

Warburgian Studies in Russia

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The name of Aby Warburg first appeared in Russian academic press even before his “intellectual biography” published by Ernst Gombrich in English in 1970 produced a new wave of interest in the outstanding personality and legacy of the art historian from Hamburg. That first time was anything but complimentary; in 1964 no Soviet art historian could give a positive review of what was a new fashionable trend in Western humanitarian science or the achievements of its recognized founding father (Libman 1964). However, iconology became a subject of academic discourse in Soviet history of art thanks to that first negative review.

The next publication on Warburg’s legacy in the Russian language appeared more than 10 years later. In 1977, Michail Sokolov, the famous Soviet art historian and adherer of the iconology method, published the analytical essay *The Limits of Iconology and the Problem of Art History Method Integrity: About Discussions of Erwin Panofsky’s Theory* in the anthology on the approaches to the study of 12th-17th century art prevailing in the West at the time (Sokolov 1977). Even though the title of the essay refers to a much later and lots more formalized version of the methodology reviewed by the author, the first part of the text is totally dedicated to its origins. Sokolov compares Warburg with “iconographers of the traditional type” (for instance, with Anton Heinrich Springer and Émile Mâle) and notes, that unlike the latter, Warburg paid less attention to the subject and concentrated on the visual motive, on what he calls “cluster of the spiritual conflicts of the epoch hidden in the works of art” (Sokolov 1977, 230). Sokolov believes it is Warburg’s achievement that thanks to his works “certain prerequisites for uniting the history of style, iconology and sociology or art (which was going through its embryonic stage at the time) into one branch of science” (Sokolov 1977, 232). Using the

Intellectual Biography mentioned above as key source of information and partly relying on Gombrich's point of view, Sokolov finishes his review with a comment that the works of the Hamburg art historian could not serve the creation of the so-called "strong", i.e. *a priori* justified art history, because "Warburg was a true child of Darwin's age, with constant tendency to seek biological understanding of creative process" (Sokolov 1977, 232).

Until early 2000s, the articles by Libman and Sokolov remained the only works in the Russian language where Warburg's legacy was reviewed. If we include translations of works by Western European art historians, it may be said that in the post-Soviet era the long period of silence was broken with the article by Ernst Gombrich: *Ambivalence in Classical Tradition: Psychology of Culture*, published in the reputable journal on humanitarian studies, "Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie" (Gombrich 1999).

Starting with the turn of the century, the number of 'warburgian' publications in Russia has been growing up, thus reflecting an outburst of interest in the origins of the cross-disciplinary history of art experienced by the Western European science at the same time. These publications fall into two categories. Authors of articles for textbooks and encyclopedias mostly concentrate on iconology as a method originally developed by Warburg. The personality and biography of the scientist, though never completely ignored by such publications, still never get any close review. The texts in the second category may be compared with Gombrich's monograph. They usually place the key Warburg's projects into the context of a detailed description of his life. Naturally, most works of the second category tend to draw parallels between the personal and the scientific biographies of the main character. Besides, in the first ten years of 21st century, there was one more addition to translated works where warburgian tradition was reflected one way or another: *Myths, Emblems, Evidence. Morphology and History* by Carlo Ginzburg (chapter *From Warburg to Gombrich*, Ginzburg 2004).

In the 2000s, Stepan Vanejan, the art historian and theorist, proved to be one of the most meticulous and enthusiastic researchers of Warburg's works. For several encyclopedias, he prepared articles on Aby Warburg (Vanejan 2003) and on iconology (Vanejan 2008; Vanejan 2009). Later, the careful studies of the Warburg's methodology brought Vanejan to the

desire to rebuild the genealogy of the views of the scientist who introduced the first stages of development of iconology to the Russian humanitarian science, i.e. the views of Ernst Gombrich, already mentioned before a few times. A long detailed article became appeared as a result of a comparison of the two research systems: *Aby Warburg Through the Eyes of Ernst Gombrich: experience of reading and commentary* (Vanejan 2012). A few years later the material, with some revisions and additions, was included in Vanejan's monograph totally dedicated to Gombrich, where it became a chapter, called *Gombrich and Warburg: experience of symbolism and commentary* (Vanejan 2015). In both texts, Vanejan explores Gombrich's point of view as Warburg's biographer, and through his point of view explores the origins of the methodology used by the latter. Vanejan makes the key emphasis on the close connection between the art history paradigm and the perceptual psychology of that form which Warburg may have known in the early 20th century. The Russian researcher of Warburg's method has established a direct or indirect connection with the views of a few scientists, including Tito Vignoli, Charles Darwin, Friedrich Theodor Fischer, Hermann Siebeck, Adolph Konrad Fiedler, Gottfried Semper. According to Vanejan, the key object of Warburg's interest was "the nature and principles of functioning of archetypal symbols in visual arts", while the basis of his highly psychological approach to the history of art was the strife to "clarify" and "rationalize" what he called "irrational, almost beastly-phobous reactions of the primitive man" (which he feared) through the means of "very concrete methodology, i.e. through the conceptual framework of association psychology" (Vanejan 2015, 138).

That chapter in the monograph by Vanejan, published in 2015, starts with an understandable statement that "by now... it has been written about Aby Warburg about as much as the whole history of art" (Vanejan 2015, 12). Though the author had in mind the situation in the West, this can also be said about Russia. Soon after the first publications by Vanejan, the strictly cross-disciplinary approach used by Warburg became the subject of Professor Vasil'ev's review in his article *Aby Warburg's Theory of Social Memory in the Intellectual Context of the Epoch* (Vasil'ev 2007). The next year was marked with the publication of a momentous text, that is, the full publication of several articles by Warburg (translated into Russian) in a monographic collection called *The Great Migration of Images*. The preface

to the collection by Il'ja Dorončenkov *Aby Warburg: Saturn and Fortuna* to this day remains one of the best texts for the wide audience, where the personal and scientific biography of Warburg is presented in close connection with the main stages of his work and the key concepts of his methodology (*Pathosformel*, *Nachleben der Antike*, etc.) are presented in simple language adapted to a lay mind. Same year, Vjačeslav Šestakov, Doctor of Philosophy and culturologist, was one of the first to include a chapter on Aby Warburg in a textbook on the history of arts for artistic and humanitarian universities (Šestakov 2008). Professor Limanskaja devoted to Warburg a big part of her review *The History of Art as a Living System: Methodology Aspects in Art History in XX Century* (Limanskaja 2011). At the same time there came publications on Warburg by Marina Toropygina, for instance, *Atlas Mnemosyne. Non finito in the History of Art* (Toropygina 2012), *Aby Warburg in 1912. About the Origins of Iconology* (Toropygina 2013) and *Aby Warburg. Biography and biographers* (Toropygina 2013). Finally, in 2015, the first detailed monograph on Warburg was published in Russian language. It is based on Toropygina's thesis for doctor's degree, guided by Vanejan and adapted for publication: *Iconology. The Beginning. The Problem of Symbol in Aby Warburg's Work and His Circle* (Toropygina 2015; an English presentation in Engramma n. 139). The first part of work is totally dedicated to Aby Warburg and the development of the concept of "symbol" in his texts. In the second part, the same concept is reviewed in a wider context, and the circle of authors is also widened with some art historians of 20th century and of Warburg's circle, including Fritz Saxl, Edgar Wind, Erwin Panofsky, Ernst Gombrich and Jan Białostocki.

In 2016 during the Second International Sarabianov Congress of Art Historians in Moscow State Institute for Art Studies Monica Centanni and Daniela Sacco have presented their works on the famous Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* and described the history and concept of the whole work in general (Centanni 2018), and some specifics of the first three plates in particular (Sacco 2018).

It is only just to crown the review of works in Russian dedicated to Warburg with a wonderfully illustrated detailed anthology of the visual culture studies *World of Images. Images of the World (Мир образов, образы мира)*, Mazur 2018) prepared in cooperation with the European University

at St. Petersburg by the editor and compiler Natalia Mazur and published in 2018 (Mazur 2018; an Italian version of the Introduction in this issue of *Engramma*). Natalia Mazur not only acted as the translator of a major part of the texts presented in Russian for the first time ever but supplemented them with a detailed essay on each author. Thanks to that, *The World of Images* offers to the reader a complete gallery of the key persons in modern European visual art studies, whose names until now were only known to experts. The opening section, *Nachleben of Warburg's Method* is fully dedicated to the subject of our interest and unites the article by Warburg himself about the painting *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* by Manet (Warburg's text on Manet, edited by Maurizio Ghelardi, is published in this issue of *Engramma*), with texts by Edgar Wind, William S. Heckscher and Carlo Ginzburg, focusing on various aspects of the great scientist's method. The articles included in the anthology provide characteristics of various research trends within the general concept of visual studies. Nearly all material in the book could be placed in the wide field of academic discourse formed by warburgian tradition, while the authors may be seen as either 'direct' intellectual heirs to Warburg (like Fritz Saxl, Erwin Panofsky, Salvatore Settis, or Michael Baxandall, for instance), or at least as those who share with him some common convictions.

There is no doubt, that the period of active interest in Warburg's legacy and those trends in the art studies which result from the long period of his work analysis, is not over yet. It is not that easy to imagine what results may come out of adopting warburgian cross-disciplinary principle, neglecting the quality difference between "high" and "low" art for the purposes of studying the nature of forces stimulating creative activities. But one thing is clear: a lot of wonderful discoveries are waiting for Russian readers along the way to which Aby Warburg gave direction.

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English abstract

This contribution illustrates the reception of Aby Warburg's magnum opus in Russia, starting with his first appearance in the academic press in 1964 up to the present day, and builds a selected bibliography of relevant Warburgian studies in the Russian environment. Until early the 2000s, only two essays examining the Warburgian legacy had appeared, outlining on the one hand a negative review, and on the other offering a study mediated by the *Intellectual Biography of Aby Warburg* by Ernst Gombrich. From the turn of the century, the number of "Warburgian" publications in Russia has grown — his writings have begun to be translated, and an interest in the cross-disciplinary methodology of the Hamburg school has taken shape.