ralement la belle lecture de Ford. Enfin, à propos d'un passage de la p. 22, on me permettra cette remarque de philologue ! Ford cite les v. 575–78 de l'« Ode à Michel de l'Hospital », où Ronsard parle du second groupe de poètes, ceux qui ont suivi les « poètes divins », comme Eumolpe, Musée, Orphée, Homère, etc. : « Par un art melancolique / Trahissoient avec grand soing / Leurs vers, esloignez bien loing / De la sainte ardeur antique. » « Trahissoient » ne veut pas dire « transmettaient », comme le traduit l'auteur, mais bien « trahissaient ». Voir *FEW XIII*² 151a–b : « Lt. *Tradere* “übergeben”, dann “verraten”, wurde schon früh [au plus tard au XII^e siècle, d'après les exemples donnés] in der letzten Bedeutung entlehnt. Es wurde dem fr. eingepasst und in die konjugation auf –*ir* eingereiht. » Il faut alors comprendre : « Par un trop grand souci de l'art [= technique], ils trahissaient ce qui aurait dû être l'inspiration spontanée et divine de leurs vers. » Si elle ne sera pas toujours aussi forte, cette sévérité pour l'art rejoint ici les interprétations de l'auteur.

Conforté dans ma vision néo-platonicienne des *Hymnes* de Ronsard, je dis à Ph. Ford ma reconnaissance et mon respect pour son brillant ouvrage.

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Aby Warburg. *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*. Trans. David Britt, with an introduction by Kurt W. Forster. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999. Pp. 859.

The English translation of a substantial part of Aby Warburg's writings is finally here, and one might well ask, why Warburg now? Despite the fact that scholars have long had access to the original German, as well as to some Italian translations, nothing replaces a translation into one's own language, especially in the case of Warburg. Notoriously yielding more questions than answers, Warburg's writings read like a struggling translation even in the German. As a result, their interpretation and adaptation through authoritative but not necessarily sympathetic filters — primarily Fritz Saxl, Erwin Panofsky, Ernst Gombrich, and Edgar Wind — has proven to be enormously significant for Warburg's *Nachleben* in the English-speaking world. The result of this rich history of transmission has been, paradoxically, an almost complete detachment from the source.

Before it was common to do so, Warburg investigated the concerns of patrons as well as artists, transformed archive work into microhistory, questioned the exclusion of “low” art by what he called art history's “border guards,” rebelled against aestheticizing art history at the height of the aesthetic movement, and studied works of art in the context both of social ritual and of arcane wisdom traditions. He joined a passion for detail to a consistent preoccupation with the

grand issues of Renaissance art and culture: the persistence and adaptation of pagan models in Christian culture, the tension between superstition and rationalism, the impact of the Reformation, the problems of secularization and early modernity, and the relevance of the Renaissance in contemporary life. The many competencies Warburg developed in his study of Renaissance culture have since separated out into somewhat hardened specializations, with the result that Warburg's larger picture has tended to recede from view, and with it the sense of cultural tension that marked his vision of the period. This is less evident where the relation to Warburg has been more direct and active: in Germany Martin Warnke and Horst Bredekamp, and in Italy Salvatore Settis and Carlo Ginzburg, to name only the most prominent scholars, have applied Warburg's approaches and insights to a wide array of Renaissance cultural phenomena. Will this translation spark a renewal of interest in Warburg in the English-speaking world, with equally productive results, or is this little more than a historiographical monument?

The Getty Research Institute's decision to adhere to the original 1932 German edition certainly points in the direction of Warburg-as-relic. Although commonly known as *Gesammelte Schriften*, this edition remained only a fragment. The two tomes we know and that are translated here consist of those writings by Warburg published during his lifetime and constitute only the first volume of a projected six-volume series, the other volumes of which were to include the *Mnemosyne-Atlas*, the unpublished works, the fragments of *The Theory of Expression, Anthropologically Considered*, the letters, aphorisms, and autobiographical sketches, and finally the catalogue of the library. This plan was never fulfilled, but in Germany *ad hoc* publication of Warburg's writings has nonetheless continued apace. When the Italian translation of *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike* appeared in 1966, the editors departed from the original German publication, sensibly adding the translation of "Der Eintritt des antikisierenden Idealstils in die Malerei der Frührenaissance." Appearing only as an abstract in the German edition (and thus here), this piece is one of the fullest and clearest statements of the abiding themes of Warburg's work. Conversely, there are several pieces in the 1932 edition that are less important than much of the unpublished material.

The Getty's reluctance to make a new selection from the available material was clearly born of a desire to adhere to the structure of the 1932 edition. But that would make sense only if the intention were to make good on the plans for the original project — that is, to publish the complete works — and yet it is now clear that this is the only Warburg translation the Getty intends to put out. The strangeness of the situation is illustrated in the very first page of this volume, where, faithful to the 1932 edition, we find the "Plan for the Collected Edition" now listing in English the titles of the six projected volumes that we won't see! Philological loyalty has produced a wilful repetition of an historical misfortune.

In defense of this decision, it could be said that the volume assembles, after all, all of Warburg's finished writings, published during his lifetime, and thus

stands as a fair representation of his work. But the distinction between finished and unfinished, published and unpublished, is not so hard and fast in Warburg's case. These are for the most part occasional pieces; circumstances dictated that these and not other pieces made it to print. And, unlike Panofsky or Gombrich, Warburg did not write particularly resolved essays. To different degrees, they are elliptical, inconclusive, bristling with unresolved questions, clearest only when they are at their most oracular. The teeming appendices to each of the essays, moreover, prove that for Warburg these pieces were still "open files," and thus not in fact in a different category from the unpublished material, suggesting a continuity right down to the fragments and even the aphorisms. Unlike typical decorous academic prose, Warburg's essays are often marked, as Kurt Forster notes in his Introduction, by the repetition of almost invocatory verbal formulas. It is an enormous accomplishment of this translation that it avoids extraneous obfuscation even as it refrains from smoothing over the strangeness of Warburg's writing.

Little wonder that Warburg's preferred mode of elucidation was not the magisterial essay but the ongoing "open work" of the assemblage. A primary example is the *Mnemosyne-Atlas*, a series of panels where Warburg assembled images, ranging from antiquity to contemporary advertisements, illustrating the careers of the antique motifs he called "pathos formulas" and the themes that carried them. He called it "a ghost story for the fully grown-up." Another instance is, of course, the library itself, a fact implicitly acknowledged in the plan to publish the catalogue of the library as the sixth and last volume of the original German edition. Contemporary accounts record how Warburg was constantly changing the order of the books in his efforts to remain faithful to what he called the principle of the "good neighbor." Any visitor to the library can attest to the uniqueness and extraordinary effectiveness of the result, perhaps most forcefully described by Ernst Cassirer upon recalling his first visit to the library in 1920: "That uninterrupted chain of books seemed suffused by the breath of a magician that hovered above it like a prodigious law."

Clearly, bringing a scholar such as Warburg into published form is not an editorial enterprise for the weak of stomach. As Kurt Forster notes in his Introduction, Fritz Saxl intended to publish the *Mnemosyne-Atlas* with a commentary supplied by a selection of Warburg's unpublished fragments "pieced together like a mosaic." The field of literary studies has certainly not hesitated to meet the analogous challenge presented by the work of Walter Benjamin, whose unwieldy and unfinished *Arcades Project* has just appeared in English, despite the fact that Benjamin himself professed shortly before his death that although he had amassed thousands of pages not a single syllable of it had yet been written.

Warburg's main concern was the dialectic between the unmediated demonic influences of paganism and the reflective distance ("*Denkraum*") of rational thought made possible through what he called symbolic thinking. Although several statements reflect a belief in a historical process of secularization or sublimation,

much of Warburg's work, as Michael Steinberg has observed, stresses the alternation between the two born of a "kinship of Athens and Oraibi." Warburg described it as a "perpetual turning from concretion to abstraction and back again," a Nietzschean contention between the Apollonian and Dionysian, and, in more unguarded moments, a form of schizophrenia. Warburg's importance lies in seeing that this problem was one that especially implicated images and their use. Because the "primitive" activity is by definition non-verbal, and because images continue to live long after their use in ritual, images and their afterlife became Warburg's primary preoccupation. Warburg was thus not an art historian attempting to build interdisciplinary bridges, but a cultural historian who, having read Lessing at an impressionable age, believed that the history of art was the best way into some of the central problems of Western civilization.

In contrast to the interest in subject matter that reigned supreme in the wake of Panofsky, Warburg was interested above all in the transmission of "pathos formulas." As Salvatore Settis has shown, Warburg's term contains an inherent tension, since "pathos" is traditionally associated with expressive impetus and movement, and "formula" with convention and classification. For Warburg, the formula allowed the original expressive element to travel and survive; it conscripted the transitory expression into the workings of historical memory. This led to a very dynamic way of viewing images. When Warburg saw a figure enveloped in fluttering drapery enter a Renaissance picture — in Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, or a popular print — he saw an irruption of a pagan life force in late medieval culture. This encounter was, in his view, a central problem of Renaissance art: it brought an age-old battle newly to a head, causing "an entirely new cultural persona to emerge." Thus, in contrast to the assured masterpieces presented in traditional studies of Renaissance art, Warburg introduces us to unstable compounds, fields of contentious forces. The models of classical stability still widely taken to symbolize Renaissance art become, upon reading Warburg, the exception rather than the rule, and take on a stranger appearance as fragile moments of sublimation. Such a view in turn provokes dramatic re-evaluations of the larger story that Warburg never told. The High Renaissance, for example, starts to look like a short-lived reaction, an archaizing effort to control and stabilize the pathos formulas that had held the Quattrocento artists in their grip, and this in turn makes it easier to understand why it so quickly devolved into the strange experiments of the art of the 1520s and after.

Warburg's anthropology was elementary, his conception of the Middle Ages procrustean, and his concerns in the end monomaniacal. And yet he offers important, even urgent, lessons in the present academic climate, perhaps explaining why there are signs of a revival similar to that which Burckhardt has enjoyed in recent years. The emphasis on the "long Middle Ages" that has marked art-historical scholarship in the last two decades has given way to new appraisals of the cultural conflicts of early modernity, making Warburg a newly compelling read. In the

wake of the high-brow contextualism of classic iconography and the social-historical contextualism that succeeded it, art history has also recently found a non-formalist road back to images, and thus can rejoin Warburg's company. We now see inquiries into the specifically visual modalities that shape religious experience, form social bonds, structure epistemological models, and inform processes of self-fashioning, as well as modes of cultural reception and construction.

Warburg's work emerges specifically as a precursor — and a caveat — amidst the recent interest in the power of images, a trend that has focused new attention on the roles of images in pre-modern and non-Western societies as alternative models to the “distanced” approaches to art that, since the Renaissance, have found their home in the modern museum and art history classroom. Warburg's resistance to art-historical aestheticism and his interest in the ritual functions of images make him relevant to these concerns, but in many ways he teaches a different lesson. Far from embracing the rituals of the Pueblo Indians as a welcome alternative to an alienated modern Western civilization — in the manner of Margaret Mead and her many followers — Warburg studied them as a living example of a pagan sensibility that caused particularly strong disruptions, and efforts of integration, during the Renaissance, and that remained close to the surface down to his own day. When in Rome shortly before his death in 1929, he witnessed the Fascist celebrations for the concordat between Mussolini and the Pope and noted that he considered himself lucky to be able to observe at first hand “the repaganization of Rome.” One can only imagine what he would have made of a late twentieth-century enthusiasm for “unmediated” engagements with images on the part of academics discontented with academic sophistication. He was too close to the power of images to be nostalgic about it, and too sensitive to the tensions within Renaissance culture to see it as the foundation for the comfortable triumph of rationalism. Warburg saw instead an unfolding and volatile process in which the spell of images is continually countered by efforts to neutralize them, to effect what he called “aesthetic detoxification” (*aesthetische Entgiftung*). Such an approach complicates the story considerably, and continually implicates the scholar as one of its primary players.

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L'Ermetismo nell'Antichità e nel Rinascimento. Istituto di Studi Umanistici F. Petrarca — Mentis Itinerarium, a cura di Luisa Rotondi Secchi Tarugi. Milan, Nuovi Orizzonti, 1998. P. 240.

Fondé en 1988 avec l'objectif de promouvoir l'étude des différents aspects de l'humanisme de la Renaissance, le *Centro di Studi Umanistici F. Petrarca* organise chaque année, avec la participation de spécialistes italiens ou étrangers, une série