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Table of Contents

Fabio Tononi and Bernardino Branca
Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment
pp. 1-8

Jaynie Anderson
Edgar Wind and Giovanni Bellini's 'Feast of the Gods': An Iconographic 'Enfant Terrible'
pp. 9-37

Fabio Tononi
Aby Warburg, Edgar Wind, and the Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft*: Reflections on Imagery, Symbols, and Expression
pp. 38-74

Monica Centanni
The Rift between Edgar Wind and the Warburg Institute, Seen through the Correspondence between Edgar Wind and Gertrud Bing. A Decisive Chapter in the (mis)Fortune of Warburgian Studies
pp. 75-106

Gioachino Chiarini
Time and Space in Dante's *Purgatorio*
pp. 107-132

The Rift between Edgar Wind and the Warburg Institute, Seen through the Correspondence between Edgar Wind and Gertrud Bing. A Decisive Chapter in the (mis)Fortune of Warburgian Studies

Monica Centanni

Abstract

This paper analyses the relationship between Edgar Wind and Gertrud Bing through a reading of their correspondence, in order to shed light on a crucial chapter in the history of studies on Warburg's legacy. The rift between Edgar Wind and those representatives of the Warburg Institute who transferred to London marks a wound in European cultural history that has yet to heal. Philological research is still needed to reconstruct this history, which is presently characterised by confusion and gaps. This article should be seen as a first step towards a comprehensive survey of the Wind–Bing correspondence preserved and filed at the Bodleian Archive in Oxford and the Warburg Archive in London.

Keywords

Edgar Wind; Gertrud Bing; Aby Warburg; Ernst Gombrich; The Warburg Institute

Contents

1. Aby Warburg and Edgar Wind: An Anagnorisis;
2. The Exile of Intellectuals: Wind in London;
3. A Journey of Fortuna: Edgar Wind in the United States;
4. Wind–Bing: A Stellar Friendship

1. Aby Warburg and Edgar Wind: An Anagnorisis

The first meeting between Aby Warburg and Edgar Wind took place in Hamburg in 1927, on Wind's return from his first stay in the United States. Warburg immediately recognised something in the young man, as if the encounter had triggered a sort of anagnorisis. In the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg Tagebuch* he wrote, 'Mr Wind is a thinking type of the best sort.'¹ And, in his usual ironic style, he would later say to Wind himself, 'I

¹ Aby Warburg on Edgar Wind, *Tagebuch KBW 1927*: 'Herr Wind ist eine Denktpe bester Sorte', quoted in Franz Engel, 'Though this Be Madness: Edgar Wind and the Warburg Tradition', in *Bildakt at the Warburg Institute*, ed. by Sabine Marienberg and Jürgen Trabant (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 87–116 (p. 90).

always forget that you are a trained art historian. You know how to think so nicely...'² thus implying that art historians are usually not such brilliant thinkers.

As noted by several scholars, between 1927 and Warburg's death in October 1929, Wind had few opportunities to associate with Warburg, due to the latter's long trip to Italy with Gertrud Bing between the autumn of 1928 and summer of 1929. Nevertheless, Warburg's diaries and correspondence from the last year of his life reveal that Edgar Wind was the only individual, aside from Bing, with whom he collaborated during the final chapter of his life and shared his passion for research.

As documented in the four-handed writing of the exciting *Diario romano*,³ Warburg read, studied, and thought in collaboration with Gertrud Bing, whom he promoted from secondary roles – firstly as librarian and subsequently as personal assistant – to that of companion and close collaborator in his research. We can infer her status from the nicknames he gave her, which were full of both humour and esteem: 'Fräulein Dr Bing', 'Bingia', 'Bingio', 'Bingius', 'Collega Bing', 'Kollege Bing', 'Herr Bingius!', 'Der Ingenieur Bing', 'Cicerone', 'Bingiothek' (Bing-Library).⁴

„Fräulein Dr Bing“

„Bingia“

„Bingio“

„Bingius“

„Collega Bing“

„Kollege Bing“

„Herr Bingius!“

„Der Ingenieur Bing“

„Cicerone“

„Bingiothek“



Aby Warburg's nicknames for Gertrud Bing

² Aby Warburg, Letter to Edgar Wind, 1928: 'Ich vergesse immer daß Sie eingeschulter Kunsthistoriker sind. Sie haben es ja so nett mit dem Denken', quoted in Bernhard Buschendorf, 'Auf dem Weg nach England – Edgar Wind und die Emigration der Bibliothek Warburg', in *Porträt aus Büchern. Bibliothek Warburg & Warburg Institute. Hamburg – 1933 – London*, ed. by Michael Diers (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1993), pp. 85–128 (p. 85); Ben Thomas, 'Edgar Wind. A Short Biography', *Stamzeczny*, 1, 8 (2015), 117–37 (p. 119).

³ See Aby Warburg and Gertrud Bing, *Diario romano*, ed. by Maurizio Ghelardi (Turin: Aragno, 2005).

⁴ Monica Centanni and Daniela Sacco, 'Gertrud Bing erede di Warburg', *La Rivista di Engramma*, 170 (November 2020), 7–13 (p. 9).

But the only other scholar with whom Warburg – so productive, dynamic, and active in the last months of his life⁵ – wanted to study, conduct projects, and think was the young Edgar Wind.⁶ Warburg also wanted to involve Wind in a very important line of research in which he had immersed himself in his final months (and which was interrupted by his sudden death): his research on Giordano Bruno. Warburg was on a real search for *sympatheia*. On 12 December 1928 he wrote to Wind:

It seems that you first have to go through the Inferno of a halt in order to correctly assess the healing power that lies in the mechanical hindrance of attempt to escape from yourself [...]. Is Giordano Bruno something?⁷

In April 1929 Warburg gave Wind a gift that held great symbolic significance. Wind responded on 30 April:

On Easter Monday a large package containing 6 volumes of Giordano Bruno arrived at our place [...] My wife and I were totally amazed. [...] We are now immersed in reading and I think we will barely emerge from it without your suggestions.⁸

Confirmation of the two scholars' harmony of thought is found in the same letter of thanks: Wind agreed with what Warburg was telling him about his encounters with various Italian intellectuals, and underlined his distance from Croce's thought – especially his 'conception of "spirit", which terribly resembles the negative conception of a god of certain obtuse religious personalities, who believe they can describe their god as an immeasurable entity, simply ignoring all its objectively definable qualities.'⁹

In a diary note written a few days before his death, Warburg stated: 'With Wind and his far-sighted gaze, the human word speaks.' A little further on he added: 'The related

⁵ Giorgio Pasquali, 'A Tribute to Aby Warburg', in *Aby Warburg and Living Thought*, ed. by Monica Centanni (Dueville: Ronzani, 2022), pp. 37–55 (pp. 54–55) (first publ. in *Pegaso* II, 4 (1930), 484–95).

⁶ Among the many references to Wind in Warburg's letters and documents from this period, see Warburg and Bing, *Diario romano*:

– 2.11.1928, Note from the *Diario romano*: 'After lunch a letter from Wind who is forced to forbid Meier to attend the Library until he has delivered the dissertation. Meier has already approached the Dean. Only the psychiatrist can still help him. I completely agree with Wind, who will unfortunately have to use a lot of kindness to allow this pathological liar to return to health...';

– 17.3.1929, Note from the *Diario romano*: 'An excellent report by Wind on Flexner, who on the whole was framed well with his sympathetic manner as a somewhat retro psychagogue modernist; after all, Flexner understood much more about the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek than seems at first glance';

– 18.3.1929, Note from the *Diario romano*: 'In Hamburg, Erich was elected as director of the North American Society; I was not even on the board. It will cost a letter to Kiesselbach. Sent my wife a copy of Wind's letter'.

⁷ Letter from Warburg to Wind, 3.12.1928: 'Es scheint, dass man zuerst das Inferno eines Anhaltens durchmachen muss, um die Heilkraft, die in der mechanischen Hinderung von Fluchtversuchen, vor selbst liegt, richtig zu bewerten [...]. Ist eigentlich Giordano Bruno etwas?'

⁸ Quoted in Bernardino Branca, *Edgar Wind, filosofo delle immagini. La biografia intellettuale di un discepolo di Aby Warburg* (Milan: Mimesis, 2019), pp. 66–67.

⁹ *Ibid.*

problems of philosophy were discussed very intensively, whereby Edgar Wind becomes more and more a thought pioneer, who puts order into thoughts.¹⁰

The ‘agnition’, as in any true anagnorisis, was mutual. In a 1945 letter to Eric Warburg, Wind wrote: ‘In less than two years I learned from Aby Warburg everything that no one else has been able to teach me in the following decades.’¹¹ As early as December 1928, to close the books on that year, Aby Warburg wrote to Wind from Italy:

I don’t want to leave the year 1928 in the filing archive of eternity without telling you and your dear wife that I count your entry into the narrower circle of those for whom the KBW does mean a real element of life, one of the really good gifts of Fate – I mean that seriously.¹²

In a 1954 letter to Sez nec, Wind wrote that Warburg had told him, one month before his death, ‘Since you came to this Library, I am no longer afraid; I know that everything will be fine when I’m gone.’¹³

When Aby Warburg died suddenly, Wind was considered to be a sort of intellectual heir to him among the KBW scholars. Panofsky would write: ‘Certainly [Wind is] the one man who has developed the ideas of the late Professor Warburg in an entirely independent spirit and is able to carry them on in a most stimulating form.’¹⁴ Despite the ill wind that would blow upon the *Warburgkreis*, the idea that Warburg handed a legacy to Wind endured for many decades, even during those years when the latter was criticised on both personal and scholarly grounds. ‘Edgar Wind is the one and only true genius among us after the departure of Aby Warburg’;¹⁵ this judgement attributed to Rudolf Wittkower has circulated in several variations. In her extensive and valuable 1984 interview with Teresa Barnett, Margot Wittkower denied that the legendary words applied to Wind: ‘That is a mistake, because Rudi meant Warburg. [...] It is Warburg who my husband said was the nearest to

¹⁰ KBW’s Tagebuch, October 1929: ‘Mit Wind weithin blickende Männerworte geredet [...]. Sehr intensiv die anknüpfenden Probleme der Philosophie besprochen, wobei sich Edgar Wind immer mehr als Vordenker und Zurechtordner ausweist’: see Ianick Takaes de Oliveira, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’. A survey of Edgar Wind’s quarrel with the Warburg Institute’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 153 (February 2018), 109–82 (pp. 124–25).

¹¹ Letter from Edgar Wind to Eric Warburg, January 1945, quoted in Branca, *Edgar Wind*, p. 47.

¹² Letter from Aby Warburg to Wind, 28 December 1928: ‘Ich will das Jahr 1928 nicht in den Aktenschrank der Ewigkeit legen wissen, ohne Ihnen und Ihrer lieben Frau zu sagen, dass ich Ihren Eintritt in den engeren Kreis derer, für die KBW ein wirkliches Lebenselement bedeutet, zu dem wirklich guten Gaben eines Schicksals rechne, das es mit Ernst meint’.

¹³ ‘Depuis que vous êtes dans cette bibliothèque, je n’ai plus peur; je sais que tout ira bien quand je serai parti. Il est mort un mois plus tard’: cf. Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, p. 124; Branca, *Edgar Wind*, p. 102.

¹⁴ Letter from Panofsky to Boas, 5 October 1939, in Erwin Panofsky, *Korrespondenz 1910 bis 1968*, ed. by Dieter Wuttke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001–2011), vol. II, p. 219; cf. Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, p. 125.

¹⁵ Quoted also in Branca, *Edgar Wind*, p. 147.

genius.¹⁶ But Wittkower's comment about Wind is confirmed by other sources, and Margot's words only confirm the interchangeability between Warburg and Wind.¹⁷

2. The Exile of Intellectuals: Wind in London

Aby Warburg died on 26 October 1929. To put that event in its historical perspective, a particular circumstance should be noted. Warburg's stroke and sudden death occurred just before Wall Street collapsed (Black Tuesday was on 29 October 1929). By the end of 1929, the funding provided to the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg (KBW) by the Warburg Bank decreased as a result of the world financial crisis and the absence of Aby's advocacy, starting with the collaborators' salaries, which were progressively reduced. It is in that context that Fritz Saxl, Wind, and Bing made every effort to find a new location for the KBW, outside Germany.¹⁸ Wind strove above all to find an Italian shore on which the

¹⁶ Margot Wittkower and Teresa Barnett, *Partnership and Discovery: Margot and Rudolf Wittkower. Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1994), p. 214: 'TB – I have one last question about Wind. Creighton Gilbert quotes your husband as calling Wind "the one true genius" of his acquaintance. MW – That is a mistake, because Rudi meant Warburg. TB – Oh, okay. It seemed hyperbolic. MW – I talked to Creighton about it and I said, "Creighton, you gave Wind a kind of glamorous halo that wasn't meant for him. It is Warburg who my husband said was the nearest to genius". TB – I wondered about that because you said the same about Warburg. I think that wraps up what we had to say about Wind here' (the reference is to: Gilbert Creighton, 'Edgar Wind as Man and Thinker', *New Criterion Reader*, 3, 2 (October 1984), 36–41, repr. in Hilton Kramer, ed., *New Criterion Reader* (New York: Free Press, 1988), pp. 238–43).

¹⁷ See Agnes De Mille, *Speak to Me. Dance with Me* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1973), p. 111.

¹⁸ On this matter and on the active role of the young collaborators in finding the best landing place for the Library's materials, I refer again to the comprehensive Lucas Burkart, "Le fantasticherie di alcuni confratelli amanti dell'arte..." Sulla situazione della Biblioteca Warburg per la Scienza della Cultura tra il 1929 e il 1933', *La Rivista di Engramma*, 176 (October 2020), 145–98 (first publ. "Die Träumereien einiger kunstliebender Klosterbrüder...". Zur Situation der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg zwischen 1929 und 1933', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 63 (2000), 89–119). See also the notes by Riccardo Di Donato, 'Dopo Warburg. La "Scienza della cultura" e l'Italia', in *Warburg e la cultura italiana. Fra sopravvivenze e prospettive di ricerca*, ed. by Claudia Cieri Via and Micol Forti (Milan: Mondadori, 2009), pp. 149–65, especially pp. 151–53. On Saxl's correspondence with Giovanni Gentile, with a description of the Institute's materials and activities in view of a possible transfer to Italy, see again Di Donato, 'Dopo Warburg. La "Scienza della cultura" e l'Italia', pp. 152–64.

library could safely land; this seemed to him a goal consistent with Warburg's wishes.¹⁹ However, the attempt failed.²⁰

In January 1934, with the National Socialist Party in power (the reason why Erwin Panofsky left Germany permanently for the United States in 1933), the KBW's adventurous move from Hamburg to London took place. Nonetheless, the Institute would not find a permanent home until 1958, when it moved to Woburn Square under Gertrud Bing's directorship. Meanwhile, in 1931, Wind had published the most important text on the theory and method of the Warburg school: *Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik*. In 1934, Wind's preface to the first volume of the *Bibliographie zum Nachleben der Antike* was published in Germany. It could be considered a political manifesto, given that it unequivocally highlighted the connection between society and science and the incompatibility between the cultural studies conducted in the KBW and the ideological foundations of National Socialism. Consequences from the Nazi regime soon followed. Wind's work was blacklisted in Germany,²¹ and in a review titled 'Juden und Emigranten machen deutsche Wissenschaft', which appeared in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 5 January 1935, we read:

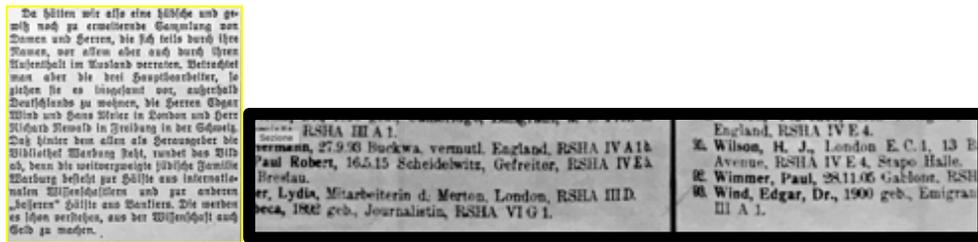
If we look at the three main editors, however, they all prefer to live outside Germany: Edgar Wind and Hans Meier in London and Richard Rewald in Freiburg, Switzerland. The fact that the Warburg Library is the publisher behind all of them rounds off the picture, for half of the widely ramified Jewish Warburg family consists of international

¹⁹ Burkart, 'Le fantasticherie di alcuni confratelli amanti dell'arte...', p. 185: quoting the paper by Bernhard Buschendorf, who highlights Edgar Wind's contribution to the move to England. On the possibility of a transfer to Italy, see Gertrud Bing's letter to Raymond Klibansky in which she writes: 'A memorandum, drafted in the meantime by Wind and myself, has gone to all these offices and is intended to initiate an exchange of scholars and students, an exchange of publications and possibly joint publications. The deeper meaning of this action is, of course, also to provide us with financial aid, but whether this will succeed is obviously very uncertain. However, the threads between us and Italy are once again firmly tied and even Saxl, despite his usual scepticism, has the feeling that he has been successful' (WIA, GC, G. Bing to R. Klibansky, 29.4.1932).

²⁰ Burkart, 'Le fantasticherie di alcuni confratelli amanti dell'arte...', p. 161, who emphasises that in addition to the 'internal logic' of scientific questions, the failed attempt to move to Italy also included a whole series of practical aspects. Saxl had just made the first contacts in Italy when Gertrud Bing and Edgar Wind wrote a memorandum, which was immediately sent to Italy and in which concrete forms of library cooperation in Rome were envisaged. In addition, the management repeatedly inquired about the annual funds and funding models of Roman institutions so that they could estimate their own needs.

²¹ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', pp. 109–10. In May 1940, the SS included Wind in the GB *Sonderfahndungsliste* (also known as 'The Black Book'). This document listed prominent British residents who should be put under investigation immediately if Germany's invasion of England – Operation Sea Lion (*Unternehmen Seelöwe*) – was successful.

scholars and the other ‘better’ half of bankers. They’ll know how to make money out of *Wissenschaft* too.²²



Völkischer Beobachter, 5 January 1935: ‘Juden und Emigranten machen deutsche Wissenschaft.’
German Black Book.

At this point, the main problem was the conservation and protection of the Library collections and their relocation to London. But there were also difficulties of a deeper and more serious kind. The painful and tragic break between Wind and the Warburg Institute, caused in part by the conditions of Wind’s exile, would have very serious consequences for the history of the humanities, not only of Warburgian studies but of European culture.

The interview given by Margot Wittkower to Teresa Barnett in 1984, transcribed from a total of sixteen recorded hours of conversation,²³ allows us to glimpse the living conditions of the colony of German emigrant intellectuals in London during the 1930s and 1940s. It is a story told in disjointed scenes, coloured in sometimes romantic and sometimes epic hues that reflect the complicated and heroic climate of those years. There is the picture of wartime communal life, punctuated by shared meals and even shared living quarters. For a few years, Margot and Rudi Wittkower and Fritz Saxl and Gertrud Bing found themselves living together – a situation that was further complicated by Saxl’s double life: in another house in London lived his legitimate wife, Elise (née Bienenfeld), ‘an excellent photographer and a strange person’,²⁴ who had behavioural disorders that bordered on psychopathology, together with a schizophrenic daughter and an epileptic son. There is the difficult life of emigrants, who must translate the language of customs and traditions into a different cultural code. There are also the more marginal aspects of

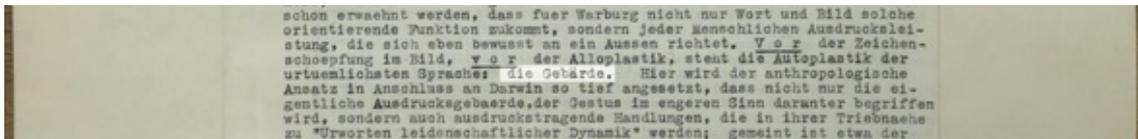
²² ‘Juden und Emigranten machen deutsche Wissenschaft’, *Völkischer Beobachter*, 5 January 1935: ‘Da hätten wir also eine hübsche und gewiß noch zu erweiternde Sammlung von Damen und Herren, die sich teils durch ihre Namen, vor allem aber auch durch ihren Aufenthalt im Ausland verraten Betrachtet man aber die drei Hauptbearbeiter, so ziehen sie es insgesamt vor, außerhalb Deutschlands zu wohnen, die Herren Edgar Wind und Hans Meier in London und Herr Richard Newald in Freiburg in der Schweiz. Daß hinter dem allen als Herausgeber die Bibliothek Warburg steht, rundet das Bild ab, denn die weitverzweigte jüdische Familie Warburg besteht zur Hälfte aus internationalen Wissenschaftlern und zur anderen “besseren” Hälfte aus Bankiers. Die werden es schon verstehen, aus der Wissenschaft auch Geld zu machen’. The text is also published in Dieter Wuttke, *Kosmopolis der Wissenschaft. E. R. Curtius und das Warburg Institute. Briefe 1928 bis 1954 und andere Dokumente* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1989), pp. 295–99.

²³ *Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett*, pp. 141–43, 156–57, 164.

²⁴ *Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett*, p. 143.

adaptation, which Margot Wittkower recounted humorously: ‘It put me off making tea for the rest of my life, because it’s as much work if you make a real English tea as a dinner.’²⁵ For very sensitive intellectuals such as these, there were endless problems, starting with misunderstandings in basic communication, both literal and due to cultural differences.²⁶

A small yet real sign of that disorientation becomes apparent when leafing through the papers in the Warburg Archive. Throughout the 1930s, Bing, Saxl, Wind, and Gombrich wrote many documents and much of their correspondence in German. But the umlauts added in ink that peek out from the typescripts show that, even when writing their institutional papers, they were obliged to use typewriters with English keyboards – a symbol of exile from their native language, as well as from their country and culture.



Geburtstagsatlas [WIA.III.109.5.1]. In the word ‘Gebärde’, the umlaut has been marked in by hand with a pen.

Another tiny sign of the difficulty of integration: the director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, addressing Edgar Wind in a letter written on 30 March (of an unspecified year in the 1930s), misspelled his name twice on the same page, writing it phonetically as ‘Windt’ instead of ‘Wind’.



²⁵ Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett, p. 152.

²⁶ Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett, p. 138: ‘I remember I was standing there when Bing said to the window cleaner, “You must do that and that.” And the window cleaner said, “Must?” The thing to say would have been, “Would you please do that and that?”’.

But there were also deeper and much more serious problems. The disruptive relocation and urgent need to find a suitable home for the KBW's books, photographs, and equipment coincided with the need for linguistic adjustments on the part of the Warburgkreis scholars. It is well known that Panofsky's move to the United States resulted in a translation of his themes and methodology. In this new context, Panofsky himself – who had written, among other things, the masterful and challenging essay *Hercules am Scheidewege* – presented in his *Studies in Iconology* a version of iconology that was conceived and translated in every sense for the American public. Emigration led to similar problems in London. As we read in the Institute's first report from London, issued in 1935, among the first tasks on the agenda was the edition of Warburg's collected papers and an edition of the Atlas. Both undertakings, including the English translation of the text that would become so successful, Kreuzlingen Conference on the Snake Ritual, were entrusted to Gertrud Bing and Edgar Wind.



Before new English works are taken in hand, we are however faced with the task of completing those already begun in Germany. An essential piece of work of this kind we consider to be the edition of Professor Warburg's collected works, two volumes of which appeared earlier (Gesammelte Schriften, Band 1 und 2: Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike, Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance; mit einem Anhang unveröffentlichter Zusätze unter Mitarbeit von Fritz Rougemont herausgegeben von Gertrud Bing; Berlin/Leipzig 1932). An "Atlas", which will contain his hitherto unpublished work on "the History of Expression and Gesture in the Renaissance", with special reference to the influence of classical sources, is being prepared by Dr. Bing. Dr. Wind is working on an edition of Warburg's studies of "Snake Dance and Ritual".

First Annual Report of the Warburg Institute in London (1934–1935).

Indeed, after moving to London, the scholars of the inner circle who had collaborated on the major projects of the institute and library in Hamburg were forced to disguise themselves. A Warburg *larvatus* came to inhabit, through his successors, the London Institute bearing his name.

Despite the successful campaign to retain the founder's name in the title of the new London institution, named "The Warburg Institute" – a battle fought primarily by Bing – everything else changed. The Warburg Institute became an internationally renowned centre of reference for Renaissance studies and art history, whereas Aby Warburg's focus had been the ways in which antiquity had survived during (and, at times, despite) the Middle Ages.

Bing made a strong claim for the centrality of Warburg's method. But on this front, too, the protagonists of Warburg's enterprise found it difficult to develop the founder's project cohesively. Having moved to England, where the organisation of knowledge followed solid, well-defined, institutionally based guidelines, they sought to adjust, pursuing openings and legitimacy for their individual research paths. Due to newly enforced arrangements in the academic disciplines, they stepped back from Warburg's battle to break down disciplinary boundaries. Paradoxically, the mechanism of this shift was very Warburgian: like the disguised and almost unrecognisable mythological figures in the Schifanoia frescoes, the scholars of the Warburgkreis settled into predetermined 'sectors'. This was neither a fully conscious nor fully voluntary phenomenon. There was no explicit constraint, censorship, or real necessity; rather, they adapted in order to find places for themselves in a new environment.²⁷ This was both a natural mechanism of adjustment and a more-or-less forced process of settling into a new world. The scholars rebranded themselves as 'art historians', 'iconologists', or, in the case of Bing, more in line with the focus of Warburg's research as 'historians of the Classical tradition'. As always when one loses context, one also loses precision and definition. Left without a frame of reference and the director of their enterprise, these expatriate intellectuals lost the power to express themselves. Consequently, they found themselves wearing masks that were alienating, but necessary for their intellectual survival.²⁸

There were also internal tensions that troubled and disrupted the group of refugees: differences in theoretical approach (between Saxl and Wind); romantic relationships, kept secret in accordance with the social mores of the time (between Saxl and Bing); and charismatic and eccentric scholars of stature and international fame but mostly on the fringe of the institutional hierarchies of the Warburg Institute (Frances Yates, for example). Overseeing everything, with his strong personality and ability to manage the dynamics of authority, was Ernst Gombrich, who arrived at the Warburg Institute in 1935.

It was the freshly arrived Gombrich who would be entrusted with drafting Warburg's biography. However, his first attempt failed. Indeed, according to the testimony of Margot

²⁷ On the feelings of Gertrud Bing, who felt like a foreigner on English soil until the end of her life, see, Donald J. Gordon, 'In memoriam Gertrud Bing', in the funeral brochure *In memoriam Gertrud Bing 1892–1964*, ed. by Ernst Gombrich (London: The Warburg Institute, 1965), repr., with an Italian trans. and preface by Chiara Velicogna, in *La Rivista di Engramma*, 177 (November 2020), 131–66, in particular 133–39.

²⁸ Di Donato, 'Dopo Warburg. La "Scienza della cultura" e l'Italia', p. 149, also recalls the difficulty of 'transplanting a vital organ into another body'.

Wittkower, the manuscript was unanimously rejected by Fritz Saxl and Rudi Wittkower because they considered it to be to be incorrect and not well-centred:

When Ernst Gombrich came from Vienna, he went to Fritz Saxl and asked, ‘Is there anything you can do for me?’ Saxl, not knowing what Ernst Gombrich had done and was capable of doing, said to us, ‘I can’t employ anyone. There is no position in the institute, what do we do with him?’ Then he said, ‘I know what he can do, he can write Warburg’s biography.’ There was all this endless untidy material. It was very difficult to read Warburg’s handwriting, very difficult to follow his ideas if you could not discuss them with him. Well, Gombrich produced a draft of the biography and submitted it to Saxl, who came to Rudi and said, ‘We can’t use it. Important things have been left out and other things have been given an importance that they don’t have.’ Then war broke out and Gombrich was taken on by the BBC to broadcast British news all over the world, so that first draft disappeared.²⁹

A plan to have Eric Warburg write his father’s biography would also fail. The biography would end up being written by Gombrich and published in 1970, more than thirty years after his first (rejected) draft, using (and abusing) the notes that Bing had collected throughout her life.³⁰

The Atlas project, in a provisional version compiled for Max Warburg’s birthday, was also entrusted to Ernst Gombrich. Reading excerpts from this 1937 version of the *Geburtstagsatlas*, one sees that Gombrich created a controlled, ordered, and clean version of Mnemosyne Atlas that dissipates its significance by cleaning up the conceptual framework and disarticulating the ‘polythetic’ writing and the very meaning of the Atlas.³¹ For many

²⁹ Margot Wittkower *Interviewed by Teresa Barnett*, pp. 199–200.

³⁰ On Gombrich’s use of Bing’s materials, see Monica Centanni, “Purtroppo non abbiamo trovato molto tra le carte della nostra cara amica Gertrud Bing che si potrebbe salvare”. Testo e contesti di Ernst Gombrich, Lettera a Delio Cantimori, 20 ottobre 1964, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 171 (January/February 2020), 127–53 (pp. 132–44), and *Aby Warburg*, ed. by Centanni, pp. 22–25, 332–33.

³¹ Salvatore Settis, ‘Aby Warburg, il demone della forma. Antropologia, storia, memoria’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 100 (September/October 2012), 269–87. A series of contributions on the *Geburtstagsatlas* has been published in recent years in *Engramma*: see Monica Centanni, Anna Fressola, and Elizabeth Thomson, eds., *Mnemosyne Challenged*, monographic issue of *La Rivista di Engramma*, 153 (February 2018); Clio Nicastro, ‘Il *Geburtstagsatlas* di Ernst H. Gombrich: Tavole A, B, C. Introduzione, testo tedesco e traduzione italiana’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 157 (July/August 2018), 25–43. A survey of materials at the Warburg Institute is in Thays Tonin, ‘I documenti relativi al *Geburtstagsatlas* di Ernst H. Gombrich. Nota sui materiali conservati al Warburg Institute Archive di Londra’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 157 (July/August 2018), 13–23. A full index of materials published in *Engramma* on the ‘Birthday Atlas’ is in Seminario Mnemosyne, coordinated by M. Centanni, A. Fressola, M. Ghelardi, ‘Il *Geburtstagsatlas* di Ernst H. Gombrich (1937). Indice dei materiali pubblicati in *Engramma*’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 157 (July/August 2018), 11–12. Three essays on the reading, analysis and comparison between the versions of the 1929 *Atlas* and the Gombrich’s one concerning Panels 7, 30, 37 are collected in Salvatore Settis, and Alessandra Pedersoli, Simone Culotta, ‘Esercizi di confronto tra le Tavole 7, 30, 37 del *Geburtstagsatlas* di Gombrich e le corrispondenti del Mnemosyne Atlas’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 151 (November/December 2017), 91–119. An analysis of the same comparison concerning Plate 4 is in Francesca Filisetti (with Seminario Mnemosyne), “Arianna è scomparsa, il Minotauro è in agguato”. Lettura di Tavola 4 di Mnemosyne Atlas’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 163 (March 2019), 243–67 (pp. 261–63). In general, on Gombrich and the Atlas, see *Aby Warburg*, ed. by Centanni, pp. 325–27.

decades Gombrich's version – the *Geburtstagsatlas* dedicated to Max and conceived as a first, private, and incomplete edition – was the only one available, and it became a sort of tombstone for the original *Bilderatlas*.

Starting in the second half of the 1930s – unsurprisingly coinciding with Gombrich's arrival in London – a rift began to open up, one that would gradually become irreparable. Edgar Wind's personality played a role in this, and Margot Wittkower's portrait of him is without equal. She presents him as a character from a novel or a movie, a man of the world who knew English because he was in the United States before meeting Warburg in Hamburg, who knew British society and, unlike the other emigrants – especially Bing – understood what pleased and displeased the British:

He was, I would say, a most widely gifted person. He was a great musician. He was immensely well read in every kind of literature, very good at languages, very social and had very definite ideas. I think he was a student of Panofsky's. Anyway, he was always brimful of ideas and he was an unusually good lecturer. Since he had been in America as quite a young man in the twenties, his English was good. He knew England and he knew what the British liked and disliked.³²

Wind is presented as a *homme du monde*, and an excellent, brilliant lecturer. Margot continues:

I was absolutely fascinated by his lectures, spellbound, because he had a superior mind and a great gift for formulating ideas well and making things absolutely clear. He talked for precisely an hour without any notes – not for dates, not for names, not for anything. He was sure of himself, sure that he wouldn't forget anything in the course of his lecture. When it was over, when we went home and we talked about it, we said, 'What actually has he said?' While we were listening it sounded completely convincing, but what actually did he mean by it, and how did he come to those conclusions? I don't think he ever gave a lecture at the Warburg Institute, but he lectured quite a bit at the Courtauld Institute, and then the various museums had lecturers. He lectured at the National Gallery, and at the Victoria and Albert.³³

Furthermore, Margot saw Wind as a heartbreaker; a gallant, handsome gentleman; a munificent man who would spare no expense. Back to Margot's testimony:

I personally knew seven ladies whose hearts he broke. There was a time when Rudi had to go to Vienna. I couldn't get away, I had work to do and I had the child. I usually went on all his journeys with him, but this time I couldn't go. Edgar took care of me and was absolutely overwhelmingly charming. He took me to concerts, he took me out to dinner, and he saw to it that I had a nice time. I never knew where he got the money from,

³² Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett, p. 198.

³³ Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett, p. 209.

because he always went to very expensive restaurants, he always had the best seats in the opera, and always complained that he didn't get enough salary.³⁴

But Wind was also a very difficult man, inconstant and capable of suddenly breaking off any relationship:

He certainly was one of the most gifted and most difficult people I ever knew. He had difficulties with absolutely everyone. In those few years that he lived in the Warburg Institute with all of us in London, from '34 to '38. I don't know of any person who knew Wind well who didn't have a break in their relationship with him. After a great friendship, after lots of exchanges of ideas, social life and all that – out!³⁵

Wind was very different from the other members of the circle of German emigrants, including Fritz Saxl. This is how Toni Cassirer described Saxl in 1924, after seeing him for the first time:

I was with him on a tram, and Ernst pointed out another passenger to me, whispering that it was Saxl. I observed him with surprise. He was wearing an old Austrian uniform from which all the stripes had been torn away, and he sat shyly in a corner of the tram, with an indefinable air about him, as he looked around, at everything and everybody [...].³⁶

The problem was not only incompatibility of character, or the social gap. What mattered – and what would be decisive in the fracture between Saxl and Wind – was their different approaches to the cultural project inspired by Warburg. In 1937, Wind and Wittkower founded the *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, which they co-edited until 1940. Saxl had opposed publishing a journal,³⁷ and it was Wind and Wittkower who began the internationalisation of the journal and of the Institute itself.

³⁴ Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett, pp. 209–10: TB – I believe you said the other day that people liked him extraordinarily if they hadn't known him very long, but if they'd known him very long, then they'd had an argument with him along the way and they saw this other side of him. MW – We met Agnes de Mille through him, and he fell deeply in love with her and she with him. Agnes was totally convinced they would marry. She had to go back to America because she had an engagement, but she was planning to come back to London and then they would marry. When she came back to London, Wind said, 'It's all over. I have changed my mind, I made a mistake'. Agnes wrote about it in her memoirs. She went into psychoanalysis because she was so completely devastated by this.

³⁵ Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett, pp. 209–10.

³⁶ Salvatore Settis, 'Warburg *continuatus*. The Description of a Library', in *Aby Warburg*, ed. by Centanni, pp. 171–230 (p. 175) (first publ. in *Quaderni storici*, n. s. 58, a. 20, 1 (April 1985), 5–38).

³⁷ Margot Wittkower Interviewed by Teresa Barnett, p. 147: [Margot Wittkower speaks] 'Edgar Wind and my husband thought it would be a good idea to publish a journal [the *Journal of the Warburg Institute*] and make it as scholarly and as good as was humanly possible. But Saxl in the beginning thought it wasn't a good idea. He thought it would only cost money and we wouldn't get any contributions, so Wind came to us three or four times a week for dinner, and then the two of them would sit and work'.



First issue of the *Journal*

It was Wind who invited Italian intellectuals such as Cantimori to write for early issues of the journal.³⁸ This resulted in Gertrud Bing's relationship with Delio and Emma Cantimori, which led to the first non-German edition of Warburg's essays.³⁹

Wind's difference of opinion with Saxl was above all on a single issue, expressed incisively in a June 1945 letter that severed their relationship. Wind did not want the Institute to become a *refugium peccatorum* for German emigrants. Rather, he wanted to create an international institution and recruit important scholars. Wind was not comfortable at the Warburg Institute, which is partly why he left for the United States in 1939. However, his main reason for leaving was his intention to bring about, to embody in himself, Aby Warburg's last project.

3. A Journey of Fortuna: Edgar Wind in the United States

In 1939, Wind was invited by former colleagues Scott Buchanan and Stringfellow Barr (whom he had met in the United States in the 1920s) to lecture on Italian Renaissance art at St. John's College in Annapolis (about 30 miles from Washington, D.C.). This voyage would be the ship's last before the outbreak of the European conflicts following the Nazi invasion of Poland on 1 September. 'When I sailed in August of that year, I intended to stay for five months. By the outbreak of the war, this period was prolonged to six years', Wind wrote years later.⁴⁰

Wind left for the United States because a great opportunity was offered to him, and he achieved truly remarkable success there. Then entering his fourth decade, Wind was at

³⁸ Monica Centanni and Silvia De Laude, 'Delio Cantimori e il Warburgkreis', *La Rivista di Engramma*, 170 (January/February 2020), 113–26.

³⁹ The book, edited by Gertrud Bing and Emma Cantimori, is *Aby Warburg: La Rinascita del Paganesimo antico* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1966).

⁴⁰ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 163.

the height of his powers, and excelled as a lecturer across the United States. His fame in that country – where he was known largely from his articles in the *Journal of the Warburg Institute* – grew significantly during the academic tour he undertook between 1939 and 1942. He travelled continually during this period, from the East Coast to the West Coast and from the Midwest to the South. He lectured at the major centres of learning – Harvard, Yale, Columbia, the University of North Carolina, the University of Chicago, the University of California at Berkeley, Mills College – but also at ‘the most provincial institutions’ (so he wrote), such as museums in Worcester, Hartford, and Providence. He did so not to promote himself but fundamentally for the benefit of the Warburg Institute:

When it became evident that I would have to remain longer than I had planned, it was my intention to travel as much as possible and, therefore, avoid becoming affiliated with an institution. As the lectures which I had delivered were met with a response that went far beyond my expectations, and as these lectures were regarded as expositions of the method to which the Warburg Institute in London was committed, I inferred that it would be in the interest of the Warburg Institute if I made this method known in as many parts of the United States as possible.⁴¹

By the end of this peripatetic pilgrimage, Wind had delivered seventy-three lectures, generally devoted to ‘a work of art of universal interest’ or ‘objects of art preserved in the region.’⁴² The United States offered him economic rewards as well; as we have seen, Wind was a big spender and always in need of money. However, the main reason for his trip to America was to spread the Warburg Gospel.

Spreading the new *Kulturwissenschaft* method abroad had also, in fact, been Aby Warburg’s project in 1927, and his reason for going to the United States. In a letter of 17 August 1927 to Columbia University’s professor of economics, Edwin Seligman, enclosing as an introduction Alfred Doren’s essay published ‘in our *Vorträge*’, Warburg proposed his candidacy to teach a course on Fortuna at Columbia:

With such an interpretation of the simplest kind, [by coming to the United States] I would show a series of symbols from the mythical, and historical mythical tradition in their neglected meaning, as developers of the ability to communicate energetic self-perception, and present the documents to be shown in pictures and words, as it were, as stages in the development of the world view of European man.⁴³

⁴¹ Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, pp. 163–64.

⁴² Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, pp. 110–11.

⁴³ ‘Durch eine derartige Interpretatio simpelster Art würde ich eine Reihe von solchen Symbolen aus dem Kreise der mythischen und geschichtlichen mythischen Überlieferung in ihrer nicht beachteten Bedeutung als Entwickler der Mitteilungsfähigkeit energetischer Selbstempfindung aufzeigen und die dabei vorzuführenden Dokumente in Bild und Wort gleichsam wie Etappen in der Entwicklung der Weltanschauung des europäischen Menschen vorführen’. Letter from Aby Warburg to Edwin Seligman, 17 August 1927, ed. and trans. by Alice Barale and Laura Squillaro, ‘Regesto di testi inediti e rari dal Warburg Institute Archive sul tema della Fortuna’, *La Rivista di Engramma*, 92 (August 2011), 66–81 (pp. 78–79).

In the letter, Warburg set out to illustrate the Renaissance revolution of the ‘man who engages in the active-passive struggle with destiny’ through the image of Fortuna, whose paradigmatic representation was on a portrait medal of engineer Camillo Agrippa (c. 1585). Warburg proposed recovering meaning in light of a new ‘energetic aesthetic’, exemplified by the warrior who grabs the tuft of Fortune’s hair, while firmly grasping the ship’s rudder, thereby avoiding subjection to Fate:

She [Fortuna] stands as a mast, to which the swollen sail is attached, in the middle of the ship, mistress of the ship and yet not quite because Man sits at the rudder and in the parallelogram of forces [handwritten: *at least*] he helps to determine the course in diagonal. Carried by the elements, yet reaching a new goal through his steering – this imprint can probably be addressed as a new energetic function of the human ingenious in the age of the discovery of America.⁴⁴

When Warburg had his eye on the United States in 1927, he was not only reflecting on the European arrival in America at the end of the fifteenth century, but was also making plans for a journey of his own. Thirty-two years after his first trip overseas, he believed that on the other side of the Atlantic he would find a new impetus for his ideas:

I believe that in the 32 years that have passed since my first trip to America, art history has developed to such an extent that it is worthwhile for both parties to make America aware of the cultural studies tendency that I cultivated, since I expect American positivism to give a substantial boost to my ideas.⁴⁵

Warburg pursued, until his dying day, plans to take his new science overseas, and invested himself in the project. However, he could not convince his doctors and relatives to support his travel plans, and died in 1929 without being able to grab Kairos’ forelock – without convincing Fortuna to let him sail to America. Some twelve years later, Edgar Wind went to America primarily to fulfil Warburg’s wish: to bring the Kulturwissenschaft method to the New World, where it could be further developed. According to the Warburg Institute Report of 1940, ‘Dr. Wind who was in America when war broke out continues his lecture tour there on behalf of the Warburg Institute. His aim is to form a Society of the American Friends of the Warburg.’⁴⁶

⁴⁴ ‘Sie steht als Mast, an dem das geschwellte Segel befestigt ist, in der Mitte des Schiffes, Herrin des Schiffes und doch nicht ganz, weil der Mensch am Steuer sitzt und im Paralelogramm der Kräfte [handwritten: *zumindinstens*] in der Diagonale den Kurs bestimmt. Von den Elementen getragen, dennoch durch Lenken ein neues Ziel erreichend – diese Prägung darf man wohl als neue energetische Funktion des Gehirnmenschen im Zeitalter der Entdeckung Amerikas ansprechen’. Letter from Aby Warburg to Edwin Seligman, August 1927, ed. and trans. by Barale and Squillaro, ‘Regesto di testi inediti e rari’, pp. 78–79.

⁴⁵ ‘Ich glaube, dass seit den 32 Jahren, die seit meiner ersten Reise nach Amerika vergangen sind, die Kunstgeschichte sich so weit entwickelt hat, dass es für beide Teile lohnend ist, von ihrer durch mich gepflegten kulturwissenschaftlichen Tendenz in Amerika Kenntnis zu geben, weil ich von dem amerikanischen Positivismus eine wesentliche Förderung meiner Ideengänge erwarte’. Letter from Aby Warburg to Edwin Seligman, 17 August 1927, ed. and trans. by Barale and Squillaro, ‘Regesto di testi inediti e rari’, pp. 78–79.

⁴⁶ Warburg Institute Report 1939–1940.

After the invasion of France on 10 May 1940, Wind received a telegram from his Warburgian colleagues in London, recommending that he remain in the United States: ‘In the common interest, we advise you to stay in the States awaiting further developments, if necessary, also next winter.’⁴⁷

The Journal of the Warburg Institute was established in 1937, with Edgar Wind and Rudolf Wittkower as founding editors. The Journal was conceived not, as is sometimes thought, as a continuation of the famous *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, series of lectures delivered in Hamburg on a given theme and then published in volumes, but a slim handy quarterly publication. By skilful editorial arrangement the contents of the first issues, articles and shorter ‘Notes’ by English and foreign scholars, show by evocative juxtaposition the unity and diversity of a Warburgian approach to humanist studies. EW was an active editor and the style and contents of the early issues bear his stamp: Vol. I, Vol. II, also Vols. IV (3/4) and VII (1/2).

PERIODICALS. Owing to the circumstances of the war, Dr. Wittkower remained the only editor on the spot of the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Dr. Sauer joining him whenever his time permitted. In spite of these difficulties, and the technical obstacles in production, we have been able to publish two double issues.

Expulsion of Edgar Wind from the editorial board of the journal (from the Archive of the Bodleian Library)

In 1940, however, the Institute’s board removed Wind from his role as one of the journal’s editors. Several factors were making the distance between London and the United States unbridgeable: Wind’s character, his *modus operandi*, and the war, which was also making it increasingly difficult to cross the Atlantic.

Indeed, it is evident that Wind was neither diligent nor solicitous in handling correspondence. Even as a young man, he waited a month before replying to Warburg’s gift of the volumes by Giordano Bruno that had so surprised and moved him. During the war years, not only Fritz Saxl but also Rudi Wittkower grew increasingly angry as they worked on the journal while German bombs fell on London, while Wind did not stay in contact and was nowhere to be found. It is in this context that the irremediable rift with Saxl, which perhaps began to develop during the Hamburg years, took place. Wind and Saxl were very different people, perhaps too different in everything from the start.

In June 1945, after the end of the war in Europe, Saxl also went to the United States, seeking further funding for the Institute. And it was here that the definitive break between the two men occurred. But to recount the last chapter of the story, let’s move on to the *fil rouge* of the relationship that is central to this reconstruction: the link that bound Edgar Wind to Gertrud Bing.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, p. 153.

4. Wind–Bing: A Stellar Friendship

Between the 1930s and 1950s, the Warburg Institute saw a succession of senior management arrivals and departures: Gombrich's arrival in 1935; Wind's departure for the United States in 1939 and subsequent expulsion from the community of the Institute;⁴⁸ Saxl's death in 1948; the interregnum under Henri Frankfort's directorship;⁴⁹ the all too brief directorship of Bing (1955–59); and, finally, the long and decisive period of Gombrich's directorship, which lasted until 1976.

As we have seen, between 1927 and 1929 Wind and Bing were united by the bonds of esteem and collaboration with Warburg in the last period of his life. That bond remained unbreakable, despite the communication difficulties entailed by Wind's travels and his lack of diligence in correspondence. These words that Gertrud wrote to Edgar range in tone from ironic to resentful:

Although the correspondence with you is something in the nature of a monologue, there are a few things which I want to tell you [...].⁵⁰

In April 1942, as the rift began to widen, Bing tried to mediate, and listened to Wind's demands. This is how she recalled the misunderstandings that occurred during their long separation:

Please do not think that we [Saxl and Bing] want to make things too easy for ourselves. Your letter, even if it hurt when we got it, has certainly had the effect of making both Saxl and me more alert and more wary of the mistakes which we may be liable to make under present conditions. I am afraid this letter may sound very vague to you – it cannot be helped. If you still know us as you used to, you may be able to read between the lines. But the effect of such a protracted separation, without much correspondence, and the entire loss of personal contact with things as they happen and personalities as they develop is bound to result in misunderstandings (and long sentences such as this one are bound to fall out of gear).⁵¹

In the same letter she reassured him, but asked him to correspond more frequently because it was not possible 'to talk into a void':

⁴⁸ On the double exile of Edgar Wind, see Maurizio Ghelardi, 'Edgar Wind su Aby Warburg: un esercizio ermeneutico', *La Rivista di Engramma*, 150 (October 2017), 625–35; Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix'; Ianick Takaes de Oliveira, 'The Demented, the Demonic, and the Drunkard. Edgar Wind's Anarchic Art Theory', *La Rivista di Engramma*, 176 (October 2020), 43–97.

⁴⁹ On the scientific profile of the archaeologist Henri Frankfort and the influence of Warburg's method and thought on his research, see Paolo Matthiae, 'Warburg e l'archeologia orientale', in *Warburg e la cultura italiana. Fra sopravvivenze e prospettive di ricerca*, ed. by Claudia Cieri Via and Micol Forti (Milan: Mondadori, 2009), pp. 123–38 (pp. 126–29).

⁵⁰ Quoted in Branca, *Edgar Wind*, p. 343.

⁵¹ The letter from Bing to Wind, 27 April 1942 is published in Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', pp. 127–31, in particular p. 130.

I also think that under the new understanding – that you will remain one of us while building up an existence quite apart from what will be happening to us – we should keep up a regular correspondence. But even this minimum is hard to reach. I promise to reply elaborately whenever you write, but I cannot promise to write without regard to the echo from your side. It is impossible to talk into a void without being able to visualise the probable reaction to what one says. This very letter proves how unsatisfactory it is.⁵²

On 1 June 1943 Bing wrote again about misinterpreted words and intentions, and Wind's habit of writing only irregularly and even then mainly to attack or protest against what displeased him:

I also felt sorry and ashamed when I read that our letters made you feel hurt and misinterpreted. Nothing was less intended, dear, and it seems that the last three years have given rise to a good deal of misunderstandings both ways. Perhaps you will find extenuating circumstances for us in certain small oddities of your own make-up – such as being constitutionally unable to write letters unless you are 'roused'. No doubt we have given you reason enough for it, but we were separated from you not only by some thousand miles of ocean and slow transport, not only by the changed conditions of a country at war, but also by the absence of any news from you except when you were dissatisfied by something we had done. It is not at all easy to keep another person's picture unblurred and undistorted before your mind's eye under these circumstances.⁵³

It was the circumstances, it was the war, it was the distance that could blur and distort one another's images. But Bing was confident: 'When we meet again I think I can make you realise what material and psychological obstacles we are up against all the time.'⁵⁴ However, she ended her April 1942 letter with these words:

You will probably feel my diffidence in every word of it [this letter]. Still – very much love and do not despair of us. Yours as always, Gertrud.⁵⁵

During the same period, Wind wrote to Saxl that, despite the rewards of life in the United States, he could not wait to return to London:

I would like nothing better than to come back to the Institute which, in my personal opinion, I have never left. My entire work here has been done for the Institute and with the Institute in mind, even so obviously that some of our good friends (I need not mention them) periodically accused me of being a fool and jeopardising my own chances.⁵⁶

⁵² In Takaes, *L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix*, p. 131.

⁵³ The letter from Bing to Wind, 1 June 1943 is published in Takaes, *L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix*, pp. 136–40.

⁵⁴ In Takaes, *L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix*, p. 138.

⁵⁵ In Takaes, *L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix*, p. 131.

⁵⁶ The letter from Wind to Saxl, 10 April 1943 is published in Takaes, *L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix*, pp. 134–36.

Wind wrote, 'I have never left.' He felt that he had never left the Warburg Institute in London. But Saxl – who as early as 1944 would promise Wind that he would succeed as director of the Institute – was evasive, to say the least.⁵⁷ Even earlier, in June 1943 Bing wrote:

The condition is that you are going to take over when Saxl's term of office comes to an end. You know how fond I am of the Institute, and how much I hope it will go on to play its part. But I feel saving it now is not worth much trouble unless its inner meaning is ensured. You have never wanted to hear anything of this as long as you were here. You may feel differently about it now. For one, Saxl is getting older, and the last years have, for private as well as for general reasons, laid a very heavy burden on him. I should be very glad if he would not have to carry it very much longer once the future of the Institute is assured, and, let us hope, the war over. The other reason why I feel this may be discussed between us three is that, the last years, and also to a certain extent the particular experiences of the common household have convinced me that the present team would be a hopelessly pedestrian and uninspired assemblage without somebody like you or Saxl to stir them up.⁵⁸

And so, we get to the 'manifesto of the breakup', of which the most clearly articulated version is found in – unsurprisingly – a letter from Wind. Dated 15 and 30 June 1945, it came after Saxl's visit to the United States and was addressed not to Saxl but to Bing. It opened ominously: 'This letter is very difficult to write, and I therefore best begin with the weather.'⁵⁹ Wind wrote about his wife, Margaret, preparing furniture and baggage that they would no longer keep in storage as they sought to return home:

The decision to the contrary would be very hard for me, and no less for Margaret who has prepared everything for our departure for more than a year. Our furniture has been in storage in Chicago, and we have been living here in a single furnished room in anticipation of our leaving. Not only Margaret's sister in London but everyone here has been told of our impending departure, and you know best how much I like living in London.⁶⁰

Wind was strongly affected, and very disappointed, by Saxl's unfriendly and ambivalent attitude:

⁵⁷ The letter from Wind to Saxl, March, 19, 1943 is published in Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', pp. 132–34.

⁵⁸ The letter from Bing to Wind, June, 1, 1943 is published in Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', pp. 136–40, in particular p. 138.

⁵⁹ The letter from Wind to Bing, 30 June 1945 is published in Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', pp. 148–54. Dated 15 June 1945, the letter has a postscript, dated 30 June, which reads: 'I have delayed sending off this letter. In the meantime, Saxl has visited us for a week [...]'].

⁶⁰ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 151.

He seemed a tiny little bit deaf toward arguments which did not quite suit his preconceived plans, and changed the subject whenever they occurred; but this will not deter me from presenting them to him.⁶¹

I will now summarise the arguments and points of contrast with Saxl that Wind detailed in his letter to Bing:

- A. *The Warburg Institute has become a charitable institution*
- B. *Saxl's idea for an encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*
- C. *Genuflection with respect to academic demands*
- D. *Hierarchy, not fellowship*
- E. *Preference for compilations instead of research*
- F. *The crime of encouraging an 'intellectual proletariat'.*

A. The Warburg Institute has become a charitable institution

This was a question of how Saxl had wanted the Warburg Institute organised when they arrived in London in 1934. On the matter, Wind repeated the same criticism in 1945:

At the root of the problem is the old question which I put to Saxl some years ago when he visited me in Devon and which I have kept repeating ever since: Is the Warburg Institute to be run primarily as a charitable institution for relieving – by more or less small pittances – the plight of distressed scholars? Or is its primary aim the development of a particular scientific method by scholars committed to this form of research, whether distressed or not. Both aims are honourable if they are kept apart.⁶²

And further on, in the postscript:

There is no intention on Saxl's part to give up his old habit of playing the benefactor at the expense of the permanent staff of the Institute. Though he knows my views, he has no scruples in speaking to outsiders in my own presence of the Institute as a 'charitable institution'. He is adamant in his refusal to strengthen the permanent staff both scientifically and financially so as to give the Institute a healthy constitution. The old policy of minimum salaries for those who work, little pittances here and there for those who suffer, and lucrative gifts for those who visit, is to be continued in the old style. Under these conditions, Saxl's complete concession of [*sic*] my own demands has no attraction for me.⁶³

As mentioned above, in 1934 Saxl had expressed – along the same lines – opposition to Wind and Wittkower's plans for founding the *Journal of The Warburg Institute*.

⁶¹ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 149.

⁶² Quoted in Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 151.

⁶³ Quoted in Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 154.

B. Saxl's idea for an encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages and Renaissance

Saxl wrote to Wind about his project of launching an encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. By June 1945, when the two men met up in New York, Saxl had already laid out his plans for it in detail. In response, Wind asserted to Bing:

There are too many encyclopaedias already. Instead of leading to the sources, they have a tendency to supplant them; and I dislike the idea that we should add to their number. Moreover, Pauly-Wissowa should be a warning rather than a model. Ever since this wonderful Instrument became available, classical studies have been on the decline. I have no authority to speak on medieval studies. Maybe they have reached the Alexandrian stage and are ready for a great funerary monument in the style of Pauly-Wissowa. I know that this is not the case with Renaissance studies. They are not yet ready for the embalmer.⁶⁴

Ianick Takaes states: 'What Wind feared most was the encyclopaedia as lexicography, that is, the indexing of facts and sources that would ultimately restrain creative access to original documents by imposing a cataloguing authority.'⁶⁵ Renaissance studies were not yet ready to have a funerary monument, or to be embalmed.

C. Genuflection with respect to academic demands

Although he was the former deputy director of the Warburg Institute, Wind faced the possibility of becoming a mere aggregator. He complained to Bing:

While he [Saxl] began by declaring that the budget could not possibly provide for me more than 950 pounds and that the post of a reader would be the maximum that the University would concede, he ended by assuring me that I would get a full professorship but turned a deaf ear to my suggestion that all such titles, including his own, should be abolished in favour of a community of fellows. I must also confess that I was shocked by the disclosure, as unexpected as the academic pigeon-holes, that the post of Deputy Director has been abolished without telling me a word, and that you have resumed your old role under a new name.⁶⁶

Wind's most profound criticism was aimed at the very narrow horizon of Saxl's ambitions for the Institute:

I can understand that the categories, if merely for the sake of estimating the appropriate salaries. In that case, Saxl should have made it clear that a research institute of this calibre, in order to be effective, requires either several professorships or none. The officers of London University, I am sure, would be the first to understand that people of

⁶⁴ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 149.

⁶⁵ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 119.

⁶⁶ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 154.

professorial status (that is their term, if I am not mistaken) will not accept appointments if they are demoted, and their esteem for the Warburg Institute will only be heightened if several people of that status are prepared to join it.⁶⁷

Certainly, Wind was disappointed at the thought of a demotion, and was concerned that he might not be able to repay the debt of gratitude that he owed to the American universities that had welcomed him. But he also objected to the institution of an academic hierarchy that did not correspond to the imprint that Warburg wished to give to his circle of collaborators:

It carries an annual stipend of \$8000. I know that the Warburg Institute cannot pay me the equivalent, and I think I have always made it clear that I do not expect it. But the financial sacrifice should be reasonable. A reduction by one-half or more, which Saxl seems to regard as equitable, will not be so regarded by any impartial judge. Moreover, if academic classifications have to be made, which I would regret, I must remain in the same class in which I am here. Anything else would be interpreted as a public disavowal on your part of the recognition I have received here. Moreover, I have no intention of playing the role of an ungrateful fool; and I would deserve this appellation and offend the sensibilities of those to whom I am indebted here, if I rewarded their generosity by preferring an inadequate appointment in London.⁶⁸

Wind was forthright: he was unwilling to look like an ‘ungrateful fool’. But there was more. He condemned the betrayal of Warburg’s legacy and his ideal of collegiality at the Institute.

D. Hierarchy, not fellowship

I was dumbfounded to learn that we are to be put into academic pigeonholes and classified as ‘professors’, ‘readers’, and God knows what. Saxl never mentioned a word of this in his letters, and neither did you. I think it is a very regrettable development since it impairs the collegiate character of the Institute. If we have to be called names, it should be ‘Fellows’.⁶⁹

In Wind’s opinion, Saxl’s plan was a betrayal of Warburg’s approach and style.

E. Preference for compilations instead of research

Wind thought that Saxl was also giving up on one of Warburg’s most important and generous ideals:

Mobilise all the forces available, with the result that the energies, particularly of the younger generation, which ought to be free for constructive research and produce new

⁶⁷ Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, pp. 152–53.

⁶⁸ Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, p. 153.

⁶⁹ Takaes, ‘L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix’, p. 152.

results, would be channelled into the unconstructive labour of compiling, and that for a period of at least two decades.⁷⁰

In a letter to Kenneth Clark, Wind added: 'If [Saxl's] plan were to succeed, it would reduce a whole generation of scholars into compilers.'⁷¹

F. The crime of encouraging an 'intellectual proletariat'

The old policy of minimum salaries for those who work, little pittances here and there for those who suffer, and lucrative gifts for those who visit, is to be continued in the old style.⁷²

Wind considered this not only a mistake but also a crime:

By your ambiguous and self-deceptive policy in these matters, both you and Saxl have substantially contributed to the increase of the intellectual proletariat. And in my opinion this is a crime.⁷³

He felt that such policies would constitute a betrayal of Warburg's intentions:

If this tendency of Saxl's prevails, the moment may come when the Warburg Institute is no longer the most suitable place for developing Warburg's methods and ideas.⁷⁴

The 'ghost of his mentor' was a constant source of concern for Wind.⁷⁵ Warburg never gave the impression of distance, because he did not feel any, between himself and young scholars, such as those approaching him for the first time with mixed feelings: half proud of their small research achievements and half anxious about what the famous man would think about them. On Warburg's working style, especially with younger researchers, Pasquali writes:

In difficult times, he considered it his duty to help beginners, even financially, without humiliating them, by finding them paid scientific work and using many of them as assistants in his greatest undertaking – the Warburg Library.⁷⁶

But to Wind, the Warburg Institute represented above all a feeling of intellectual freedom, and pride in being 'an intellectual outcast [...] which [...] is today the only honourable position.'⁷⁷ Yet Wind felt that Warburg's legacy no longer existed in London. The quarrel

⁷⁰ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 150.

⁷¹ Letter from Wind to Clark, 28 August 1948, published in Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 167–68.

⁷² Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 154.

⁷³ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 151.

⁷⁴ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 151.

⁷⁵ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 123–24.

⁷⁶ Giorgio Pasquali, 'A Tribute to Aby Warburg', in *Aby Warburg*, ed. by Centanni, p. 52.

⁷⁷ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', pp. 150–51.

over the management of the Institute ended in accusations and hatred: claims of the theft of books and ideas, and Wind's attempt to snatch Wittkower from Warburg. Although the end was bitter,⁷⁸ the quarrel was not personal. What was at stake was a concept of Warburg's legacy: against encyclopaedism and for depth of study; against mere assistance and for original research; against academicism and for living knowledge – which is also the embodiment of living thought. The king's throne – the father's seat – was vacant, and no one had been able to occupy it.

Certainly, the toxicity of the final letters ended any possibility of a fruitful relationship. But the Wind–Bing correspondence shows that history could perhaps have been different. Possibly the fracture that closed a fundamental chapter of twentieth-century European culture, and contributed to the (un)fortunate reception of Warburg's authority as a thinker and a teacher could have been healed.

But it was only with Wind that Bing could talk about Warburg's plans. In a letter dated 9 April 1940 (of which a carbon copy is preserved in the Bodleian Archive), Bing wrote to Wind to discuss Warburg's *Theory of Memory*. She contemplated the application of the biological theory of the transmission of memory to well-defined historical events:

Can heredity by memory pass through other channel of [sic] those of biological descent in direct line? This question is, I suspect, connected with another one which I cannot answer, that is, which are the stimuli which cause the revival of mnemonic imprints? Semon talks 'Ekforische Reize' without saying nothing [sic] about their nature [...]. But how is it that among so many inherited dispositions which the descendants 'do not remember' particular ones are selected for reproductions? If they cannot be defined in terms of mnemonic theory, we may just as well call the phenomenon [...] their 'influence' or 'style' and leave it to that [...] I cannot get clear about it without your help. Can you act as 'Katalysator' to my muddled ideas in this, as you have so often done before? Love, as always, Gertrud.⁷⁹

And in 1942 Bing wrote to Wind (whom else?) about the urgent need for both to commit to the publication of the Atlas:

I have also been working on Warburg's Atlas, and have arrived at a stage where I need much criticism and some help in fixing the material down to make sense as a book. This will be this summer's job for both Saxl and me, and I hope Saxl's collaboration will be a guarantee of its being done within a limited period. At any rate it is understood that the Atlas must have appeared by the time our present arrangement expires. The schedule was fixed before your letter arrived but your admonition helped to make Saxl realise that now was the time for him to take a hand in it. I do not dare suggesting the material should be sent to you when it nears its final shape – I cannot quite imagine that it will be possible

⁷⁸ Margot Wittkower *Interviewed by Teresa Barnett*, pp. 206–12.

⁷⁹ Bodleian Archive, Oxford, MS. Wind 7, file 1.

for you to devote the necessary time and concentration on it let alone the difficulties of communication. But if you think it can be done no one would be happier than I.⁸⁰

Again, in June 1943, Bing wrote to ‘my dearest Edgar’, reminding him of the importance of the Mnemosyne project, for which Saxl was offering her less support than she would like:

And lately, because the old idea of a book on Warburg has taken a new shape. It might be the psychological moment for such a book. It might sum up and conclude the phase in the development of the Institute during which it existed under private tutelage, finance and administration; and it might also serve to state clearly for what type of history writing the Institute stands. The idea was started by several people asking Saxl to write a history of the Institute. I am not at all certain that it will come to anything. If not, it will bring us a step nearer to the completion and publication of the ‘Mnemosyne’, which Saxl is finding increasingly difficult to do. [...] All my love, dear, and thanks for your simple ‘confessio fidei’ which your letter contained. Good wishes and all that, and is it too much to hope that you will write again in a measurable time? Yours as always, Gertrud.⁸¹

What is certain is that both Wind and Bing, even during the decades in which Warburg’s intellectual reputation and legacy were obscured, cherished the memory of his teaching until their final days. Bing’s last project was Warburg’s biography, which her death caused to be left unfinished. Wind’s last published article was a critical review challenging Gombrich’s *Intellectual Biography* – a paper that in my opinion (in disagreement with my friend Branca, and many others) is neither ‘groundless’ nor ‘malevolent’.⁸²

All this, especially the harsh review of the *Intellectual Biography*, unleashed Gombrich’s revenge, is certainly – as Branca claims – one of the reasons why Wind’s name was excluded from cultural and academic circles in England for at least thirty years.⁸³

Wind paid dearly for his choices. He was expelled from the influential circles of Anglo-Saxon culture, and faced heavy criticism of, and restrictions on, his works. Bing paid dearly for her choices as well: from 1958 onward, Gombrich denied her any support to

⁸⁰ The letter from Bing to Wind, 27 April 1942, is published in Takaes, *L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix*, pp. 127–31, in particular pp. 130–31.

⁸¹ The letter from Bing to Wind, 1 June 1943, is published in Takaes, *L’esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix*, pp. 136–40, in particular p. 140.

⁸² Edgar Wind, ‘On a Recent Biography of Warburg, Review of: E.H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, London 1970’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 June 1971, 735–36. On Wind’s review, see Guglielmo Bilancioni, ‘Aby Warburg, the Great Lord of the Labyrinth’, in *Aby Warburg*, ed. by Centanni, pp. 107–10 (first publ. in *il manifesto*, 15 January 1984).

⁸³ See for example the scathing review of the *Eloquence of Symbols* by Charles Hope, ‘Naming the Graces. Review of: E. Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, Oxford, 1984’, *London Review of Books*, 6, no. 5 (15 March 1984): ‘Edgar Wind himself was an exceedingly learned man. His publications are full of untranslated passages in Latin and Greek, with long discursive footnotes. But these often serve to obscure the extreme shakiness of his arguments, even to a scholar as acute as Hugh Lloyd-Jones’. On this subject, see Ghelardi, ‘Edgar Wind su Aby Warburg: un esercizio ermeneutico’ and Takaes, ‘The Demented, the Demonic, and the Drunkard’.

finish Warburg's biography. After her retirement in 1959, she was not only excluded from the decision-making processes at the Institute but also barred from publishing Warburg's papers and writing his biography unhampered. As I have argued elsewhere, based on both primary and secondary documentary evidence, at the time of Bing's death in 1964 Gombrich was using Warburg's materials and composing his *Biography* in her stead.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, Bing continued to collect notes for the Warburg biography throughout her life. In 1960, she asked an American funder, the Bollingen Foundation, for the support of an assistant to write another work:

[...] An analysis of Warburg's language. This is a type of examination which has, as far as I know, not been carried out in the case of any historian because historians are generally expected to write 'as it comes', that is to say, to state their results factually without much regard to verbal niceties. Warburg does not conform to this pattern. Not only is his language unusually concise and stimulating: he has also coined a number of terms and phrases which have gone into modern art-historical terminology and influenced historical thinking. And I hope to be able to show that this so-called 'method' is to a large extent the outcome of his gift for creative formulation, which led him to discover connections in cultural phenomena up till then considered as belonging to different fields of study and amenable only to separate treatment.⁸⁵

A substantial fragment of this essay – in the German language and consisting of thirty-two handwritten pages, corresponding to thirty-one typewritten pages – is kept at the Warburg Institute Archive in the 'Gertrud Bing' file, in a folder bearing the handwritten title 'On Warburg's language'.

Bing died in the summer of 1964 without having completed her essay on Warburg's language. But what she did leave is a real mystery. In 1964, Delio Cantimori wrote to Gombrich to ask about Warburg's biography, knowing that Gertrud had been working on one. In a letter I found in the Archive of the Scuola Normale in Pisa, Gombrich surprisingly responded that Bing 'cut into pieces' her draft because she was dissatisfied with it:

Unfortunately, we didn't find much in her papers that she could save herself. Warburg's biography that we all hoped so much to see written by her very expert hand is certainly lost forever. There are not even Notes. Not even the essay on the language and style of

⁸⁴ I have discussed Bing's isolation and Gombrich's unwillingness to back her up when she asked for a stipend for an assistant, in Centanni, 'Purtroppo non abbiamo trovato molto tra le carte', pp. 132–44.

⁸⁵ Philippe Despoix and Martin Treml, eds., *Gertrud Bing, Fragments sur Aby Warburg* (Paris: INHA, 2020), pp. 102–4.

Warburg has remained intact because – wanting to redo it – she cut it into pieces a few days before her illness.⁸⁶

This is a very strange statement, disproved by what Gombrich himself wrote in his *Intellectual Biography*, where he admitted to having used scattered notes from Bing's work. Strange – and very shady. Bernardino Branca writes:

Upon Bing's death in 1964, it is assumed that Ernst Gombrich, director of the WI and her successor, will have the Warburg correspondence with Saxl that she owned and with it also the correspondence with Wind about Warburg's *Theory of Memory* thrown away, for fear, in the mentality of the time, of damaging the image of the Institute [...].⁸⁷

The result was Gombrich's *Intellectual Biography*, published in 1970. Wind attacked the work harshly – rightly, in my view – and condemned the use and abuse of notes and other materials. This is what Wind wrote in his famous review:

The fragments quoted from unpublished notes, drafts, diaries, and letters, and indiscriminately mixed with pieces torn from finished works as if they were fragments, are drowned in a slow-moving mass of circumlocution which determines the tone and tempo of the book.⁸⁸

Bing fell into oblivion, her role in the great enterprise of creating the Warburg Institute forgotten until very recently. But from the letters between Bing and Wind, and then from Wind's last publication – the review of Gombrich's *Intellectual Biography*, a 'critical testament by Wind' (as Takaes states)⁸⁹ – we can deduce that both always remembered the beginning of their adventure and the crossroads that separated them – and how that extraordinary story could have taken a very different path. We must at least attempt to bring that interrupted path to light.

I conclude this exploration with the words of an author whose works were dear to both Gertrud Bing and Edgar Wind:

We were friends, and have become strangers to each other. But this is as it ought to be, and we do not want either to conceal or obscure the fact, as if we had to be ashamed of it. We are two ships, each of which has its goal and its course; we may, to be sure, cross one another in our paths, and celebrate a feast together as we did before – and then the gallant ships lay quietly in one harbour and in one sunshine, so that it might have been

⁸⁶ 'Purtroppo non abbiamo [sic] trovato molto tra le sue carte che si potrebbe salvare. La biografia del Warburg che noi tutti speravamo tanto di vedere scritta dalla sua esertissima mano e [sic] certamente perduta per sempre. Ne [sic] esistono nemento [sic] appunti. Nemento [sic] il saggio sulla lingua e lo stile del Warburg e [sic] rimasto intatto perche [sic] volendo rifarlo lo tagliava in pezzi qualche giorno prima della malattia'. See Centanni, 'Purtroppo non abbiamo trovato molto tra le carte', pp. 137–38.

⁸⁷ Branca, *Edgar Wind*, p. 63, n. 49. The information has been taken from an August 2017 interview with Claudia Wedepohl, Director of the Warburg Institute Archive.

⁸⁸ Wind, 'On a Recent Biography of Warburg'. See also the first digital edition of Wind's review, published in *La Rivista di Engramma*, 153 (febbraio 2018), pp. 183–195 (p. 185).

⁸⁹ Takaes, 'L'esprit de Warburg lui-même sera en paix', p. 125.

thought they were already at their goal, and that they had had one goal. But then the almighty strength of our tasks forced us apart once more into different seas and into different zones, and perhaps we shall never see one another again, – or perhaps we may see one another, but not know one another again; the different seas and suns have altered us! That we had to become strangers to one another is the law to which we are subject: just by that shall we become more sacred to one another! Just by that shall the thought of our former friendship become holier! There is probably some immense, invisible curve and stellar orbit in which our courses and goals, so widely different, may be comprehended as small stages of the way. – let us raise ourselves to this thought! But our life is too short, and our power of vision too limited for us to be more than friends in the sense of that sublime possibility. And so we will believe in our stellar friendship, though we should have to be terrestrial enemies to one another.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*⁹⁰

Edgar Wind and Gertrud Bing: for them, I borrow Friedrich Nietzsche’s brilliant image of an intense, tormented, and ultimately ‘stellar’ friendship. The troubled legacy of Aby Warburg’s thought is illuminated by the constellation formed by those two stars.

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⁹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Thomas Common (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2006), p. 137.

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