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# Staging Mnemosyne

a cura di Daniela Sacco, Emily Verla Bovino

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# Staging Mnemosyne

Editoriale Engramma n. 130

Daniela Sacco, Emily Verla Bovino

With *Staging Mnemosyne*, Engramma publishes an issue devoted to the relationship between studies of, and on, Aby Warburg (Hamburg, 1866 – 1929) and the Theatre: it does so with the awareness that the theatre and the theatrical recurrently emerge as themes of interest in the Hamburg scholar's notes, publications and projects. Responses to our call for papers arrived from across the world and a selection of these contributions are gathered here under two lines of discussion: first, the study of forms of gestural expression in the history of theater and the visual arts and, second, the varied application of the Atlas construct that Warburg worked with in his *Mnemosyne* project, within the working processes of theatre.

Alongside the featured original essays – the majority of which, significantly, are almost entirely devoted to works of contemporary theatre – we have also included a number of extracts from two previously published book-length works: these extracts are by authors who, from two very distant parts of the world – Argentina and Japan – have touched on similar concerns regarding our proposed theme of Aby Warburg and the Theatre. Extracts from Argentinian scholar José Emilio Burucúa's *Imagen y la Risa: Las Pathosformeln de lo de lo Cómico en el Grabado de la Modernidad Temprana* (2007) are an important example of the application of Warburg's concept of *Pathosformel* to comic expression. In his research on the comic in fifteenth and sixteenth century European prints, Burucúa's writing on engravings in the collection of French abbot Michel de Marolles (1600 – 1681) shows how the concept of polarity principally explored by Warburg in its tragic dimension, can be adapted to explore comic *pathos*. Extracts from Japanese scholar Jun Tanaka's volume *Aby Warburg: The Labyrinth of Memory (Aby Warburg. Kioku no Meikyū)*, (2001) speculate on the young Warburg's interrupted plans to travel to Japan, expanding upon Warburg's interest in late-nineteenth century Pueblo theatrics and fifteenth and sixteenth century Florentine pageantry, to suggest associations between Warburg's thinking and the classical Japanese theatre of Noh.

With *La matrice tragica dell'atto artistico*, issue curator Daniela Sacco prefaces the present selection of original essays and extracts with a focus on

Warburg's late thinking: her introductory essay draws theatrical resonance from ideas Warburg was in the process of developing before his death, about the tragic foundations of the creative act, framing them in relation to his concept of *Denkraum*.

In *Wanting to See Duse, or on Goshka Macuga's Preparatory Notes for a Chicago Comedy inspired by Aby Warburg-as-Amateur-Playwright*, co-curator Emily Verla Bovino follows the lead of a lesser-known dramaturgical experiment by the young Warburg, inspired by actress Eleonora Duse, to analyze the performance-film *Preparatory Notes for a Chicago Comedy* (2013) by Polish artist Goshka Macuga, a work inspired by Warburg's more oft-cited amateur comedy *Hamburg Kunstgesprache (Hamburg Art Conversations)* written in 1896. Warburg's conceptualization of the "künstlerische" Act ("artistic" act) and *Verleibung* (corporalization) in his early notes, are outlined and discussed in relation to the internet life of images and semio-capitalism in the twenty-first century. An early instantiation of Macuga and Roelstraete's script for the *Preparatory Notes for a Chicago Comedy* is published to accompany the essay.

In *Atlante immemorabile. Virgilio Sieni a Palazzo Strozzi (Firenze, 12 aprile 2014)*, Stefano Tomassini addresses the epiphany of gesture evoked by Warburg's concept of *Pathosformel*. Tomassini reflects upon what it is to reside in space using the *Mnemosyne* model of the 'Atlas form' and bases his observations on experiments in dance that Virgilio Sieni has worked on for a number of years, in particular the choreography for *Corpus Deposizioni e Visitazioni* performed within the monumental exhibition *Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino. Diverging Paths of Mannerism* at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence.

It is instead lyric opera, specifically the theatre of Federico Tiezzi, which Biagio Scuderi's *Per un'estetica dell'intervallo. Echi warburghiani nella regia lirica di Federico Tiezzi* explores through Warburg's concepts; Tiezzi's *Norma* (1991) is offered by Scuderi as an example of a liminal work between theatre and the visual arts.

With *Horror on Stage in the Dutch Republic. Re-thinking a Tableau Vivant from Joost van den Vondel's Gysbreght van Aemstel (1637) through Aby Warburg's Pathosformeln and Denkraum*, Tim Vergeer rethinks the function of the *tableau vivant* in the context of one of the most important works of the celebrated seventeenth century Dutch poet and dramaturge Joost van den Vondel, associating what Warburg called *Denkraum*, with *catharsis*.

An interesting perspective on how the recent renewal of interest in Warburg's work has influenced proponents of experimental theatre in Italy, is provided by two contributions relative to the work of the theatre groups *ErosAntEros* (Ravenna) and *Anagoor* (Castelfranco Veneto). In both instances, the experience of theatre is told directly by its protagonists: in *Itinerari scenici e compositivi attraverso la Ninfa e l'Atlante di Warburg. Esperienze di ricerca del gruppo ErosAntEros*, Agata Tomsic writes from the perspective of practice about the influence of Warburg's hermeneutic model, and its evolution as a "compositional method," on performances from *Ninfa Mane!* to the more recent *Like Fireflies*.

In an interview conducted by Lisa Gasparotto, Simone Derai -- co-founder of Anagoor-- recounts the experience of Anagoor: *La lingua di Atlante. Abbecedario del Teatro di Anagoor* is a glossary or primer of basic concepts in which themes from Warburg's oeuvre and thought -- in particular the methodologically central *Nachleben* or afterlife -- are connected to particular Anagoor productions, from *Palazzo Atlante* to *Fortuna*, from *Tempesta* and *Lingua Imperii* to *Virgilio brucia*.





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