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Sommario

Warburg in America

From Pueblo to Passamaquoddy

David Freedberg

We publish here this lecture, delivered by David Freedberg at UNAM, Mexico City, on September 5, 2017, which has never been published before. It addresses themes of the 'American Warburg' that Freedberg has explored throughout his scholarly career – beginning with his seminal essay *Pathos a Oraibi: Ciò che Warburg non vide* (in *Lo sguardo di Giano: Aby Warburg fra tempo e memoria*, edited by C. Cieri Via, P. Montani, Torino 2004, 569-611) – and intertwines them with his own research experience, opening significant trajectories for the future agenda of (*lato sensu*) Warburgian studies.

I first set foot in the Warburg Institute at the end of 1969. Perhaps you will allow me to speak briefly about my own trajectory as background to what follows. Before I got to the Warburg, I studied classical philology at Yale with Eric Havelock, teacher of Marshall McLuhan, but also a great and controversial authority on the transition from orality to literacy in ancient Greece. Then I worked as the assistant to Adam Parry, who continued the work of his father Milman Parry on the role of formulaic oral song in the origins of epic literature. I don't know whether it was he who first stimulated my concern with the relations between so-called high and low cultures, or perhaps it began as a result of my earlier upbringing in South Africa, where the distinctions between vulgar and popular languages was a daily affair, and where from childhood on I saw the pictographs amidst the snakes? Anyway, it was clear to me at the end of my Yale years that I wanted to study the afterlife of antiquity, especially but not only in its popular forms. Arnaldo Momigliano, whom I also studied with, wanted me to go to Switzerland to study Greek Epigraphy; but I refused.

And so when I got to Oxford, Francis Haskell said to me "This is no place for you: Go to London to study with Gombrich at the Warburg Institute", and my classics tutor at Oxford said to me "No, go to London to study with Michael Baxandall at the Warburg Institute"—so I did both, and learned from them. I loved the Warburg Library for all the obvious reasons, and I loved both Gombrich and Baxandall. I knew that Gombrich had a reputation for being fierce, Baxandall for being taciturn, Gombrich for being anti-modern, Baxandall for being elliptical, but in fact to me they gave everything.

I went to the Warburg to study the afterlife of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the Renaissance, both in Italy and in the North, without realizing that that had in fact been Warburg's original thesis topic—and what is interesting is that neither Gombrich nor Baxandall mentioned this to me (though perhaps they thought I knew). This led to my interest in censorship and that, of course, led very swiftly to the problem of iconoclasm. But that's another story. At the Warburg, much as I enjoyed the library, and the erudite and stimulating company of Gombrich, Baxandall, and the wonderful Frances Yates, even then I couldn't resist the feeling that occasionally the notion of the *Nachleben der Antike* had been too narrowly defined. Why was there so much emphasis on the *Nach*, and so little on the *Leben*? Why were there so many boring seminars and lectures on the afterlife of Aristotle and the fourth century commentators on Virgil, for example? It was the end of the 1960s after all, and I resolutely wanted to know how to make the transmission of antique forms relevant to our time, and matter to our society. There was too little at the Warburg that did that—or so it seemed to me. There was too much antiquarianism and not enough anthropology. And where was there evidence of any interest, as Warburg had, in the role of the barbaric in the transmission of culture, and the movement from elite to everyday forms—and, for that matter, vice-versa? It was all too upper-class for my taste, all too insulated from the real questions about the meaning and transmission of cultures. Where were the studies of gesture, for example, or of so-called primitive and popular forms? It was Gombrich who first told me that Meyer Schapiro had gone to Argentina to study the gestures of the Jewish community there.

Gombrich was of course interested in many of these topics, but his resistance to ideas of empathy, his anti-Hegelianism and pro-Popperianism often got in the way of studying such things, as did his resistance to Warburg's struggle to understand the role of the irrational in culture and his scepticism about science, or rather his desperate but never resolved efforts to figure out the fundamental tensions between scientific and symbolic thought, between mythical and technological efficacy.

Warburg's rich legacy contains much that is inchoate, but even more that is unfulfilled. Those of you who've heard me speak about Warburg elsewhere know of the ways in which I think his work has been misprised, and how many of its most stimulating aspects have been left to languish in uncomprehending or all-too conservative or sceptical neglect. The rich texture of his truly dialectical thought, it seems, has been too much for most of his epigones, and perhaps nowhere more so than in positivist Britain, of which, ironically, the Warburg Institute has often been a standard-bearer.

In my Siemens lecture in Nymphenburg (*Per Monstra ad Sphaeram: Aby Warburg and the Future of the Humanities*, given at the Siemens Foundation in Nymphenburg, Münich on March 1 2016, and then modified in subsequent lectures at the Warburg Institute, Universities of Manchester, Hamburg and Cambridge in 2016–2017), I observed that beyond the humanistic study of the survival of antiquity especially in the Renaissance still preserved in the London Institute, the four main threads of Warburg's thought, and to which he made incalculably

suggestive and genuinely interdisciplinary contributions, were: 1) Psychological; 2) Anthropological; 3) Biological; and 4) Political.

In all these respects, these were contributions which, even when they were inchoate, were clear in his work, and just remained to be brought properly to the fore. This was my mission when I was at the Institute. I know that many of the ex-staff and alumni at the Warburg thought that in this respect I was misguided. I don't think that many of you present will be surprised by the first two of these dimensions of his work—that is, the psychological and the anthropological—but I imagine that while some of you will agree that the biological dimensions have still not been adequately discussed, the political dimension, even the immediate urgency of the political and ethical dimension of his work, may come as a surprise. Everyone knows how unsettled—to say the least—Warburg was by Italy's decision to break its alliance with Germany in 1915 in favor of going to War on the side of Britain and France, as well as of his fascination and horror in the face of Mussolini; but the matter is more complex than that.

Indeed it is precisely the topic of this conference that makes Warburg's contemporary political relevance clear, in more ways than even he would have realized at the time. And it was his encounter with the American Indians, of course, that as much as any other topic in his work, makes one realize just how much the psychological, anthropological, biological and political stands at the center of his thought, even when he only seems to be expressing them in his long and difficult German sentences and in the most abstract or elliptical terms. All of us here know how pregnant his prose can be, pregnant with ideas that he never had the time to fully work out but were bursting to come forth.

So I apologize for speaking about the so-called *Snake Dance lecture* again. Warburg himself referred to it as his *Schlangenquatsch* and never wanted it to be published at all (Engramma has devoted a special issue to the complex editorial history of the Kreuzlingen conference; see Engramma 201, *21 aprile 1923. Il rituale del serpente*). Saxl, realizing its importance, put it together as best he could, and published it anyway. Already in the first edition of his Warburg's biography in 1970 Ernst Gombrich observed that "more has been written on this episode in Warburg's life than on any other aspect of his work" (Gombrich 1970, 90). I wish I could have resisted the temptation. I probably should have.

When I first lectured on the subject of Warburg's trip to America and the lecture that he delivered about it almost thirty years later in Kreuzlingen, I pointed to what seemed to me three major issues. First, the impression Warburg gave that the Snake Dance was wild, speedy and daemonic, when it fact it was deliberate, controlled, and concentrated. Secondly, his failure to comment on in the extraordinary political tensions between the Hostile and Friendly factions that were occurring at the very time he was there—a true fight for the soul of the tradition that was so important to Warburg himself as a precursor to the modern. Thirdly, I expressed the regret that for someone who was so involved in the *Nachleben der Antike*, Warburg had not searched for the afterlife of forms and subjects in the pottery he so admired but wrote so little about. This last was probably more than a little unfair, since at the very beginning of the lec-

ture Warburg made an effort to do just this and to understand the symbolic dimensions Hopi decorative forms also on vases. Had circumstances turned out differently he might well have developed the issue of the genesis and development of the symbolism and forms of Anasazi and Hopi pottery much further.

I have been much criticized for having been unfairly hard on Warburg, and there are mistakes of tone and of fact, especially in the second and better-known essay, that I regret. But aside from the fact that this conference is explicitly about Warburg in and on America, two episodes in my own life since I published those essays make me welcome the opportunity to tell you not what is lacking in them, not what Warburg did not see, as I put it in the first of the two essays, but why Warburg's lecture and American notes are important, especially now—not only for the understanding of Warburg's thought, but also for the kinds of ethical and moral reasons which I believe were essential to his thinking and yet drop ever more out of scholarship these days.

I admit that in all of this I have been deeply influenced by two personal factors, the first being my having been forced to reflect on Native American issues in ways that I could not have anticipated when I first wrote about the Kreuzlingen lecture; and the second, of course, being my renewed and more intense contact with the work of Aby Warburg, the lodestar of my entire intellectual life, after my return to the Warburg Institute in 2015 and 2016.

My first reading of Michael Steinberg's excellent translation of and essay on Warburg's lecture shortly after it appeared coincided with one of the last of my long visits to the Pueblo region of New Mexico. It so happened that I was in Santa Fe and had just returned from a performance of the Corn Dance at Cochiti and the Antelope Dance at San Ildefonso when I opened Steinberg's volume out of sheer curiosity. And immediately I was struck by a strange dissonance.

If you have actually been to any Pueblo dance, the one most striking thing about them is the deliberateness with which they are performed, the slow pauses between the steps, the firmness of the decisive steps in the dance as they touch the ground. These are dances that are marked by deliberation, sobriety, monotony of step, and stamping rather than tripping movements. They are almost never frenzied, with hair flying and garments waving wildly in the breeze. But this is what Warburg, influenced in general by Nietzsche, especially the *Birth of Tragedy*, failed to see. It is almost as if he forgot his moment of reality when, in his notes for the Kreuzlingen lecture, he described the Hemis Kachina dances as beginning with slow spinning movements accompanied by low monotonous singing. He wanted to see them as wild, speedy, and demonic. He was blinded by his desire to see in the snake dance the primitive origins of the struggle between Apollo and the Python, as performed in the Florentine Intermezzi (and which he published in the same year as the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*), by the fate of Laocoon and his sons, and by the behavior of the out-of-control followers of Bacchus, the Maenads, who danced frenziedly with the snakes in their hands, just like it might have seemed, the Hopi Snake priests. But the Hopi Snake Priests and dancers had a relationship with the snakes that was the very opposite of frenzied—more of partnership in a cosmic (and possibly causal) relationship, as Warburg himself indeed emphasized. It was a dance in

which the participants focused on their movements and those of the snake with extraordinary and careful attentiveness, an attentiveness that was not wild but gentle, sober, and deeply reflective. There is no mention of this in Warburg, nor the careful division of watchfulness between the gatherer, the carrier, and the hugger, who carefully brushed away the snake when it reared before the carrier, or calmed the snakes down. Only at the very end did the dancers pick up the snakes and rush off to the four points of the compass to distribute the snakes, return and take the emetic which caused them to vomit over the edge of the *mesa*. But Warburg needed to see the dances as wild and wildly animated—and this is precisely not how they were.

By the time Warburg went out to the Hopi mesas in 1896, the Snake Dance had already been observed and commented upon *ad infinitum*. Serious description begins with the important accounts first by Captain Bourke of the third United States Cavalry (*The Snake-Dance of the Moquis of Arizona*, 1884), then Cosmos Mindeleff (*An Indian Snake Dance*, "Science" 7, 1886), and finally the great Jesse Fewkes (*Hopi snake ceremonies: An eyewitness account*, 1894-1895). Everyone was interested in them, including the heads of the marvelous "Annual Report and Bulletins of the Bureau of Ethnology", two more military men, first Colonel Powell and then Major Holmes, who sponsored anthropological reports and field trips of unimaginable richness in our time, all across the Americas, both North and South. It was really they and the dedicated ethnologists they published, both male and female, who provided the foundations for the ethnology of native America.

Warburg began by doing all the right things too. He thoroughly read Nordenskjold's great book of 1891 on Mesa Verde (T*he Cliff Dwellers of the Mesa Verde*), and when he came to the US immediately got in touch with the great and strange Frank Cushing, the wonderful James Mooney, and he knew the Wetherill brothers, the useful Keam at Keam's Canyon and above all the Mennonite missionary Voth, mostly hated by the Hopi, but a good gatherer of information. Warburg saw his defects, but used his material; but above all, of course, he could rely on Fewkes's work. In the end the most important essays for Warburg (as, in many ways, they are still are for us now) were his essays on the Snake Ceremonial at Walpi which appeared and the even more comprehensive essay on the Tusayan Snake Ceremonies based on his visits to the five pueblos—Walpi, Oraibi, Mishongnovi, Shipaulovi and Shongopavi—where the snake dance was performed in August of 1896—just a few months after Warburg visited Oraibi at the beginning of May.

But much of this I and now many others have already commented upon. Even so, the differences between the earlier accounts and what Warburg chooses to discuss are striking. What we learn, right from the start, both in Fewkes and in his predecessors, is the extraordinary care with which the visual aspects of the dance, dancers, ritual and ritual location are described. Indeed, these are precisely those aspects most neglected by Warburg, perhaps in keeping with his oft-proclaimed resistance to the esthetic dimension of visual forms and of art, "a downright disgust with esthetizicing art history", as he called it in his Kreuzlingen lecture. But Fewkes

and the others all describe the colors and complex adornments—shells, feathers, animal skins and so on—of the dancers, as well as the ways in which their bodies are painted.

But there are other aspects of these accounts that are worth noting which fit right into Warburg's preoccupations, including his sense that if the Pueblo customs were not now described, they would soon be lost, which also profoundly preoccupied Fewkes. But chief amongst his intellectual concerns was the role of the role of the primitive and of the apparently barbaric in the transmission and consolidation of culture. Every one of the five examples I will give you comment on the primitive weirdness of the ritual. "Weird" in fact is one of Fewkes's favorite adjectives, and few of the others writers can resist using terms not only like "uncanny", which by this time we might have expected, but also "ghastly", "clammy", "loathsome" and "revolting". Yet at the same time, each has a kind of profound respect for the rituals they all so lovingly and carefully describe.

And this could not apply more clearly than to the very first full account we have of the Snake Dance, published in 1884 by Captain Bourke of the 3rd US Cavalry. Its general title was simply *The Snake Dance of the Moquis of Arizon*a but its subtitle was "The Manners and Customs of this peculiar People, and especially the revolting religious rite, The Snake Dance". The detail was greater than ever before, and despite its subtitle, only rarely melodramatic. The dancers carried "wands of eagle feathers in both hands", while tied to the right knee were "rattles made of tortoise shells and sheep or goat toes, which clanked dismally whenever the leg or body moved; small bunches of red feathers were attached to their head…" and so on. There was no wildness—"each division marched solemnly around the sacred stone […]. When the second division had finished its tour it formed two ranks facing the first division and not more than four paces from it". No hint of disorder or frenzy: In fact, the very opposite. "The men and boys of the first division shook their rattles gently, making the music of pattering showers".

But then there were the snake carriers:

> Bodies a dark greenish brown, relieved only broad white armlets… faces painted black, as with a mask of charcoal, from brow to upper lip, where the ghastly white of kaolin began, and continued down over chin and neck; the crowning point being the deadly reptiles borne in mouth and hand, which imparted to the drama the lurid tinge of a nightmare. With rattles clanking at knees, hands clinched, and elbows bent, the procession pranced slowly around the rectangle, the dancers lifting each knee slowly to the height of the waist, and then planting the foot firmly upon the ground before lifting the other, the snakes all the while writhing and squirming to free themselves from restraint.
>
> Then, later, "as fast as the members of the second division had dropped the first invoice of snakes they returned with more, every man carried a sinuous, clammy reptile between his teeth; one of the performers, ambitious to excel his fellows, carried two; while another struggled with a huge serpent too large to be pressed between his teeth.

And so Bourke's account continues in all its nerve-curdling detail. None of the snakes, he emphatically concluded (as almost all the anthropologists confirm), had been defanged, or their poison sacs emptied.

Fewkes's accounts describe the full range of what is in fact a twenty days ritual, with the dance itself never lasting more than an hour, and sometimes even much less. In fact, most of the other Pueblo dances often last most of the day or more. Everything Fewkes wrote was a masterpiece of close ethnographic description. He described not only the dance, but also the preparatory rites in the *kiva*, and the making of the sandmosaics onto which the snakes are thrown. The terrifying scene there is accompanied by a song that ends in a shriek, going "from a low weird song to a wild war cry", as the snakes are taken in hand by the priests and then plunged into the holy liquid and thrown upon the writhing mass of snakes already at the altar, crawling back out, pushed into the middle. Finally, the dancers "stride"—note 'stride', or 'rush'—"into the plaza, with their faces given hideous expression by the glistening specular iron on the cheeks and the kaolin on the chin".

It's all pretty clear. The dance and dancers may be weird, even hideous, but they are not frenzied. In 1933, Hattie Greene Lockett noted how always the hugger placed his left arm across the shoulder of the first dancer and always a step behind him uses his feather wand or snake whip to distract the attention of the snake, the gatherer again walks behind, alert to pick up any dropped snake, but always without seeming haste... and so on.

When in my articles on Warburg's lecture I wrote that the snake dance was less Dionysian than he suggested (or wanted), I had not yet read Ruth Benedict's account of Pueblo dances in her famous book, *Patterns of Culture*. It is informed by her vision of the fundamental opposition between the Dionysian and the Apollonian in culture. But while she readily admits to the ecstatic, Dionysian, and trance-like elements in Plains Indian cultures, she resists all of this when it comes to the Pueblo and the Hopi. For her:

> The pueblo dance, like their ritual poetry, is a monotonous compulsion of natural forces by reiteration. The tireless pounding of their feet draws together the mist in the sky and heaps it into the piled rain clouds. It forces out the rain upon the earth. They are bent not at all upon an ecstatic experience, but upon so through-going an identification with nature that the forces of nature will swing to their purposes. This intent dictates the form and spirit of Pueblo dances. There is nothing wild about them. It is the cumulative force of the rhythm, the perfection of forty men moving as one, that makes them effective.

Even where the Pueblos share with their near neighbours dance patterns the very forms of which are instinct with Dionysian meaning, they are used among the Pueblos with complete sobriety. In the sets of dances in the underground *kiva* chamber in the Hopi Snake Dance they also dance upon the altar. But there is no frenzy, the set formality of the Antelope and Snake dances is nothing less than "a formal sequence danced in complete sobriety".

"Nor", Benedict adds, "is the dancing with snakes a courting of the dangerous and the terrible in Hopi. There is current in our civilization so common a horror of snakes that we misread the Snake Dance". But of course, let us never forget, it was precisely the dancing with snakes and the magical efficacy of that action, that lay at the real basis of Warburg's interest. He wanted to know how the dance worked—and this he attributed to something else: To a belief in the efficacy not just of direct contact with nature but with the very handling of the means of bringing rain. But efficacity had been transferred to a second order—in a way a second-hand—technology—not nature, but space-transcending telecommunication, first wired and then wireless. For him what was lost was the efficacity of the combination of mythic symbolism (the schematic drawings of the snake) and the direct handling of the animals through whom it was possible to attain the level of cosmic authority. But over the case of the snake dance he slipped, as so many others have. Even the patient Fewkes did. Despite his own brilliant and close descriptions of the dance, in the end he too could not get away from the horror of the snake.

Fewkes was aware that even by 1893 the Snake Dance had been vulgarized in many respects, with cheap ornaments and ribbons replacing the old textiles, skins and colors; but still he noted that the sight of the snakes writhing in the *kiva*—to which he was the first white admitted—"Haunted me for weeks afterwards, and I can never forget this wildest of all the aboriginal rites of this strange people, which showed no element of our present civilization. It was a performance which might have been expected in the heart of Africa rather than in the American Union, and certainly one could not realize that he was in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century". For Fewkes, as for practically all observers of the dance, there was no doubt about its primitive and barbaric nature—even when they understood the fundamental elements of control and self-consciousness in its execution.

And this, of course, was perfect for Warburg and what joined him to Fewkes. No wonder that Fewkes wrote to Warburg both while he was still in America and shortly afterwards encouraging him to continue his pueblo researches. He hoped that Warburg and his fellow Germans would bring a fuller and more expert comparative theoretical dimension to the study of the Indian than his American peers. Fewkes's sense of the importance of studying the wildness beneath the order, the energy beneath the contemplativeness, all this fitted with the lessons that Warburg still hoped to bring to the fore about the relationship between primitive and modern culture. And the astonishing periodic admissions in all of Fewkes's writing about the barbaric aspects of the sophisticated rites he described were perfectly in accord with Warburg's view—with which I am entirely in agreement—of the generative granularity and irritation that gives cultural transmission its most vital energies, that in fact powers the engines of culture exchange. For Warburg high culture was always infused with the barbaric. It was essentially hybrid, and it owed its vitality precisely to its hybridity. This, as you will readily admit, is what makes Warburg so modern and so ethical in the end, despite his conservatism.

In the end the lecture and the Kreuzlingen notes provide a program for what can still be done. It is in the lecture itself, as many of you know, that he describes himself as "a folklorist

interested in a biological understanding of the roots of human cultural expression", and as those of you know me, I would have been very happy to give an entire lecture about this aspect of his work. And the notes for the lecture reveal some of the most extraordinary steps he took in this direction. At the beginning of a note in Kreuzlingen "Still on opium", he asks "Why did I go? What attracted me?"; and then, just after referring to his "downright disgust with estheticizing art history" he observes: "The formal contemplation of images—not conceived as a biologically necessary product situated between the practices of religion and art (which I understood only later) seemed to me to give rise to such a sterile trafficking in words that after my trip to Berlin in the summer of 1896 I tried to switch over to medicine".

In 2004 I bought a house in Maine. Nearby is the Passamaquoddy Indian reservation at Pleasant Point where the average female mortality rate is 38. The dances have been vulgarized more or less beyond recognition. A small basket-making tradition survives. There is a tiny museum with some reconstructions of traditional boats and dress. But for the rest what is left is all-too representative of the almost total oblivion into which the grand and multifold Native American tradition has been cast. The Passamaquoddy are just one tribe amongst thousands, whose heritage has been totally lost, and yet has much to teach us: About the relationship between nature and development, between mythology and technology, between symbolism and explicit picturing, for example. Between the efficacy of not saying and saying; between noise and silence; between involvement and detachment, passionate engagement and contemplation, narcissism and self-awareness. This is a society, ours, that has lost its way because it has lost its native cultures and above all the lessons of those cultures. Even if you don't agree with any of this, is clear that almost all of us present here live in societies that have lost the memory of their ancient pasts. We here perhaps have not done so, but look around us: The Indian and his culture has been consigned to almost total oblivion, and its traces erased. And where man—allow me to stay with this gendered phraseology—has not wiped the Indian out, or erased his traces (as Trump is still trying to do with his oil pipeline across Sioux lands in Dakota, or in the slow eradication of petroglyphs everywhere), Nature helps by its rising tides that cover the petroglyphs that are the last testimony to Passamaquoddy culture, along with the birch bark drawings that rot from year to year.

To see these slow and fast disappearances is to grasp the moral dimension of the Warburgian project, which grew out of his belief in the significance of primitive cultures for later ones, in the granularity provided by cheapness, coarseness, and vulgarity as much as by the exotic. It is this cross-fertilization, call it hybridization if you like, that keeps even elite cultures vital; so are the universally communicable aspects of our biology and expressiveness. But do not be alarmed by this phrase. To say it is not to deny the need, as Darwin himself pointed out, to be alert—as we are trained to be—to the cultural modulations of our embodied mimetic responses to what we see in the behavior and representations of others. As you know, I have always laid much store, as Warburg did, on the perception of emotion via the felt imitation of the movements—actual and implied—of others. And while Warburg's interest in biology was almost always focused on the mimetic and representational, what he did not pull together was

the nature of more primitive signs. He got as far as hieroglyphics in the Renaissance, and he certainly was no slouch when it came to Babylonian or pseudo-Babylonian symbolism; but imagine if he had been able to turn to forms of communication that stand on the borderline between writing and picturing, such as the petroglyphs and cave paintings that run across the millenia from 100,000 years ago until the erasures of modern technology and the ravages of technologically induced oblivion.

The question of the borderline between writing and picturing is of course a fundamentally Warburgian—and Cassirerian—topic that ended with emblems but has not gone far enough. It ended with Piero Valeriano and did not go on to Champollion. How do we deal with such things? Or with the vast range of birch bark wikhegans, scratchings, petroglyphs, and pictography more generally? Or with the problem of Indian sign talk—the real reconciliation of semiotics and embodiment? Some say such sign talk arose as a means of communication which, using the body, can transcend the multiplicity of Indian languages, known less and less. In one of his comments in the crucial notes for the Snake Dance, written "still on opium" in Kreuzlingen, Warburg writes of the complex hybridity of pueblo objects and philology, and observes that "This situation is complicated by the fact that today the Indian languages are so rich and distinct that neighbouring Pueblo villages—there are about thirty of forty—cannot understand each other, and must resort to sign language or (before that) to Spanish, and now to English". But where could one find a stronger exemplification and illustration of Warburg's concern with the relationship between gestural and emotional expression? I don't know, but there are real possibilities here, and we need, just like Warburg, to get to its remaining exponents as quickly as possible!

The only real treatment is Brenda Margaret Farnell's remarkable but little-known book on Assiniboine Sign Talk of the Plains Indians (*Plains Indian Sign-talk: Action and Discourse Among the Nakota (Assiniboine) People of Montana*, 1990). She recalls that when she began research:

> One of the first things I noticed was that many older Nakota speakers, who denied any explicit knowledge of the sign language, appeared to accompany their speech with manual gestures that I recognized from the nineteenth-century documentation as belonging to that system. "Of course it's part of the language", I was told and my remark was considered to be rather obvious. This alerted me to the consideration that the understanding obtained from the historical record—of Indian Sign Language as a distinct and primarily intertribal language is grossly misleading [...]. Instead in Assiniboine communities at least a continuum exists from the informal use of manual gesture that accompany or replace speech in everyday interactions to more formalized contexts such as storytelling performances and signed songs [...]. My consultants prefer the designation "sign talk" over "sign language" because the latter is felt to denote a system altogether separate from speech, which is not the case here [...]. On one occasion when I asked one of my teachers for the spoken equivalent of a signed utterance by saying "How would you say that in Nakota", the reply was "Like I just showed you".

So all this clearly challenges traditional notions of language. It is as if in such cases language really becomes embodied, and in doing so moves away from pure arbitrariness, from pure semiosis. This is critical to the passage from language to image. Communication is by images of a totally different kind from written languages, and closer to the representational, the iconic if you like. How Warburg would have loved to discuss Farnell's notion of "An action-centered theory of *deixis*", and how much better reconciled Michael Baxandall would have been to Warburg himself if he had read her book, committed as he was to what he regarded as the fundamentally deictic role of descriptions of visual things! Or maybe he would not have.

The issue for the art historian who is impatient with esthetics is precisely the biological drive to use the hand directly for communication, thus minimizing figurative infill, moving away from figural mimicry to shorthand, from individual parcellated languages to signing with the body, from comprehension to apprehension—or as Warburg put it: "Between prehension and comprehension lie the outlining and delimitation of contour". And he goes on: "The artistic process is situated between mimicry and science. It uses the hand but the hand reverts to its own movement. The hand imitates; that is, it renounces any right to possess the object other than by palpably following its outer contour. It therefore does not completely renounce touching the object, but it renounces taking possession through comprehension". And so leaves space for matching and for art... This is where Gombrich and Warburg come together, though perhaps it is only now that we can see that!

The Indians who used wikhegans were less inclined to worry about picturing, given their concern with the purely deictic, with the visual notations that told stories or mapped locations. So much of native American pictography, especially in the North East which I now know best, from Huron to Abenaki, from Miq' Maq' to Haudenosaunee (as the Iroquois are now called), teeters on the edge of the symbolism of hieroglyphs ot the descriptiveness of pictures. In the wikhegans, despite their narrative dimensions, the schematic barely transformed itself to the descriptive. Who at the Warburg Institute ever studied dendroglyphs, wikhegan, or quipu for that matter? When Rensselaer Lee wrote his little *Names on Trees* (1977) I don't think he ever thought of or even heard of dendroglyphs, of which this is one (and so is this); but all over the Americas, especially the region in which he taught for so many years, they were once common; and no one at Princeton ever studied them.

Nor did Warburg ever get round, alas, to expanding his work on pottery or to thinking much about baskets at all, the two areas in which Major Holmes produced his vast pioneering efforts at the end of the nineteenth century and has rarely been matched, at least not in its range, ever since. And what would he have made of the extraordinary work on the picture writing of the American Indians by Garrick Mallery, the one anthropologist who would have supplied him with rich material on images if not on art (though one could of course debate that) and the relationship between sign and signified that might have brought him to provide radical new foundations for semiology.

But, you will say, Warburg's lecture was entitled *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians*, not stories, or languages, for example. Indeed not. But I hope I have been able to show you this afternoon how his engagement with the Indians in 1895-1896 and to which he so fruitfully returned in his days in Kreuzlingen, whether under the influence of opium or not, suggests a whole new program for the future. It is program that is always beneath the surface, but never fully articulated, like so much else that has lain dormant for so many years but is only now beginning to emerge.

If you look up wikhegan in Google you will find practically zero, except for the repeated mention of a bookstore with this name in the posh resort of North East Harbor on Mount Desert. What Warburg's work also makes clear is the need for the recovery and conservation of ever more threatened cultural forms, from the pictorial to the linguistic. The task before us, in such cases, as well as in the thousands of rapidly disappearing petroglyphs, is to plot the points on the scale from representational to schematic to sign talk—in other words to plot the transition from pure semiosis to pure embodiment in the expression of emotion and meaning, including iconographic meaning.

And the ensuing desiderata follow:
1) a reformulation of the Piercean transitions between icon, index (or trace) and symbol;
2) an examination of the continuum on an expressive level from language rules to sign rules, and the extent to which efficacy depends on arbitrariness or not;
3) a consideration of the role of the hand—to what extent does the efficacy of the handmade sign depend on the trace of the hand in the sign? Where does imagination fit in? Does it reinforce efficacy or not? The question moves into the pure psychology of figuration both external and internal (what neuroscientists significantly call "imagery");
4) to make clear the need to distinguish between narrative or purely descriptive signs on the one hand and action signs on the other;
5) to better articulate the relationship between descriptive—mimetic—and schematic. For Warburg the mimetic was totally critical. But how one would have loved to have had his thoughts on this relationship with the schematic. He never got that far; one can be sure he would have.

And then two important issues, one of which has a clearly empirical end, the other theoretical. The theoretical relates to the symbolic efficacy of these lost languages. We know practically nothing about their content. The usual way out is to have recourse to an amazingly vague notion of shamanism as an all-purpose explanation and account of function and meaning. We know nothing about this. Here we could bring in Ginzburg back to the Warburg. Unfortunately much of the petroglyphic and pictographic work has concentrated recently, thanks to the influence of David Lewis Williams in South Africa on shamanism and trance-like states and his influence.

And finally, for the Warburg empiricists: When I first went to the South West I was interested in the paintings—I asked the dates—anywhere between 300 and 2000; when I went to Maine—there were the ships and the cavalry, they said so ca. 350 years old, but then there

were these much older ones—this last penultimate image of mine from Canon de Chelly, the great Navajo site near the Hopi Mesas – but there lies yet another story. These are issues with which the Warburg Institute could fruitfully be involved, and the fields are still wide open, full of perils still. So too are the questions of the origins of representation (and how often the earliest forms are in fact prints and paintings of the hand), the relationship between embodiment and symbolization, and the relationship between embodied responses and efficacity.

Just think what the Institute might have been if Warburg had taken up Fewkes's proposal to come back to write up his theories on the relationship between the pagan world view of the Indians as a yardstick, as he put it, for transmission of culture all the way through the antique world and on to the modern? Of if, more importantly, he had indeed come back to America, as he wrote in 1927, and taken up the promise of those forgotten anthropologists to study those roots which civilization has now so bluntly stamped out and prevented from ever flowering again? Then truly he would have fulfilled his dream that "Our institute will have risen to meet the highest standards as an observation tower, which, from its platform in Hamburg, looks out over all the migratory routes of cultural exchange/of symbolic culture between Asia and America".

Abstract

In this contribution, David Freedberg weaves together his personal intellectual trajectory with a reassessment of Aby Warburg's legacy and the remit of the Warburg Institute. By reexamining Warburg's Snake Dance lecture and American notes, he contends that Hopi ceremonies are intentional and carefully regulated rather than, as Warburg argued, Dionysian—a view consistent with the interpretations of Bourke, Fewkes, and Benedict. The essay advocates renewed attention to gesture, to popular and so-called "barbaric" forms, and to indigenous sign talk as vital mediations between embodiment and semiosis. It concludes by sketching a program of further research: revisiting the categories of icon, index, and symbol; clarifying the distinction between descriptive and action signs; and mapping the continuum from representation to schematic notation—all while underscoring the urgency of cultural preservation in the face of ongoing erasure.

keywords | Aby Warburg; Pueblo; Hopi; Snake Dance; Jesse Fewkes; Ruth Benedict; John Gregory Bourke; Michael Baxandall; Ernst Gombrich.

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