

make the most of what is left, in himself and the world. Again, he addresses us:

What were we waiting for? The appearance of the Messiah? Was all this nothing? I was quite fed up with the search for perfection. And rather amazed by all that I had—the lemonade stand with its lemonade, the café with its irritable customers and staff, the squirrels, the birds, the trees.... I sat on the bench for a very long time, lost—sunk deep—in the experience of unbelievable physical pleasure, maybe the greatest pleasure we can know on this earth—the sweet,

ever-changing caress of an early evening breeze.

Thus ends this play/film—on a lyrical note of revised values, of consoling accommodation, with a civilization shrugged away.

Note. *The Designated Mourner* is published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (103 pp., \$19). I suggest seeing the film first; then, when you read it, the actors' voices will be in your ears. •

Paleface and Redskin

BY JOSEPH LEO KOERNER

Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America

by Aby M. Warburg
translated with an interpretive essay
by Michael P. Steinberg

(Cornell University Press, 114 pp., \$25, \$13.95 paper)

I.

The text casually titled *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* was originally a lecture intended to prove that its author was sane. Aby Warburg, the pathbreaking analyst of Renaissance art and the reluctant scion of perhaps the world's oldest banking family, delivered his talk on April 21, 1923, before an audience of inmates, doctors and guests at the Bellevue sanatorium in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland. Warburg had been confined in that institution since 1921. Prior to that, he had languished for three years in a private clinic in his native Hamburg, after threatening his wife and children with a pistol. For late in 1918, in the weeks following Germany's defeat in the war, and just days after the abdication of Wilhelm II, Warburg, a fervent defender of the German Empire and a Jew, became convinced that he and his family would be arrested by nameless persecutors and taken to secret prisons to be tortured and murdered. He sought to avoid this fate by shooting his own before they fell into enemy hands.

Sometimes Warburg took these enemies to be Bolsheviks bent on murdering capitalists and intellectuals. Sometimes he saw them as furies avenging his lapse from Judaism. Raised in a worldly but orthodox home, Warburg had matricu-

lated in 1886 at the University of Bonn in the gentile (and often anti-Semitic) field of the history of art. His choice of subject provoked opposition from his observant parents, not only because they expected a career in the professions or the rabbinate, but also perhaps because such a consuming attachment to pictures, Christian or pagan, ran counter to the Mosaic interdict against graven images.

Within days of arriving in Bonn, Warburg defied his family's wish that he remain kosher: "Since I do not arrange my courses of study according to the quality of ritual restaurants but according to the quality of my teachers," he wrote his father Moritz, "I do not eat ritually." And in 1892, against Moritz's passionate objections, he married a Lutheran art student, Mary Hertz, and he refused to raise his children as Jews or to circumcise his sons. Balking at any compromise, he explained that Jewish culture was in no way superior to the culture of contemporary Germany. He did not attend his father's funeral, and he refused to say kaddish for him. He referred to himself as a person in *cherem*, or under a ban, owing to his mixed marriage and his non-Jewish children.

Warburg's repudiation of his religion haunted him during his collapse. In the days after Germany's surrender, he pulled his disciple Carl Georg Heise into a corner and whispered that he had

once declared to a gentile professor, "At the bottom of my soul I am a Christian." After swearing Heise to secrecy about his confession, he screamed the sentence again through the open windows. He wanted the neighbors to hear it.

Sometimes in his madness, though, Warburg believed his pursuers to be Germany's anti-Semites who, with the demise of Wilhelm II, and of the rule of tolerance that Warburg attributed to him, were now plotting to eliminate influential Jews. Even as his doctors at Kreuzlingen worked to cure Warburg of these delusions, his younger brother Max, who had assumed leadership of the private bank M. M. Warburg & Co., was targeted for assassination by right-wing terrorists; the policeman guarding him round the clock was in fact a Nazi spy. On June 24, 1922, these same conspirators succeeded in murdering Walter Rathenau, Germany's Jewish foreign minister, and a close friend and associate of the Warburgs.

The Bellevue medical records register Aby's diagnosis parenthetically, as "(Schizophrenia)," followed by the note, in pencil: "manic-depressive mixed condition." Isolated in the clinic's closed wing, he came under the care of Ludwig Binswanger, Bellevue's distinguished director. A student of Eugen Bleuler and, for a time, a colleague of C. G. Jung in Zurich, Binswanger (who would later found the "existential" school of psychology) had been the first to introduce Freudian psychoanalysis into a clinical setting, in 1906. And Freud himself took an interest in Warburg's illness. In a letter of 1921 to Binswanger, he asked about the patient's prognosis and whether he would ever work again. Binswanger replied that, in his view, no "resumption of scholarly activities will be possible."

Freud wrote that he knew the patient not only by his prominent family, but also by "his penetrating work." At the time of his madness, Warburg had not yet achieved his legendary status as the inventor of modern art history's dominant exegetical method (what today is termed "iconology"), or as the founder of the great research library, now in London, that bears his name. Yet his archival studies of fifteenth-century Florentine painting, patronage and pageantry, together with his pioneering work on the influence of pagan antiquity on the Christian cultures of early modern Europe, had already earned him a significant reputation.

At Binswanger's clinic, however, Warburg's brilliance, wealth and reputation were nothing exceptional. Beautifully situated on Lake Constance, relatively

humane in its cures and perfectly discreet, Bellevue was the asylum of choice for Europe's emotionally troubled elite. It was a place where, in the words of the Viennese novelist Joseph Roth, "spoiled madmen from rich families received expensive and cautious treatment." In this period, Bellevue's inmates included the dancer Nijinsky, the Expressionist artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, the chemist and industrialist Adolf Werner, the poet Leonard Frank, and the feminist Bertha Pappenheim (also famous as "Anna O.," Freud's first patient). Warburg would thus have delivered his lecture in 1923 before an audience that was, in its own strange way, remarkably fit to receive it.

Even after the lecture had secured his release, Warburg referred to Bellevue as his "inferno"; and he called himself a revenant. During his confinement, he had been certain that his whole family was secretly jailed in the clinic awaiting slaughter, that the cries in the hallway were his wife's cries under torture, that the meat served at supper was his children's flesh, that Dr. Binswanger was the butcher whom he had failed to escape. Again, Warburg's delusions mingled fact and foresight. During his confinement, for example, Aby had indeed been joined by his son Max Adolf, whose nervous breakdown (occasioned by his father's) was treated by forced confinement and tepid baths; and during these "calming" cures, Max Adolf could hear his father's animal screams resounding through the clinic. The specter that elicited those very screams—Aby's whole, terrible fantasy of his people's arrest, transport, imprisonment, torture and extermination—looks, in hindsight, less like madness and more like prophecy.

Aby's therapy consisted of bed rest, opium and analysis. Yet his was less a talking cure than a working one. It was the labor, performed in the lecture of 1923, of changing fear into thought. With the help of his assistant Fritz Saxl, Warburg had convinced his doctors to pledge his release if he could successfully compose and deliver a scholarly talk on a subject of his choosing. Rather than select an impersonal theme to foster detachment, he fixed upon a topic eerily close to his obsessions, and charged with pathos: the serpent, that primal occasion of fear, whose threat is inborn in the mind, and whose cult Warburg had himself witnessed among the Pueblo peoples during an American journey that had helped at once to found and to up-end his thought.

From a practical perspective, the choice of Warburg's theme was clever, and not merely because of the diversion

that an Indian tale would offer its inmate audience. Reporting to Freud, Binswanger had despaired that, while his logic and his memory remained sound, Warburg was distracted by fears and had lost the power "to fix on scholarly the-mata." By choosing terror as his theme, by fixing on his own distraction, Warburg achieved the unremitting attention required for scholarship.

And yet Warburg's choice facilitated more than productive mania. In his account, the Pueblo Indians had themselves turned objects of terror into means of control, demonstrating, by sympathetic magic, how fear could be transmuted into thought. The Hopi people, in their famous rain dances, carried the poison serpent—the rattlesnake—in their mouth. And they did this because the snake, from their mythopoetic perspective, was the lightning that produced storms. Subduing the snake meant mastering rain. As efficacious symbol, the serpent thus performed the work of culture, which (in Warburg's view) consisted principally in referring amorphous fears to specific causes, magical, divine or natural. At once poison and medicine, illness and cure, the serpent showed, and itself exemplified, how fear occasioned symbols that occasioned thought, and how thought, in its turn, enabled the state of clarity, composure and detach-


ment that the Greeks praised as *sophrosyne*, and that the doctors at Kreuzlingen might applaud as mental health.

Warburg's lecture is still fascinating, owing to the sympathy that it intimates between the author and his subject. Warburg could explain irrational "images" because he himself had lost his reason. And these irrational images, once explained, could save Warburg, since they were themselves cultural mechanisms of self-control. Warburg makes this doubling all but explicit by asking, in the very diction of his own diagnosis, whether the Pueblo Indians are really "schizoid," and what it means to be in a "mixed condition" between fantasy and reason. To the original audience in the sanatorium, the likeness between the dance and Warburg's lecture about the dance must have seemed uncanny. It must have seemed, indeed, like sympathetic magic in action.

Where the Hopi bit the serpent without themselves being bitten, Warburg spoke his terror without himself sounding afraid. Scholars and lecturers can appreciate the difficulty of this task. They know how uncontrollable the mind and the mouth become under pressure, when success depends on being both original and sane. How did Warburg pass his test, when just a few months before he had ended dinner with a visit-

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LOOK BACK IN ANGER



ing colleague by remarking that the meat they had eaten was human?

Certainly the lecture, as we have it, makes sense, and this itself denotes sanity. If its author's disease is anywhere signaled, as in the phrase about "schizoid" states, it has been generalized and thus distanced, as an aside about civilization's discontents. Yet Warburg's argument also depends on a kind of closure usually forbidden to scholarship, because it compromises its claim to objectivity, to scientific detachment. In rendering the author's trial of sanity analogous to the Hopi rite, Warburg created a mixed condition in which fact and delusion become indistinguishable. And, far from jeopardizing Warburg's release, this mixing would have served to deflect any isolated judgment on his condition as such. Indeed, Warburg's conflation of himself and his subject elevates his text—which otherwise would seem like an historical curiosity, what one commentator called "an iridescent *objet trouvé* from the utmost fringes of modernity"—to the status of a scholarly paradigm. In this strange address, European cultural self-identity is recuperated (the medical term is entirely appropriate) by means of an assimilation to a radical other, in this instance "madness" and "savagery."

A decade after declaring his patient "furloughed to normalcy," and five years after Aby's fatal heart attack in 1929, Binswanger still pondered the affinity, in Warburg, between insanity and scholarship. In a letter to Max M. Warburg, he mused that a psychiatrist ought someday to write about Aby's sickness, for "in your brother's case very interesting passages can be indicated between his scientific views and specific delusions." Binswanger would later become a theorist of precisely such "passages" between authors and their works. Writing on Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, in which an architect falls from a tower of his own design, he argued that creation occurs in the mind's errancy from ordinary thought-paths, and that authors "realize themselves" in their works through this extravagance akin to madness. Warburg, for his part, maintained that in him the impulse of extravagant subjectivity was especially strong. In a note jotted down just weeks before his death, he wrote: "Sometimes it seems to me that, as a psycho-historian, I attempt to derive the schizophrenia of the West from its visual culture as if in an autobiographical reflex."

Warburg's Bellevue lecture, far more than his historical studies, may be read

as the product of this "reflex," and it invites consideration as a self-portrait of its author. Presenting experiences recollected from his youth, and delivered to repair his personality, this text will continue to appeal more for what it says about Warburg and about the early life of art history than for its views on the Hopi and their rituals. And Warburg's autobiographical turn will have a special resonance in our own era of scholarship, in which memoirs have replaced monographs as the preferred genre of successful professors, and where the death of the author proclaimed by crit-



ABY WARBURG WITH A HOPI INDIAN, ARIZONA, 1896

ics in the late 1960s has given way to the critic-as-author, even as intensely self-regarding author.

Having published no memoirs, Warburg revealed his personhood in the guise of monographic scholarship. His "collected works" consist of a number of specialized articles, some no longer than a page or two, on subjects ranging from an obscure Flemish tapestry to the last will and testament of a fifteenth-century Florentine merchant. This forces readers who are intrigued by Warburg's person to engage with what he himself did best, namely, meticulous historical scholar-

ship. And there is another reason for engaging with Warburg. He lived an exceptional life, a life that touched the trouble-spots of modernity. In *Aby Warburg: Un banchiere prestato all'arte*, her useful and compelling "biography of a passion," Francesca Cernia Slovin recently structured her turbulent subject around the uniquely charged coincidence, in Warburg, of the minutiae of a lifetime and the turning points of history. Even if Warburg's importance rests finally on his scholarship, his lived relation to the imponderables of war, ethnicity, nation, wealth and reason together seem to constitute a fable about our own identity. As Warburg himself boasted, "I'm just cut out for a beautiful story."

In his Bellevue lecture, Warburg recounts his youthful journey to the American West as the story of civilization told in reverse. Each step forward in his travels among the Pueblo peoples of Arizona and New Mexico describes one step backward from culture to nature, from art through ritual to sacrifice. The tale begins in the villages of Laguna and Acoma, where he discovers, in the decoration of pottery and architecture, the image of the serpent, symbol of lightning and harbinger of life-giving rain. Making his way westward, he visits San Ildefonso and witnesses an antelope dance; and the animal imagery first encountered in ornament now appears in performance as a totemic identification of dancer and mask. At the end of his journey Warburg arrives at Oraibi, at the far west of the region, and observes the seasonal festivities of the *humiskachina*. In these elaborate rites, performed to ensure a successful corn crop, he discerns a yet more elemental cultural form. At San Ildefonso, the dancers merged with their animal masks; but at Oraibi they sought magically to influence nature itself.

Warburg did not himself travel the full distance spanned by his lecture. Leaving Oraibi immediately after the *humiskachina* dances, he missed the more crucial serpent ritual itself, and so he relied on published photographs for his account. In this seeming heart of darkness, in which dancers manipulate live animals to influence nature, Warburg detects the crucial turning to culture: after their use in the dance, the serpents are set free, proving that blood sacrifice has been sublimated into symbolism, and that animalistic "fetishism" is already on the way "to the pure religion of redemption." At this point in his argument and his life, Warburg returns

Courtesy: The Warburg Institute, University of London

from Oraibi to Europe, observing how the Greek serpent cults of Dionysus, as well as the serpent cults demonized in the Old Testament, had originally been sacrificial—and that the West, like the Puebloans, marked its progress from sacrifice to symbolism through serpent imagery.

In Warburg's view, this progress toward civilization is never final. It must be constantly defended; and its defense is especially urgent in the period that we call modernity. The cultural achievement of the Pueblo peoples is threatened, in Warburg's view, by the encroaching barbarism of modern America, in which the serpent is "exterminated" and lightning is "imprisoned in wire." "Telegram and telephone destroy the cosmos. Mythical and symbolic thinking strive to form spiritual bonds between humanity and the surrounding world, shaping distance into the space required for devotion and reflection: the distance undone by the instantaneous electric connection." Thus did Warburg darkly conclude his lecture.

The text of Warburg's lecture, now in a new English translation, was never intended for publication. In a cover letter attached to the original typescript, and written five days after the talk, Warburg instructs Saxl not to show the piece to anyone without his prior approval: "This lecture is so formless, and rests on such poor philological foundations, that the only value it has (and a questionable one it is) lies in its bringing together into view some documents towards a history of symbolic behavior. . . . This gruesome twitching of a decapitated frog should . . . absolutely not find its way to print." This disclaimer might be ignored as modesty or perfectionism, except that it appeals to standards that were perfectly valid for Warburg and which should be perfectly valid for us.

Unlike, say, Walter Benjamin, to whom he is often compared, Aby Warburg was more comfortable as a scholar than as a theorist or a writer. His best work derives its power from some newly discovered and meticulously glossed document, artifact or detail within a particular tradition or culture, rather than from some general speculation about tradition or culture. It confines itself productively to the narrow framework of the scholarly paper, even if it intimates, in hermetic turns of phrase, the abyss that lies beyond. By these standards, then, the serpent lecture does indeed lack "philological foundations." Warburg admits ignorance of the Hopi language and culture, and develops a reading before he has established a text. To

put it crudely, Warburg himself might have sided with contemporary Native Americanists who will either disregard *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* or treat it merely as a document of their own prehistory.

In a text attached to a revised typescript, he scorns Binswanger's praise of his lecture's "findings": "The image and words . . . are the confessions of an (incurable) schizoid, deposited in the archives of mental healers." Warburg would have been sensitive to the distinction between scholarship and confession. Where the former was the product of historical science, the latter was one of the objects of historical science, its raw material. In his lecture, Warburg tried to locate himself on this side of scientific detachment by observing, and by making an archive of, certain "primitive" images that seemed less detached. And if he discerned in these images the self's earliest division from primordial fears, this supported his own observer status by explaining the relation of his own delusions to instrumental reason. Why, then, consign his talk to the archives of mental healers?

In the autumn of 1922, early in the period of his recovery, Warburg found a copy of Hans Prinzhorn's just-published *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* in Binswanger's office, and he flew into a rage. He ranted that the book was placed there to torment him, that it had been written for and about him. Warburg's madness here involved the mutually reinforcing fantasies that the world was conspiring against him and that it was doing so by treating his condition as a "case." Warburg's cure turned the tables on his observers. By appearing to define his own "schizoid" condition, Warburg, in the lecture which he would call "the beginning of my Renaissance," performed a rite of passage from object to subject. What today we admire in the lecture's mingling of the observer and the observed is precisely what its author rejected.

In 1938, Fritz Saxl, together with Warburg's other trusted assistant, Gertrud Bing, organized an English translation (severely abridged by Edgar Wind) for publication in the *Journal of the Warburg Institute*. Constructed from several typescript drafts, the text was a kind of homage to the continued currency of Warburg's work, since it fit seamlessly into the scholarship of his epigones. Its publication, ten years after Warburg's death, signaled the challenge of his "literary remains." For already in 1933, introducing Warburg's collected scholarly papers, Saxl had announced a *Nachlass* in five divisions to be published in

multiple tomes. The intention was to establish for Warburg—who had never written, in his words, the "big book"—a reputation based on texts rather than on legends.

But the volumes never materialized. Their designated editor, Ernst Gombrich, opted instead to write his own "big book," *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, which appeared in 1970 and was reissued in 1986. Quoting massively from unpublished texts, but arguing that the rest was dross, Gombrich seemed to offer all the *Nachlass* that was fit to print. To this day, even as admirers declare that Warburg is (as one admirer has put it) "on a par with Freud and Einstein," his writings themselves remain largely unread, especially in the English-speaking world, where his difficult German (he called it his "eel-soup style") dissuades. The only two translations of Warburg into English are both of his serpent lecture.

The serpent lecture did not appear in German until 1988. Edited and glossed by Ulrich Raulff, the text was based on an original typescript rather than on the text as prepared for translation in 1938. Michael Steinberg has now translated this new version, calling it "the full German text." This claim is somewhat deceptive. The typescript that Warburg seems to have used for his lecture was a redaction by Saxl and Bing, who reworked handwritten drafts sent to them from Kreuzlingen. Warburg then covered the typescript with penciled additions and corrections, some predating the lecture's delivery, some apparently written much later. Raulff handled these inconsistently, incorporating some, but not all, of the early amendments, as well as several of the subsequent ones. More troublingly, not all of the original typescript text made it into the present edition. Whole paragraphs have been omitted, including citations of Goethe on anthropomorphism and a fascinating anecdote about the Puebloan Governor of Acoma drinking too much wine and refusing Warburg entrance to the Catholic church.

Moreover, in delivering his lecture, Warburg did not read directly from his typescript. Months after the event he boasted of having spoken without notes for an hour. Many of the unpublished penciled amendments were aids for such extemporizing. Indeed, Warburg understood his lecture as a performance: "If I am to show you some images . . . and to accompany them with words. . . ." The degree to which the written text had subsumed its oral presentation is evidenced in an odd lapse in the new English translation. Comparing Warburg's original

list of forty-seven slides to photos housed at the Warburg Archives; Steinberg, with the help of the 1938 and 1988 versions, has assembled thirty-eight images (including five to illustrate his own essay), and he has numbered these as "figures" in the order in which they appear in his book. In the text of the lecture, however, he has Warburg say of some persons visible in a photo that "you see them standing, in figure 10." A slip of the translator's pen (as when he renders *Wander-maler*, or "itinerant painter," as "strolling painter"), but a slip that is symptomatic of the appropriations involved in bringing Warburg's "confession" to print.

Steinberg appends to Warburg's lecture an essay of his own, an essay longer than the lecture. In this essay, he wishes to recover the "resonances" of Warburg's lecture, that is, the meanings available to Warburg's original public, most of whom knew him and spoke his language and shared his culture. Yet Steinberg's "resonances" also include meanings not fully available even to Warburg, "mediations between the self that is known and the self that is secret." Steinberg makes no attempt to update or to evaluate Warburg's work on the Pueblo peoples. He briefly surveys the influences of nineteenth-century ethnography, but this is to locate Warburg's viewpoint, not to clarify, from the standpoint of contemporary scholarship, what Warburg saw. In Steinberg's édition of Warburg's text, the radical other is no longer the Indians encountered, as Warburg put it, in "the rock village of Oraibi, the most remote westerly point." It is Warburg himself, in his historical strangeness.

II.

Warburg was a quintessential European, an innovative scholar of Western culture's survival from antiquity through the modern age, a living instance of the triumph and the tragedy of European learning, and for these reasons he has himself become a "most remote westerly point." This process, whereby the strangeness once imputed to "savage" peoples is now located in one's own savage past, finds a perfect vehicle in the serpent lecture. A self-analysis disguised as the encounter with an Other, Warburg's lecture about Indian symbolism is no less about the observer observed.

And, from the very first page of the text, Warburg's object recedes precipitously from view. Announcing that he will show photos "from a journey undertaken some twenty-seven years past," he laments that he has not been in a condition "to revive and work through my old

Chance Meeting

I tried to explain to a man I hardly knew how it was I had come to love him—how, having seen him no more than three times, I could navigate each absence in his life, could crawl behind his eyes peering out across the one dock bereft of a ship.

I was not a clairvoyant, could not claim to see into his past by clutching a piece of his hair.

Nothing so portentous ever occurred to me.

I loved him because somewhere a door had been left open by mistake, and because he looked like me, and all I needed was a moment of his time to understand how he buried himself inside derelict hours when nothing but the hands on the clock progress, forging another circle.

Like me, I assumed he preferred his own company, and did not mind ballroom dancing by himself if no one had the courtesy to ask.

I loved that he denied our similarities, which only made me think more of him.

In her book *Freud and the Ecstatic Penis*, Dr. Cynthia Oren maintains all forms of love are directly linked to each person's failure to clone themselves.

I tried to explain I had not recently flown off in a glowing, wafer-thin ship, but I understood his apprehension. *Every connection has at its core one moment of illogical longing—that split second meeting in the grocery store when two people reach for the same tomato.*

How can I reconcile myself to this without losing face? How do I make clear to him that two complete strangers can be conjoined through distance, can discover one another in the gaps that pull them apart?

EVE WOOD

memories," that even those first impressions, now "blurred," originally lacked "depth," as he "had not mastered the Indian language," and anyway "a journey limited to several weeks could not impart truly profound impressions." Moreover, the indigenous culture, as he encountered it, was itself already transformed by Spaniards in the sixteenth century and by North American educators in the nineteenth century: "The material is contaminated: it has been layered over twice."

Like Lévi-Strauss's tropics, Warburg's "region of the Pueblo Indians" is less wild than sad. Already diminished by previous travelers, its natives have become too much like their observers to behave as nature does to culture. Lévi-Strauss sought the structures that were immune to contaminants, but Warburg, like today's anthropologists, attends precisely to the breaks in his material, the ruptures within the symbolic order which, better than the continuities, reveal the forces generating that code.

Thus, explaining his photo of the interior of a house in Oraibi, Warburg

points out an ordinary kitchen broom displayed beside ritual kachina figurines: it is "the symbol of intruding American culture." And he takes pleasure in noting in a missionary church certain "pagan cosmological symbols" painted beside "a genuine baroque altar," and in observing how the village chief draws a Catholic pastor's hand toward his lips "with a slurping noise," as if to inhale the priest's aura. Far from dismissing these as contaminated evidence, Warburg seeks them out: "My wish to observe the Indians directly under the influence of official Catholicism was favored by circumstance."

This desire was an expression of Warburg's lifelong interest in the mechanisms of cultural influence and survival; and it also reflected his search for a shared horizon between himself and his object. More importantly, though, the impulse to study the hybrid rather than the pure derives from Warburg's notion of culture itself. In Warburg's view, culture—foreign or indigenous, modern or archaic, contaminated or hermetically sealed—will always be "schizoid," exist-

ing as the dynamic middle term between objective threats and an endangered, mortal subjectivity.

Warburg's genius as an art historian lay in his skill in locating the crucial rupture in his object and naming its hidden source. Sometimes this came to light only through historical reconstruction, as when Warburg, working from unpublished documents, pictured the Florentine church of Santissima Annunziata as it really was in the fifteenth century: virtually unenterable, since it was filled to capacity with life-size wax dolls dressed in real garments. Recollecting this forgotten chaos of images, and expanding thereby the field of art history itself to include the ephemera of ritual, Warburg overturned the dominant conception of Renaissance art as a timeless haven of order and beauty.

Sometimes he found the crucial rupture in the masterpiece itself, in the subtle disjunctions of style, dress or time within it, as when, in Ghirlandajo's frescoes in Santa Trinità in Florence, likenesses of the painter's contemporaries intrude on an historical tableau of sacred miracle, thereby treating church space itself as a "playground of the secular;" or when, in another of Ghirlandajo's works, a beautiful woman in a windblown, diaphanous garb rushes into a static scene of Christian domestic life, like a character from a different play. Warburg called that rushing maiden Nympha, and he was obsessed with her meaning all his life.

He traced her to a pagan origin: the frenzied maenads of the ancient mystery cults, the serpent-bearing, serpent-decorated revelers of the slain god Dionysus. Mobile and erotic, Nympha breached more than the bourgeois ambience and the stylistic consistency of Ghirlandajo's composition. Her very presence denoted a clash of cultures, the pagan versus the Christian. Nympha violated the values of harmony and balance that were thought, in Warburg's day, to be constitutive of art. Against an inherited aesthetics of the closed and perfect whole, Warburg located deeper power in fractures and contradictions, and in the subtle challenge that images could pose to the viewer's own detachment. "You live," exclaims the motto to his fragmentary *Psychology of Art*, "yet you do me no harm."

Warburg found his example of the affective power of images where it was least expected: in the classical tradition. Since the eighteenth century, with Johann Winckelmann's praise of the "noble simplicity and silent grandeur" of ancient sculpture, German aesthetics and art history had constructed (and

then championed or ridiculed) classical antiquity as the eternal wellspring of reason, order and beauty. Warburg's quarrel was not with German classicist ideals, which anyway had long ago lost their currency in artistic practices and tastes. He questioned classicism's historical view of the classics themselves. His precursor in this regard was Nietzsche, who had imagined an antiquity torn between the ideals of "Dionysian" ecstasy and "Apollonian" restraint. Warburg traced this conflicted antiquity forward to the Renaissance, studying the Christian renewal of the classical heritage as also a rebirth of the pagan gods. Neither singular nor pure, antiquity survived as contaminated material.

After Bellevue, Warburg felt a special kinship with Nietzsche. The author of *The Birth of Tragedy*, who in his madness signed himself "the crucified Dionysus," exemplified the seer who so resonated with his object that he became the frenzy he observed. By contrast, the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt embodied for Warburg the balance between empathy and detachment that was appropriate to a scholar. In 1927, Warburg noted that, like Nietzsche, Burckhardt "received the waves from the regions of the past, he felt the dangerous tremors, yet he saw to it that the foundation of his seismograph were made strong." Warburg felt indebted to Burckhardt for his vast perspective on the Renaissance and for the variety of cultural evidence within that purview.

But he darkened Burckhardt's Renaissance. He magnified its undercurrents of fear and unreason; and he did this by expounding vastly on the smallest evidentiary instance—a detail in an artifact, a phrase in a document. These cultural microcosms so occupied Warburg that he became (as he observed of Nietzsche) "the victim of his own ideas." Thus Ghirlandajo's ecstatic Nympha is both an object of and a symbol for Warburg's scholarship. Exploding the staid milieu of the Florentine commercial class, she violates with her pagan pedigree the Christian drama taking place there; and Warburg, in his madness and his dissidence, shatters the decorum of his high bourgeois family, while also tainting, through his labor, the supposed purity of Christian art.

In his historical scholarship, Warburg encountered his material as an outsider, as a secular Jew exposing the ruptures in Christian religious art. In his serpent lecture, curiously, he took the insider's perspective. In the "contaminated" and "schizoid" state of the Puebloans, Warburg recognized the mixedness of his psychic and ethnic identity.

His motto, coined in Italian, described the latter: "Born in Hamburg, Hebrew by blood, in soul a Florentine." Reviewing Warburg's tortured relation with Judaism, Steinberg notes a "parallel" in the serpent lecture "between the Hopi and the Jews as primitives." It is true that Warburg's Jewishness cannot be disentangled from the objects and the methods of his scholarship. Since 1933, when the Warburg Institute (including a staff of six, 80,000 books and voluminous archives and equipment) was quietly shipped from Hamburg to London to escape the Nazis, Warburg's legacy has become a symbol of the fate of German-Jewish scholarship. Still, Steinberg's gloss is much too simple. The German Jews whom Warburg rejected were in no sense "primitives." I think Warburg would have understood the pairing of Jews and Hopi less as kinship than as contrast: as exiled versus native; as passive versus active; as book-learned versus naturally wise. Warburg's trip to the Pueblos, like his immersion in Christian art, was partly an escape from Judaism, which explains why his lecture ends with the "pure religion of redemption," Christianity.

What did Warburg think he was doing in Oraibi? His travel documents introduce him as a "German scientist" and a "man of means." And in a note penned at Bellevue he remembers wanting to "escape to the natural object and to science." Arriving in New York in 1895 to attend the wedding of his brother Paul, he sickened of the "emptiness of civilization" and, inspired by ethnographers at the Smithsonian, decided to visit the Puebloans of the Southwest. Other notes from Bellevue make his motives seem less detached: redress for his army failure; a need to be "manly" after abandoning his wife and children to a cholera epidemic; a "will to the Romantic." And his goal evoked mixed memories: when he was 7, his mother fell gravely ill and, oppressed by the Hebrew prayers at her sickbed, and by "an inferior Jewish-Austrian student, who was supposed to be a tutor," he snuck off to eat pork sausages and "consume" tales about American Indians, delectable for their "romantic cruelty."

Nor did his escape to the object lead directly to "science." Returning to Germany in 1896, Warburg spoke about his trip at local photographic societies (notes for these talks have been preserved), but his scholarship returned to the Renaissance, where it remained until his madness. Even his Bellevue lecture eddies back to Europe. As Sigrid Weigel has recently argued, Warburg sees in Oraibi what he knows of antiquity and

In his Bellevue inferno, Warburg learns that Athens and Oraibi are indeed alike—but alike in reason, not in unreason. Instead of dismissing the serpent rites as superstitious, and thus as alien and inferior to rationality, Warburg discovers that they, too, comprise a logic directed to practical ends: the mastery of fear, the health of crops, the expression of piety. Warburg's journey outward thus becomes a homecoming, not just to Athens but also to sanity, to labor, to society.

In his best essays, Warburg, intoxicated by the estrangement that he has achieved, enters the work of art and describes it ecstatically from within, in a prose that makes all other art-historical scholarship seem lifeless. His serpent lecture never achieves this abandon. Whereas his historical work seeks to estrange the familiar by disclosing the cracks in reason's façade, in his lecture he seeks the familiar in the strange, discerning behind apparent superstition a nascent rationality. In Oraibi, Warburg believes he has observed firsthand what,

Yet the idea of understanding one's early history through the savagery observed in one's neighbors is as old as the word "barbarism" itself. Raulff points out that even the classical Athenians looked to people whom they called *barbaros* ("foreign") for a picture of their past selves. And, from the moment of their encounter with Europeans, the indigenous peoples of the New World were continually being compared to the peo-

Was Warburg a pluralist, or was he championing a unitary ideal of reason? Ernst Gombrich and George Mosse have portrayed Warburg as attempting (in Mosse's words) to "maintain rationality in an increasingly complex and irrational world." Steinberg, like Giorgio Agamben before him, disputes this view, discerning in Warburg a "painful ambivalence between, and simultaneity of, the primitive and the rational." To prove his point he cites a cryptic sentence from Warburg's essay of 1919 on Luther, which he translates thus: "Athens always wants precisely to be reconquered anew

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from Alexandria." In its original context, the statement refers to the overtaking of cultures of reason (Athens) by cultures of superstition (Alexandria). Steinberg chides Gombrich for translating "will" as "must," and attributes this error to Gombrich's "passion for reason," which makes a universal imperative out of what, in Warburg, is simply "what Athens wants." Again, this is too simple. Warburg's "will" means both what Athens itself desires and what, in the order of things, ought to be.

In truth, the serpent lecture sustains both Gombrich's and Steinberg's interpretations. It offers a progressive account of culture by locating the Hopi between nature and culture. At one end of this spectrum stand the "nomadic Indians" and their "bloody and sadistic practices" (Steinberg never mentions these); at the other end, troublingly, stands Christianity, which pictures the brazen serpent of Moses as a shadow of Christ's promise. If Warburg's lecture can support both Gombrich's rationalism and Steinberg's multiculturalism, this is because it is less the diagnosis of modernity than a symptom of it. The lecture is itself an "old book to browse in," and it situates us in our present intellectual bewilderment.

Warburg understood himself above all as a medium. "The function I've been given," he wrote just before his death,

has been to serve as soul-seismograph to the meteorological divides of culture. Placed from my very birth in the middle between Orient and Occident, driven by elective affinity to Italy, where in the fifteenth century, at the weather divide of pagan antiquity and Christian Renaissance, an entirely new cultural persona had to emerge, I was driven to travel to America in the service of extrapersonal causes, in order there to experience life in its polar tension between a pagan, instinctual nature cult and organized intelligence.

During the Great War, in the period leading to his madness, Warburg began to gather and to collate all news that came his way in an effort to establish, through the weapons of scholarship, who in the conflict was and was not at fault. Enlisting his wife and children in this manic archival labor, he assembled some 25,000 excerpts from wartime news, stuffing all available space with clippings and notes. With the approach of Germany's defeat, he came to believe that he was himself the war's hidden cause, who in his scholarship had reawakened the pagan demons. Heise, visiting the cluttered library, reports that it looked like a "battlefield," with poor Warburg as the commander.

The library, of course, became Warburg's most enduring legacy. According

to family legend, it was founded upon a boyhood pact with his younger brother Max that he, Aby, the eldest son, would renounce his position in the bank if Max would buy him books for the rest of his life. The collection expanded from the private library of a bibliophile-scholar into a public institution of international fame. When the philosopher Ernst Cassirer first visited the library in the 1920s, he called it a "labyrinth," and vowed either to flee it or remain its "prisoner" for years. Organized according to Warburg's scholarly interests, and therefore replicating, in old books, the pathways of his thought, the library still places

its readers (whom Warburg called its "patients") in the midst of Warburg's work, in a maze between the self and the other. And Warburg arranged his library in the structure of a Hopi altar, the space of the serpent's cult. Thus does scholarship shape itself in the image of its object. In its delusions and its sympathies, Warburg's unfinished business remains our own.

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The Critter Poet

BY CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

Mountains and Rivers Without End by Gary Snyder

(Counterpoint, 165 pp., \$20)

A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds New and Selected Prose by Gary Snyder

(Counterpoint, 263 pp., \$25, \$15 paper)

Gary Snyder was a character in a novel before he published his own first book. In Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*, that vivid account of the birth of the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance and the Beat movement, there is a biographical sketch of Japhy Ryder, "the number one Dharma Bum of them all":

Japhy Ryder was a kid from eastern Oregon brought up in a log cabin deep in the woods with his father and mother and sister, from the beginning a woods boy, an axman, farmer, interested in animals and Indian lore so that when he finally got to college by hook or crook he was already well equipped for his early studies in anthropology and later in Indian myth and in the actual texts of Indian mythology. Finally he learned Chinese and Japanese and became an Oriental scholar and discovered the greatest Dharma Bums of them all, the Zen Lunatics of China and Japan. At the same time, being a Northwest boy with idealistic tendencies, he got interested in old-fashioned I.W.W. anarchism and learned to play the guitar and sing old worker songs to go with his Indian songs and general folksong interests.

This is the beginning of the Snyder myth. For all I know, and for all that I can glean from Snyder's autobiographical writings, it is entirely true.

What makes *The Dharma Bums* a pleasure to read, forty years after its publication, is the way Kerouac, in the guise of his ordinary-Joe narrator, undercuts Japhy Ryder's humorless, self-satisfied ethos. Ray, the writer's stand-in, walks into Japhy's shack, and there is Japhy "sitting cross-legged on a Paisley pillow on a straw mat, with his spectacles on, making him look old and scholarly and wise, with book on lap and the little tin teapot and porcelain cup steaming at his side. He looked up very peacefully, saw who it was, said, 'Ray come in,' and bent his eyes again to the script." "What you doing?" "Translating Han Shan's great poem called 'Cold Mountain' written a thousand years ago some of it scribbled on the sides of cliffs hundreds of miles away from any other living beings." "Wow." Japhy proceeds to teach Ray all about Asian poetry and culture, including the proper way to have sex. When Ray walks in on Japhy, in the lotus position, making meditative

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