The Survival of Images: Art Historians, Psychoanalysis, and the Ancients. By Louis Rose. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 2001. Pp. 209. $34.95. ISBN 0–8143–2860–1.

This monograph explores the emergence of a psychoanalytically oriented art history, one concerned with tracing motifs found in Western art to myth and to the psychic tensions of prehistoric clan life. The principal subjects are: the art historian Aby Warburg, his successor as director of the Warburg Library Fritz Saxl, the classicist Emanuel Loewy, the art historian-turned-psychoanalyst Ernst Kris, and Sigmund Freud. Born into the cultivated Jewish middle class in Central Europe before the First World War, they shared many personal connections. Saxl took over the direction of the Warburg Library when its founder was hospitalized for a mental breakdown in the 1920s and helped arrange for its safe transfer to London after the Nazi seizure of power. Freud and Loewy, only a year apart in age, grew up together in Vienna and were lifelong friends. Kris first became an art historian and then a psychoanalyst in Vienna where Freud named him as one of the editors of the *Imago*, the journal of the psychoanalytic movement. His work on the psychology and history of art also brought him in contact with the Warburg Library. Even Warburg, who explicitly rejected Freud's theories, was led by his investigation into the ritual bases of Renaissance art into some of the same terrain that Freud explored in his essays on art and especially in *Totem and Taboo*. There were of course many important differences in approach and subject matter between these men, but all of them found themselves at one point drawn into questions of image-making and the way in which images hearken back to classical antiquity: to its myths, to its dramaturgy, and to the primitive rituals and clan life that underlay them.

Rose begins with an explanation of how Warburg became interested in the problem of expressive gestures in Renaissance paintings and sculpture. Such gestures, which Warburg came to call "pathos formulas," acquired ultimately their emotional resonance because they represented residual bits of ancient dramaturgy, theater that represented deep-seated and timeless emotional conflicts. This conclusion led Warburg from the study of Renaissance painting to the study of primitive myths. Traveling in the 1890s to New Mexico and Arizona he witnessed the Pueblo *Hemis Kachina* ceremonies where dancers wearing masks recreated the presence of absent spirits. These rituals employed magic to "bind" hostile natural forces by having the dancers mimic them. But there was, according to Warburg, a latent tension in such rituals between the promise of mastery over hostile forces and the danger of becoming so immersed in the ritual identification that one would lose one's own sense of identity. Gradually, as a way of easing this tension, symbolical identifications replaced identification based on gesture and movement. Symbolism represented then a sublimation of pagan rituals, and thus the visual arts that employ symbols still recalled, albeit at

a considerable distance, the magic, rituals, and psychic tensions of primitive clan life. Warburg considered symbolism or image-making an evolutionary stage on the path to rationalism and the formulation of laws, but also believed that our memory preserved traces of the still powerful projections of the primitive ego.

Obviously this view has a striking affinity with the contemporary investigations of Freud into cultural phenomena. From the very beginning dream work can be read as a theater, one in which fragmentary gestures acquire their emotional resonance by recalling dramatic incidents and memory traces. Through such dramaturgical techniques as condensation and displacement dream symbols emerge in a process analogous to what Warburg described for the beginnings of civilization. Like Warburg, Freud saw art as a window into the human psyche and his prewar essays on artists and all who explore the ways in which art allows for repressed memories, which threaten the stability of the ego, to resurface symbolically, permitting them to be pacified or mastered. They all illustrate the principle that Freud considered central to mental and cultural life: "the instrument of repression . . . becomes the vehicle for the return" (quoted on p. 94). The culmination of these investigations is *Totem and Taboo* where the totemic festivals and the religions, including Christianity, which emerged from them are explained as elaborate theatrical events meant to evoke and honor the presence of the absent father. Just as the image of the serpent among the Pueblos, once a feared and ambiguous symbol, became etherealized over generations, so too the image of the hated and feared patriarch transforms itself into an idealized deity.

The psychological roots of image-making also fascinated Freud's friend, the classicist Emanuel Loewy, who in his book, *The Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art*, asked how the Greeks were able to achieve a realist style. Not simply, he argued, by paying closer attention to their external world, or by learning a new technique, but rather by "a psychological process of recollection" (p. 66). Artists within a culture worked from a collection of "memory-pictures," a store of images that is gradually increased and enriched over time. The breakthrough to realism was indeed aided by a closer observation of nature, but it also was inspired by the work of Greek poets and dramatists who taught visual artists how to give their work a sense of movement by placing them in a dramatic scene. But beneath the new realism lurks still the archaic "memory-pictures." Similar themes are sounded by Ernst Kris, first in his study of the heroic image of the artist, which traced this potent myth back to ritualist magic, and then in his later study of caricature, which worked, he asserted, by mobilizing energies associated with the primitive magic and image-making as magic. Finally Fritz Saxl also explored the psychological reasons for the uses of the classical inheritance in painters from Holbein to Cézanne.

Rose has clearly identified an important and intriguing bundle of ideas within the modern development of what he calls cultural sciences. One need

only think of the debt that Ernst Gombrich, arguably the greatest art historian of the twentieth century and a strong presence in this book, owed to Warburg, Kris, Loewy, and Saxl, to understand how fruitful this form of psychological investigation could be in the arts. A patient reader with a solid background in the field should find some useful hints and ideas here. But the book suffers from two serious flaws. First, it lacks a wider context. What led these five individuals from very similar backgrounds to speculate about a residual, archaic past lurking beneath the images of Western art? Was there something in their shared background that might have predisposed them to this approach? To what situation and influences in the discipline of art history were they reacting? What was their enduring influence both within art history and in neighboring disciplines? Rose does draw parallels with the Cambridge classicists, including Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray, and Francis Cornford, who focused on ritual as the source of Greek art, but one only has to read the beginning chapters of Gombrich's intellectual biography of Warburg to understand how useful a wider context would have been, even in a monograph.

A bigger, if related problem, however, has to do with the author's exposition of his subjects' ideas. It just is not very clear. One must read and reread passages just to understand various *Problemstellungen* and why they mattered. The problem is not so much with jargon, but rather that the author tries to compress too much that needs to be unpacked, explained, elucidated into his paragraphs. His abstract, and occasionally portentous sentences frequently cannot perform the tasks he assigns to them. The reader longs for examples and for arguments to support the, sometimes breathtaking, leaps from cause to effect. Too often, as for example in the discussion of Kris's ideas about caricature, one can only vaguely discern the argument as if it lay beneath a rather gauzy fabric. It is not a good sign when an excerpt from one of his subject's works explains far more clearly what is at stake then the previous four or five pages of the author's exposition. This reviewer turned frequently back to Gombrich, with pleasure and relief, to be able to follow the train of thought.

Even if one could wish, however, for a clearer, more contextualized discussion of the subject, one comes away from this book persuaded of its interest and wanting to know more. That is not a small accomplishment.

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