

Humanities

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Issued three times a year, Common Knowledge exists to publish "work in the humanities, intellectual history, the arts, and social sciences that redefines divisive terms and figures of the past and

present in ways that make expanded sympathies possible". The journal's founder and Editor, Jeffrey M. Perl, is supported by a substantial and distinguished editorial board, many of whose members themselves contribute to the journal. Each issue contains around 200 pages of articles, book reviews, poetry and fiction: one recent issue features Alissa Valles's substantial twenty-two-poem sequence, "Hand Work", on medical matters.

Many of the reviews are refreshingly brief and to the point (Perl's entire review of Stéphane Hessel's *Time for Outrage* reads "... then, maybe, Nap Time and - when we grow up - Happy Hour?"), and the range of books noticed is very enterprising. The journal's variety of material and opinions gives it a pleasing heterogeneity: for example, transcripts of the sixteenth-century wills of Christopher Urswick and John Redman, reproduced by Colin Richmond, can be found lurking in its pages.

Among academic journals, Common Knowledge's distinctive and lively approach is partly due to its pursuit of chosen themes. Recent issues have been dedicated to "Improvisation and Originalism" and to "Comparative Relativism", subtitled "Symposium on an impossibility". These symposia stretch beyond just one issue, and three have been devoted to "Fuzzy Studies" or the "Consequence of Blur", including an eighty-page article by Barry Allen on "Blurring the Difference with China". "Fuzzy studies" are, by definition, hard to tie down, but there's no doubt in the journal's collective mind that they can be associated with the work of the Warburg Institute, "which is presently under threat": that "threat" lies behind the Winter 2012 issue of Common Knowledge, which is devoted to the Institute, its Library and Readers. There are several excellent and detailed accounts of the Warburg's history and personalities - as well as more personal memoirs by, among others, Elizabeth Sears, Carlo Ginzburg, Jill Kraye and Christy Anderson. "The Warburg Library must never be dismantled or hidden away", Christopher S. Wood writes, adding that it "is now threatened by politics". The key document, helpfully reproduced in Anthony Grafton and Jeffrey F. Hamburger's introduction to the issue, is the Trust deed of November 28, 1944, in which it is stated that "The University will maintain and preserve the Warburg Library in perpetuity in accordance with this Deed ... and will keep it adequately equipped and staffed as an independent unit". The Institute's current Director, Peter Mack, writes of looking for "A strategy for the future of the Library": Common Knowledge provides a first-rate location for explaining why such a strategy is essential.

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