

la rivista di **engramma**  
settembre **2025**

**227**

**Warburgian Studies  
in the Ibero-American  
Context**

La Rivista di Engramma  
**227**

La Rivista di  
Engramma  
**227**  
settembre 2025

# Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context

a cura di

Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes, Giulia Zanon



edizioniengramma

*direttore*  
monica centanni

*redazione*

damiano acciarino, sara agnoletto, mattia angeletti,  
maddalena bassani, asia benedetti, maria bergamo,  
mattia biserni, elisa bizzotto, emily verla bovino,  
giacomo calandra di roccolino, olivia sara carli,  
concetta cataldo, giacomo confortin,  
giorgiomaria cornelio, vincenzo damiani,  
mario de angelis, sylvia de laude,  
francesca romana dell'aglio, simona dolari,  
emma filipponi, christian garavello, anna ghiraldini,  
ilaria grippa, roberto indovina, delphine lauritzen,  
annalisa lavoro, laura leuzzi, michela maguolo,  
ada naval, viola sofia neri, alessandra pedersoli,  
marina pellanda, filippo perfetti, chiara pianca,  
margherita piccichè, daniele pisani, bernardo prieto,  
stefania rimini, lucamatteo rossi, daniela sacco,  
cesare sartori, antonella sbrilli, massimo stella,  
ianick takaes, elizabeth enrica thomson,  
christian toson, chiara velicogna, giulia zanon

*comitato scientifico*

barbara baert, barbara biscotti, andrea capra,  
giovanni careri, marialuisa catoni, victoria cirlot,  
fernanda de maio, alessandro grilli, raoul kirchmayer,  
luca lanini, vincenzo latina, orazio licandro,  
fabrizio lollini, natalia mazour, alessandro metlica,  
guido morpurgo, andrea pinotti, giuseppina scavuzzo,  
elisabetta terragni, piermario vescovo, marina vicelja

*comitato di garanzia*

jaynie anderson, anna beltrametti, lorenzo braccesi,  
maria grazia ciani, georges didi-huberman,  
alberto ferlenga, nadia fusini, maurizio harari,  
arturo mazzarella, elisabetta pallottino,  
salvatore setti, oliver taplin

**La Rivista di Engramma**

a peer-reviewed journal

**227 settembre 2025**

[www.engramma.it](http://www.engramma.it)

*sede legale*

Engramma  
Via F. Baracca 39 I 30173 Mestre  
[edizioni@engramma.it](mailto:edizioni@engramma.it)

*redazione*

Centro studi classicA luav  
San Polo 2468 I 30125 Venezia  
+39 041 257 14 61

©2025

**edizioniengramma**

ISBN carta 979-12-55650-97-3  
ISBN digitale 979-12-55650-98-0  
ISSN 1826-901X  
finito di stampare novembre 2025

Si dichiara che i contenuti del presente volume sono la versione a stampa totalmente corrispondente alla versione online della Rivista, disponibile in open access all'indirizzo: <https://www.engramma.it/227> e ciò a valere ad ogni effetto di legge.  
L'editore dichiara di avere posto in essere le dovute attività di ricerca delle titolarità dei diritti sui contenuti qui pubblicati e di aver impegnato ogni ragionevole sforzo per tale finalità, come richiesto dalla prassi e dalle normative di settore.

# Sommario

7 *Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context. Editorial of Engramma* 227  
Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes and Giulia Zanon

13 *Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context. Editorial de Engramma* 227  
Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes y Giulia Zanon

19 *Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context. Editorial da Engramma* 227  
Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes e Giulia Zanon

25 *Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context. Editoriale di Engramma* 227  
Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes e Giulia Zanon

**Overviews**

33 *Estudar (a partir de) Warburg Estudiar (desde) Warburg Studying (from) Warburg*  
Martinho Alves da Costa Junior, Serzenando Alves Vieira Neto, Linda Báez Rubí,  
Norval Baitello Junior, José Luis Barrios Lara, Jens Baumgarten, Maria Berbara,  
Gabriel Cabello, Rafael Cardoso, Emilie Ana Carreón Blain, Roberto Casazza,  
Patricia Dalcanale Meneses, Bianca de Divitiis, Claire Farago, Cássio Fernandes,  
Aurora Fernández Polanco, David Freedberg, Isabela Gaglianone, Jorge Tomás  
García, Maurizio Ghelardi, Antonio Leandro Gomes de Souza Barros, Nicolás  
Kwiatkowski, João Luís Lisboa, Fabián Ludueña Romandini, Laura Malosetti Costa,  
Luiz Marques, Claudia Mattos Avolese, Ulrich Pfisterer, Ivan Pintor Iranzo, Vanessa  
A. Portugal, Vera Pugliese, José Riello, Adrian Rifkin, Agustina Rodríguez Romero,  
Federico Ruvituso, Sandra Szir, Dario Velandia Onofre, Luana Wedekin. Edited by  
Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes, Giulia Zanon

111 *Estudos warburguianos no Brasil (2023-2025)*  
Ianick Takaes

115 *Estudios warburguianos en América hispánica (2019-2025)*  
Bernardo Prieto

137 *Estudios warburguianos en España (2019-2025)*  
Ada Naval

143 *Warburgian Studies in Portugal (2000-2025)*  
Fabio Tononi

147 *Las ciencias de Atenea y las artes de Hermes*  
a cargo de Ada Naval, Bernardo Prieto

**Essays**

169 *Warburg in America*  
David Freedberg

183 “*Bilderwanderung*”  
Linda Báez Rubí

205 *Towards a Philosophical Anthropology*  
Serzenando Alves Vieira Neto

225 *Partecipation and Creation of Distance*  
Cássio Fernandes\*

237 *Astrology Between Science and Superstition in Art History*  
Antônio Leandro Gomes de Souza Barros

**Presentations**

257 *Una presentación de Aby Warburg en/sobre América: Historia, sobrevivencias y repercusiones* (México 2024)  
coordinado por Linda Báez Rubí, Emilie Carreón Blaine editado por Vanessa A. Portugal

283 *A Presentation of Aby Warburg en/sobre América: Historia, sobrevivencias y repercusiones* (México 2024)  
curated by Linda Báez Rubí, Emilie Carreón Blaine, edited by Vanessa A. Portugal

305 *The Exuberant Excess of His Subjective Propensities*  
Ilanick Takaes

# Towards a Philosophical Anthropology

## Cushing in Dialogue with Warburg

Serzenando Alves Vieira Neto



1 | Gotthold August Neeff, Aby Warburg Sitting on a Rock with the Bag of his 'Buckeye Camera', North of the Ruins of Pueblo San Cristóbal, 1896. Source: Warburg Institute Archive.

2 | John K. Hillers, Frank Hamilton Cushing em traje Zuñi, c. 1880-1881. Source: National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Aby Warburg's (1866-1929) journey to the United States, which began on September 5, 1895, under the pretext of attending his brother Paul's wedding, soon evolved into a full-fledged intellectual expedition, lasting until May 1896. In Washington, Warburg visited the Smithsonian Institution and came into contact with its ethnographic research. Driven by a growing interest in the art and culture of the Pueblo peoples, he continued westward, toward the American Southwest [Fig. 1]. This experience stands as a paradigmatic episode in Warburg's engagement with anthropology, revealing how his encounter with Pueblo culture proved decisive for the formulation of an image theory shaped by anthropological concerns, prompting an expansion that redefined both the scope of his interests and the complexity of his method.

Within the broad range of issues that emerge from this experience, the present article focuses on a specific point: Warburg's engagement with the ethnologist and pioneer of participant observation, Frank Hamilton Cushing (1857-1900) [Fig. 2]. Although this connection has been mentioned in the literature, this study aims to offer a more systematic treatment of the topic, drawing on materials that have received little attention, such as Warburg's correspondence, his notes, and the conceptual affinities that emerge between their respective works.

Seeking to reconstruct the intellectual contours of this relationship, without losing sight of the organic way in which it is embedded within the broader arc of Warburg's trajectory, this article aims to examine the conceptual framework that not only explains but also guides his approach to anthropology. From this perspective, it explores the convergences between symbolic ornamentation, mythical thought, and integrated cosmology, as they manifest in both explicit and implicit exchanges between Warburg and Cushing. Underlying this inquiry is the hypothesis that Cushing as a figure should be reconsidered not as a peripheral or episodic reference, but as a decisive element in the development of Aby Warburg's theoretical thought.

### **Psychological Aesthetics and the Problem of the Origin of Art: Aby Warburg's Formative Horizon Between Art History and Philosophical Anthropology**

Since the publication of the first biography by Carl George Heise (Heise [1947] 2005), through classic works such as those by Ernst Gombrich (Gombrich [1970] 1986) and Bernd Roeck (Roeck 1997), to more recent biographical contributions (Hönes 2024; Lescourret 2014), the university education of the young Warburg has been extensively documented and studied. Figures such as Carl Justi, Jacob Burckhardt, Hubert Janitschek, and Karl Lamprecht frequently appear as his main points of reference in historical research. In a less orthodox aspect of his formation as an art historian, particular emphasis is placed on his readings of authors such as Tito Vignoli and Charles Darwin, through whom Warburg deepened his study of gesture, mimicry, and the physiological mechanisms of expression.

Warburg's doctoral dissertation is a product of this intellectual repertoire and marks his first substantial contribution to Renaissance studies. Focused on the analysis of the mythological paintings *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera*, the dissertation engages with historiographic debates that were well-established at the time and converges toward a broader investigation into the relationship between painting and poetry in fifteenth-century Florence, reconstructing the historical process behind Sandro Botticelli's artistic program. Although concerned with a problem characteristic of historical erudition, the thesis was developed against a theoretical background that already pointed to markedly ambitious aims.

Strategic passages of Warburg's dissertation reveal the theoretical vocation of the young scholar, which manifests, for instance, in the preliminary note where he acknowledges that his study of the representation of "accessory forms in motion" contributes to Robert Vischer's psychological aesthetics, particularly regarding "an emerging sense of the aesthetic act of 'empathy' [Einfühlung] as a determinant of style" (Renewal, 89). This same theoretical impulse resonates in his interpretation of Botticelli's art as "a compromise between

anthropomorphic imagination and analogical reflection" (*Renewal*, 96), and in the four theses presented at the conclusion of the dissertation (*Renewal*, 144), which aim to grasp the essential unity of the artistic phenomenon through the formulation of nomothetic laws, to borrow Wilhelm Windelband's terminology. Indeed, Warburg was convinced of the possibility of rehabilitating aesthetic thought within art history, seeking a reconciliation between empirical observation and theoretical reflection. In March 1892, he sent Robert Vischer a copy of the dissertation, accompanied by a letter in which he acknowledged his intellectual debt to the book *On the Optical Sense of Form* (Vischer 1873), which enabled him to envision a connection between art history and aesthetics (letter to Robert Vischer, March 23, 1892, quoted in *Briefe*, 1, 101).

The developments stemming from Warburg's dissertation did not lead him directly to new Renaissance themes. Before returning to Florence in 1894—where he would encounter the drawings by Buontalenti that would give rise to his essay on the theatrical costumes for the *Intermedi* of 1589—Warburg spent a formative period in Berlin, dedicating himself to the study of psychology and physiology. This interlude reflects his interest in the emerging advances of these disciplines, especially the conception of psychology as an experimental, natural science. During the summer semester of 1892, Warburg attended lectures by Hermann Ebbinghaus, the German psychologist and pioneer of cognitive research who had studied under Wilhelm Wundt (Hönes 2024, 53). Furthermore, Warburg may have encountered ethnographic collections during this first stay in Berlin. Although no direct records support this hypothesis, it seems unlikely that the initiatives led by Adolf Bastian, then director of the Berlin Ethnological Museum and a key figure in its expansion, would have escaped his notice.

This entire framework connects to Warburg's broader interest in questions of philosophical anthropology, amply documented in his aphorisms, in which one can already discern a holistic perspective on the study of art and a universalist orientation (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 18, 31, 60-61, 82, 119-120). Warburg's readings, in turn, both reflected and reinforced the widespread fascination at the end of the nineteenth century with so-called "primitive art." For instance, his 1890 reading of Gottfried Semper's text on ornamentation (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 50), as well documented by Spyros Papapetros (Papapetros 2010, 310 ff.), introduced him to an approach that sought to identify, in the specific representations of ornament—whether among the Indigenous peoples of the North American Plains, the peoples of the South Pacific islands, the so-called Botocudos of Brazil, or the Aboriginal peoples of Australia (Semper [1856] 1884, 305-306)—the expression of an artistic principle that would convey, more or less consciously, a universal cosmic law (Semper [1856] 1884, 310).

Following this line of inquiry, other key examples of late nineteenth-century thought reinforce the connection between art history, philosophical anthropology, and ethnological studies in the construction of Warburg's conceptual architecture. On a more directly documented empirical level, one may highlight *The Beginnings of Artistic Activity* by Conrad Fiedler (Fiedler 1887), a work acquired by Warburg the year it was published (Gombrich [1970] 1986, 78), which pro-

poses a comprehensive philosophical approach to the origins of art. From a more contextual perspective, one may cite *The Beginnings of Art* by Ernst Grosse, as it signals a significant disciplinary shift by advocating ethnology as an indispensable field for the understanding of art (Grosse 1894, 19 ff.).

Without intending to explore this discussion in all its complexity, even an outline of its general contours suffices to underscore the organic place of the American experience within the conceptual architecture of Warburg's thought. The aim here is merely to indicate elements of his intellectual formation which, though often overlooked, prove crucial in challenging the notion of exceptionalism that underpins canonical interpretations, such as Gombrich's intellectual biography, which characterizes Warburg's engagement with anthropology as largely accidental (Gombrich [1970] 1986, 88). While there is indeed a degree of contingency in Warburg's American experience, it seems implausible that his involvement with the intellectual circle of the Smithsonian and his decision to undertake an extended expedition to the American Southwest (an area, it should be noted, hardly hospitable for a member of the Hamburg upper bourgeoisie) occurred without a prior theoretical predisposition.

### **Methodological Inflections: The Encounter with the Smithsonian Institution and Conversations on the Symbolism of Ornament**

Warburg's indifference toward the culture and lifestyle of the United States was evident from the earliest moments of his journey, as evidenced by his correspondence with James Loeb regarding the monotonous and uninspiring atmosphere of Chicago (letter from James Loeb to Aby Warburg, November 21, 1895 [WIA GC/10004]), as well as from later passages, including his well-known critique of "the emptiness of the civilization of Eastern America" (Warburg [1923] [1999] 2004, 301), the very same civilization that destroys "what the natural sciences, born of myth, so ardently achieve" (Warburg [1923] 1995, 54). It is not surprising, then, that Warburg spent so little time in the eastern United States. What drew his attention most in that region was, without a doubt, the Smithsonian Institution, which he visited on October 23, 1895, accompanied by the librarian Cyrus Adler. On that occasion, Warburg first saw Jesse Walter Fewkes's collection of pottery: "Adler [...] shows me the collection of vases by Dr Fewkes (the conscious symbolism of ornaments)" (Warburg [1894-1897] 1998, 150).

Fewkes had recently returned from an archaeological expedition to Arizona, bringing with him a collection of pottery and other archaeological artifacts. His interest in these objects—particularly in their symbolism and ornamental patterns—prompted Warburg to spend a short period in Washington to study the most recent publications in the field of ethnology, especially those focused on material culture, architectural patterns of dwellings, paintings, terracotta vessels, and ceremonial masks (Cestelli Guidi 1998, 30).

The importance of ceramics for the study of Indigenous symbols, beliefs, and religious practices was thoroughly explored and emphasized in Fewkes's research. For him, the ancient funerary pottery of the peoples who inhabited Sikiyatki constituted fundamental evidence for reconstructing the different phases of their culture and their ancestral myths. Fewkes demon-



3, 4 | Food bowls with figures of quadrupeds from Sikyatki. Source: Fewkes 1898, 672, 676.

strated that archaic decoration did not follow the principles of realistic representation, but was essentially symbolic: human figures appeared as exaggerated caricatures, and animals often belonged to species unknown to naturalists (Fewkes 1898, 657). In addition to the traditional ornamental motifs commonly found on ceramics, there are numerous examples of mythological quadrupeds, unidentifiable reptiles, and regional animals such as the hare, the serpent, and the antelope [Figg. 3,4].

Warburg's contact with the material collected by Fewkes seems to have encouraged him to conceive of ceramics as a promising medium for studying the genesis of symbolic art: what he would later describe, in 1923, as the characteristically ornamental "treatment of such animals", in which one observes a decorative stylization of animal forms that leads toward a "symbolic pictographic writing" (Warburg [1923] 1995, 8).

This fascination with ornamental symbolism and with Fewkes's pottery collection proved decisive for the direction of Warburg's journey. Shortly after beginning his studies at the Smithsonian, he wrote to his confidante and future wife, Mary Hertz, about his intention to situate

the entire question of the genesis of ornament on a broader foundation, one that would include ethnographic material, and he also noted that he would likely depart the following week to observe the Pueblo peoples in New Mexico (letter to Mary Hertz, November 8, 1895, quoted in *Briefe*, 1, 144). Indeed, his growing interest in Pueblo culture and art led him to extend his stay in the United States, as he felt he could not return to Europe “without having seen the West and something of the ancient natives” (letter to Charlotte Warburg, November 22, 1895, quoted in *Briefe*, 1, 145).

The visit to the Cliff Dwellings ruins was strongly influenced by his reading of the reports of the Swedish explorer Gustav Nordenskiöld (Nordenskiöld 1893), which document the excavations at the archaeological sites of the Mesa Verde region (Naber 1988, 89-90; Raulff 1998, 64; Raulff [1988] 2011, 93-94; Steinberg 1995, 62). In December 1895, Warburg visited the site and described it as the “American Pompeii” (letter to Charlotte, Moritz Warburg, and his siblings, December 14, 1895, quoted in *Briefe*, 1, 147). The apex of the trip, however, was undoubtedly his observation of the Hemiskatsinam ceremony in Oraibi, on May 2, 1896. Curiously, the famous Snake Ritual, which would later give its name to the first published version of his acclaimed 1923 lecture, was never witnessed by Warburg himself. Although Fewkes had encouraged him to prolong his stay to attend the ceremony, which took place in August, Warburg chose to return shortly after his experience in Oraibi (Fewkes wrote to Warburg encouraging him “by all means to make an effort to see the Snake Dance”: letter to Aby Warburg, March 21, 1896 [WIA GC/9581]). His knowledge of the Snake Ritual would thus be based primarily on Fewkes’s reports and on his dialogue with the Mennonite missionary and ethnographer Henry Voth, who was active among the Hopi (especially the letters dated May 14, 1896 [WIA GC/9584], September 14, 1896 [WIA GC/9585], and November 30, 1896 [WIA GC/9587], in which Henry Voth provides Warburg with information about the Hemiskatsinam and the Snake Ritual).

Warburg’s interest in religious manifestations and archaeological discoveries was accompanied by a notable fascination with the material culture of the Pueblo peoples, which culminated in the recurrent acquisition of artifacts. Already by mid-January 1896, his plan to return to Germany with an ethnographic collection was clearly taking shape. In a letter to his parents, he wrote: “Dear Mama, make room! I’m bringing with me about 50 large Indian pots” (letter to Charlotte and Moritz Warburg, January 12, 1896, quoted in *Briefe*, 1, 153). On February 8, 1896, Warburg recorded in his diary a visit to a local collector in Pasadena, California: “Incredibly rich collection, but badly sorted and without any mention of provenance. Great collection of Cliff Dwellings pottery (whether everything is genuine?)” (Warburg [1894-1897] 1998, 153).

In the end, Warburg returned to Germany with a large number of objects, including ceramics, Katsina dolls, musical instruments, and ceremonial items [1]. This collection, later donated to the Museum of Ethnology in Hamburg, attests to Warburg’s commitment to assembling ethnographic material for his investigations, not only during his journey to the Americas, but also

after his return to Europe. This effort is especially evident in his involvement with Berlin's intellectual circles and in his encounter with Karl von den Steinen, a moment that marks a distinct chapter in his relationship with nineteenth-century anthropology [2].

### **Fragments of a Dialogue: Warburg and Cushing**

Aby Warburg returned to the Smithsonian one day after his initial visit, guided by Cyrus Adler, the institution's librarian. This time, his diary records an encounter with the ethnologist Frank Hamilton Cushing: "24 Oct. [Smithsonian Institution, Washington]. Lively conversation with Frank Hamilton Cushing (who looks somewhat drained, stomach ailments) on the meaning and appropriateness of any ornament" (Warburg [1894-1897] 1998, 150). This note reaffirms Warburg's enduring interest in the study of ornament, corroborating the thesis of the organic continuity of his research program, whether as an art historian concerned with the movement of drapery in Botticelli, or as a theorist of the image investigating the origins and meanings of ornamental representation. Moreover, this passage offers valuable evidence concerning Cushing, who would prove strategically important in shaping Warburg's interpretation of Pueblo art and culture.

Regrettably, the epistolary material that could enrich our understanding of the dialogue between Warburg and Cushing is scarce. Although Warburg was known for his meticulous habit of recording the development of his research and ideas, keeping notes, sketches, and drafts—and occasionally making copies of his correspondence, a habit that led Edgar Wind to remark on the "obsessional quirk in Warburg's over-extravagant habit of preserving all his superseded drafts and notes" (Wind 1983, 107)—the logistical conditions of his American travels hindered a more extensive and systematic documentation of his letters. The collection preserved in the Warburg Institute Archive in London contains only a single letter sent by Cushing to Warburg, dated November 1895, in which the ethnologist requests Warburg's address, promises to send letters of recommendation, and expresses regret over having missed him in Philadelphia:

It is late night and I have but now returned from Philadelphia, hence I write you this hurried line to make sure of reaching you before your departure for the Southwest, and to suggest that you give me a prospective address at, say, Santa Fe or Fort Wingate, and the probable dates of your being at these places. Meanwhile I will write notes of introduction for you at Zuni and in the Moki country, and when I receive your direction, forward them to the address you give.

My old friends Governor Prince, and Professor Ad. F. Bandelier having left Santa Fe (as well as others whom I knew there several years ago), I really do not now know anyone personally, who could help you, or I would gladly send letters to what place also.

I regret exceedingly that you did not wait a day in Philadelphia, for me. I had written that I would be there on the evening of the fifth novbr, and only the next morning learned that you had preceded me. Mr. Culin did not show you the Tablets, after all. He regretted this exceedingly, when I asked him, and said that I had particularly mentioned them to you (letter to Aby Warburg, November 11, 1895 [WIA GC/9577]).

The content of the letter suggests a possible continuation of the dialogue between the two scholars. Warburg was in the habit of replying to his correspondents, and it is reasonable to assume that Cushing did, in fact, send the promised letters of recommendation. However, there is no concrete evidence to confirm this. Cushing's correspondence, preserved in the National Anthropological Archives, consists largely of communications with his colleagues and superiors at the Bureau of American Ethnology and does not include records of an exchange with Warburg [3].

The richest sources for studying the relationship between Aby Warburg and Frank Hamilton Cushing are found in the so-called "index card boxes" (Zettelkasten). Warburg adopted the method of filing notes in his research, using these boxes to organize his observations, bibliographic references, and a variety of other materials such as newspaper clippings, hand-drawn sketches, invitations, and entry tickets to events. Over the course of his academic life, this material accumulated in at least 104 boxes, some of which have been lost. Today, the Warburg Institute Archive preserves 96 of them, with the materials related to his stay in the United States collected in box 40, titled "Americana."

This particular index card box is especially relevant to understanding Warburg's "anthropological project", as it reflects both the breadth of his intellectual ambitions and the scope of his bibliographic references. It is divided into sixteen sections that organize the themes of his interest, revealing a broader project dedicated to the study of the peoples of the Americas: from the Pueblo of the North American Southwest to the peoples of Central America and the cultures of the Andes. Cushing's name appears on several occasions, including a possible reference to a meeting, "Zus. mit Cushing [together with Cushing]" [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040/020528], and as a recurrent bibliographical reference. Indeed, Warburg refers to several of Cushing's essays, such as his text on arrow-making (Cushing 1895 [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020550]), the study on Pueblo pottery symbolism (Cushing 1886 [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020555]), his memoir of time spent among the Zuñi (Cushing 1883a [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020647]), short reports on Zuñi mythology (Cushing 1892 [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020652]), discussions on the origins of copper objects among the Mound Builders (Cushing 1894 [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020659]), and his masterwork on Zuñi creation myths (Cushing 1896 [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020660, 040.020661]). Box 40 also preserves some notes specifically related to that work on Zuñi creation [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020662], along with occasional mentions of his name [WIA III.2.1. ZK/[40-American], 040.020655, 040.020700].

The number of Cushing's works cited in Warburg's note cards suggests that he conducted a broad bibliographic survey, making it unlikely that he read each title in depth. It is more plausible that he focused on a few specific texts and consulted the others more briefly. In any case, the references indicate that Warburg followed Cushing's research closely, demonstrating that any theoretical affinities between the two were not merely coincidental, but stemmed from

a genuine interest on Warburg's part; he was then a young art historian trained Renaissance studies and beginning to explore new territories of knowledge.

### **Integrated Cosmology, Mythology, and Serpent Symbolism: Toward Possible Inferences**

But how, after all, could Cushing's research have offered Warburg relevant methodological insights? What lessons could a young art historian, educated in the tradition of the Renaissance, draw from the ethnologist's vast investigative scope?

At first glance, studies cited in box 40, such as the ethnological analysis of arrow-making (Cushing 1895), might seem far removed from Warburg's field of interest. However, a careful reading of the text, guided by a broader understanding of the methodological principles underlying it, may reveal potential points of convergence. It would not be unwarranted, in this context, to posit the existence of a shared underlying orientation: one that guides Warburg in his formulation of nomothetic principles—already present in his early studies on the Renaissance and in the complex system he developed to categorize the process he called “incorporation” (*Verleibung*) of sensory impressions in the study of Pueblo religiosity (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 145)—and one that guides Cushing in the broader methodological framework that informs *The Arrow*.

As Cushing makes clear, the study of arrows is not presented as a mere idiosyncratic exercise, nor as a dogmatic treatment of “isolated phenomena”. Rather, it is conceived as a means of illustrating “the laws and principles which have governed man's development under all sorts of circumstances and in every age and land” (Cushing 1895, 309). Grounded in this theoretical vocation, Cushing draws an explicit connection between the making of arrows and “the history of man and his culture-growth” (Cushing 1895, 309).

Yet if this approximation remains, to some extent, speculative, a more firmly documented example can be retrospectively identified in the lecture delivered by Warburg in Kreuzlingen. Readers familiar with that essay will recall the passage in which Warburg explicitly evokes a dialogue with Cushing, in which the ethnologist describes the inner relationship Indigenous peoples maintain with animals. For these communities, such a relationship completely subverts the anthropocentric logic of human superiority characteristic of European thought:

My initiation into the psychology of the will to animal metamorphosis came, just before my departure, from Frank Hamilton Cushing, the pioneering and veteran explorer of the Indian psyche. I found his insights personally overwhelming. This pockmarked man with sparse reddish hair and of inscrutable age, smoking a cigarette, told me that an Indian once said to him: “Why should man stand taller than animals? Take a good look at the antelope—she is all running, and runs so much better than man—or the bear, who is all strength. Men can only do in part what the animal is, totally” (Warburg [1923] 1995, 19).

Though well known, this episode deserves to be read in more direct dialogue with Cushing's own work—particularly *Zuñi Breadstuff*—in which the same cosmogonic principle evoked by Warburg resounds with striking clarity. The idea is stated explicitly in the passage on the origin

of corn: “Men, our children, are poorer than the beasts, their enemies; for each creature has a special gift of strength or sagacity, while to men has been given only the power of guessing” (Cushing [1884-1885] 1920, 32).

This conception expresses one of the most decisive lessons Warburg assimilated from his encounter with Cushing: the need to shift away from his European intellectual formation toward a holistic and integrated conception of the cosmos, in which myth, nature, and the practices of daily life interpenetrate. And it is precisely at this point that the problem—initially seeming to lie outside the traditional scope of an art historian like Warburg—proves, in fact, to be directly related to the holistic perspective that informs both his treatment of art and Cushing’s interpretation of myth.

The strength of this perspective becomes evident when Cushing interweaves nourishment, ritual, and cosmogony, demonstrating that in the Zuñi world, the act of eating—and in particular, corn, the “seed of the seeds”—is intrinsically connected to cosmic life and sacred forces. Far from being merely an act, or merely a foodstuff, as Cushing makes clear in his comparison with the Western tradition [Cushing [1884-1885] 1920, 519 ff.], it is, in Zuñi culture, a necessary and existential function: corn is present in all aspects of daily life, from agriculture to religion, from mythology to the stories told to children during the winter (Cushing [1884-1885] 1920, 18).

It is reasonable to assume that Warburg may have harbored deep admiration, already in the 1890s, for a work that, through a holistic and organic perspective, offers concrete examples of a conception of myth as a necessary and spontaneous function of understanding, an idea with which he became acquainted through readings such as those of Usener (Roeck 1997, 51). In Cushing’s thought, this idea is articulated in his attempt to describe mythology from an expanded perspective, recognizing folklore and philosophy as its visible results (Cushing [1884-1885] 1920, 19). This aspect of Cushing’s ethnological-anthropological approach—which perceives social organization, artistic expression, and religious practice as interrelated spheres—already contains the seeds of the conception that, in Warburg, would translate into an anthropological understanding of the image: one that rejects the notion of the image as an autonomous, aestheticized form, construing it instead as “a biologically necessary product situated between the practices of religion and art” (Warburg [1923] [1999] 2004, 301).

Although this is a reconstruction based on a passage from the Kreuzlingen lecture—and therefore marked by a certain *post factum* effect with regard to the chronology of the source, though not to the validity of the idea—the absence of *Zuñi Breadstuff* from the bibliographic notes compiled by Warburg should not be interpreted as a sign of disinterest, but rather as a consequence of the work’s particular publishing history. Originally released in serialized form with limited circulation, the work only became more broadly accessible in 1920, when it was reissued in full in the series *Indian Notes and Monographs* of the Museum of the American Indian (Cushing [1884-1885] 1920, 7).

And if this search for intellectual intersections began, paradoxically, with a work absent from the index card boxes, it can proceed just as productively with one that would undoubtedly have been among the most relevant to a thinker like Warburg—someone deeply attentive to the study of religion—this time, a title effectively present in his notes: *Outlines of Zuni Creation Myths* [4]. This work, a detailed compilation of Zuñi cosmogonic narratives, offers insight into the symbolic and ritual structure of this culture, articulating mythology, ceremonial practice, and social organization in a reconstruction that Cassirer would later describe as “mythico-sociological” (Cassirer [1922] 2003, 26).

But perhaps the most thought-provoking comparison lies precisely in how each of them seeks to explain the complexity of Pueblo culture. In his reading, Warburg seems to lean toward the idea of a process of cultural hybridity, in which elements of Spanish colonization and North American Puritan culture are layered onto originally Indigenous conceptions. This leads him to ask whether he is dealing with truly autochthonous creations or rather with “hybrid products assembled from thoughts of South American origin combined with a European supplement?” (Warburg [1923] [1999] 2004, 304) [5]. Cushing, by contrast, appears to challenge this reading by highlighting the persistence of what he calls the “uncompromisingly paganistic spirit of these supposedly converted Indians”, which manifests itself in the “unmodified fashion of their thoughts at the period of their truest apparent allegiance, or at least submission, to the church” (Cushing 1896, 334). What is at stake here is not a process of cultural layering, but rather a symbolic continuity; the endurance of Indigenous modes of thought even after their superficial conversion to Christianity.

From these broader formulations, which highlight both convergences and divergences within a holistic approach to cultural phenomena, comparative analysis may extend into the more specific domain of symbolism. In fact, although Warburg’s interest in ornamentation partly stems from his engagement with Fewkes, it is in Frank Hamilton Cushing’s *A Study of Pueblo Pottery as Illustrative of Zuñi Culture Growth* that one finds his most probable and significant source.

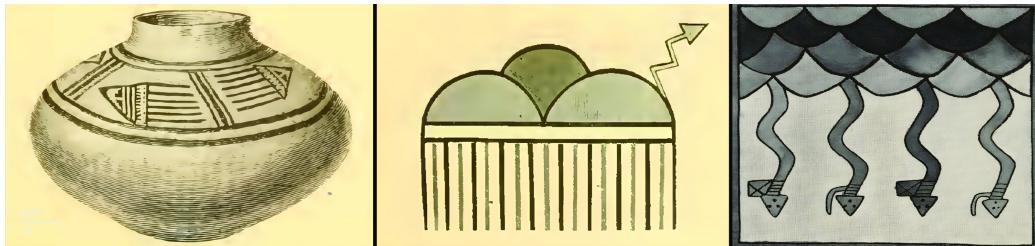
In this text, Cushing offers a dense and well-structured description of Pueblo ceramic art, emphasizing both its geographical and climatic determinants and the complex symbolism embedded in its decorative elements. While engaging with broader theoretical premises—such as the idea that the “gradual development in ceramic decorations, especially of the symbolic element”, is particularly “illustrative of the growth of culture” (Cushing 1886, 506; Cushing cites as sources the works of Edward B. Tylor, John Lubbock, and Daniel Wilson)—his approach does not rely on the application of abstract interpretive models. On the contrary, it integrates an analysis of technical procedures with linguistic inquiry. In exploring the origins of ornamental motifs among the Pueblo, Cushing proposes a rigorously empirical and historical explanation, tracing these motifs back to basketry as their original form (Cushing 1886, 487-489) and understanding their development as the result of a natural sequence of events and technical transformations (Cushing 1886, 498).

When it comes to decorative symbolism, Cushing returns to the broader conception of Pueblo cosmology, showing how technical analysis intertwines with the idea that the vessel is conceived as an entity endowed with its own existence. This process is exemplified in his description of the ritual act of pottery-making, in which women refer to the vessel as a “Made Being” and reinforce its ontological status by offering it food before firing, treating it, in effect, as if it were a living being. This notion of agency is not metaphorical: the vessel is believed to have a voice (as when it emits a sound while on the fire), and its “soul” is thought to separate from it when it breaks (Cushing 1886, 510-511).

With Cushing, Warburg was prepared to recognize that the symbolic elements present in ceramics pointed to a broader conception of the cosmos; one that also manifests itself in ritual and religious expressions. Cushing developed this point even more explicitly in his study of fetishes, showing that what appears in Warburg’s reflections as a lack of distinction between subject and object in fact corresponds to an integrated cosmological vision. For Cushing, this derives directly from the Zuñi perception of a close correlation between humans, gods, and animals, conceiving of a comprehensive and interconnected cosmos in which stars, earth, sea, plants, animals, and inanimate objects—indeed, all elements and phenomena—belong to “one great system of all-conscious and interrelated life, in which the degrees of relationship seem to be determined largely, if not wholly, by the degrees of resemblance” (Cushing 1883b, 9).

From this perspective emerges the organizing principle of Zuñi cosmology, according to which an organic relationship is established between living beings and the natural phenomena with which they share the greatest resemblance. More than an ethnographic curiosity, it is reasonable to suppose that the lessons drawn by Cushing played a structural role in Warburg’s reading of Pueblo cultures, as observed both in his notes for the Kreuzlingen lecture—“the magical worldview [...] is based on the belief in the fluid borders between human, animal, plant, and mineral” (Warburg [1923] [1999] 2004, 325)—and in excerpts from his scholarly correspondence: “In primitive man—and as you yourself consistently emphasize—multiplicity is bound into unity” (letter from Fritz Saxl to Aby Warburg, May 7, 1923 [WIA GC/14431]).

To conclude this section, it is worth highlighting what is perhaps the most evident iconographic motif to emerge from this intellectual exchange: the symbolism of the serpent. Cushing interprets the figure of the serpent according to the same conceptual framework that shapes the Zuñi’s integrated view of the cosmos. In this specific case, it is the animal’s movement—its sinuous path and its sudden, destructive strike—that links it to the natural phenomenon closest to it in form and effect: lightning (Cushing 1883b, 9). Once again, Warburg’s later recollections suggest that his reading of serpent symbolism and the integrated vision of the cosmos, very likely derived from Cushing, had a decisive influence on his theoretical elaborations. Echoing the ethnologist’s observations, Warburg identifies in Pueblo culture a close correspondence between human and animal. In the ritual dances of the Indians at Walpi, he recognizes “a far more primeval aspect of the magic dance”, in which the “dancers and the live animal form a magical unity” (Warburg [1923] 1995, 35). What particularly draws his attention is the fact



5 | Ancient Pueblo “medicine jar”. Source: Cushing 1886, 517.

6 | Modern Moki rain symbol. Source: Cushing 1886, 517.

7 | Serpent as lightning. Reproduction of the floor of an altar in a kiva. Source: Warburg [1923] 1995, 3.

that the serpent is not sacrificed during the ritual but functions as a mediator, responsible for bringing the rain. For Warburg, the serpent acquires a causal and magical dimension by assuming the form of lightning: “The serpent in its lightning shape is magically linked to lightning” (Warburg [1923] 1995, 10).

The serpent thus appears not only as a cosmological figure, associated with the sky and the rain cycle, but also as a symbol that moves between religious meaning and artistic expression. In this context, the study of ceramic vessels regain prominence, as they provide iconographic support for the representation of lightning (Cushing 1886, 517); a motif that appears both in the most archaic decorations of ceremonial vessels [Fig. 5], and in modern Hopi symbolism [Fig. 6], and which also seems to figure in the visual repertoire mobilized by Warburg, particularly in the image of the lightning-serpent depicted on a kiva altar [Fig. 7].

Warburg’s fascination with the animal and his attempt to understand it in its symbolic, artistic, and ritual function was not merely a belated interest. Already in 1897, the theme appears in one of his aphorisms, directly tied to what had been the central problem of his early scholarly work: the representation of movement. Warburg writes:

Wenn das Tierbild als ausgeprägterer und eindeutiger Eigenschaftsträger die causale Zurück-  
ziehung von Bewegungsveränderungen erleichtert, so muß die Schlange deshalb besonders  
geheimnisvoll wirken, weil hier ein Maximalmaß der Bewegungsmöglichkeit mit einem Minimal-  
maß der Angriffsfront bietet.

[If the image of the animal, as a more pronounced and unambiguous bearer of characteristics, facilitates the causal retroaction of changes in movement, then the serpent must have a particularly mysterious effect, since here we are presented with a maximal degree of movement potential with a minimal degree of attack front] (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 179).

It is worth noting that this observation was made on the very same day Warburg was reflecting on the psychological processes mediating the relationship between subject and object—metamorphosis, symbol, metaphor, and comparison (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 178-179)—revealing

how the concrete example of the serpent is embedded within the broader context of his own theoretical formulations for the study of the image.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The intellectual trajectory reconstructed in this article has sought to demonstrate the close correlation between the two scholars' research. Even before witnessing the Hemiskatsinam ceremony in Oraibi on May 2, Warburg already believed he had rediscovered the structural foundations of his own thought. It would not be an exaggeration to suppose that his dialogue with Frank Hamilton Cushing, a pioneer in the understanding of the soul of the Indian and the one who conveyed to Warburg the psychology of animal metamorphosis (Warburg [1923] 1995, 19), was one of the main factors that led him, on January 27, 1896, to write: "I believe I have finally found the expression for my psychological law; something I have been seeking since 1888" (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 145).

It is therefore not surprising that Cushing holds a prominent place in the Kreuzlingen lecture, a distinction Warburg extended to no other ethnologist. This helps explain why, twenty-eight years after their first meeting in Washington, while preparing his lecture, Warburg expressed a sense of urgency to have Cushing's work at hand, as a letter from Fritz Saxl suggests: "As I also hope that Cushing's book is long since in your hands" (letter to Aby Warburg, May 7, 1923 [WIA GC/14431]).

However, it is important to stress that the relationship between Cushing and Warburg was not one of unmediated theoretical exchange, but rather was shaped by Warburg's own intellectual project and conceptual filters. As has been shown, there are significant tensions between the two authors, most notably in their understanding of cultural hybridity and, more decisively, in the very conceptual apparatus that underpins Warburg's reflections. These divergences make it clear that his reading of Cushing is consistently refracted through his own theoretical assumptions and scholarly priorities.

Since his readings of authors such as Alfred Biese (Biese 1890; GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 32, 36), which introduced him to Goethe's principle that "man never realizes how anthropomorphic he is" (aphorism 203, Goethe [1809-1829] 1907, 36; Warburg [1923] 2018, 93), Warburg had been deeply engaged with the problem of anthropomorphism. Ever since his study of Friedrich Theodor Vischer's theory of the symbol (Vischer [1887] 1922), he had been predisposed to conceive the link between image and meaning in terms of a "magical bond" (Wind 1983, 27). And since his readings of *Myth and Science* by the Italian philosopher Tito Vignoli [6], Warburg had been in dialogue with a conceptual framework that understood mythical thought as analogous to a mechanism of animal psychology, one that attributes life to the surrounding world, animating what is inanimate (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 35-36).

Fundamentally, the tension between subject and object, which for Warburg constitutes a specific feature of modern thought, is altogether absent in Cushing. This absence reveals pro-

found divergences in their theoretical frameworks and in the epistemological implications of their respective approaches.

It follows that only in light of a broader set of references and mediations that one can more deeply understand paradigmatic passages such as the one from January 1896, in which Warburg describes the religious manifestations of the Pueblo peoples as a reflection of the “causal behavior of ‘primitive man’ (that is, incapable of subjective differentiation) toward the external world” (GS *Ausdruckskunde*, 145).

In sum, and by way of conclusion, it is worth adding that the discussion presented here has not sought to offer an entirely new finding [7], but rather to recover and document more systematically the relevance of Cushing within Warburg’s thought, suggesting connections that have thus far remained largely unexplored. It is striking how this relationship, though frequently mentioned, still tends to occupy a secondary place when compared to the attention granted to figures such as Franz Boas, despite the notable theoretical divergences that separated them (Cestelli Guidi 2007, 222-223) [8]. What matters most here, perhaps, is to grasp the broader trajectory of Warburg’s thought and to situate his work within a moment preceding the anthropological turn marked by Boas’s 1896 critique of the comparative method; one that would go on to redefine the epistemological foundations of the discipline. In this regard, the aim has been, above all, to highlight Cushing’s role as an interlocutor, whose writings offered Warburg not only ethnographic data, but also the possibility of expanding the conceptual boundaries of his own approach. This, in turn, makes it possible to understand more precisely the fundamental ideas that lie at the heart of this relationship; ideas essential to grasping both the origins and the limits of Aby Warburg’s conceptual thought.

---

I am grateful to Claudia Wedepohl and Eckart Marchand for their support during my consultation of Aby Warburg’s correspondence and notes. I also wish to thank Roberto Casazza for his critical reading and valuable suggestions. This research was funded by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), grant ID 2022/16114-4. Unless otherwise identified, all translations are mine.

---

## Notes

[1] This material was recently exhibited at MARKK in Hamburg, in an exhibition accompanied by a catalog that brings together critical studies dedicated to Warburg’s American journey and the material legacy of that experience: see Chávez, Fleckner 2022; see also De Laude 2023.

[2] The letter from Aby Warburg to Henry Voth, dated October 2, 1896, is particularly relevant in this context. Warburg comments on the Berlin ethnographic collection, noting the scarcity of Pueblo artifacts. The letter also reveals his efforts to mobilize resources for enriching Germany’s ethnographic holdings, indicating an interest not only in acquiring objects but in expanding and enhancing ethnological heritage; cf. *Briefe*, 165-166. Warburg’s connection to Berlin’s ethnological circles is analyzed in detail by Horst Bredekamp (Bredekamp 2019).

[3] I am grateful to Alex Brown, of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, for providing this information.

[4] As can be inferred from Fritz Saxl's reading (Saxl [1930] [1957] 2023, 189), both *Zuñi Breadstuff* and *Outlines of Zuñi Creation Myths* constitute the bibliographical basis for Cassirer's and Warburg's investigation into the structural affinity between the Zuñi's symbolic assignment of cardinal points and the associative dynamics of astrology.

[5] This passage subsequently reveals a more problematic, objectified perspective, in classifying Pueblo artistic culture as "contaminated" and, from a philological point of view, as "the most difficult object imaginable" (Warburg [1923] [1999] 2004, 304). This article adopts a comparative analytical effort and does not aim to detail the critical aspects of Warburg's approach, already addressed in much greater depth by other authors (Farago 2006; Freedberg 2004).

[6] Furthermore, through his study of Tito Vignoli's work, Warburg had already engaged with discussions on fetishes, anthropomorphism, and the genesis of myth; see Vignoli [1879] 1882, 27-28.

[7] Cushing is usually mentioned only briefly in the literature on Warburg, as in Raulff ([1988] 2011, 91-92), who notes the relevance of *Outline of Zuñi Creation Myths*. Other brief references appear in authors of the Warburgian tradition, such as Agamben [1975] 2022, 86; Freedberg 2004, 571; Ghelardi 2016, 154; Ghelardi 2021, XXXIII; McEwan [2007] 2023, 63, 66; Naber 1988, 91; Severi 2003, 86, 103; Steinberg 1995, 61, 95, 100. More recent attempts to explore more closely the exchanges between Warburg and Cushing can be found in Vollgraff 2022, 53 and Wedepohl 2024, 88 ff., whose analysis draws especially on archival materials and scholarly correspondence.

[8] The complete correspondence between Aby Warburg and Franz Boas has recently been published; see Penalosa-Patzak; Wedepohl, 2023.

---

## Bibliography

### Abbreviations

AWM II

A. Warburg, *Fra antropologia e storia dell'arte*, a cura di M. Ghelardi, Torino 2021.

### Briefe

A. Warburg, *Briefe: 1886-1929*, hrsg. von M. Diers and S. Haug, Berlin/Boston 2021.

### GS Ausdruckskunde

A. Warburg, *Fragmente zur Ausdruckskunde*, hrsg. von U. Pfisterer, H.C. Hönes, Berlin 2015.

### Renewal

A. Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, ed. by K.W. Forster, Eng. trans. by D. Britt and K.W. Forster, Los Angeles 1999.

### WEB

A. Warburg, *Werke in einem Band*, hrsg. von P. Ladwig, M. Treml, S. Weigel, Berlin 2010.

## Bibliographical References

Agamben [1975] 2022

G. Agamben, *Aby Warburg and the nameless science* [Aby Warburg e la scienza senza nome, "Settanta" I, 2 (luglio/settembre 1975)], in M. Centanni (ed.), *Aby Warburg and living thought*, trans. by E. Thomson, Dueville 2022, 83-105.

Biese 1890

A. Biese, *Das Associationsprincip und der Anthropomorphismus in der Aesthetik: ein Beitrag zur Aesthetik des Naturschönen*, Kiel 1890.

Bredekamp 2019

H. Bredekamp, *Aby Warburg, der Indianer: Berliner Erkundungen einer liberalen Ethnologie*, Berlin 2019.

Cassirer [1922] 2003

E. Cassirer, *Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken*, in Id., *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften (1922-1926)*, hrsg. von B. Reck, Hamburg 2003, 3-73.

Cestelli Guidi 1998

B. Cestelli Guidi, *Retracing Aby Warburg's American journey through his photographs*, in Cestelli Guidi, Mann 1998, 28-47.

Cestelli Guidi 2007

B. Cestelli Guidi, *Aby Warburg and Franz Boas*, "RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics" 52 (2007), 221-230.

Cestelli Guidi, Mann 1998

B. Cestelli Guidi and N. Mann (eds.), *Photographs at the Frontier: Aby Warburg in America 1895-1896*, London 1998.

Chávez, Fleckner 2022

C. Chávez, U. Fleckner (eds.), *Lightning Symbol and Snake Dance: Aby Warburg and Pueblo Art*, Berlin 2022.

Cushing 1883a

F.H. Cushing, *My adventures in Zuñi*, "The Century Magazine" 25 (1883), 191-207, 500-511.

Cushing 1883b

F.H. Cushing, *Zuñi fetishes*, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology" 2 (1883), 9-45.

Cushing [1884-1885] 1920

F.H. Cushing, *Zuñi Breadstuff*, New York 1920.

Cushing 1886

F.H. Cushing, *A study of Pueblo pottery as illustrative of Zuñi culture-growth*, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology" 4 (1886), 473-521.

Cushing 1892

F.H. Cushing, *A Zuñi Folk-Tale of the Underworld*, "The Journal of American Folklore" 5 (1892), 49-56.

Cushing 1894

F.H. Cushing, *Primitive Copper Working: An Experimental Study*, "American Anthropologist" 7 (1894), 93-117.

Cushing 1895

F.H. Cushing, *The Arrow*, "American Anthropologist" 8 (1895), 307-349.

Cushing 1896

F.H. Cushing, *Outlines of Zuni Creation Myths*, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology" 13 (1896), 321-447.

De Laude 2023

S. De Laude (a cura di), *Le traversie della collezione etnografica di Aby Warburg. Intervista a Christine Chávez*, "La Rivista di Engramma" 201 (aprile 2023), 179-182.

Farago 2006

C. Farago, *Re(f)using Art: Aby Warburg and the Ethics of Scholarship*, in C. Farago and D. Pierce (eds.), *Transforming Images: New Mexican Santos In-Between Worlds*, University Park 2006, 259-273.

Fewkes 1898

J.W. Fewkes, *Archeological expedition to Arizona in 1895*, "Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology" 17, 2 (1898), 519-744.

Fiedler 1887

C. Fiedler, *Der Ursprung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit*, Leipzig 1887.

Freedberg 2004

D. Freedberg, *Pathos a Oraibi: ciò che Warburg non vide*, in C. Cieri Via, P. Montani (a cura di), *Lo Sguardo di Giano: Aby Warburg fra tempo e memoria*, Torino 2004, 569-611.

Ghelardi 2016

M. Ghelardi, *Aby Warburg et la 'lutte pour le style'*, Paris 2016.

Ghelardi 2021

M. Ghelardi, *Introduzione*, in AWM II, VII-LVII.

Goethe [1809-1829] 1907

J.W. Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, hrsg. von M. Hecker, Weimar 1907.

Gombrich [1970] 1986

E.H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, Oxford 1986.

Grosse 1894

E. Grosse, *Die Anfänge der Kunst*, Freiburg, Leipzig 1894.

Heise [1947] 2005

C.G. Heise, *Persönliche Erinnerungen an Aby Warburg*, Wiesbaden 2005.

Hönes 2024

H.C. Hönes, *Tangled Paths: A Life of Aby Warburg*, London 2024.

Lescourret 2014

M.-A. Lescourret, *Aby Warburg ou la tentation du regard*, Paris 2014.

McEwan [2007] 2023

D. McEwan, *On the Origins of the Serpent Ritual Lecture. Motive and Motivation: Healing Through Remembrance*, in Ead., *Studies on Aby Warburg, Fritz Saxl and Gertrud Bing*, London/New York 2023, 59-73.

Naber 1988

C. Naber, *Pompeji in Neu-Mexico: Aby Warburgs amerikanische Reise*, "Freibeuter" 38 (1988), 88-97.

Nordenskiöld 1893

G. Nordenskiöld, *The Cliff Dwellers of the Mesa Verde, Southwestern Colorado: Their Pottery and Implements*, Stockholm 1893.

Penaloza-Patzak, Wedepohl 2023

B. Penaloza-Patzak, C. Wedepohl (eds.), *Franz Boas and Aby Warburg: The Complete Correspondence, 1895 to 1928*, "West 86th" 30 (2023), 70-90.

Papapetros 2010

S. Papapetros, *World Ornament: The Legacy of Gottfried Semper's 1856 Lecture on Adornment*, "RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics" 57-58 (2010), 309-329.

Raulff 1998

U. Raulff, *The Seven Skins of the Snake*, in Cestelli Guidi, Mann 1998, 64-74.

Raulff [1988] 2011

U. Raulff, *Nachwort*, in A. Warburg, *Schlangenritual: ein Reisebericht*, Berlin 2011, 79-128.

Roeck 1997

B. Roeck, *Der junge Aby Warburg*, München 1997.

Saxl [1930] [1957] 2023

F. Saxl, *Warburg's Visit to New Mexico* [*Warburgs Besuch in Neu-Mexico*], in *Id., Lectures*, London 1957, 325-330; ora in "La Rivista di Engramma" 201 (aprile 2023), 183-190.

Semper [1856] 1884

G. Semper, *Über die formelle Gesetzmäßigkeit des Schmuckes und dessen Bedeutung als Kunstsymbol*, in *Id., Kleine Schriften*, Berlin/Stuttgart 1884, 304-343.

Severi 2003

C. Severi, *Warburg anthropologue ou le déchiffrement d'une utopie*, "L'Homme" 165 (2003), 77-128.

Steinberg 1995

M.P. Steinberg, *Aby Warburg's Kreuzlingen Lecture: A Reading*, in Warburg [1923] 1995, 59-114.

Vignoli [1879] 1882

T. Vignoli, *Myth and Science* [Mito e scienza], Milano 1879] London 1882.

Vischer 1873

R. Vischer, *Über das optische Formgefühl: ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik*, Leipzig 1873.

Vischer [1887] 1922

F.T. Vischer, *Das Symbol*, in R. Vischer (hrsg.), *Kritische Gänge*, vol. 4, München 1922, 420-456.

Vollgraff 2022

M. Vollgraff, "...With the Eyes of an Anthropologist": *Aby Warburg and the Bureau of American Ethnology*, in Chávez, Fleckner 2022, 51-57.

Warburg [1894-1897] 1998

A. Warburg, *Excerpts from Aby Warburg's Diary*, in Cestelli Guidi, Mann 1998, 150-155.

Warburg [1897] 2010

A. Warburg, *Eine Reise durch das Gebiet der Pueblo Indianer in Neu-Mexico und Arizona*, in WEB, 508-523.

Warburg [1923] 1995

A. Warburg, *Images from the region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* [Bilder aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo-Indianer in Nord-Amerika, WIA III 93], trans. by M. P. Steinberg, Ithaca, London 1995.

Warburg [1923] [1999] 2004

A. Warburg, *Memories of a Journey through the Pueblo Region* [Reise-Erinnerungen aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo Indianer in Nordamerika, WIA III 93.4], trans. by S. Hawkes, in P. Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* [Aby Warburg et l'image en mouvement], Paris 1999], New York 2004, 293-330.

Warburg [1923] 2018

A. Warburg, *Bilder aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo-Indianer in Nord-Amerika* [WIA III 93], in U. Fleckner (hrsg.), *Bilder aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo-Indianer in Nord-Amerika: Vorträge und Fotografien*, Berlin 2018, 65-104.

Wedepohl 2022

C. Wedepohl, *Aby Warburg, Heinrich Voth and the Study of Native American Religious Ceremonies*, in L.B. Rubí, E.C. Blaine (eds.), *Aby Warburg en/sobre América: Historia, sobrevivencias y repercusiones*, Ciudad de México 2024, 81-118.

Wind 1983

E. Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by J. Anderson, with A *Biographical Memoir* by H. Lloyd-Jones, trans. by T.G. Rosenmeyer, P.L. Ganz, C. Gooden, E. Bowie, D. Russell, Oxford 1983.

---

## Abstract

This article investigates the interlocution between Aby Warburg and the ethnologist Frank Hamilton Cushing, with particular focus on their possible points of connection. Rather than claiming a groundbreaking discovery, it aims to recover and more systematically document Cushing's relevance within Warburg's thought, drawing on underexplored sources as well as an indirect comparison of their respective oeuvres. The analysis unfolds along three main axes: the formative intersection between Warburg's psychological aesthetics and philosophical anthropology; the methodological and conceptual resonances of his encounter with the Smithsonian Institution and his approximation to the theme of symbolic ornament; and the possibility of conceptual inferences from a fragmented dialogue between Warburg and Cushing, based on both documentary traces and analytical parallels. On this basis, the article advances the hypothesis that Cushing's influence was not marginal or incidental, but rather instrumental to Warburg's developing interest in anthropology, and that he should be seen as Warburg's principal reference in the field.

---

**Keywords** | Aby Warburg; Frank Hamilton Cushing; Myth; Cosmology; Art History; Anthropology.



la rivista di **engramma**

settembre 2025

**227 • Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context**

#### **Editorial**

Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes, Giulia Zanon

#### **Overviews**

**An exploration of Warburgian studies across the Ibero-American world**

edited by Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes, Giulia Zanon

**Estudos warburguianos no Brasil (2023-2025)**

Ianick Takaes

**Estudios warburguianos en América hispánica (2019-2025)**

Bernardo Prieto

**Estudios warburguianos en España (2019-2025)**

Ada Naval

**Warburgian studies in Portugal (2000-2025)**

Fabio Tononi

**Las ciencias de Atenea y las artes de Hermes**

entrevista a José Emilio Burucúa, a cargo de Ada Naval,

Bernardo Prieto

#### **Essays**

**Warburg in America**

David Freedberg

**“Bilderwanderung”**

Linda Báez Rubí

**Towards a Philosophical Anthropology**

Serzenando Alves Vieira Neto

**Partecipation and Creation of Distance**

Cássio Fernandes

**Astrology Between Science and Superstition in Art History**

Antônio Leandro Gomes de Souza Barros

#### **Presentations**

**Una presentación de Aby Warburg en/sobre América: Historia, sobrevivencias y repercusiones (México 2024)**

Linda Báez Rubí, Emilie Carreón Blain,

Tania Vanessa A. Portugal

**The Exuberant Excess of His Subjective Propensities**

Ianick Takaes