

# *The Edgar Wind Journal*



Volume 3

3/2022

ISSN 2785-2903

[www.edgarwindjournal.eu](http://www.edgarwindjournal.eu)

# *The Edgar Wind Journal*

ISSN 2785-2903

## *Editors-in-Chief*

Bernardino Branca and Fabio Tononi

## *Editorial Board*

Jaynie Anderson (University of Melbourne) – Andrew Benjamin (University of Technology, Sydney; Monash University, Melbourne) – Guido Boffi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan) – Peter Burke (University of Cambridge) – Pia Carolla (Università di Genova) – Monica Centanni (Università Iuav di Venezia) – Gioachino Chiarini (Università degli Studi di Siena) – Claudia Cieri Via (Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza”) – Stephen Clucas (Birkbeck, University of London) – Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann (Princeton University) – Georges Didi-Huberman (École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris) – Roberto Diodato (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan) – Raphael Ebgi (Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan) – Astrid Erll (Goethe University Frankfurt) – Claire Farago (University of Colorado Boulder) – David Freedberg (Columbia University in the City of New York) – Robert Gaston (University of Melbourne) – Maurizio Ghelardi (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa; Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan) – Pascal Griener (University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland) – Martin Kemp (University of Oxford) – Martina Mazzotta (Curator and Independent Scholar) – W. J. T. Mitchell (University of Chicago) – C. Oliver O’Donnell (Bilderfahrzeuge Project, The Warburg Institute) – Arturo Carlo Ottaviano Quintavalle (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei) – Giulia Maria Paoletti (University of Oxford) – Spyros Papapetros (Princeton University) – Robert Pawlik (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) – Donald Preziosi (University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)) – Silvia Ronchey (Università degli Studi Roma Tre) – Pablo Schneider (University of Trier) – Elizabeth Sears (University of Michigan) – Salvatore Settis (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa) – Carlo Severi (École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris) – Daniel Sherer (Princeton University School of Architecture) – Larry A. Silver (University of Pennsylvania) – Michael P. Steinberg (Brown University, Providence) – Ianick Takaes de Oliveira (Columbia University in the City of New York) – Ben Thomas (University of Kent) – Stéphane Toussaint (Centre André Chastel, CNRS-Sorbonne Université, Paris) – Claudia Wedepohl (The Warburg Institute) – Sigrid Weigel (Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur und Kulturforschung (ZfL), Berlin; Technical University of Berlin) – Christopher Wood (New York University) – Valentina Zaffino (Pontificia Università Lateranense, Stato Città del Vaticano, Rome)

## *Assistant Editor*

Giulia Maria Paoletti

*Contacts*

[info@edgarwindjournal.eu](mailto:info@edgarwindjournal.eu)  
[submissions@edgarwindjournal.eu](mailto:submissions@edgarwindjournal.eu)

The Edgar Wind Journal is a biannual, peer-reviewed and international journal, in open access format.

Authors are invited to follow the instructions on the website:

<https://www.edgarwindjournal.eu/submission/>

*Publisher*

**Bernardino Branca**

Contact: Corso Magenta 48, 20123, Milan, Italy

Phone: 0039 3483605940

Email: [bernard.branca@gmail.com](mailto:bernard.branca@gmail.com)

## *Table of Contents*

Giulia Maria Paoletti

### **Introduction**

pp. 1-3

Colin Eisler

### **Oxford's Art-Historical Circus: Life as a Henry Fellow at Magdalen College 1952–3**

pp. 4-13

Jaynie Anderson

### **'Posthumous Reputations': Edgar Wind's Rejected Review of Ernst Gombrich's Biography of Aby Warburg**

pp. 14-35

Stefano Farinelli

### **Edgar Wind and Michelangelo's *Battle of the Centaurs*: A 'Romantic Affection' for the Centaurs**

pp. 36-46

Gioachino Chiarini

### **Time and Space in Dante's *Paradiso***

pp. 47-72

Francesco Monticini

### **A Nostalgic Gaze Towards Antiquity: The So-Called 'Palaiologan Renaissance'**

pp. 73-91



# ‘Posthumous Reputations’: Edgar Wind’s Rejected Review of Ernst Gombrich’s Biography of Aby Warburg<sup>1</sup>

Jaynie Anderson

(AM OSI FAHA, Professor Emeritus, University of Melbourne)

## Abstract

In the days of anonymous reviewing Edgar Wind evaluated Ernst Gombrich’s biography of Aby Warburg for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1971, as ‘Unfinished Business’. The review appeared shortly before Wind’s death when he was suffering from leukaemia. Wind’s authorship was acknowledged in 1983, when his review was republished in *The Eloquence of Symbols*, a collection of Wind’s writings, edited by Jaynie Anderson. As her husband’s literary executor, Margaret Wind considered publishing an earlier version of the review, rejected by the *TLS*; then decided not to do so. Given the amount of discussion the review has provoked it seems a matter of duty to print the unpublished version, as it contains more about Wind’s perception of Warburg than the final version. The personal remarks about Gombrich reveal what was not acceptable even in the days of anonymous criticism during the editorship of Alan Pryce-Jones.

## Keywords

Ernst Gombrich; Aby Warburg; Edgar Wind; *Times Literary Supplement*; Anonymous reviewing; Isaiah Berlin; Gertrude Bing

Shortly after 1955 when Edgar Wind became the first professor of art history at Oxford, he responded to a review of Fritz Saxl’s *Lectures* (1958), now known to have been written by Roger Hinks,<sup>2</sup> in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Hinks, an English classicist, was a good choice to explain the Warburg Institute’s role in England, as he had been inspired by the Institute in the 1930’s. Wind’s letter established his claim once again to be Aby Warburg’s

---

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the published and unpublished writings of Edgar Wind are by kind permission of the Literary Executors of the estate of Edgar Wind. I am grateful to Henry Hardy for his advice and guidance about the papers of Isaiah Berlin, and for permission from the Trustees of the Isaiah Berlin Literary Trust to reproduce quotations from them here.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Sears, ‘A Diarist’s View. Roger Hinks on the Warburg Institute “twenty-five years after its settling in London”’, in *The Afterlife of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg. The Emigration and the Early Years of the Warburg Institute in London*, ed. by Peter Mack and Uwe Fleckner (Berlin–Boston: Peter de Gruyter, 2015), pp. 71–96.

true heir.<sup>3</sup> He argues for the publication of Warburg's writings in English as a desideratum. Wind's reasonable letter is reproduced here in its entirety:

Sir, - The memory of an anti-Kantian book which I published twenty-five years ago under the inauspicious title *Das Experiment und die Metaphysik* was unexpectedly revived in your front-page article of May 23. The honour is undeserved since the book fell dead born from the press. One of the very few persons who read it was the late Ernst Cassirer: and I am sorry to say it made that amiable man extremely angry. In honour of his memory, I must protest against the suggestion that we held the same view about the nature of symbols. My thesis was that symbols are 'real' only to the extent in which they can be embodied in an *experimentum crucis* whose outcome is directly observable – in his view a deplorable lapse into 'empiricism'. Even in the eulogistic mood of your reviewer, the historian should not *corriger la fortune*.

Unfortunately, I must also touch on a more important matter. As one who knew Warburg intimately and had a certain part in bringing the Warburg Institute to England, I wish to record in your pages that Warburg was an uncompromising critic of superstition, very much given to plain statement, and of a formidable wit. It is a misguided piety to obscure his original learning by fumes of incense. The memory of his interesting discoveries, models of economy and precision would be far better served if at least his published works (leaving aside the literary remains) were finally translated into English. If they were readily accessible, the unworthy impression of a Warburg *mystique*, to which your reviewer refers, would vanish and Saxl's writings could be seen in their proper perspective.<sup>4</sup>

This mild letter fell on deaf ears. The true rebirth of Warburg's writings was to begin in Italy with the partial edition of Warburg's writings by Delio Cantimori in 1966,<sup>5</sup> followed by considerable German interest. An English translation was not published until 1990 by the Getty Research Institute, with an introduction by Kurt Forster on the Aby Warburg phenomenon of being 'Obscurely Famous'.<sup>6</sup> This large volume, known as the 'Blue Book' has a prehistory, which shows the tenacity of an Italian scholar who made possible the first edition of Warburg in English, Salvatore Settis. In 1988–9 Settis was invited by Kurt Forster to be a Getty Scholar in Los Angeles. He was then appointed to the Getty Committee for publications, to which he made several proposals, including a translation of

---

<sup>3</sup> For the review that provoked Wind's letter, that was attributed erroneously to 'R Hinds', a typo, see *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 2934, 23 May 1958, p. 277, *The Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive 1909–2019*.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar Wind, *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 2935, 30 May 1958, p. 289.

<sup>5</sup> Aby Warburg, *La Rinascita del paganesimo antico: contributi alla storia della cultura* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1966). For the Italian appreciation of Warburg, see Salvatore Settis, *Incursioni. Arte contemporanea e tradizione* (Turin: Feltrinelli, 2020), pp. 20-1. On Cantimori's relations with the Warburg Institute, see Monica Centanni and Silvia De Laude, 'Delio Cantimori e il Warburgkreis', *La rivista di engramma*, 171 (January–February 2020), pp. 113-25.

<sup>6</sup> Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*. Introduction by Kurt W. Forster and translation by David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1990). Also published online, <https://www.getty.edu/publications/resources/virtuallibrary/9780892365371.pdf> [accessed 30 July 2022]



Warburg's *Gesammelte Schriften*, as published in 1932–3. When, in 1993, Settis was appointed director of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (which he later renamed the 'Getty Research Institute'), nothing had been done about the translation. Settis reintroduced the project and asked his predecessor Forster to review the translation of Warburg's papers into English. The huge 'Blue Book' was published by the Getty Research Institute at the end of his directorship, in early 1999. It contained the very first translation into English of all of Warburg's writings. Later it was artists rather than art historians who reconstructed the *Atlas of Mnemosyne* in 1993 as an exhibition;<sup>7</sup> again it is artists, together with art historians, who are preparing an exhibition around the Atlas, recovering the exhibition history of the early Warburg Institute, for the Uffizi Galleries in Florence, scheduled for 2023.

To return to Wind: in 1954, when the post of director at the Warburg suddenly became available, following Henri Frankfort's death, Wind still hoped to become director. He lobbied Gertrud Bing and Jean Seznec, as Ianick Takaes de Oliveira has shown in his well-documented essay on Wind in 1954.<sup>8</sup> Wind's letter to Seznec passionately demonstrates his never-failing belief that he was Warburg's heir. Seznec realised that the London directorship was politically impossible and promised to help Wind obtain a post in Oxford, which he eventually did, with the help of Isaiah Berlin and Maurice Bowra. Gertrude Bing became director of the Warburg Institute in London in 1954.

Given the efforts of Fritz Saxl, Gertrude Bing and others, to establish the Warburg Institute in London, it is difficult to understand why the successive directors never attempted to publish the works of their founder, although it could be argued that Ernst Gombrich's unsympathetic biography of Warburg, published in 1970, attempted to make Warburg better known to the English public. Gombrich's biography was completed in 1947, when he was a young research assistant at the Warburg Institute. At that time the biography was considered inappropriate by his colleagues, as Gombrich himself explains in the introduction to his biography. It was finally published, seemingly little altered, in 1970, when Gombrich was director. Bing had also been working on a biography of Warburg and an analysis of his language, which has recently been published, significantly, by the French Institut Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Art.<sup>9</sup> As always, Warburg's biography rather than his writings was considered most important.

In the days when the *Times Literary Supplement* published only anonymous reviews, and encouraged critical disagreement, Edgar Wind was asked to review Gombrich's

---

<sup>7</sup> W. Rappi, G. Swoboda, W. Pichler, M. Koos (eds), '*Aby Warburg Mnemosyne*'. *Eine Ausstellung der Transmedialen Gellschaft Daedalus in der Akademie der bildenden Künste*, catalogue of an exhibition in Vienna, 25 January to 13 March 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Ianick Takaes de Oliveira, "Il y a un sort de revenant". A Letter-Draft from Edgar Wind to Jean Seznec (Summer 1954)', *La rivista di engramma*, 171 (January/February 2020), pp. 97-112.

<sup>9</sup> Gertrud Bing, and collaborators: Philippe Despoix, Martin Treni, Diane Meur, Hervé Jourbert-Laurencin and Carlo Ginzburg, *Fragments sur Aby Warburg: documents originaux en allemand, en anglais, en italien et leur traduction française* (Paris: INHA, 2019).

biography of Warburg. Wind was then retired and ill with leukaemia. At that time, under the cloak of anonymity, many intellectuals, wrote scathing reviews in the *TLS*, as did Wind's friends, such as Isaiah Berlin,<sup>10</sup> the Warden of All Souls College, John Sparrow or historians like Hugh Trevor-Roper and art historians like Sir John Pope-Hennessy.<sup>11</sup> Wind was in no way different. When he published his review of Gombrich, he felt less constrained, given that he knew he had little time to live and realised that he would be identified as the author of the review. In this first rejected review Wind again claims that he is the heir to Warburg, even on this occasion trying to eliminate Erwin Panofsky, describing him as timid in Warburg's presence.

In the issue of the *TLS* for 26 March 1970,<sup>12</sup> Wind had previously reviewed John Sparrow's *Visible Words. A Study of Inscriptions in and as Books and Works of Art* (Cambridge 1970), under the title 'Linear Disposition and the Lapidary Phrase'. Everyone recognised the author, including Sparrow. One passage was especially recognisable:

It must, of course, be held in Mr. Sparrow's favour that he tends to make only such mistakes as a more timid man would have avoided. This applies in particular to a digressive chapter on inscriptions in works of art. To hear a Renaissance Latinist of Mr. Sparrow's experience discourse on Latin inscriptions in Renaissance paintings should be illuminating; but, alas, his repeated disclaimers of any art-historical competence do not restrain his desire to offer new interpretations of major works of art, such as Botticelli's 'Madonna of the Magnificat'. Having scrutinised the amount of paper covered by the words written in the Virgin's book (and without realizing that the word 'Quia' begins a new strophe in the vesper song of the *Magnificat*), Mr Sparrow constructs an ingenious sub-plot, a didactic interlude between Child and Mother, that would interrupt and in fact destroy the devotional diapason that pervades this painting. (Besides[,] no well-behaved child, let alone the Divine Child, would point with the middle finger.)

Sparrow replied that the reviewer: 'reproves me for suggesting' that the child, 'let alone the Divine Child, would point with the middle finger'; and, with his usual brilliance for polemics, wrote that the significance of the gesture as he described it was originally pointed out to him by Professor Edgar Wind, adding of the reviewer: 'I am sure that he (or she) would be the first to acknowledge the weight of that authority' (28 May 1970, p. 586). The story became legendary and whenever as a young Junior Research Fellow in Oxford I dined in All Souls it was repeated at least once.

---

<sup>10</sup> For an account of Isaiah Berlin's relations with Alan Pryce-Jones, see Deborah McVea and Jeremy Treglowan, *Critical Times: The History of the Times Literary Supplement* (London: Harper Collins, 2001). Unpaginated.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah McVea and Jeremy Treglowan, 'The Times Literary Supplement in the days of Anonymous Reviewing 1948–1959: The Times Literary Supplement under Alan Pryce-Jones', *The Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive*. <https://www.gale.com/intl/essays/mcvea-treglowan-times-literary-supplement-under-alan-pryce-jones>

<sup>12</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 March 1970, pp. 337-8.

Wind's literary executor, Margaret Wind, was keen to acknowledge Wind's authorship of the review in a collection of his essays that I edited, *The Eloquence of Symbols*. So was Roberto Calasso, Wind's Italian publisher, celebrated for his creation of the Milanese publishing house Adelphi. Calasso, who thought of Wind as a mentor, commissioned excellent translations of many of Wind's books, which sold successfully in numerous copies. The sales statistics suggest that Wind was more popular and better read by Italians than by any other nationality. Margaret asked me to consider publishing the first review that Wind wrote, which was rejected, and is published here for the first time. In the book we decided to keep to the published version of the review, and in so doing acknowledged Edgar's authorship for the first time.

The inclusion of Wind's review provoked in turn an unfavourable review of *The Eloquence of Symbols*, from Charles Hope, who later (in 2001) became director of the Warburg. Hostile reviews are always memorable but have little impact on the success of a book. *The Eloquence of Symbols* had three editions in England with Oxford University Press and a notable critical success as *L'eloquenza dei simboli* in Italy, where it was published by Calasso with Adelphi, selling 10,000 copies to date.<sup>13</sup> *The Eloquence of Symbols* was also translated into Spanish and Japanese.

Wind's review enjoyed a notable success in Italy in the Italian edition of the *Eloquence of Symbols* and was recently retranslated by Monica Centanni and Anna Fressola for *Engramma*, an Italian journal that specialises in Warburgian traditions.<sup>14</sup> When an Italian translation of Gombrich's biography of Warburg was published by Feltrinelli in 1983, again it was reviewed critically by Italian scholars such as Guglielmo Bilancon, with reference to Wind's review.<sup>15</sup>

Wind's own books had been reviewed critically and anonymously in the *TLS*. Ernest Fraser Jacob reviewed *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* on 12 December 1958, and John Pope-Hennessy reviewed *Giorgione's 'Tempesta'*, both with gentle criticism. *Art and Anarchy*, was prominently criticised on the front page, on 27 March 1964, in a review now acknowledged to be by Alan Bowness, the expert on contemporary art at the Courtauld Institute. Wind, who loved controversy, responded to the review on 2 and 9 April 1964 with a lengthy discussion of Manet's Catholicism. Wind also contributed signed articles to

---

<sup>13</sup> There were three English editions, Edgar Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson, with a biographical memoir by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983; reprinted 1985; OUP paperback, revised edition, 1993). The Italian translation added several essays and the short monograph on Giorgione's *Tempesta: L'eloquenza dei simboli (e) La 'Tempesta': commento sulle allegorie poetiche di Giorgione*. Traduzione di Enrico Colli. A cura di Jaynie Anderson (Milan: Adelphi, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> *La rivista di engramma, Aby Warburg: Unpublished and Critical Studies* (171, January/February 2020), pp. 63-95. [http://www.gramma.it/eOS/index.php?id\\_articolo=3712](http://www.gramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=3712).

<sup>15</sup> Guglielmo Bilanconi, 'Aby Warburg the Great Lord of the Labyrinth', reprinted in *Aby Warburg and Living Thought*, ed. by Monica Centanni et al., *Engramma saggi*, 2 (2022), pp. 107-10.

the *TLS*, such as *Raphael: The Dead Child on a Dolphin*, published on 25 October 1963 (p. 874).<sup>16</sup>

I have a copy of Edgar Wind's rejected review among my papers. It is here reprinted as an appendix. It does not survive in the Bodleian Manuscripts. Written before the age of the computer the manuscript of the review is a series of paragraphs pasted together as the author carefully revised his text. Since the review contains some of Edgar Wind's perceptions of Warburg, that are not in the later one, I have decided to publish it. The text is given as Edgar wrote it with minimal footnotes. Many passages are the same as in the final publication. There is no record of why the editor of the *TLS* rejected the first version as the *TLS* has no historical correspondence in their archive. Derwent May, who worked as a correspondent and leader writer in the 1960's for the *TLS*, discusses Wind's review in his *Critical Times: The History of the Times Literary Supplement* 'The art scholars – who of course knew to a man who had written the review – nodded their heads sagely after their first excitement, and, most of them, sadly agreed that Wind was right.'<sup>17</sup> It may be that Gombrich somehow knew that the first version of the review was rejected, as Thomas DaCosta Kauffman recalls, that when the second version was published, Gombrich said to him that he thought it would be even nastier.<sup>18</sup> In fact the first version is not nastier, just more detailed in its criticism. Other reviews were less critical.<sup>19</sup>

In the first paragraph Wind refers to his earlier letter to the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, requesting that the writings of Warburg should be published in English, a hint as to authorship. Both versions of the review demand that an English edition of Warburg's own writings should be published. The first review contains many cutting assessments of Gombrich's biography and of Gombrich himself, often emphasizing the criticism with a German expression. It was the way in which Wind often spoke and amused his colleagues in Trinity College with his wit, but which are surprising to read in print. All German quotations are omitted in the later version. The first version contains impressions of Warburg that only someone who had known him could have known, such as his characterisation of Warburg as an elegant dancer.

Edgar Wind met Isaiah Berlin during his London years, when Wind was at the Warburg Institute in London and Isaiah was a don in Oxford. Their first letter dates from 1939, which shows that they were then discussing David Hume's philosophy at the same conferences in Scotland and England.<sup>20</sup> They renewed their acquaintance in the 1950's

---

<sup>16</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement* (25 October 1963), p. 874.

<sup>17</sup> Derwent May, *Critical Times: The History of the Times Literary Supplement* (London: Harper Collins, 2001), pp. 374-5.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Speaking of Lilliput? Recollections on the Warburg Institute in the Early 1970's', *Common Knowledge*, 18/1 (2012), pp. 160-73.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Felix Gilbert, 'From Art History to the History of Civilization: Gombrich's biography of Aby Warburg', *The Journal of Modern History*, 44/3 (September 1972); Morris Weitz, *Art Bulletin*, 54/1 (March 1972), pp. 107-10.

<sup>20</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Wind's letter to Isaiah Berlin, 6 July 1939, Ms. Berlin, 107 fol. 101.

when Wind was at Smith College, and Isaiah stayed with them. In a letter to Anna Kallin, Isaiah gave his impression of Edgar:

Edgar still longs to come to England – is very fond of us all – there is no trace of any inner resentment towards any of us – he is as sweet and friendly and affectionate as ever. His wife is even more nervous, and obedient, and utterly utterly German. Edgar has formally applied to Kings, and I shall write a letter to All Souls saying that he is a candidate for one of our fellowships too if ever available. I have a feeling that perhaps sooner or later we shall get him, and then a new period of splendours and miseries in our lives will begin; but this must be achieved.

Edgar is genuinely unhappy, I think, and will come on any excuse.<sup>21</sup>

In an article in the last issue of this journal I published for the first time references written by Kenneth Clark in connection with Wind's applications for fellowships at King's College, Cambridge and All Souls, Oxford, that were among Clark's papers.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Kenneth Clark found it necessary to warn Noel Annan of Wind's Jewishness says a lot about the English academic world at the time, and about the hurdles that Jewish intellectuals faced there and maybe in America as well.

On 5 April 1973, Isaiah wrote about Wind at greater length to lamenting the lack of a proper obituary:

Did you know that Edgar Wind had died? It is not clear how: officially as a result of pneumonia, but there is some suspicion that he has been suffering from something graver – leukaemia – for some years before. There was no obituary in *The Times* or anywhere else until steps were taken and a brief, not excessively appreciative statement occurred pointing out e. g. that beneath his suave exterior he was a very belligerent character – it cautiously refrained from paying any homage to his kunsthistorische talents, so it must have been written by a colleague. His poor wife is much upset, letters to be sent to *The Times* etc, so we shall have to rally round.<sup>23</sup>

Two years later the question of an obituary that did Edgar Wind justice was unresolved. Colin Hardie drafted one. Isaiah's comments on Hardie's text reveal in fragmentary form, what might have been written. Isaiah's letter comments on the obituary, which Colin Hardie intended to show to Austin Gill and Margaret Wind before sending it to *The Burlington*. They may have advised against publication, which could explain its loss.

---

<sup>21</sup> Letter to Anna Kallin, 15 October 1953, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Berlin, 271.

<sup>22</sup> Jaynie Anderson, 'Edgar Wind and Giovanni Bellini's "Feast of the Gods": An Iconographic "Enfant Terrible"', *The Edgar Wind Journal*, 2 (2022), pp. 9-37.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to Nicolas Nabokov, 21 September 1971, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Berlin, 271, fol. 76.

Dear Colin,

I have read Edgar on Gombrich, and must say it is remorseless. A real scorched earth operation. What a terrible hater he was. Reminiscent in some ways of Trevor-Roper's relentless polemics.

I read your piece with great pleasure and admiration. I have very little to add: on page 2, line 5, what does pro mean? Do you mean for the poets? Like Plato means in the Ion?

Line 9. I am not sure that *terribilità* is quite the word – it was all too feline in a way – *terribilità* to me means fiery ferocity like Toscanini or Salvemini or Housman – there was something of the velvet glove about Edgar. I do not know what word I would use – something like 'implacable quality' seems to me nearer it. If you are to account for the negative emotions felt towards him, perhaps the marvellous flights of imagination, the ingenuity built upon ingenuity – those marvellous constructions in his lectures not always supported by conclusive factual evidence, but beyond refutation by mere facts – irritated the 'solid and sound' who felt uncomfortable and even shocked to be transported into such rich realms outside their sober disciplines (to put it mildly).

Line 3 from the end. I doubt whether Warburg was gay – fancy, perhaps, but he was a deeply neurotic man. I cannot believe that he was ever gay.

Page 4, line 3, you spell 'skilful' in the American fashion – so be it.

Page 5, line 7, Smith is a college not a university.

Line 8, I think I would prefer 'of a viscous texture', but I think that Margaret will not like this at all, and perhaps that entire sentence had best be left out and something like 'he seemed much happier at Oxford than at Smith College, where he was involved in deep divisions with his colleagues' or something of this sort. We shall certainly never see his like again. I think this with regret, others with relief, I suspect.

Thank you for letting me see this excellent piece.<sup>24</sup>

'Poor Wind. In a way it was a terribly wasted life'. Thus wrote Isaiah Berlin a few weeks after Wind died, on 21 September 1971, illustrating the difficulties in controlling posthumous reputations. Isaiah believed that Wind never had the position he deserved. Both Warburg and Wind enjoyed good fortune with the Italians, who generation after generation interpret and re-interpret the Warburgian experience, whereas they only experienced misfortune with the British.

---

<sup>24</sup> loc.cit. (note 23)

## Bibliography

- Bilanconi, Guglielmo, 'Aby Warburg the Great Lord of the Labyrinth', reprinted in *Aby Warburg and Living Thought*, ed. by Monica Centanni et al., *Engramma saggi*, 2 (2022), pp. 107-10.
- Bing, Gertrud, Despoix, Philippe, Treni, Martin, Meur, Diane, Jourbert-Laurencin, Hervé and Ginzburg, Carlo, *Fragments sur Aby Warburg: documents originaux en allemand, en anglais, en italien et leur traduction française* (Paris: INHA, 2019).
- Centanni, Monica, and De Laude, Silvia, 'Delio Cantimori e il Warburgkreis', *La rivista di engramma*, 171 (January-February 2020), pp. 113-25.
- Centanni, Monica, ed., *La rivista di engramma, Aby Warburg: Unpublished and Critical Studies*, 171 (January/February 2020), pp. 63-95. [http://www.engramma.it/eOS/index.php?id\\_articolo=3712](http://www.engramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=3712).
- DaCosta Kaufmann, Thomas, 'Speaking of Lilliput? Recollections on the Warburg Institute in the Early 1970's', *Common Knowledge*, 18/1 (2012), pp. 160-73.
- Gilbert, Felix, 'From Art History to the History of Civilization: Gombrich's biography of Aby Warburg', *The Journal of Modern History*, 44/3 (September 1972).
- Gombrich, Ernst, *Aby Warburg: An intellectual Biography; with a memoir on the history of the library by F. Saxl* (London: Phaidon, 1970).
- Hinds, R., *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 2934, 23 May 1958, p. 277, *The Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive 1909–2019*.
- May, Derwent, *Critical Times: The History of the Times Literary Supplement* (London: Harper Collins, 2001), pp. 374-5.
- McVea, Deborah and Treglowan, Jeremy, *Critical Times: The History of the Times Literary Supplement* (London: Harper Collins, 2001).
- McVea, Deborah and Treglowan, Jeremy, 'The Times Literary Supplement in the days of Anonymous Reviewing 1902–1974. 1948–1959: The Times Literary Supplement under Alan Pryce-Jones', *The Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive*.
- Settis, Salvatore, *Incursioni. Arte contemporanea e tradizione* (Torino: Feltrinelli, 2020).
- Warburg, Aby, *La Rinascita del paganesimo antico: contributi alla storia della cultura* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1966).
- Warburg, Aby, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*. Introduction by Kurt W. Forster and translation by David Britt

(Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1990).

Weitz, Morris, [Review of Gombrich's biography of Warburg], *Art Bulletin*, 54/1 (March 1972), pp. 107-10.

Wind, Edgar, *The Eloquence of Symbols, Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson, with a biographical memoir by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983; reprinted 1985; OUP paperback, revised edition, 1993).

Wind, Edgar, *L'eloquenza dei simboli (e) La Tempesta: commento sulle allegorie poetiche di Giorgione*. Traduzione di Enrico Colli. A cura di Jaynie Anderson (Milan: Adelphi, 1992).

Wind, Edgar, *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 2935, 30 May 1958, p. 289.



Revised first draft of Warburg review: not to be quoted or referred to without the written permission of August Wied

As institutions of learning go, the Warburg Institute is a young foundation. Its public life began in 1920 when an extraordinary private library, assembled in Hamburg by the late A. Warburg, was made into a research institute devoted to the founder's chosen subject: the cultural study of pagan revivals as sources of enlightenment and superstition, with special emphasis on the visual arts (*Kulturwissenschaftliche Kunstgeschichte*). After thirteen years in its native Hamburg, the institute moved for obvious reasons (1933) to London, where it has been active for thirty-seven years. It is easy to forget that its residence in England has been almost three times as long as in its place of origin.

Some twelve years ago it was suggested in the correspondence of this journal (May 13, 1958) that it was about time the Warburg Institute produced an English translation of Warburg's published writings—those incomparably lucid, solid and elegant papers which the author himself had committed to print and which would have formed, if not a lighter, most certainly a slenderer volume than the book now under review. It appears, however, that within the Warburg Institute it has become a tradition to regard Warburg's literary formulations as a sort of arcanum, an exceedingly fine but all-too-concentrated elixir of learning which should not be served to British consumers without an ample admixture of barley water.

It is much to be regretted that the present book, written by the fourth director of the Warburg Institute, continues to adhere to this convention, as may be seen from the following remarks addressed to "the attentive reader" (a phrase encountered very often in this book although it is presumably written for adults): "Such a reader might well feel cheated of the prize of his labours if Warburg's final theoretical formulations were to be withheld on the ground of their difficulty. At the risk, therefore, of providing a type of commentary that used to be reserved for sacred texts expounded by learned rabbis, an attempt will here be made by means of paraphrase and translation to disentangle the knots of meaning that Warburg presents in these drafts."

Although Professor Gombrich did not know Warburg personally—his contacts with the Warburg Institute began about seven years after Warburg's death and some three years after its transfer to London—he might have inferred from Warburg's writings that he was a neat anatomizer of humbug.

15

An old and so far unverified supposition that Warburg's adage about "the dear Lord nestling in particulars" might be a translation from Flaubert is repeated here without any attempt to find the actual sentence in Flaubert, whose writings are, after all, not inaccessible. Professor Gombrich should now either produce the passage or drop the thought. A worse that unfounded speculation, which turns historical order upside down, is that Warburg's style was "probably influenced" by Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, a book that Warburg cherished because its "philosophy of clothes" contained some penetrating remarks on the nature of symbols, for example that in a good symbol, as in a good costume, concealment and revelation are combined. As for style, Warburg's diction belongs, with its sharp twists and cumulative periods, to a well-known tradition of German prose which Carlyle parodied in *Sartor Resartus*, drawing on his intimate knowledge of Jean Paul, "that vast World-Mahlstrom of Humour, with its heaven-kissing coruscations, which is now, alas, all congealed in the frost of death." As a parody this has its merits, but it is hardly a source of Warburg's style.

While Warburg is not easy to translate (no significant foreign writer is), the method adopted in this book of mixing paraphrase with translation is a fumbling device which too often amounts just to bad translation. The danger is great that, despite its shortcomings, the book will be used and quoted as a convenient surrogate for Warburg's own writings, which still await an English translator. Though the chances for such a work may now seem blocked by the sheer bulk of Professor Gombrich's vulgarization, the setback is not likely to be permanent. As an Italian translation has been authorized and published, the English reader's justified desire to read Warburg undiluted in English cannot be ignored in perpetuity.

**Wind's first draft of his review of Gombrich's biography of Aby Warburg,  
rejected by the *Times Literary Supplement***

**E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography. With a Memoir on the History of the Library by F. Saxl*, 376 pp. plus 65 pp. plates. London: The Warburg Institute, 1970.**

As institutions of learning go, the Warburg Institute is a young foundation. Its public life began in 1920, when an extraordinary private library, assembled in Hamburg by the late A. Warburg, was made into a research institute devoted to the founder's chosen subject: the cultural study of pagan revivals as sources of enlightenment and superstition, with special emphasis on the visual arts (*Kulturwissenschaftliche Kunstgeschichte*). After thirteen years in its native Hamburg, the institute moved for obvious reasons (1933), to London, where it has been active for thirty-seven years. It is easy to forget that its residence in England has been almost three times as long as in its place of origin.

Some twelve years ago it was suggested in the correspondence of this journal (May 30, 1958),<sup>25</sup> that it was about time the Warburg Institute produced an English translation of Warburg's published writings – those incomparably lucid, solid, and elegant papers which the author himself had committed to print and which would have formed, if not a lighter, more certainly a slenderer volume than the book now under review. It appears, however, that within the Warburg Institute it has become a tradition to regard Warburg's literary formulations as a sort of arcanum, an exceedingly fine but all-too-concentrated elixir of learning which should not be served to British consumers without an ample admixture of barley water.

It is much to be regretted that the present book, written by the fourth director of the Warburg Institute, continues to adhere to this convention, as may be seen from the following remarks addressed to 'the attentive reader' (a phrase encountered very often in this book although it is presumably written for adults): 'Such a reader might well feel cheated of the prize of his labours if Warburg's final theoretical formulations were to be withheld on the grounds of their difficulty. At the risk, therefore, of providing a type of commentary that used to be reserved for sacred texts expounded by learned rabbis, an attempt will be made by means of paraphrase and translation to disentangle the knots of meaning that Warburg presents in these drafts'.<sup>26</sup>

Although Professor Gombrich did not know Warburg personally – his contacts with the Warburg Institute began about seven years after Warburg's death and some three years after its transfer to London – he might have inferred from Warburg's writings that he was a

---

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.edgarwindjournal.eu/current-issue/> [accessed 14 July 2022].

<sup>26</sup> Gombrich, on Warburg, op. cit., p. 288.

neat anatomiser of humbug. He was particularly good on what he called *Fabnenschwenken* ('flag waving'), a very special kind of claptrap of which Professor Gombrich provides a specimen on the same page as the passage just quoted: he proposes – unfortunately without the mischievous overtones that are discernible in his rabbinical tirade – that a sequence of pictures arranged by Warburg to illustrate the transformations of Perseus was meant to evoke in the beholder something akin to 'the changing moods of Beethoven's *Eroica*'.<sup>27</sup>

It is not surprising, if such orchestral byplay is deemed acceptable, that this 'intellectual biography' at times descends to the wailing cries of a penny dreadful: 'He was like a man lost in a maze and the reader who attempts the next chapter should perhaps be warned that he, too, will have to enter the maze.' Strange to say, this inauspicious invitation refers to the years 1904–7, one of Warburg's great productive periods, in which he published the exquisitely fresh *Imprese amorose* (1905), the now classical discourse on Dürer's *Death of Orpheus* (1906) and the magisterial treatise on Francesco Sassetti (1907), perhaps his finest essay in Renaissance psychology. To Professor Gombrich this intellectual sequence spells out confusion, agony, and frustration: 'It might seem an impertinence to attempt to trace Warburg's wanderings through the maze, but it is possible at least to indicate why he found it so agonizingly hard to map it out'.<sup>28</sup> This is the author's way of building up what he considers to be his subject's *persona*.

The reader who hears Warburg speak in these pages through fragments quoted from unpublished notes, drafts, diaries, and letters, embedded in a slow-moving mass of paraphrase that determines the tone and tempo of the book, should be warned that this is not the authentic voice. The claim that in this sluggish progress one of the most alert of historical explorers 'speaks in his own words' is false: Warburg's words have been drowned out by the filibustering talk of the narrator.

The failures of the book are foreshadowed in its plan: it promises to do three things at once, and consequently cannot give full attention to any: (1) a presentation of some of Warburg's unpublished Notes and Drafts; (2) a biographical history, to serve as a 'scaffolding' for the Notes, which, it is claimed, would be less intelligible in a regular annotated edition; (3) a conspectus of Warburg's research and of his growth as a scholar. The fact that these three aims, although supposedly dovetailed, get constantly into each other's way may account, at least in part, for the dragging pace of the book. Warburg emerges from this conglomerate as an intellectual mollusc: shapeless, flustered and jejeune, incessantly preoccupied with his inner conflicts and driven in vain to aggrandize them by some unconquerable itch of the Absolute.

Considering what Warburg thought of people who had *ein geräuschvolles Innenleben* ('a screaming inner life'), the fact that he himself is here portrayed in that fatiguing character

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-7.

suggests some obtuseness in the author's outlook. After referring, as a matter of hearsay, to Warburg's reputation for 'epigrammatic wit', Professor Gombrich proceeds to disregard 'this more volatile side of Warburg's personality' because 'in the nature of things' it 'has left few traces in his notes'. However, the distinction is much too facile, and the notes themselves do not bear it out since they inevitably include examples of Warburg's aphoristic felicity, which also illumines his published writings.

Despite the deep strain of melancholy in his temperament, Warburg was not a splenetic introvert but very much a citizen of the world, in which he played his part with expansive zest and with a glorious sense of humour, not to forget a substantial dose of personal conceit which always marked his bearing. Famous in his youth as 'a ravishing dancer' (he was remembered thus by a friend of the family, Dr. Emden<sup>29</sup>), he was still capable, at the age of sixty-two, of leading off a waltz with exemplary precision. While he studied at Bonn he became notorious as one of the most ebullient among the revelling students who attended the carnival at Cologne as masquers. His animal vitality (which physical illness never quite managed to subdue) was at the root of his marvellously exact comprehension of folk festivals whether in Renaissance Florence or among the Navaho Indians. Even his pursuit of far-fetched allegories had an ingredient of festive participation. A phrase that he enjoyed using in speech and writing – *das bewegte Leben* – defines what Pope would have called his ruining passion.

Given Warburg's pleasure in miming and the important role it played in his conception of art, it is understandable that he seized with delight on the theory of empathy (*Einfühlung*), introduced into psychology and aesthetics by Robert Vischer, who had coined the term in his revolutionary little treatise, *Über das optische Formgefühl* (1873), directed against *die Herbartische Schule*. Warburg referred to this book in the preface to his first work, the dissertation on Botticelli, listing it as the principal source for the study of *Einfühlung* which he said had some bearing on his own method. In describing Botticelli's peculiar trick of animating his firmly set figures with the help of flamboyant accessories, such as fluttering draperies and flying hair, Warburg thought he could show in what devious ways empathy became a force in the formation of style: *Einfühlung als stilbildende Macht*.

By some curious oversight, Professor Gombrich has taken no account at all of Robert Vischer's work or of the reference to it in Warburg's dissertation. Unavoidably, the word 'empathy' occurs quite often in the book since *Einfühlung* is a term regularly used by Warburg, but no indication is given that this term, so important to Warburg's thought, was a new coinage in the 1870's. In fact, the name of Robert Vischer is nowhere mentioned in this volume. In trying to trace the sources of Warburg's psychological concepts, Professor Gombrich has turned instead to his Warburg archive, in which are preserved the lecture notes that Warburg took down as a student in Bonn while he attended the historical

---

<sup>29</sup> Presumably Dr Max Emden (1874–1940), a collector and businessman in Hamburg.

courses of Karl Lamprecht. Since Lamprecht expounded social evolution, including the arts as determined by Herbart's psychological laws of association, it was not only a small step to assume that Warburg became 'committed', as Professor Gombrich puts it, to 'the dominant psychological theory' – 'associationism'. In that doctrine, as twice set forth in this book with a grave sort of didactic insistence, the mind is a *tabula rasa*, receiving 'sense impressions' and retaining them as 'ideas' that reinforce, obstruct, or displace each other according to calculable laws of association. Leaving aside whether this is a correct account of Herbart (who was, alas, a metaphysician and did not start with the *tabula rasa*), the 'associationist' schema here presented is just about the reverse of Robert Vischer's demonstration that in the aesthetic act, both on the creative and the receptive side, association is only an adjunct, often a distracting adjunct, of empathy, even though there are occasions on which empathy may get aroused by association, whose vital part in our mental habits can of course not be denied. An amusing incident in the life of Markart, who found himself inspired by a dusty tassel to paint a gorgeous assembly of cardinals, is given, not without irony, as an example.

The lively debates on the nature of *Einfühlung*, and on its warfare or truce with association, which arose from Robert Vischer's spirited treatise and still survived in Croce's vigorous diatribe *L'estetica della 'Einfühlung' e Robert Vischer* (1934) have not detained Professor Gombrich. He quotes, as a book bought and marked by Warburg, an eclectic attempt by Hermann Siebeck (1875) to bring empathy into line with Herbart's psychology, but this was of course not the only book that Warburg consulted on this new and vital subject. Indeed, by 1887, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, Robert's father, incorporated and expanded his son's observations with proud acknowledgment in a famous treatise, *Das Symbol*, which became, as Professor Gombrich knows, a sort of breviary for Warburg. It, too, is cited in the preface of his dissertation, but as Warburg was aware that in matters of *Einfühlung* the child was father to the man, he placed Robert in front of Friedrich Theodor.

That Professor Gombrich took no notice of this amusing fact is not surprising. More astonishing is that he felt free, in giving a long summary of *Das Symbol*, to exclude the parts devoted to his subject: 'We need not follow Vischer into the lengthy discussion of empathy which makes up a large of his stimulating paper'. The confusion resulting from this stubborn evasion (perhaps a case of Freudian *Verdrängung?*) have led Professor Gombrich to this opinion, pronounced several times in the course of this book, with an air of finality that would have been ill judged even if the evidence had been less faulty, that Warburg's psychological concepts allow no place to the creative imagination and are therefore useless for any understanding of the artistic process. He repeatedly asserts that Warburg had formed his concept of the human mind on an outmoded mechanistic psychology that only 'talked in terms of sense impressions and the association of ideas'.

One phase of Warburg's psychological thinking embarrasses Professor Gombrich particularly: like Robert Vischer, Warburg believed that the physiology of the brain would one day offer the means of giving a scientifically exact account of the workings of

empathy and its ramifications. Professor Gombrich has looked with some despair on the ‘increasing’ number of notes devoted by Warburg to these reflections. Unfortunately, none are quoted. It is to be hoped that this interesting phase of Warburg’s work will be studied eventually by an historian who has mastered the physiological psychology of that period. The interest is more than antiquarian: for in Warburg’s concern with empathy and its operation lies the key to his later and more famous researches into magic and demonology. Indeed, some perhaps over-refined distinctions introduced by Robert Vischer into the study of empathy – *‘Einfühlung, Anfühlung, Zufühlung’* – recur in one of Warburg’s earliest attempts to distinguish between various kinds of magical appropriation (*‘Einverleibung, Anverleibung, Zuverleibung’*).

To examine, one by one, the technical flaws that run through the book (occasionally relieved by coarse-grained nonsense about the intent of some of Warburg’s propositions, e.g.: ‘Whether or not Warburg meant them to be understood it is hard to tell’) is not the purpose of this review. It must suffice to observe that if Professor Gombrich got off on a false start in the presentation of Warburg’s psychology of art, it is because he had his head so deeply buried in unpublished papers that he paid insufficient attention to the published text. Rummaging in fragments, drafts, and other unfinished business, easily gives a compiler, unless he is on his guard against that error, a disproportionate sense of his subject’s insufficiencies: ‘It must indeed strike the modern reader of Warburg’s fragments how little place there is in his schemes for the creative imagination’. – ‘Reading these formulations, one cannot be much surprised that their author felt that he still lacked the tools to achieve the goal he had set himself’. – ‘The attentive reader may well feel that in the end the problem he wanted to present again eluded Warburg’. Sentences of that type, which recur at every turn, might have served the author as signals that he was on a wrong track, but that thought seems not to have crossed his mind, intent on seeing Warburg as a pitiable knight-errant lost in the swampy wood of his frustrations and torments.

‘This dichotomy between his research into the particulars of a historical situation and the generality of the questions he really had hoped to solve continued to torture Warburg for many years’. Note the words *torture* and *dichotomy* and the generous imprecision of *many years* (not to speak of the word ‘often’ in a sentence like: ‘The result was often paralysis.’). Since Warburg’s preparatory drafts, notes and sketches reveal a concern for relating the universal to the particular, it is inferred from them that he could not master that problem. Its solution is indeed not to be found in the notes but in the finished papers, and here it appears with such force that it seems unintelligible that Professor Gombrich should have missed it.

All of Warburg’s major papers, from 1902 onward, are composed on the principle that his general psychological insights must appear in and through historical particulars (*Universalialia in re*): this accounts for the monographic density of Warburg’s writing, which Professor Gombrich regards as a disadvantage. In one case he has even tried to reduce the sap of Warburg’s configurational logic to a linear trickle, contrary to Warburg’s convictions

that the *contiguum* (as he called it) is more important to his method of discovery than the *continuum*. His famous adage *Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail* ('The dear Lord nestles in particulars') is not the triviality that Professor Gombrich makes of it (an 'insistence on scholarly probity'), but a tough precept of historical analysis that has been persistently disregarded in this loosely tissueed book.

Perhaps it is worth adding here that the physiological term *Assoziationsfasern* ('association fibres') was occasionally used by Warburg with humorous overtones, as in a spirited note on his 'services as a pig for rooting up truffles' (*Trüffel schweindienste*), in which Warburg observed that, so far as his conscious awareness was concerned, the *Assoziationsfern* of his general ideas had resisted the disclosure of their intimate natural connexion (*'natuürliche Verwebung'*) with the underlying particulars until he was forty.

To a reader of the important works that Warburg published between 1902 and 1906, this would suggest that at the age of forty (1906), when he began composing the *Francesco Sassetti*, Warburg suddenly felt that he was reflecting with a new freedom and clarity on those principles that had governed his previous writings in a more instinctive, piggishly snuffling way. But despite the truffles Professor Gombrich insists that this funny note must be accepted as positive proof that Warburg had suffered in the years before 1906 from a protracted and very severe 'blockage' of his mental faculties of coordination. Given the amusing tone of the note, and considering the publications from 1902–06, the inference seems a little hasty, but it adds to the colour of splenetic gloom that Professor Gombrich has spread over his canvas.

-----

In the biographical narrative, the impression that Warburg must have suffered from frightful intellectual isolation is increased by the fact that an important source for his intellectual history has been left untapped – his scholarly friendships. Time and again a name flits across these pages – 'his friend Mesnil', 'his friend Jolles', 'his Florentine friend Giovanni Poggi', 'his friend, the Hamburg art historian Pauli' – but beyond the bare fact that Mesnil was 'a Belgian art historian' or Jolles 'a Dutch author-philosopher' no attempt is made anywhere to characterize these men or to give even the slightest idea of their scholarly preoccupations or their personal idiosyncrasies – particularly attractive in the benign anarchist Mesnil, author of Baedeker's Italian volumes, who worked concentratedly, as did Warburg, on Botticelli and on artistic exchanges between Flanders and Italy. Even Jolles, who appears as Warburg's co-author in a *jeu d'esprit* (whose title *Ninfa Fiorentina* derives almost certainly from Boccaccio's *Ninfa Fiesolana*) remains a mere shadow in this book; not to speak of the famous Poggi, to whom Warburg paid the odd compliment that while he himself was working through the dark tunnel of the Medicean *vita amorosa*, he heard 'friend Poggi knocking at the other end'. As for Pauli, it is a memorable fact, here unremembered, that the intimate friendship that united him to Warburg, could hardly have been foretold from a scathing review of Warburg's dissertation, in which Pauli declared it

absurd that this novice should apply to Botticelli an amount of learning that was much larger and heavier than Botticelli's own. This brilliantly written criticism, in which a now well-worn paradox was stated for the first time, is not listed in the *Bibliography of Writings about Warburg* which Professor Gombrich has appended to his book. For an unexplained and presumably accidental reason this bibliography begins only with the year 1917, and so it omits all that was written about, against and in favour of Warburg at the time when his major discoveries first appeared in print.

Considering that Warburg never assumed that he could understand an historical character unless he had meticulously related him to his intellectual surroundings, it seems extraordinary that he himself should have been made the subject of an historical monograph that ignores that fundamental principle in dealing with his mature years. It may indeed be doubted whether a biography that omits such an important part of a scholar's life as his intellectual friendships has any right to call itself 'an intellectual biography' at all.

If friendships are treated in this book cavalierly, enmities are not: they add to the depressive tenor of the narration. Thus a good deal is made of the tensions between Warburg and Lichtwark, the first director of the Kunsthalle in Hamburg. To label Lichtwark 'a modernist' and a 'pioneer of art education' is not enough since it was a very special sort of modernity that Lichtwark favoured. He believed that great art grows out of the soil, and more particularly the North-German soil, and this is what Warburg disliked: '*Bodenstand und Erdgeruch*'. Unlike his successor Pauli, Lichtwark was insensitive to French Impressionism, except in the North-German adaptations of Max Liebermann or, even better, Leopold von Kalckreuth. His purchases in contemporary French art, for which he undertook regular journeys to Paris, were virtually confined to plaquettes and medallions, a craft that he hoped to revive in Hamburg. It was twenty-four years after Manet's death that he first acquired a painting by him: Renoir or Cézanne never entered his orbit, nor did the art of the Mediterranean, Renaissance medals notwithstanding. His gods were Meister Bertram and Meister Francke, Runge and Wasmann, of whom he assembled magnificent collections, but he never looked beyond the Alps. To see Hamburg and Florence in one perspective offended his forthright parochialism.

Of Warburg's administrative work for the German art historical Institute in Florence, on whose board he served most energetically, Professor Gombrich has little to say beyond stressing a temporary dissatisfaction with the rambling ways of one of the directors (Brockhaus): 'Perhaps Warburg's reservations about the Florentine Institute increased his eagerness to demonstrate through a rival institution how he saw matters'. In fact, Warburg never thought of the two institutions as commensurable, let alone as 'rivals'. Besides, the impulse ascribed to him is completely out of character. Misjudgements of scale occur quite regularly in this book when psychological motivations are attempted. Sentences like: 'he wanted to prove to himself, to his family and to his in-laws that he had something to offer' belong to a mentality and milieu that are smaller than Warburg's. Equally off-key is the flat statement that Lichtwark's success as a public orator made Warburg 'long for a similar



response'. And to add a touch of high comedy, 'he never failed to attend congresses to counteract his isolation in the academic world'.

By the time the biography reaches the final period in Hamburg (after 1924), when Warburg became deeply involved in the affairs of the new university, even names become scarce and tend to disappear in a shadowy phrase, 'the *entourage*', rather ill-suited for a community of scholars except perhaps in a satiric sense, but that cannot be imputed to an author who always refers to Saxl and Miss Bing with a religious sort of veneration. Since the *entourage* is credited with uniform views, even on so problematic an enterprise as Warburg's *Atlas*, it should be said that the persons constituting that mystical body were known to have reacted to this particular project with a great diversity of opinion, encouraged by Warburg with characteristic vigour.

Since Panofsky's scholarship was of a stature that put him into a different class from Saxl or Miss Bing, it is necessary to remark that the hackneyed phrase 'a devoted follower', which Professor Gombrich seems to regard as sufficient to characterize his relationship to Warburg, misses the very peculiar quality of their association. The intensive studies that Panofsky pursued in the Warburg Library were based on his collaboration with Saxl, not with Warburg: for it was one of the endearing traits in Panofsky, then in his thirties, that he felt so overpowered by Warburg's superiority that he was genuinely afraid of him, almost like a timid schoolboy; and so their acquaintance remained rather formal. The two men never achieved (and perhaps did not desire) that unreserved feeling of mutual confidence, a sort of crossing between *camaraderie* and profound engagement, into which Warburg entered so willingly with younger colleagues, even with some who were only in their twenties, such as Rougemont, Solmitz and Wind. It is all the more noteworthy that, when Warburg died, Panofsky wrote for a daily paper an obituary that is still by far the best thing that has been written of Warburg's personality, achievement and method (*Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, October 28, 1929).

If Panofsky's relation to Warburg is treated too superficially, that of Cassirer, who was very close to Warburg in his last years, is not treated at all. This is possibly the most unintelligible omission, given the long dedication to Warburg in Cassirer's book, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, in which the author speaks in the name of the community of learning that had found its centre in Warburg's work and person. Is it conceivable that Professor Gombrich would not regard it as relevant to his subject that Cassirer's *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, his Sprache und Mythos* and *Die Begriffsform im Mythischen Denken* rest in their concern with primitive ritual, myth and magical thinking on materials with which he became acquainted through books collected by Warburg? Cassirer's preoccupation with these themes, although he treated them in a spirit more detached than Warburg (and possibly too detached, as if the bloody tantrums of a savage tribe could reveal to a serene Olympian observer the same coherence-theory of truth as, say, the differential calculus), nevertheless moved Warburg to such an extent that when Cassirer was tempted to accept a call to the University of Frankfurt, where (as Warburg put

it) he was wanted ‘only as a transcendental table decoration’, it was Warburg who forced him to turn it down. The exchange of ideas between these two friends, so different in temperament and style but bound together by the passion for a common subject, would surely deserve a place in a book that professes to trace Warburg’s intellectual history. Cassirer was, moreover, among the first scholars to visit Warburg during his convalescence from a long mental illness, about which more will have to be said below. The conversation at their first meeting must have ranged widely; for it included a discussion on Kepler: in memory of which Warburg ordered the reading room in his new library to be constructed in the shape of an ellipse.

Some five years later, in reflecting on his association with Warburg and on the impression he received at their first meeting, Cassirer wrote: ‘In the first conversation that I had with Warburg, he remarked that the demons, whose sway in the history of mankind he had tried to explore, had taken their revenge by seizing him’. Professor Gombrich, who has looked at the diaries that Warburg kept during his illness, has reached a different conclusion: ‘Written in pencil in states of obvious excitement and anxiety, they are both hard to decipher and uninformative to the non-psychiatrist. They hardly sustain the legend which has grown up that the patient’s main preoccupations at that time were connected with his past research into demonology and superstition’. It is not quite clear how a script that he found hard to decipher and uninformative enabled him to dispose of an existing account as legendary. In any case ‘the legend’ did not ‘grow up’ at random but was apparently started by Warburg himself. It could of course be argued that this may well have been Warburg’s way of looking back on his illness after he had recovered from it, and that during the illness itself he would have had other and perhaps less elevated preoccupations: but two facts speak against taking Warburg’s retrospective judgement too lightly. It is admitted, even by Professor Gombrich, that Warburg’s astounding insight into the nature of his obsessions contributed to his cure: and it is known that the crucial test he proposed to his doctor, by which he hoped to show that he had freed himself of the terrors that beset him, was that he would manage to give a coherent lecture on Navaho Serpent Rituals – and he delivered it to the inmates of the hospital. By a strange irony it is the only work of his that has appeared in English. He of course never published it himself.

In an essay *On the Uses and Drawbacks of History* Nietzsche remarked that an apt cultivation of forgetfulness is indispensable to mental health. It is certain that Warburg was never mentally healthy in that sense. Although he knew that the dangers of excessive empathy and of all-too-passionate recollection, he exercised these powers without thrift. Having entered deeply, as a patient of contemporary political history, into the spirit of a whole cluster of calamitous decisions that left the comity of nations in shambles, this good European went off his head in 1918, and it took him six years to recover. During his illness Warburg wrote more or less constantly. In the hands of an experienced physician these papers ought to be an invaluable source for studying the progress and recovery of an incredibly gifted psychotic. Professor Gombrich, in planning his biography, decided to leave those six years untouched, on the ground that he was not competent to deal with

them. Warburg would not have favoured that decision: for he held, and always vigorously insisted, that whenever a scholar runs up against a problem which he has not the professional competence to handle, he must call in the help of an expert and make the work a joint investigation. It is fair to say that if those six years had been studied as they deserve to be, the darkness which has spread over the whole of Professor Gombrich's presentation would have become concentrated in its right place.

Understandably, Professor Gombrich was unable to close his eyes and mind completely to some of those papers that he did not feel qualified to interpret. He has even made some use of them, inevitably in an amateurish way. Thus, his account of Warburg's childhood rests in part on notes written by Warburg during his illness, that is, written some fifty years after the events on which they reflect, and under decidedly anomalous circumstances. As they stand, they impart to the chapter called *Prelude* a psychopathic ingredient that somehow sets the tone of the book. Professor Gombrich says, in at least one sentence, that what he calls 'the precarious balance of Warburg's mental health' has enabled 'the biographer often to discern the reasons for his personal involvements more clearly than would be the case with more extrovert scholars'. To judge by this sentence, and in fact by the book itself, the biographer's terms of reference have not been kept free of clinical connotations, and this makes it all the more regrettable that this province was not surrendered to competent hands.

A few words must be said about the workmanship of the book. The bibliographies are careless, even with regard to Warburg's own writings: *Gesammelte Schriften*, for example is listed without its title, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike*, and without the names of the editors: G. Bing assisted by F. Rougemont. Works published in periodicals are given without pagination so that it is impossible to distinguish at a glance between major studies and short notes. The bibliography of writings about Warburg, apart from the unexplained omission of all that was written before 1917, is incomplete after that date. If a selective bibliography was intended here, a good deal of rubbish could have been left out to make place for Boll-Bezold's *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung*, Ernst Robert Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Mesmil's *Botticelli*, or Pauli's reminiscences, to mention only a few. The extracts from Warburg's unpublished papers are printed without annotations. Thus, when Warburg reflects on 'contemporary artists such as Philipp, Niels, Veth', these obscure names are left unexplained. Where it is said that Warburg's brothers bought 'two paintings by Consul Weber', it is more likely that they bought them *from* Consul Weber, who was a well-known collector in Hamburg. In one of the fragments from the *Ninfa Fiorentina* Warburg quotes a poetic phrase by Jean Paul (*auf einem Stamm geimmpfet blühen*), but no reference is given to the text, which is *Vorschule der Ästhetik* II, ixx, 50, or to the important role it played in Warburg's later reflections on the nature of metaphor. The index not only fails to list this early quotation under the name of Jean Paul, but is altogether an uneven instrument, omitting names like Magin, Niels, Philipp or Weber, on which the editorial work has been deficient. The illustrations at the end of the book are coarsely arranged. A plate on which a portrait of Warburg is juxtapose to Liebermann's

painting of 'Old Age Pensioners in Amsterdam' is irresistibly funny. Captions are often incomplete and occasionally false: *Death of Alceste* is inscribed on an image representing in fact *The Death of Meleager*.

It is possible that Professor Gombrich cultivates the gentle art of imprecision he is content to cite Edmund Wilson, *To the Finland Station*, as his sole source for a ranting letter by Michelet, from which he quotes, inaccurately and at length, on the ground that 'it might have been written by Warburg'. Fortunately, it was not.

An old and so far, unverified supposition that Warburg's adage about 'the dear Lord nestling in particulars' might be a translation from Flaubert is repeated here without any attempt to find the actual sentence in Flaubert, whose writings are after all, not inaccessible. Professor Gombrich should now either produce the passage or drop the thought. A worse than unfounded speculation, which turns historical order upside down, is that Warburg's style was 'probably influenced' by Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, a book that Warburg cherished because its 'philosophy of clothes' contained some penetrating remarks on the nature of symbols, for example that in a good symbol, as in a good costume, concealment and revelation are combined. As for style, Warburg's dictation belongs, with its sharp twists and cumulative periods, to a well-known tradition of German prose which Carlyle parodied in *Sartor Resartus*, drawing on his intimate knowledge of Jean Paul, 'that vast World-Mahlstrom of humour, with its heaven-kissing coruscations, which is now, alas, all congealed in the frost of death'. As a parody this has its merits, but it is hardly a source of Warburg's style.

While Warburg is not easy to translate into English (no significant foreign writer is), the method adopted in this book of mixing paraphrase with translation is a fumbling device which too often amounts just to bad translation. The danger is great that, despite its shortcomings the book will be used and quoted as a convenient surrogate for Warburg's own writings, which still await an English translator. Though the chances for such a work may now seem blocked by the sheer bulk of Professor Gombrich's vulgarization, the setback is not likely to be permanent. As an Italian translation has been authorized and published, the English reader's justified desire to read Warburg undiluted in English cannot be ignored in perpetuity.