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Fritz Saxl as Reader of Aby Warburg's Sassetti Essay

In late August 1928 on a research stay abroad in Geneva, Fritz Saxl received a query from Aby Warburg about a no longer existing bridge in that city where religious ceremonies in commemoration of a member of the Sassetti family would have taken place. Besides providing bibliographic references to support Warburg's enduring interest in individuals of the Medici's mercantile circle, Saxl's response reaffirmed the high regard in which he held the essay *Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunctions to His Sons* (1907): "I have always said that it is your best work". To contextualize and better understand the position and role of the Sassetti essay in Warburg's published work, this paper studies its strenuous writing process, earliest reception, and appraisal as a methodological "turning point" by his closest collaborator and deputy, Saxl. As he declared in 1921, the publication epitomizes a significant moment in Warburg's intellectual history: "from that moment on every work is more and more not just a historical but rather a human document". But what does a transition from a merely historical to a human document mean? How does this change relate to the Sassetti essay and what does it add to the reading of the text?