

la rivista di **engramma**
gennaio **2023**

198

Warburg Bibliothek

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Warburg Bibliothek

edited by Ada Naval and Giulia Zanon

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La Rivista di Engramma

a peer-reviewed journal

198 gennaio 2023

www.engramma.it

sede legale

Engramma

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redazione

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edizioni**engramma**

ISBN carta 978-88-31494-98-4

ISBN digitale 978-88-31494-99-1

finito di stampare maggio 2023

Si dichiara che i contenuti del presente volume sono la versione a stampa totalmente corrispondente alla versione online della Rivista, disponibile in open access all'indirizzo: <http://www.engramma.it/eOS/index.php?issue=198> e ciò a valere ad ogni effetto di legge. L'editore dichiara di avere posto in essere le dovute attività di ricerca delle titolarità dei diritti sui contenuti qui pubblicati e di aver impegnato ogni ragionevole sforzo per tale finalità, come richiesto dalla prassi e dalle normative di settore.

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Warburg Bibliothek

Engramma 198, Editorial

Ada Naval, Giulia Zanon

Professor Warburg makes his Library available to all those who are seriously engaged in scientific work, because it is intended to be not only a tool of the trade but also the focal point of the research on the question of the influence of Antiquity and it is hoped that in the Library a circle of people will gather, who will devote their work to answering this question lying at the heart of all historical research.

(Fritz Saxl, *Das Nachleben der Antike. Zur Einführung in die Bibliothek Warburg*, [1921] 2023)



The Warburg Bibliothek issue of “Engramma” opens basking in the light flooding in the reading room of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg from the large skylight above, designed in 1925 by Gerhard Langmaak (for a history of the Bibliothek’s project, see Engramma 116, maggio 2014, the contribution of Giacomo Calandra di Roccolino, *Aby Warburg architetto*).

Collected in this issue are primary sources on the Warburg Library, excerpts from the most significant essays on the subject, as well as an interview with the current Director of the Warburg Institute on the future of the Library.

Together with the Mnemosyne Atlas project, the Library founded by Aby Warburg can be regarded as the most important result of the scholar’s intellectual project and, at the same time, a tangible precipitate of the complexity of his thought. The cover of this issue, a 1926 photograph, evokes the space and materiality of the Library in Hamburg, built from

both bookshelves and projections of light and whose complexity finds a concrete expression in the elliptical plan of the room.

The ellipse, rather than the geometrically centered circle, appears thus as the paradigm of a new form of thought: Warburg looks to Keplero's studies, which refuted the heliocentric model with a new calculation of the planetary orbits, thus declaring the fall of the aristotelico-copernican system, and with it the circle's centrality (it is one of the main themes of the Mnemosyne Atlas Panel C). Through this point of view, the skylight is not only the source of a singular kind of light, but also a window open towards the sky, where points (the stars) and lines (constellations) constitute the first form of Orientation for humankind.

Orientation (*Orientierung*) is one of the four key-words governing the organisation of the Library, together with Image (*Bild*), Word (*Wort*) and Action (*Dromenon*). By means of these traces one can attempt to establish knowledge paths through Warburg's inexhaustible intellectual legacy. The four categories of the Library are, in turn, physical places for study, which reciprocally interconnect in order to "shed light on specific problems" and find spaces where to solve them. It is likely that the ellipse speaks as well of this interweaving of knowledge, the law of 'good neighbourhood', where each book is located on one of the foci of an orbit where other books lie and converse. For the scholar in the Library, this 'neighbouring' books are capable of giving answers, but, moreover, act as 'agitators' of thought, raising new and unexpected questions to those who peruse them. Ellipse embraced by ellipse, a refracting dance along the orbit of the room.

The texts we publish here allow us to trace a journey through the life of the Warburg Library as a philosophical object and a living portion of Aby Warburg's intellectual history and of the survival of his thought. Warburg Bibliothek opens with the words of the most prominent of Warburg's heirs —Fritz Saxl, Edgar Wind, Gertrud Bing— here published both in their original language —German or English— following the life and the journeys of the Warburg Institute and in Italian translation (in most cases, a first Italian translation). Fritz Saxl, Gertrud Bing and Edgar Wind's contributions allow us to understand the Warburg Library's trajectory and to retrace its development. For this reason, we have chosen to follow a

chronological order, from the library of a rich, well-educated Hamburg scholar, who exchanges his birthright with an endless supply of book desiderata until the Warburgkreis' exile in London from the already deeply wounded Germany of the early Thirties; the intellectuals' diaspora caused by National Socialism was to be dense of consequences for Europe's cultural history.

But before all this came to pass, the years from 1923, when the *redux* bravely returned from Kreuzlingen to life, to his death in October 1929 are the happiest and more prolific of his whole intellectual and existential adventure. At the zenith of his endeavours, he devises and builds the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek as a space designed for his new research method and, at the same time, as an urgently ideological enterprise. Thus, in the text of the report read by Aby on the 31st of December 1927 before the Board of Directors of the Library (that is to say, his family), we can find:

It is an *impresa* whose effects are already visible today in the midst of the monstrous haste of the present that aims only at the advantages of the here and now. This *impresa* proceeds in an imperturbable manner and proposes the construction of an armoured turret in the service of reflection. We hope that we still have strength and trust that, in addition to the admiring respect that the scientific world pays to such an enterprise, the importance of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg as an essential tool for the reconstruction of European civilisation will be understood and supported by all, and not only ideally (Aby Warburg, *Da arsenale a laboratorio* (1927), in M. Ghelardi (a cura di), *Fra antropologia e storia dell'arte*, Torino 2021, 16. Author's translation).

The first section, *Sources*, collects texts by Warburg's closest collaborators concerning his project to establish the KBW. The issue opens with the text by Fritz Saxl, *Das Nachleben der Antike Zur Einführung in die Bibliothek Warburg* (1921), along with its first Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo, *La sopravvivenza dell'antico. Introduzione alla Biblioteca Warburg*. It is the first account both of the constitution of the Warburg Library and of the fundamental question around which the project revolves—the question of the current presence of Antiquity.

Along the same lines and two years later, Saxl's second contribution, *Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel (1923)*, with its first Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo: *La Biblioteca Warburg e il suo fine*, takes up the central questions that animate the Library's research, in order to delve into Warburg's methodology. In this text, Saxl broadens the field: while Warburg confronted himself with "what antiquity meant to the man of the early Renaissance", he also collected and organised the material needed to further that research into other fields. *Die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Hamburg (1930)*, with its first Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo, *La Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Amburgo*, Saxl's third contribution published in this issue, is a more technical text, focuses on the dissemination of the KBW's work, while also describing the relationship between the book collection and the photographic collection.

Gertrud Bing, in *Notes on the Warburg Library (1934)*, with its first Italian translation, edited by Giulia Zanon, *Appunti sulla Biblioteca Warburg*, elaborates on the interdisciplinary relationship between the volumes in the Library (which by then had moved to London) through an exposition of the library science method adopted. In addition, she presents an account of the extent of the library collection in 1934: 70,000 volumes, with 3,000 due to arrive in the following year. In the final part of the text, Bing elaborates and clarifies the library's classification system for the first time. The interest sparked by Bing's notes on the cataloguing system induced Edgar Wind to write, the following year, a contribution on the same subject of the classification of volumes based on a shelf marking system composed of three capital letters, numbers and colours: *The Warburg Institute Classification Scheme (1935)*, with its first Italian translation edited by Giulia Zanon, *Il sistema di classificazione del Warburg Institute (1935)*.

The History of Warburg's Library, 1886-1944, with its Italian translation edited by Michela Maguolo, *La storia della Biblioteca di Aby Warburg, 1886-1944*, is Fritz Saxl's best-known text on the subject because it was published as an appendix to Ernst Gombrich's *Intellectual Biography* in 1970: here Saxl composes the first complete account of the Library's history, from its beginnings to its transfer to London. Saxl's fourth text published here — *Das Warburg Institute (1946)*, with its first Italian

translation edited by Michela Maguolo, *L'Istituto Warburg (1946)*— is intended for publication in an architectural journal: after a concise introduction on the Warburg Institute and its Library, Saxl gives an update on the future of the Institute in England.

The second section, *Excerpta selecta*, presents excerpts from the most relevant essays and monographs on the KBW, two of which are contributions extracted from the seminal monograph for the studies on the Warburg Library: *Porträt aus Büchern: Bibliothek Warburg und Warburg Institut* (Dölling und Galitz, Hamburg 1993) edited by Michael Diers. In the first text, written by Diers himself, *Porträt aus Büchern. Stichworte*, the author reconstructs the multifaceted history of the Research Institute after the death of its founder, interrogating contemporary sources, from private and unpublished letters to reviews. Diers also reconstructs the crucial history of the KBW's publishing activity through its most important publications and titles. Martin Warnke, in *Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Forschungsprogramm*, deals with the Warburg Library and its research activities. Warnke begins with an overview of the German research institutions of the time, but also of the ways in which Warburg's teaching influenced the way research was carried out, and then goes on to survey the fundamental areas of study pursued by the Library: the consequences of antiquity, meant not as a historico-artistic but rather as an interdisciplinary research agenda, applicable not only to the humanities but also to other areas of life. Thus Warnke:

It is a characteristic of Warburg's thought and research to focus less on remedies than on causes of suffering; not on prescriptions but on diseases; not on what is beautiful but rather on what is ugly (which makes the latter necessary in the first place). Thus, it is not primarily the aesthetic achievements and canonised artistic *formulae* that emerge in the survival of antiquity, but it is rather the caricaturisations, verbalisations and repressions of those *formulae* that continue to produce an effect on us.

Salvatore Settis's note *Dromenon, as ritualised behaviour*, introduces the matter of the meaning of one of the Library's key-words, *Dromenon*, by taking up the ideas outlined in the *Nota Finale* (1995) to his masterful essay *Warburg continuatus*, which we consider as the cornerstone of the construction of this issue of "Engramma". The text of *Warburg continuatus*

(1985) and, in its first Italian translation, of the *Nota Finale* (1995) are published M. Centanni (a cura di), *Warburg e il pensiero vivente*, Dueville 2021, 169-228 and translated into English in M. Centanni (ed. by), *Warburg and Living Thought*, Dueville 2021, 171-230.

The section closes with the recent *Construire des espaces de voisinage*, an excerpt from Philippe Despoix's book, *KBW – La Bibliothèque Warburg, laboratoire de pensée intermédiaire*, forthcoming from Presses du Réel (Dijon 2023). In his contribution, Despoix traces the process of institutionalisation of the Warburg Institute and the challenges the KBW faced, taking up the considerations on tearing down of disciplinary barriers and methodologies of book classification. Specifically, Despoix articulates his thought starting from Warburg's system of 'good neighbourhood' and the interrelation of the architecture of the building with the theoretical instances both of Warburg himself and his heirs. To close this editorial, we quote a short passage from his contribution, defining of the ellipse of the Bibliothek Warburg:

Matérialisation et symbole du *Denkraum*, l'«espace de pensée» constitué par la Bibliothèque, figure cosmique et source de lumière, la forme elliptique apparaît comme un des abrégés en image de la vocation de recherche warburgienne.

The last section of the issue concerns the future of the Library in relation to its long life in England, but also to its research cores and its hermeneutical demands. *Mind, Memory and Museum* is an interview with the current Director of the Warburg Institute, Bill Sherman, on the reform that is currently taking place, for the first time since the Warburg Institute found its permanent home in Woburn Square. The interview outlines the main lines of the Warburg Renaissance Project, and how the founder's legacy is still present in this project.

A final remark to end the presentation of Engramma 198: if Warburg, after his death, was for years merely the name of an institution or a Library (as Pasquali states in his 1930 *Ricordo di Aby Warburg*), what we are called upon to do is to once again interweave Warburg's intellectual history with the history of his Library, in order to understand the man through the

Abstract

Engramma n. 198, Warburg Bibliothek is a journey through the years of Warburg Library's life as a philosophical object and a living part of Aby Warburg's intellectual history and the survival of his thought. This issue could be seen as an anthology in which texts from the Warburgkreis about the Library are collected and presented for the first time in Italian translation. The first essays are from the Hamburg period: Fritz Saxl in *Das Nachleben der Antike Zur Einführung in die Bibliothek Warburg (1921)*, first Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo, *La sopravvivenza dell'antico. Introduzione alla Biblioteca Warburg*, briefly summarises the salient aspects of the Warburg Library, highlighting a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Antiquity; Saxl's *Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel (1923)*, first Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo, *La biblioteca Warburg e il suo fine*, explains the particular approach to the history of the survival of Antiquity; *Die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Hamburg (1930)*, first Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo, *La Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Amburgo (1930)* is a brief presentation of the Hamburg Institute. Other essays are from the British period: *Notes on the Warburg Library (1934)*, first Italian translation, edited by Giulia Zanon, *Appunti sulla Biblioteca Warburg, Appunti sulla biblioteca Warburg (1934)* is written by Gertrud Bing in the aftermath of the arrival of the Warburg Library in London. Bing describes simply but fully the genesis, history, structure, mission, and meaning of the library conceived by Aby Warburg; In *The Warburg Institute Classification Scheme (1935)*, first Italian translation, edited by Giulia Zanon, *Il sistema di classificazione del Warburg Institute*, Edgar Wind briefly explains the system of classification used in the Warburg Library. *The History of Warburg's Library, 1886-1944*, Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo, *La storia della Biblioteca di Aby Warburg*, is Fritz Saxl's major account on the Warburg Library, written in 1943-1944, and published for the first time by Ernst Gombrich as an Appendix to his *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography (1970)*. Few years later, Fritz Saxl publishes *Das Warburg Institute (1946)*, first Italian translation, edited by Michela Maguolo, *L'Istituto Warburg*, with a really brief presentation of the Warburg Library. Two texts are extracted from 1993 book *Porträt aus Buchern*, edited by Michael Diers: in *Porträt aus Büchern. Stichworte*, Diers explains the history of the Warburg Institute after its founder's death; in *Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Forschungsprogramm* Martin Warnke tells us about the Warburg Library and its research activity. Salvatore Settis in *Dromenon: comportamento ritualizzato* questions the meaning of one of the 'key words' of the Warburg Library: Dromenon as ritualised behaviour. The second part of this Engramma issue focuses on the present and the future of the Library. In *Mind, Memory and Museum* Bill Sherman, director in charge of the Warburg Institute responds to suggestions by Ada Naval and Giulia Zanon on the Institute with special attention towards the Warburg Library. Warburg Bibliothek closes with Philippe Despoix's *Construire des espaces de voisinage* reconstructs the original steps that established the Warburg Library as a 'laboratory' for collective research

into the ways in which images and knowledge have been transmitted since antiquity.

keywords | Aby Warburg; Warburg Library; Warburg Institute; Gertrud Bing; Fritz Saxl; Edgar Wind; Kulturwissenschaft Bibliothek Warburg.



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Editorial/Editoriale

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Fritz Saxl / traduzione di Michela Maguolo

Die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Hamburg (1930) /

La Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Amburgo (1930)

Fritz Saxl / traduzione di Michela Maguolo

Notes on the Warburg Library (1934) / Appunti sulla Biblioteca Warburg (1934)

Gertrud Bing / traduzione di Giulia Zanon

**The Warburg Institute Classification Scheme (1935) / Il sistema di catalogazione
del Warburg Institute (1935)**

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