

# THE WARBURG INSTITUTE

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A Special Issue on the Library and Its Readers

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## **Introduction: Warburg's Library and Its Legacy**

In this collection of essays, scholars from many traditions and disciplines describe what a single academic institution has meant: to them, to their work, and to the humanities in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Named for a supremely imaginative historian of art and culture, Aby Warburg, the Warburg Institute began as his personal library in Hamburg (fig. 1). Devoted to the study of the impact of classical antiquity on European civilization, the collection became a major center of culture and scholarship in the years after World War I. While Warburg himself was incapacitated, his Viennese assistant, Fritz Saxl, turned the Library into a center for interdisciplinary scholarship. Erwin Panofsky, Ernst Cassirer, and many others found both materials and inspiration in the Library, and Warburg himself, when he returned, offered brilliant seminars on the history of art and culture. A successful monograph series established the Warburg Library as a center of scholarship on the history of religion and philosophy as well

*Common Knowledge* 18:1

DOI 10.1215/0961754X-1456845

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Figure 1. Aby Warburg and his son Max Adolph in Warburg's study in Hamburg.  
Courtesy of the Warburg Institute, London

as on that of art. Lecture series and collaborative projects stitched intellectual webs across the landscape of Europe.

In 1933, as Germany entered its age of darkness, the Library was rescued from Hamburg, thanks in part to the help of British benefactors. In the midst of World War II, Rab Butler, president of the British Board of Education, decided that the Institute must be kept in Britain and that the only way to do so was to make it part of the University of London, which was in those days a great force for openness and innovation in British higher education. Butler persuaded the Treasury to provide the funds necessary for its upkeep and for a new building. In 1944, the University of London signed a trust deed in which it agreed to offer the Institute a home on this basis—a testimony of the university's faith in the enduring value of humanistic research and teaching (fig. 2). Since then, the Warburg Institute has been one of Britain's most renowned academic institutions.

In its old quarters at the Imperial Institute and, from winter 1958 on, in an ugly but functional new building in Woburn Square in Bloomsbury (fig. 3), the Warburg Institute has offered a domicile for scholars of profound and original scholarship—both for members of the staff, such as Michael Baxandall, Ernst Gombrich, Charles Schmitt, D. P. Walker, Edgar Wind, Rudolf Wittkower, and Frances Yates, and for others who made it their home away from home, such as Arnaldo Momigliano, Marjorie Reeves, and Gershom Scholem. The *Journal of*

*the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* began as a creation of the Warburg—early issues were written largely by the editors, Wind and Wittkower—and has established itself over the decades as a unique interdisciplinary periodical, one whose coverage runs from antiquity to the twentieth century and whose standards of erudition and clarity are legendary. Several series of publications—the *Studies of the Warburg Institute*, the *Oxford-Warburg Studies*, and the *Warburg Institute Texts and Surveys*—have transformed areas of scholarship, from the history of astrology and ritual magic to the prophetic and visionary work of Ramon Lull, and from the aesthetics of the Renaissance humanists to the philology of the first professional classical scholars. The Warburg Institute remains dedicated to the study of the classical tradition, in all its variations—not as a single set of texts crafted by Greeks and inherited by the followers of Leo Strauss, but as a great Mississippi of texts, ideas, images, and objects, constantly intersecting with and transformed by other streams.

At the heart of the Warburg Institute is its Library of 350,000 volumes. The collection is not enormous when compared to the world's great research libraries. But the quality of the Library's holdings is extraordinary: some 40 percent of the books on its shelves are not in the British Library. Except for the rarest of them—now being digitized and made universally available—the books are made accessible to readers as Warburg intended, on open shelves (itself unusual in Europe). They are organized, moreover, by a particular system of classification, which originated with Warburg himself. The Library is designed not simply to make information rapidly accessible—as a search engine might—but to shape and channel scholarly investigations. Any sustained trip into the Warburg stacks will bring the reader not only to the books he or she is looking for, but also, as Michael Steinberg emphasizes in these pages, to their unexpected “good neighbors.” Magic and science, religion and philosophy, Christianity and Judaism appear in close proximity and challenge the reader both to trace webs of unexpected connections and to find the points of radical disjunction. Look for the history of astronomy and you will find primary and secondary sources, learned treatises, and popular almanacs—texts, tables, and images that range in origin from the ancient Near East to the present—as well as the vast literature of astronomy's unruly sister discipline, astrology. On the shelves of the Institute, the reader experiences the coincidence of opposites. For almost a century, this unique and uniquely organized collection has drawn scholars from around the world. As the section of Michael Baxandall's memoir reprinted in this collection makes clear, it has not only provided them with vital materials for their work but changed their way of thinking about scholarship and much more.

The Warburg is special in many ways. It benefits, in the first place, from the extraordinary prescience and learning of its founder—one of the rare scholars whose work and thought continue to be challenging and provocative eighty

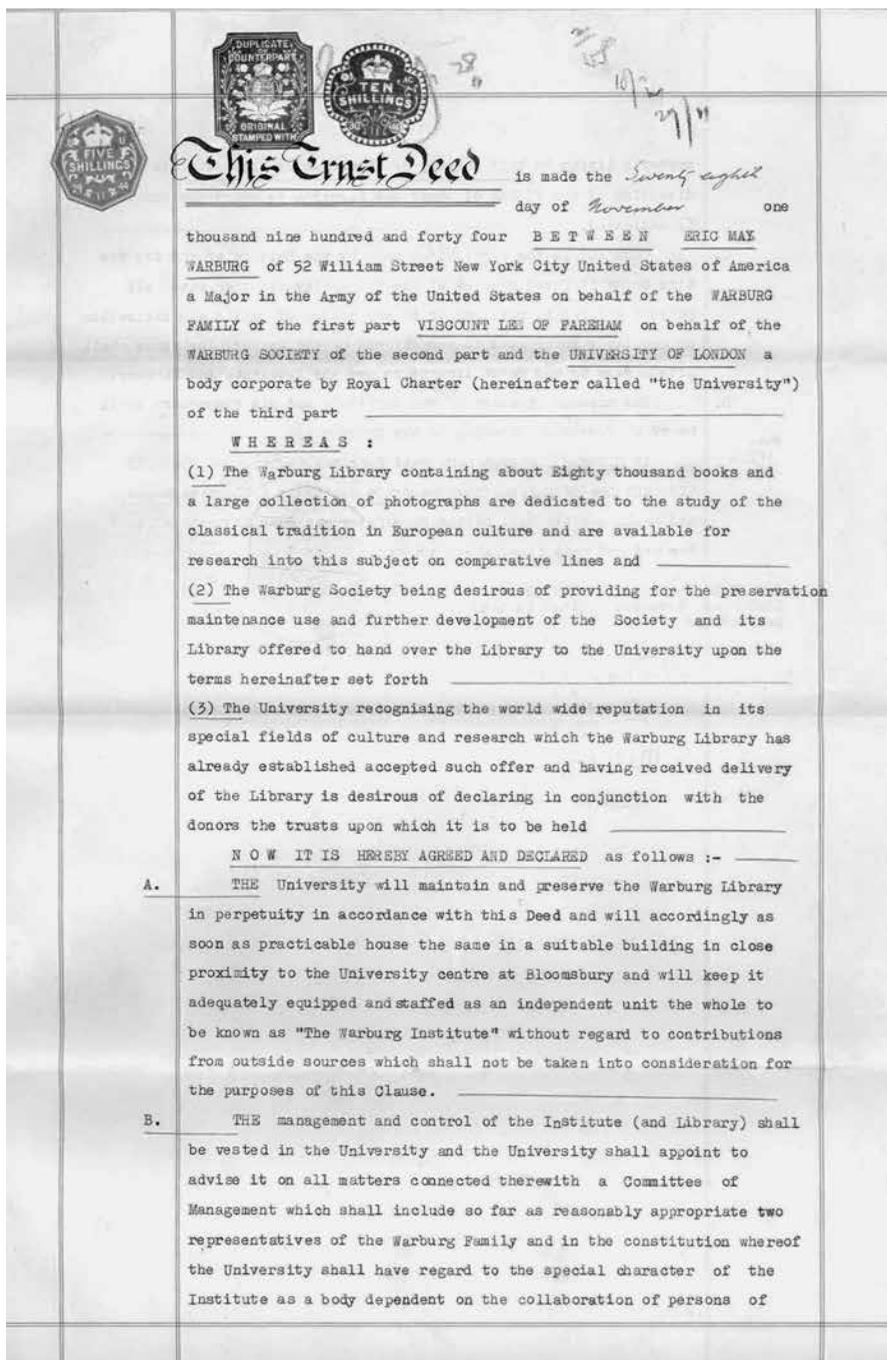


Figure 2. Trust deed for the Warburg Library and Institute, November 28, 1944,  
 bearing the University of London's seal and signed by Major Eric Max Warburg  
 for the Warburg family and by Viscount Lee of Fareham for the Warburg Society.  
 Courtesy of the Warburg Institute, London. "The University will maintain and  
 preserve the Warburg Library in perpetuity in accordance with this Deed . . . as an  
 independent unit."

goodwill living in this country or abroad whose interests lie in the direction of the fields of study and research to which the Institute is dedicated.

C. SUBJECT to the regulations made by the University and for the time being in force Members of the University together with all persons engaged in research or in any branch of public administration or genuinely interested in the objects of the Warburg Institute shall have access to and be at liberty to use the Institute and Library.

D. THE present Director of the Institute and his successors shall be of professional <sup>or a C.</sup> standing in the University.

*D.W.L.*  
*112* IN WITNESS whereof the said Eric Max Warburg and the said Viscount Lee of Fareham have hereunto set their respective hands and seals and the Seal of the University has been hereunto affixed the day and year first above written.

THE SEAL of the UNIVERSITY OF LONDON was hereunto affixed in the presence of

*H. Reaughin*  
PRINCIPAL

*D.W. Logan*  
CLERK OF THE COURT.

Figure 2. (continued)



Figure 3. The Reading Room of the Warburg Institute in Woburn Square, London, 1999. Courtesy of the Warburg Institute, London

years after his death. In many respects, Aby Warburg represents the model intellectual—if, as the history of modern intellectuals suggests, a lifelong struggle with contradictory forces is what gives many of them their creative energy. Warburg’s inherited wealth provided him with the means to live independently of institutions and thus of received ideas, in ways that most academics can only dream of. Good fortune, however, hardly guarantees intellectual independence, and closer consideration of Warburg’s life testifies to the many conflicts that he endured, inner as well as outer, intellectual as well as social. For all of Warburg’s qualities that continue to speak to us today—his extraordinary adventurousness as an intellectual “Grenzgänger,” reflecting and reflecting on the conflicts of his time and place—he remained very much a man of his age. Although Warburg had no need of a regular academic appointment, he aspired to one, encountering nothing but frustration. Closely related to his striving for academic acceptance was his struggle with his identity as a largely assimilated Jew in Wilhelmine Germany. Married to the artist Mary Hertz (1866–1934), whose family had converted from Judaism to Protestantism, and the first within his own family to wed outside his faith, Warburg nonetheless expressed pride in his Jewish ancestry, musing that “I should have been a roaring lion in the Judean desert; instead, I’ve become a lap-dog in Harvesthude” (a prosperous, bourgeois section of Hamburg). In ways that may not have been fully clear to him yet that he shared with

many well-to-do Jews in late-nineteenth-century Germany, Warburg's position placed him at the cusp between traditional forms of life, rooted in religion, and the modern mores of a more secular age. Such conflicts were to stand at the core of his scholarly endeavors.

Warburg characterized himself as “a Hebrew by blood, a Hamburger at heart, and a Florentine in spirit.” Himself a scion of a family of bankers, he focused in many of his most famous studies on the patronage of Florentine bankers of the Quattrocento, such as Francesco Sassetti, who themselves sought to combine traditional religious aims with the pursuit of power, political and commercial, in a rapidly changing world. Rejecting the notion, dominant in his day and inherited from Burckhardt, that full-blooded modernism and individualism had emerged in the Renaissance, Warburg recognized the complex coexistence of the medieval and the modern, the sacred and the secular, the Christian and the pagan, the Mesopotamian, the Islamic, and the Western in the culture of fifteenth-century Italy. The ambiguity, bordering on dualism, of Renaissance culture in some ways matched the contradictions of his own life as a Jew who rejected what, for him, were meaningless rituals, but who, at the same time, could see in the anti-Semitism that dogged him a crude renaissance of another sort of antimodernism that had its roots in the medieval past.

Warburg's work remains a powerful antidote to anodyne understandings of classicism that, in the vein of postmodernism in its most superficial forms, reduce it to a pale Apollonianism without sufficient regard for its darker Dionysian side. His concept of the classical tradition has nothing to do with Winckelmann's vision of “noble simplicity and still grandeur.” An admirer of Nietzsche, who also suffered from mental illness, Warburg nonetheless regarded the philosopher's work as untrammelled by the critical mass of historical data in which he, as a historian, delighted. In this too, Warburg remains a study in dialectical contradiction: an opponent of mystification who feared what might be called cultural recidivism but who nonetheless was fascinated to the point of obsession with magic and the occult.

Afflicted with depression and mental illness for much of his life, Warburg entered adulthood at a time when the profession of psychiatry itself was coming of age. A student of images and symbols, understood not simply as *topoi* but as powerful and sometimes repressed embodiments of cultural memory, Warburg made psychology central to his work long before it entered the mainstream of humanist studies. Though he conceived of cultural change in psychological terms, he was never so simpleminded as to think of it as a process that followed a straight line from the primitive to the enlightened. For him, the survival or, better, resurgence of the past, very often in the form of the primitive, remained a defining feature of modernity in general and of the Renaissance in particular; hence the focus in his own work (and in his Library) on such subjects as magic

and astrology. In his Freudian skepticism about enlightenment and his firsthand experience of the fragility of reason—and this, well before the horrors of World War I, let alone World War II—Warburg anticipated the mistrust of present-day scholars who, even if they do not subscribe to the most jaundiced notions of culture as a conspiracy, insist, along with Benjamin, that “there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”

Opposed to aestheticism, a dominant current in artistic thought and practice at the time of his formation, Warburg saw images as expressions of human experience. In using his own scholarship as a way of reflecting on his own subjectivity and, in turn, his own subjectivity as a way of exploring history, Warburg seems more modern than ever. His moving “Lecture on Serpent Ritual,” delivered in 1921 at the Swiss sanatorium in Kreuzlingen, sought to demonstrate his sanity to his skeptical doctor, Ludwig Binswanger, a student of Freud’s. Yet Warburg’s lecture also engages with symbolic anthropology (a subject that at the time had hardly established itself as a respectable academic discipline) in ways that anticipate the work of figures such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Mary Douglas. Warburg was a contemporary of the geographer and anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942), who, like him, participated in the intellectual milieu in Hamburg and also was fascinated by native American cultures. Boas, who emigrated early to the United States, famously declared, “I am of Jewish ancestry, but in feeling and thought I am a German. What do I owe to the house in which I grew up? A sense of duty and truth, and the compulsion to search honestly for the truth. When all this is unworthy of a German, when defamation, meanness, impatience, injustice, and lies today are perceived as German, who then still wants to be German?”<sup>1</sup> At a time when many of the human sciences have returned to anthropological perspectives with renewed engagement, Warburg’s willingness to look beyond the narrow contextualism and positivism of many of his contemporaries seems prophetic.

Warburg’s choice of subject for his critical lecture was both brilliant and pointed. The dances that the Moki Indians performed with snakes (which they regarded as symbols of lightning), in order to produce rain and thus avert famine, could themselves easily have been interpreted as the embodiment of primitive magic and irrationality. Warburg’s choice of subject, however, was uncanny not only in its insight but also in its pertinence to his own personal situation. Warburg interprets the snakes as double-edged therapeutic instruments of healing and violence that the Hopi used not simply to manipulate the natural world, but

1. “Ich bin jüdischer Abstammung, aber im Fühlen und Denken bin ich Deutscher. Was verdanke ich meinem Elternhaus? Pflichtgefühl, Treue und den Drang, die Wahrheit ehrlich zu suchen. Wenn dies eines Deutschen unwürdig ist, wenn Unfläterei, Gemeinheit, Unduld-

samkeit, Ungerechtigkeit, Lüge heutzutage als deutsch angesehen werden, wer mag dann noch ein Deutscher sein?”

also to understand it. In seeking parallels across continents, Warburg sought healing in unexpected patterns of scholarship. At the same time, he provided a model for researchers such as Natalie Zemon Davis and Richard Trexler, who followed in his footsteps from the narrow streets of Renaissance Florence to the less charted territories of the Americas.

A case could be made for Warburg's importance simply on the grounds of his enormous impact on the history of art history and, more broadly, the humanities and social sciences at large. To do so, however, would be to sell Warburg short. Just as Warburg himself did not peddle influences when it came to studying works of art, so too he should not be evaluated solely in such terms. Warburg and, with him, his Library, which, as demonstrated by the essays in this volume, constitutes the laboratory in which his legacy continues to evolve, provide a dynamic model for modern scholarship. More than a method, let alone a particular set of findings, Warburg's legacy remains an openness to unexpected connections that defies any kind of methodological dogmatism.

To see the truth of this assessment, one has only to acknowledge the wide range of often antithetical approaches that look to Warburg as a source of inspiration. Despite the presence of the Warburg Institute in England, until quite recently his work and its impact were less intensively studied in English-speaking countries than in Germany, if only for lack of translations. Nevertheless, over recent decades, new approaches to the study of images—whether “visual studies” or “visual culture” in the English-speaking world or (not an exact counterpart) what the Germans call “Bildwissenschaft” (a set of related tendencies all of which fly under the same intellectual flag)—have become far more comprehensive than ever before. In other words, there has been a transformation of the understanding of the image, to which Warburg would have been sympathetic. Anthropological approaches to the analysis of art objects, as well as cross-cultural studies, can also claim Warburg as an antecedent. In effect, Warburg brought to the study of the rarefied art of the Renaissance an ethnographic approach (in particular, to votive imagery) that has been compared to the efforts of the anthropologist Alfred Gell (1945–1997) to analyze the animation of images, as well as the ways in which they place their makers within a network in the world. The resurgence of interest in Warburg, therefore, cannot simply be attributed to pious regard for founding fathers. Rather, Warburg has come rightly to be seen as in many respects an intellectual prophet, if one whose work, in keeping with its author's own contradictions, points in many directions simultaneously.

This restless, multifaceted, and in many respects unresolved (and certainly incomplete) aspect of Warburg's work represents part of what permits it to remain so consequential. Anything but definitive, it remains infinitely suggestive. Were Warburg to visit his Institute in London today, one could ponder what he would make of its current activities. Compulsive as he was, the first thing he probably

would do on coming through the doors would be to rush into the stacks to make sure that everything was in its proper place—places, however, that only he could have divined, designed as they were to force other visitors to think outside the conventional categories. Whatever Warburg, who preferred to think of himself as an “image-historian” than as an “art historian,” would have thought of any particular set of modern methodological claims, he presumably would have welcomed the current expansion of the field that, not coincidentally, took place over the same decades that saw the emergence of the World Wide Web, even if the web hardly encourages the kind of prolonged, intense attention that Warburg himself encouraged.

In recent years, Aby Warburg’s writings have been made newly available in both German and English, and the interdisciplinary approaches that he pioneered have spread through the histories of literature and religion, art and film (he saw the vital importance of moving images, for example, long before most other scholars). A visionary scholar, Warburg was obsessed with cultural exchanges of all kinds and in all periods, and tinkered throughout his life with new ways to frame and display visual images in order to reveal their interconnected meanings across time and space. His unconventional tool for studying this shifting web of historical relationships was a picture atlas that remained in perpetual flux and to which he gave the name *Mnemosyne*, or memory. The project was unfinished when Warburg died in 1929 and never published, though scholars have attempted to reconstruct versions of it. For Warburg, cultural memory involved more than the stale invocation of tradition; it demanded heroic struggles with the forces of historical oblivion.

At the time of its destruction in 1933, *Mnemosyne* consisted of a sizable (and still indeterminate) number of large screens, each built up of many interlinked photographs of works of art (somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 in toto), and can easily be construed as a prescient effort to hyperlink images, which explains in part why the project ultimately defeated Warburg and remained incomplete at his death. The full title of the project—“*Mnemosyne, Bilderreihe zur Untersuchung der Funktion vorgeprägter antiker Ausdruckswerte bei der Darstellung bewegten Lebens in der Kunst der europäischen Renaissance*”—testifies to the complexity of Warburg’s undertaking to invent an art history beyond texts, and itself represents a syntactical effort to unify his diverse intellectual preoccupations under a single rubric.

Unrealized and, given its nature, perhaps inevitably never fully articulated, Warburg’s ambitions for the project nonetheless remain instructive. The interpenetration of high and low art—and the amplification of art as well as art history to include all sorts of popular imagery, from advertisements to moving images, in the form of film and video—all represent developments that would have interested him. The inclusiveness of the iconographical method owes much

to Warburg in this respect, even if in its later, often ossified development it bowdlerized his way of employing such materials by stripping them of much of the disturbing presence with which Warburg saw them as invested. For Warburg, pictorial motives, far from being mere conventions, were, to use his term, “Pathosformeln,” powerful reservoirs of cultural energy with the potential not just to convey but also to disturb received ideas.

Although Warburg was anything but an antiquarian, perhaps the most famous phrase associated with him remains his dictum that “Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail” (a maxim that some of his most ardent followers might do well to remember). No less memorable is his characterization of his study of the zodiacal imagery in the Schifanoia Palace, delivered in a lecture of 1912, as “an iconographical analysis which does not allow itself to be hemmed in by the restrictions of the border-police.” In making this statement, Warburg referred to those among his contemporaries, especially of the Vienna School, who insisted that art historians should restrict themselves to the study of style and the development of style—in short, to those aspects of images that were immanent to the images themselves, rather than to anything that might be construed as context. Warburg’s defiant statement could too easily be read as a platitudinous plea for what has come to be called interdisciplinarity. Yet at a time when, for pressing practical reasons, different disciplines need to seek each other out, Warburg’s avowal remains acutely relevant. In his understanding of the complexity of culture, which relates directly to the complexity of his personality, Warburg’s writings make of his own person a “Pathosformel” in its own right: taken as an unruly whole, they represent a potent personality whose work continues to have the power to unsettle established patterns of thought. In this, too, Warburg remains the model intellectual, long after his death.

The richness and originality of Warburg’s scholarly achievement are clear, and the contours of his thought are now far more accessible than ever before, thanks to the work of Michael Diers, Karen Michels, and others in Germany; to that of Dorothea McEwan, until 2010 archivist at the Warburg; and to the Getty Institute’s very useful translation of Warburg’s collected articles. In some ways, the Warburg Institute has remained his creation over the decades. Subjects that were central to his work—the uses of myth and astrology in art, for example—have continued to generate new work at the Institute. Even more striking is the continuity in the Institute’s vision of the classical tradition—a vision that takes in late antique rereadings of older traditions, that includes the Middle Ages (Western and Byzantine), and that recognizes the central roles played by cultures outside the Greek and Latin worlds, both in helping to form ancient culture and in preserving its accomplishments.

Yet the Institute is anything but a frozen monument dedicated to perpetuating the vision of a single individual. Warburg’s original model, with its internal

conflicts and fluid borders, proved capable almost from the start of attracting collaborators who brought their own perspectives and methods with them. True, change from generation to generation has never been easy, and there have been many conflicts. Saxl, who began as Warburg's assistant, built up the Library as a public institution during Warburg's long years of illness at Kreuzlingen, and was passionately loyal. Every year he traveled to Konstanz, where he would stay for a time, bringing Warburg materials to read and taking dictation from him. Yet when Warburg returned to Hamburg, the two men found the new Institute building too small to hold both of them. Saxl undertook long research trips while Warburg was in Hamburg and returned to the Institute when Warburg made his long voyages to Italy. Erwin Panofsky, who had been professor at Hamburg, was surprised and hurt to learn, once he had reached the United States, that he was no longer seen as a core member of the Warburg group.

Still, the conflicts have never mattered as much as the extraordinary ability of the Institute's extraordinary directors and librarians, from Saxl and Gertrud Bing down to J. B. Trapp and Jill Kraye, to pursue their own interests in highly original and influential ways, and at the same time to identify creative scholars and bind them to the Institute—as fellows, as visitors, as members of staff, and as authors of publications. Saxl shared Warburg's interest in the wanderings of the planetary gods. But he also modified and simplified Warburg's complex, labile reconstructions of tradition, both in the lucid, accessible lectures in which he explicated Warburg's method (as well as his own discoveries in England) and in the thematically defined collections of photographic images that he assembled in Hamburg and in London. He also developed programs of his own for the study of subjects as diverse as Mithraism and medieval English sculpture. Panofsky and Wind insisted on the central importance of formal philosophical texts for the classical tradition. They shared the passion of Warburg and Saxl for fifteenth-century Italian art and, different though they were, insisted on the central importance of the High Renaissance in Rome and Florence. Rudolf Wittkower and Ernst Gombrich, Michael Baxandall and Michael Podro, made the Institute a center, for generations, for the study of the history of aesthetics. Warburg was fascinated by the ways in which science and magic interacted across the millennia: D. P. Walker, Frances Yates, Charles Schmitt, and Charles Burnett all found new ways to address this complex topic. Some of the additional topics became permanent additions to the Institute's culture of inquiry; others, like architecture, which Wittkower highlighted, have not been pursued so consistently across the generations. Still, to look back across the ninety years of the Warburg's existence as a learned institution is to be astonished by the boldness and prescience shown in the choice of its staff members.

For all their differences on questions of organization, Warburg and Saxl agreed very strongly on one central point: both believed in collaboration, at every

level, from the international art-historical conferences that mattered so much to Warburg, to the publication series and projects for bibliographies and lexica, catalogs and editions, on which Saxl spent so much of his energy. Far from being “fiercely mandarin”—as George Steiner once described the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*—the Warburg has a long history of seeking partnerships with institutions, societies, and individuals. Saxl and Bing had a special ability to assign great scholars to topics that, as they rightly saw, needed work: Beryl Smalley and Frances Yates are only two of the many who have paid tribute to Bing’s ability to see that an apparently outré subject would yield a brilliant book on English friars and antiquity or on the tradition of the *ars memorativa*.

Over the generations, the Institute has also been able to attract exceptional scholars who, while never members of its teaching staff, have located vital parts of their professional activity there. Paul Oskar Kristeller, the twentieth century’s greatest historian of Renaissance thought, published his transformative *Iter italicum*, a finding list that has given dozens of scholars access, through the Warburg Institute, to hundreds of uncataloged and unknown humanistic manuscripts. Arnaldo Momigliano, the proverbially learned historian of the tradition of classical scholarship, had his formal position at University College London, where he became professor of ancient history in the early 1950s. But the Warburg Institute was central to his work: Saxl, Wittkower, and Yates appreciated his brilliance and learning, and helped him devise a style of presentation that would make his studies of forgotten scholars accessible and attractive. Momigliano in his turn gave many lectures at the Institute—notably one titled “Ancient History and the Antiquarian” that recast the Warburg’s existing tradition of scholarship on Renaissance antiquaries and that continues to provoke debate sixty years later. He also served on the Institute’s committee of management. Most important, it was at the Warburg that he held his legendary seminars, where over the years a long procession of scholars from around the world spoke on historiography and related themes—and discovered that their host, who had appeared to sleep through their presentations, had not only grasped them but also had fundamental criticisms to offer. For decades, Momigliano made the Warburg the leading center of intellectual history in Britain.

Teaching and working in the Library have been transformative experiences, moreover, for many scholars who never took, or even started, a formal degree there. Examples include students of the ancient world like Peter Brown, who attended Momigliano’s Warburg seminars; Oswyn Murray, who held a brief but formative fellowship at the Warburg before beginning his career as a classics don at Balliol College, Oxford; and Sally Humphreys, who worked at the Warburg before beginning her career at University College London. Students of the Sanskrit tradition like David Pingree, and of the Islamic tradition like Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmermann; historians of the classical tradition in

the Middle Ages like Carlotta Dionisotti, and historians of modernity like Lisa Jardine—these and other groundbreaking scholars have owed at least something of their bold willingness to cross borders and upset apple carts to the time they spent at an institution that took both of those pursuits as its vocation.

Almost from the beginning, moreover, the Warburg has been a teaching institution, and it has succeeded in that capacity to an extent that even most humanists do not realize. Once established in London, the Institute began to offer both lectures for University of London undergraduates—as it continued to do for decades—and supervision for students working on doctorates. From the mid-1960s, a two-year MPhil program—more recently transformed into a one-year MA—brought students into the Institute for a shorter period and exposed them to its many sides. Rigorous training in “Techniques of Scholarship”—“description of manuscripts, palaeography, printing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, editing a text, preparation of dissertations and photographic images”—rests in part on original materials, including rare books and manuscripts in London collections. Students who have not already mastered Latin can take reading classes; and all students must take, as part of their MA examination, a translation test in postclassical Latin. These classes hark back to an aspect of Warburg’s teaching that has been less emphasized in the English-speaking world than in Germany. Warburg rebelled against Winckelmann’s austere vision of antiquity but never against the equally austere discipline of the classical Gymnasium and the seminar. As a student at Bonn he profited greatly from the instruction of the great classical philologist Hermann Usener. For all Warburg’s passion for symbols and subject matter, moreover, he never lost his passion for working directly with prints and other works of art. In his own seminars, he insisted that students be able to practice what he called “hermeneutica more majorum,” rigorous interpretation of texts, images, and objects, informed by the traditional disciplines of philology and art history.

All students take required courses that cover Italian political history; rhetoric and dialectic, the core disciplines of humanist education, and their implications for writers’ understanding and use of knowledge; iconology, including the study of mythological imagery; and the fate of classical philosophy in the Renaissance. Everyone who takes an MA at the Warburg, in other words, works with images as well as texts, steps him- or herself in the wider historical contexts of intellectual and literary history, learns to read and transcribe archival documents, and comes to terms with what it meant, in very specific places and times, to reinterpret ancient texts and images.

Optional courses—those to be offered in the 2011–12 academic year include “Sin and Sanctity in the Reformation,” “Art and Devotion in the Renaissance,” “Renaissance Material Culture,” “Islamic Authorities and Arabic Elements in the Renaissance,” “Dante and the Medieval Transmission of the Classical Tradi-

tion,” “Sixteenth-Century European Literature,” and “Early Modern Scepticism: Trends, Dissemination, Criticism” — give opportunities for individual exploration, and help students find the subjects for their dissertations, which must rest on primary research and many of which, over the years, have been published in whole or in part.

Those who do not know the Warburg Institute directly often think of it as a purely art-historical institution. And it has trained, or helped to train, many of the most original and learned art historians of the last hundred years: for example, Roy Strong, Charles Saumarez Smith, and John Onians in Britain; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Elizabeth Sears, Larry Silver, and David Wright in the United States; and Bernard William Smith in Australia. Yet even a brief look at the master’s courses the Warburg has offered, the doctoral dissertations it had sponsored, and the young scholars it has harbored as pre- and postdoctoral fellows makes clear how broad its impact has been. Its alumni include historians of science in all its multiple forms (Katharine Park, Robert Goulding, Alessandro Scafi); historians, especially of Italy (Kate Lowe, Margaret Meserve); students of the tradition of classical rhetoric (Peter Mack, Ruth Webb); distinguished writers (Richard Rodriguez, Michelle Cliff); and even an influential Labour MP (Gordon Marsden, a former editor of *History Today*).

Teaching and research have converged, finally, in the development of new methods and approaches. From the start, as we have seen, the Warburg has devoted itself to understanding earlier understandings of antiquity. Warburg’s work on Botticelli rested in part on close reading of the Florentine scholar and poet Angelo Poliziano. Saxl wrote vividly on the antiquarian passions of the fifteenth century, pursuing Warburg’s interest in how scholarship and imagination nourished one another. He expertly studied the antiquarians’ drawings of ancient reliefs and their transcripts of ancient inscriptions, following the ways in which ancient rituals of worship and sacrifice came back to flickering life. The adventurous hunters of antiques (Ciriaco d’Ancona, Pirro Ligorio, and others), the codices in which they recorded their finds, and their impact on contemporary artists have continued to form the objects of a stream of Warburgian publications.

In 1950, a pioneering article by Momigliano in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* enlarged this tradition, tracing multiple connections between the scholarship of the early modern antiquaries and the work of contemporary historians and scientists. A year later, a second article, this one by an Italian research fellow at the Warburg, Giuseppe Billanovich, not only revised scholarly understanding of the textual tradition of Livy but also revealed in Petrarch a formidable scholar, deeply engaged with textual and historical problems. Since the 1950s, the Institute has become a center for studies in the history of scholarship, from the classical editions of the humanists to the wide-ranging studies of Hebrew, Arabic, and Coptic, patristics and biblical exegesis, mathematics and

astronomy, that occupied the polymaths of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many of these studies have been nurtured by a long-running seminar, History of Scholarship, founded and led by Christopher Ligota, with a number of partners. The history of precise, exacting study of the ancient past, in all its forms, is now as established a part of the Warburgian tradition as the history of myth and symbol in all their forms.

The Warburg Institute, in other words, has been anything but a sheltered enclave. From its origins in the work and thought of one of the most innovative scholars of that great age of radical scholarship, the *fin de siècle*, it has fostered a range of scholarly pursuits that would do credit to a far larger institution, and has used its modest resources to support a dazzling range of enterprises. In its cosmopolitan approach to scholarship and its unique gravitational ability to gather varied academic talents, in its unique assembled resources and its unmatched record as a center of inquiry and teaching, the Warburg Institute has securely established a central position in the intellectual world.

— *Anthony Grafton and Jeffrey F. Hamburger*