's colleague Hans-Joachim Drexhage, to the 'Mauer' or 'Deckmantel des Schweigens' ('wall' or 'mask of silence') which characterised German scholars' attitude to this period.<sup>4</sup>

Broadly speaking, during the decades following the end of the Second World War (at least as far as the Federal Republic is concerned), classical scholars and ancient historians in Germany refused to engage with the idea that they might bear any guilt concerning their complicity with the Nazi regime.<sup>5</sup> In his privately-published *Personal Memories*, Viktor Ehrenberg (1891-1976), a Jewish émigré ancient historian who had made his career in England after having fled Germany in 1939, recalled that at the first postwar conference of German ancient historians and classical scholars in September 1949, his willingness to build bridges with former colleagues and cast aside the darkness of the intervening decade was welcomed, and that 'no revival of Nazism seemed possible, but there was comparatively little feeling

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<sup>3</sup> Volker Losemann, *Nationalsozialismus und Antike. Studien zur Entwicklung des Faches Alte Geschichte 1933-1945* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Volker Losemann, *Klio und die Nationalsozialisten. Gesammelte Schriften zur Wissenschafts- und Rezeptionsgeschichte*, edited by Claudia Deglau, Patrick Reinard, and Kai Ruffing (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), VII, IX-X.

<sup>5</sup> Matters in the German Democratic Republic took a rather different (though in some ways no less problematic) turn, inasmuch as research by scholars such as Johannes Irmscher into the history of Nazified classical scholarship was portrayed as rescuing the discipline from its fascist past; however, such research was itself ideologically loaded, tending to dismiss all past work as the flawed product of 'bürgerliche Geschichtsschreibung' ('bourgeois historiography'). It is perhaps telling that Fritz Altheim (1898-1976) was able to get more than one volume of his *Krise der Alten Welt*, a publication originally sponsored by the SS-Ahnenerbe, reprinted in the Soviet Zone of Occupation / German Democratic Republic; only the Ahnenerbe decorations and Himmler's prefatory foreword as 'Reichsführer-SS' were removed in the new edition (Losemann, *Klio*, 164-5).

of guilt.<sup>6</sup> Later, in a review published in 1958, Ehrenberg himself suggested that it would be best to let the recollection of his former colleagues' 'prostitution of scholarship, of which the authors must by now feel deeply ashamed [...] sink into oblivion'.<sup>7</sup> However, the reporter who covered the conference for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* at the time, Walter Rüegg, took a rather harsher line, commenting that the future of the discipline appeared bleak indeed when professors who had made substantial concessions to the Nazi regime, such as Josef Vogt of Tübingen (1895-1986) and Fritz Taeger of Marburg (1894-1960) were allowed to hold the floor once again, as if the mere fact of their 'denazification' had unproblematically cleansed them of all complicity.<sup>8</sup>

In his survey 'Nationalsozialismus und Antike: Bemerkungen zur Forschungsgeschichte', Losemann suggests that one might speak of a revisionist literature of the early post-war years, in which the 'Irrweg' (erroneous path) of Nazified historiography could comfortably be castigated, bolstered by the prevalent idea that upstart teachers and 'outsiders' had taken over the historical discipline against the will of its established members.<sup>9</sup> Works on the Nazification of academia by scholars such as Max Weinreich, Helmut Heiber, Michael Kater, and Reinhard Bollmuss might mention ancient historians in passing, but it was Marburg professor Karl Christ (1923-2008), Losemann's doctoral supervisor, who was the first to engage systematically with the history of *Altertumswissenschaft* under National Socialism.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Viktor Ehrenberg, *Personal Memories* (1971, n.p.), 115.

<sup>7</sup> Viktor Ehrenberg, 'Review of (E.)Will, *Doriens et Ioniens. Essai sur la valeur du critère ethnique appliqué à l'étude de l'histoire et de la civilisation grecques* (Paris: Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres', 1956)', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 78 (1958): 156.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Rüegg, 'Die Altertumswissenschaft in Deutschland', *NZZ*, 20 September 1949, cited in Losemann, *Klio*, 164.

<sup>9</sup> Volker Losemann, 'Nationalsozialismus und Antike – Bemerkungen zur Forschungsgeschichte', in Beat Näf, ed., *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Mandelbachtal and Cambridge: Edition Cicero, 2001), 71-88 (reprinted in Losemann, *Klio*, 161-74, pp. 164-5); cf. František Graus, 'Geschichtsschreibung und Nationalsozialismus', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 18 (1969): 87-95. For a snapshot of modern historians' attitude towards mastering the Nazi past of their discipline, see Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> cf. Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People* (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute, 1946); Helmut Heiber, *Walter Frank und sein*

However, when Christ applied to the Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft (German Research Council) for funding for a project on this topic in the late 1960s, the reaction was instant and unequivocal; it took less than a week for Christ's application to be summarily rejected.<sup>11</sup> Losemann was able to deduce from his own personal research at a later juncture that the grant proposal itself must have been the subject of heated oral discussion, due to the lack of written documentation surrounding its incredibly swift rejection. He concludes that 'there is no question that the responsible peer reviewers made their decision completely in accordance with the prevailing consciousness and interests of the majority of their colleagues. The affair fits the established picture; it corresponds with the typical – and much criticised – behavioural patterns of the older generation of historians. But it also proves that there were relatively early attempts and initiatives [to bring this disciplinary history to light], which were permitted no possibility of success.'<sup>12</sup>

This problem was exacerbated by the 'double career' phenomenon, whereby ancient historians such as Josef Vogt and Helmut Berve (1896-1979) were able to continue their professorial careers unproblematically in the German Federal Republic. Karl Christ saw Berve as the personification *par excellence* of this troubling trajectory: the former 'Beauftragte für den Kriegseinsatz der

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*Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des Neuen Deutschlands* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966); Reinhard Bollmus: *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner. Studien zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1970); Michael H. Kater, *Das Ahnenerbe der SS: 1933-1945. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> For a sketch of the project's putative content, which promised to define the personal fate and political engagement of leading ancient historians; the significance of intellectual, religious, social and political influences on the formation of their character and their choice of historical perspectives and themes; the reciprocal relationship between monarchist and imperialist positions during the Wilhelmine Empire and the Weimar Republic, and the attitudes taken towards ancient phenomena or changing perceptions of Sparta between 1918 and 1945, as well as the relationship between National Socialism and antiquity, see Karl Christ, 'Zur Entwicklung der Alten Geschichte in Deutschland', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 22 (1971): 577-93.

<sup>12</sup> Losemann, *Klio*, 168: 'Es ist keine Frage, daß sich die zuständigen Fachgutachter wohl durchaus im Einklang mit der Bewußtseins- und Interessenlage der Mehrheit ihrer Fachgenossen befanden. Der Vorgang fügt sich in das bekannte Bild ein, er entspricht dem vielfach kritisierten typischen Verhaltensmuster der älteren Historikergeneration. Er belegt aber auch relativ frühe Ansätze und Initiativen [...], denen keine Chance geben wurde.'

Altertumswissenschaften' (War Representative for Classical Scholarship) led the 'Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik' (Commission for Ancient History and Epigraphy) between 1960 and 1967, and his book on Sparta (1937), intended for a popular audience, and replete with Nazified ideological tropes, was reprinted with scarcely a redaction in 1966.<sup>13</sup> Of course, the setback over funding did not prevent Christ from using material on classics and ancient history under Nazism in his seminars, or from building up collections of relevant sources at Marburg University. Nevertheless, the resulting dissertations and theses were often greeted with perturbation or anxiety by his disciplinary colleagues, often leading to their engaging Christ in concerned conversations over the telephone.<sup>14</sup>

Losemann also mentions the 'grotesque' conditions which he encountered when attempting to gain access to relevant archival material whilst researching his own dissertation on the theme of ancient historians under National Socialism, and the politicised dissent among his peer reviewers which occurred when the finished doctoral thesis was being assessed for publication. One reviewer claimed that 'the entire subject ought to be somewhat relativised [...]. [Fritz] Altheim's "war service" scarcely alters the fact that block wardens were far more influential and capable of shaping public opinion under National Socialism than all the professors of ancient history put together.'<sup>15</sup> Stefan Rebenich has interpreted this episode as a paradigmatic example of the widespread embargo on any form of discourse which explored ancient historians' relationship with Nazism.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, a glance at the comprehensive bibliography compiled by Beat Näf at the turn of the millennium demonstrates that it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that scholarship on the topic became widespread – while Losemann notes that the 1990s also saw a 'sharpening' and 'radicalisation' of the research questions which were being put forward, as well as a greater willingness

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<sup>13</sup> Karl Christ, *Neue Profile der Alten Geschichte* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), 186-7; cf. Helmut Berve, *Sparta* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1937).

<sup>14</sup> Losemann, *Klio*, 168.

<sup>15</sup> 'Insgesamt [sollte] das Thema etwas relativiert werden [...]. Altheims "Kriegseinsatz" ändert doch wohl kaum etwas daran, daß die Blockwarte für den NS meinungsbildender und einflußreicher waren als alle Ordinarien der Alten Geschichte.' cf. Karl Christ, *Römische Geschichte und deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1982), 259.

<sup>16</sup> Stefan Rebenich, 'Nationalsozialismus und Alte Geschichte: Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in Forschung und Lehre', in Isolde Stark, ed., *Elisabeth Charlotte Welskopf und die Alte Geschichte in der DDR* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005), 42-64, p. 64.

to engage critically with the work of fully paid-up Nazi ancient historians, such as Hans Oppermann.<sup>17</sup>

Works by Beat Näf, Cornelia Wegeler and Diemuth Königs paved the way for this new, more open approach<sup>18</sup> – yet the question of what would have happened if the scholars under investigation by this new generation of researchers had still been alive remains open. Vogt, the subject of Diemuth Königs' monograph, for instance, not only kept quiet about his Nazi past, but also actively hindered its exploration. Some former students still attempted to protect their father-figures, or even hid relevant or potentially incriminating material – such as the acolytes of the Berlin ancient historian Wilhelm Weber (1882-1948), who demanded that retired professors' widows return all the letters which he had once sent them.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, cooperation by the *Enkelgeneration* (i.e. the generation of [scholarly] grandchildren) has often proved rather less problematic, as Stefan Rebenich's work on Helmut Berve's past can testify.<sup>20</sup>

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In general terms, we can see that debates about the appropriateness or otherwise of leaving the history of ancient historical and classical scholarship under the Third Reich to rot in oblivion were largely determined by overlapping personal and political

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<sup>17</sup> Beat Näf, ed., *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Mandelbachtal and Cambridge: Edition Cicero, 2001); Losemann, 'Nationalsozialismus'; cf. e.g. Jürgen Malitz, 'Römertum im "Dritten Reich": Hans Oppermann', in Peter Kneissl and Volker Losemann, eds., *Imperium Romanum. Studien zu Geschichte und Rezeption. Festschrift für Karl Christ zum 75. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), 519-43.

<sup>18</sup> Beat Näf, *Von Perikles zu Hitler? Die athenische Demokratie und die deutsche Althistorie bis 1945* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1986); Cornelia Wegeler, "... wir sagen ab der internationalen Gelehrtenrepublik". *Altertumswissenschaft und Nationalsozialismus. Das Göttinger Institut für Altertumskunde 1921-1962* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1995); Diemuth Königs, *Joseph Vogt: Ein Althistoriker in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Volker Losemann, 'Die "Zeitgeschichte der alten Geschichte"', in Sabine Rieckhoff, Susanne Grunwald and Karin Reichenbach, eds., *Burgwallforschung im akademischen und öffentlichen Diskurs des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Universitätsverlag, 2009), 9-20 (reprinted in Losemann, *Klio*, pp. 269-82, p. 279).

<sup>20</sup> cf. Stefan Rebenich, 'Alte Geschichte zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur. Der Fall Helmut Berve', *Chiron* 31 (2001): 457-96.

factors. The personal element was usually motivated by self-interest; *Doktorväter* (doctoral supervisors, lit. ‘doctor fathers’) were hardly likely to welcome critical investigations by younger students into their own questionable pasts, or (later) the pasts of their own supervisors and mentors – in a watered-down form, this is still a phenomenon that has not yet completely vanished. Losemann has pointed to a deep-seated unwillingness among former students to symbolically murder their scholarly fathers<sup>21</sup> – perhaps we might suggest that such tendencies have been heightened by the extremely paternalistic relationship which still pertains between doctoral students and their supervisors in Germany (as symbolised by the term ‘Doktorvater’ itself). Former doctoral students’ own self-interest would also have had a crucial role to play, however, for which scholar in the prime of their career would wish publicly to acknowledge a former Nazi sympathiser as their academic protector, patron or sponsor?

The political element, meanwhile, appears more mutable and complex, mirroring the variety of attitudes and shifting engagements with German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (attempts to master the past) during the postwar years and beyond. Key milestones of cultural memory such as the *Historikerstreit* (historians’ debate), the Goldhagen debate, and the Frankfurt Historikertag in 1999, all played their role in causing scholarly attitudes to change, whilst not necessarily making a great deal of difference to the ingrained political convictions of individual academics.<sup>22</sup>

Even today, however, there remain gaps and black holes in our knowledge; topics which we would expect to have been covered before now, yet remain untouched; cases of young scholars writing a monograph on a topic and then leaving academia, possibly because they touched on a subject that is still to a certain extent taboo among the older professoriate. An interesting example of this phenomenon might be Barbara Stiewe’s monograph on the third humanism, *Der “Dritte Humanismus”*. *Aspekte deutscher Griechenrezeption vom George-Kreis bis zum Nationalsozialismus*, which appeared in 2011 with De Gruyter. In her introduction, Stiewe comments that there has been a great reluctance to engage with the phenomenon of the ‘Third Humanism’, as peddled by Werner Jaeger, Eduard

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<sup>21</sup> Losemann, *Klio*, 170-1.

<sup>22</sup> cf. Schulze and Oexle, *Historiker*.

Spranger and the George Circle, in contrast with Renaissance humanism and neohumanism. She ascribes this neglect to the general perception of the Third Humanism as too much oriented towards *Realpolitik*, too chauvinist, and betraying (supposedly) too great an affinity with National Socialist thought (though in fact she is able to make a good case for its being much further from Nazi *Denkmuster* (paradigms) than one might have suspected). It has therefore, in her own words, been doomed to the fate of ‘collective forgetting’.<sup>23</sup>

So, where does this (brief and necessarily inexhaustive) survey of the state of the discipline leave us – and how does it fit in with more general reflections on scholarly forgetting or the nature of scholarly oblivion? It seems clear that, if we take Brigitte Schlieben-Lange’s model of academic amnesia, we are looking at a straightforward case of those types of forgetting which require conscious effort – some form of censure or repression. If we are distinguishing between intentional and unintentional forgetting, then what we see in the immediate postwar period are concrete attempts to prevent knowledge about certain aspects of the disciplinary past from reaching the public (or even the scholarly) domain.<sup>24</sup>

If we conceive of the scholarly community within a nation as bearing some of the traits which we can ascribe to the ‘imagined community’ of the nation as a whole – as Katherine Harloe has suggested in her recent monograph on Winckelmann and his reception<sup>25</sup> – then we might also subscribe to Aleida Assmann’s idea, blending Maurice Halbwachs and Nietzsche, that ‘national memory is commonly ruled by pride or the memory of its own suffering, while recollection of one’s own guilt is scarcely admissible.’<sup>26</sup> Assmann would presumably site this instance between the

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<sup>23</sup> Barbara Stiewe, *Der “Dritte Humanismus”. Aspekte deutscher Griechenrezeption vom George-Kreis bis zum Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 31.

<sup>24</sup> cf. Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, ‘Vom Vergessen in der Sprachwissenschaftsgeschichte. Zu den “Ideologen” und ihrer Rezeption im 19. Jahrhundert,’ *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 14 (1984): 18-38; Bas Clercx, Han Lamers, and Toon van Hal, ‘Scholarly Forgetting in the History of the Humanities: A Thinkpiece’ (2017).

<sup>25</sup> Katherine Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity: History and Aesthetics in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016), 48: ‘Das nationale Gedächtnis wird gemeinhin von Stolz oder der Erinnerung an eigenes Leiden regiert, während die Erinnerung an eigene Schuld nur schwer Einlass findet.’ For more on this, see also Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (München: C.H.



poles of what she terms ‘selektives Vergessen’ (selective forgetting) and ‘defensives Vergessen’ (defensive forgetting). In this context, affected individuals and groups are imposing forgetting upon themselves (*Vergessenwollen*) but they are also hoping to make others forget (*Vergessenmachen*). There is certainly an ‘obliviating force’ at work here – the body of knowledge in question is perceived as dangerous and undesirable, leading to the formation of a taboo.

But why does this particular subject have what appears to be such a high ‘*Vergessenspotential*’ (potential for being forgotten)? Yes, it could certainly be regarded as posing a risk to certain dominant, cultural, political, or ideological concerns; one could usefully cite the Nietzschean aphorism on cognitive dissonance as a gloss: ‘Memory says, “I did that.” Pride replies, “I could not have done that.” Eventually, memory yields.’<sup>27</sup> And, as the general intellectual or cultural climate changed, along with the distance in time from the Nazi past, it is surely unsurprising that the ‘potential for forgetting’ would also change, and the taboo begin to break down. However, perhaps even more importantly, we appear to have a strong moral forcefield acting here; an imperative that demands remembrance, when many scholars who were directly involved with the period at issue would arguably prefer to forget.

From this perspective, I wish to conclude with some more anecdotal reflections from my own experience, which nevertheless mesh well with the introductory observations conceived by Han Lamers, Toon van Hal and Bas Clercx on amnesiological patterns, which they have defined as: ‘Omissions and silences that are reproduced socially, viz. through communication between individuals or networks of scholars, and thus constitute structural “blind spots” that are in need of an explanation beyond the psychopathological level of blocked individual memory.’ These can include ways in which ‘scholars, in the process of scholarly communication, discard knowledge that, at least to us, seems relevant to their work and to have been principally accessible to them.’<sup>28</sup> If each instance of scholarly forgetting should

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Beck, 2006), and *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur. Eine Intervention* (München: C.H. Beck, 2013). On memory cultures in post-war Germany more generally, see also Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (München, C.H. Beck, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), Aphorism 68: ‘Das habe ich getan, sagt mein Gedächtnis. Das kann ich nicht getan haben, sagt mein Stolz. Endlich gibt das Gedächtnis nach.’

<sup>28</sup> Clercx *et al.*, ‘Thinkpiece’.

‘be understood against the backdrop of a complex and dynamic interplay between *Vergessenspotential* and the working context, or habitus’, as the authors argue, then it may also be helpful to take a brief look at how habitus-forming might work in practice, through the attitudes which older scholars display when speaking to younger scholars about scholarly research on the Nazi past and Nazified classical scholarship.

My first experience of this kind was a conversation with Stefan Rebenich, which took place when he was giving me some advice on my MPhil thesis in May 2008, prior to submission in June of that year.<sup>29</sup> In connection with Volker Losemann’s magnum opus, *Nationalsozialismus und Antike*, Rebenich mentioned that the considerable furore which it had caused within the discipline in Germany meant that, if Losemann had not already had tenure at Marburg, he would have been completely ousted from the academic world, and cold-shouldered at every turn. Rebenich claimed that this was why Losemann has never received a professorship, despite his important – and ground-breaking – work in the field of Nazi intellectual history.<sup>30</sup> This makes complete sense in terms of the chronology; as we have already seen, Losemann published *Nationalsozialismus und Antike* at a point when *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* was still pretty much unknown, particularly in academic institutions,<sup>31</sup> and arguably many of his colleagues simply deemed that he was fouling his own nest, rather than respecting the struggles and supposed ‘victimhood’ of his colleagues.

The second anecdote relates to Werner Jaeger’s notorious article ‘The Education of the Political Man and Antiquity’, published in the Nazi periodical *Volk im Werden* in 1933 after Hitler’s seizure of power.<sup>32</sup> Katie Fleming has dubbed this ‘a straightforward exercise in academic opportunism, an attempt to convince the new

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<sup>29</sup> The thesis, supervised by Paul Cartledge, was subsequently published under the title ‘*Spartanische Pimpfe: The Importance of Sparta in the Educational Ideology of the Adolf Hitler Schools*’, in Stephen Hodkinson and Ian Macgregor Morris (eds.), *Sparta in Modern Thought: Politics, History and Culture* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2012), 315-42.

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, in intellectual history, Losemann is often hailed himself as a sort of ‘founding father’ – for instance in Wolfgang Bialas and Anson Rabinbach’s introduction to their edited volume on *Nazi Germany and the Humanities* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> cf. Steven P. Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth. The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Werner Jaeger, ‘Die Erziehung des politischen Menschen und die Antike’, *Volk im Werden* 1 (1933): 43-9.

regime of the compatibility of [Jaeger's] Third Humanism with the aims of the [Nazi] Party' – which seems a fairly uncontentious judgement, given the article's content.<sup>33</sup> It has been more or less incontrovertibly established that, in writing the piece, Jaeger wished to ingratiate himself with the National Socialist Education Minister Bernhard Rust, in the hope that his ideas on neo-Greek *paideia* might become influential in Hitler's new Germany.

However, whenever (both as a doctoral student, and beyond) I mentioned the pro-Nazi sympathies displayed by Jaeger to other older Classicists, whether in person or in writing, my interlocutors immediately become affronted, and rallied round to defend Jaeger's reputation by referring to all the wonderful things which he had done after emigrating to the USA. While not attempting to deny all of that, I found it strange that older Classical scholars were generally so unprepared to confront Jaeger's previous, Nazi-sympathetic credentials. If the Nazi movement had been prepared to accept the Third Humanism into their *Weltanschauung*, and used Jaeger as a glamorous academic poster boy, might he have been more tempted to stay in Germany? It appears that this is not something which, as a Classicist, one is 'supposed' to consider, whereas it would seem a fairly uncontroversial counterfactual from a modern-historical standpoint.

Finally, in 2014, in connection with my work on National Socialist educational periodicals, I elicited some advice from an older German scholar (who had previously written several hard-hitting articles on Nazi classics professors).<sup>34</sup> He was extremely concerned that many of the people who wrote for the National Socialist Teachers' League (NSLB) classics journal which I was analysing, *Die Alten Sprachen*, should not be defined as 'Classicists' because they were by no means 'top rank scholars', or did not possess a doctorate. He even made the same complaint about Reich Education Minister Bernhard Rust, a Classicist by training, stating that he was surely just a mere 'Gymnasium teacher'. On another occasion, however, the scholar in question told me that I must always mention when authors were '*braver*

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<sup>33</sup> Katie Fleming, 'Heidegger, Jaeger, Plato: The Politics of Humanism', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 19/2 (2012): 82-106, p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> cf. Helen Roche, 'Classics and Education in the Third Reich: *Die Alten Sprachen* and the Nazification of Latin- and Greek-teaching in Secondary Schools', in Helen Roche and Kyriakos Demetriou, eds., *Brill's Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 238-63.

*Gymnasiallehrer*’ (‘good Gymnasium-teachers’) post-1945; the idea seemed to be that you were worthy of being termed a Classicist if you went on to publish ‘humanistic’ articles in *Der Altsprachlicher Unterricht* in the post-war period, but not if you had only published Nazified articles in *Die Alten Sprachen*.<sup>35</sup>

Again, it seemed odd to me that there was such an obvious defensiveness at play here, and a strong desire to overwrite the memory of peccadilloes committed during the Nazi era by referring to people’s ‘good behaviour’ afterwards – it did not appear as if the past were being completely mastered here. Yet, had I continued my career as a classicist and ancient historian, rather than making the transition into modern history, it would have been easy to internalise these ‘warnings off’ a touchy topic, accept these strictures as part of the scholarly habitus of the discipline, and focus my attention elsewhere.

In conclusion, then, this case study arguably raises some important questions – for instance, who do we believe deserves recollection or oblivion within the context of an individual discipline, and why? Should certain episodes of particular scholars’ careers be deliberately remembered or forgotten? How far should moral reasoning play a role in our judgment, and in our determination of research topics (as well as our desire to discover a relatively un-trodden path)? And, crucially, what role does interpersonal subjectivity have to play?

Finally, the specific cases of Karl Christ and Volker Losemann also point towards the significance of modern funding mechanisms in today’s grant-led research landscape when it comes to the potential obliteration of scholarly ideas.<sup>36</sup> After all, even bibliographical items which remain uncited can be discovered far more easily than the remnants of proposed projects which were never given the chance to generate any bibliography at all.

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<sup>35</sup> J.M., private correspondence, January 2014. This attitude correlates interestingly with previous tendencies to blame teachers and ‘outsiders’ for Nazifying the discipline, as mentioned above.

<sup>36</sup> In this context, it might be interesting to note that one of the peer reviewers for a major German funding body took such swift (and not wholly substantiable) exception to the author’s own proposal for a research project on the Nazification of classics-teaching during the Third Reich, submitted in 2015, that the application was inevitably turned down as a result – a circumstance which might also seem suggestive of some Teutonic scholars’ reluctance to engage with such topics, even in the twenty-first century.

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