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Warburg Bibliothek

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Sommario

- 7 *Warburg Bibliothek. Engramma 198, Editorial*
Ada Naval and Giulia Zanon
- 15 *Warburg Bibliothek. Editoriale di Engramma 198*
Ada Naval e Giulia Zanon
- 23 *Das Nachleben der Antike. Zur Einführung
in die Bibliothek Warburg (1921)*
Fritz Saxl
- 29 *La sopravvivenza dell'antico. Introduzione
alla Biblioteca Warburg (1921)*
Fritz Saxl, traduzione di Michela Maguolo
- 35 *Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel (1923)*
Fritz Saxl
- 49 *La Biblioteca Warburg e il suo fine (1923)*
Fritz Saxl, traduzione di Michela Maguolo
- 63 *Die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg
in Hamburg (1930)*
Fritz Saxl
- 71 *La Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Amburgo
(1930)*
Fritz Saxl, traduzione di Michela Maguolo
- 77 *Notes on the Warburg Library (1934)*
Gertrud Bing
- 87 *Appunti sulla Biblioteca Warburg (1934)*
Gertrud Bing, traduzione di Giulia Zanon
- 97 *The Warburg Institute Classification Scheme (1935)*
Edgar Wind
- 103 *Il sistema di catalogazione del Warburg Institute (1935)*
Edgar Wind, traduzione di Giulia Zanon
- 109 *The History of Warburg's Library, 1886-1944*
Fritz Saxl
- 125 *La storia della Biblioteca di Aby Warburg, 1886-1944*
Fritz Saxl, traduzione di Michela Maguolo
- 141 *Das Warburg Institute (1946)*
Fritz Saxl
- 145 *L'Istituto Warburg (1946)*
Fritz Saxl, traduzione di Michela Maguolo

- 149 *Porträt aus Büchern. Stichworte*
Michael Diers
- 171 *Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Forschungsprogramm*
Martin Warnke
- 179 *Dromenon, as ritualised behaviour. A definition
of the Warburg Library's section*
Salvatore Settis
- 183 *Dromenon, come comportamento ritualizzato.
Una definizione della sezione della Biblioteca di Warburg*
Salvatore Settis
- 187 *Construire des espaces de voisinage. Institution, collectif de
recherche et architectonique de la KBW*
Philippe Despoix
- 219 *Mind, Memory and Museum. Warburg Renaissance Project.
An interview with Bill Sherman*
Edited by Ada Naval and Giulia Zanon

Dromenon, as ritualised behaviour

A definition of the Warburg Library's section

Salvatore Settis

Introduction, edited by Ada Naval and Giulia Zanon

In this Engramma issue, we publish an anthology of texts that retrace the history of the Warburg Library since its establishment, written by the protagonists of its history such as Gertrud Bing, Fritz Saxl, and Edgar Wind. By doing so, we deem it fundamental to give a prominent place to what is, without doubt, the first and most comprehensive critical study on the Warburg Library. As Saxl wrote in the 1930s “the Library and its writings constitute the unity of Warburg’s oeuvre”, Salvatore Settis reminds us of the value of the Bibliothek as a complete (and living) part of Aby Warburg’s intellectual body of work.

In 1985, Salvatore Settis publishes *Warburg continuatus. Descrizione di una biblioteca*, in *Quaderni storici* n.s. 58/a. xx, 1 (April 1985), 5-38. This essay is, to this day, one of the reference points for Warburgian studies: it illustrates a path by which to understand the development of the Library and the hermeneutic importance of the location of its volumes, following four plans and four reference points. We also publish here a brief reflection, extrapolated from the *Final Note* that Settis added in 1995 to his original text (in *Le pouvoir des bibliothèques. La mémoire des livres en Occident*, ed. par M. Baratin et C. Jacob, Paris, 1996, 150-163) on the meaning of *Dromenon*, one of the ‘key-words’ corresponding to Warburg’s ‘living thought’, which refers to action or even better, as Settis suggests here, to ‘ritualised behaviour’.

The text of *Warburg continuatus* (1985) and of the *Final Note* (1995) are translated into English in M. Centanni (ed. by), *Warburg and Living Thought*, Dueville 2022, 171-230.

Dromenon, as ritualised behaviour

As the four-floor division was gradually drafted by architects, and the transfer of books implemented, the idea of matching the physical sequence of books with a small number of key ideas that corresponded to Warburg's 'living thought' began to take shape. The key ideas, which can partially be traced back to Warburg's own writings or earlier testimonies of his Library (as I have tried to show above), were condensed into four terms (*Orientierung, Bild, Wort, Handlung*), which would remain constant in all subsequent relocations of the Library; in England, they became Orientation, Image, Word, Action, respectively. Another word, *Ausdruck*, appears, transparently, behind these: 'Expression', which can naturally take the form of images (*Bild*) or words (*Wort*).

	I PHASE HAMBURG, CA.1927	II PHASE HAMBURG, CA.1932	III PHASE LONDON, 1934	IV PHASE LONDON, 1938
IV.	DRÖMENON	DROMENON	DROMENON	DRÖMENON
III.	WORT	WORT	BILD	ORIENTIERUNG
II.	ORIENTIERUNG	BILD	WORT	WORT
I.	BILD	ORIENTIERUNG	ORIENTIERUNG	BILD

Scheme for the evolution of the four 'key-words' sections of the Warburg Library.

Finally, a point that is not clear to me in terms of terminology is when exactly the word *Drōmenon*, which corresponds to German *Handlung* or *Handeln* and the English Action, appeared for the first time. It certainly drew on the Greek language of the mysteries, the Eleusinian mysteries in particular. Ancient texts distinguish in them, 'what is shown' during the mystery rites (*deiknymenon*), 'what is said' (*legomenon*), and 'what is performed' (*drōmenon*) the purpose was probably to allude to *Bild* and *Wort* through implicit references, respectively, to *deiknymenon* and to *legomenon*.

English abstract

In this note following his magisterial essay, *Warburg Continuatus*, Salvatore Settis questions the meaning of one of the 'key words' of the Warburg Library: *Dromenon* as ritualised behaviour.

keywords | Orientierung; Wort; Bild; Dromenon.



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