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Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context

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Warburgian Studies in the Ibero-American Context

a cura di

Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes, Giulia Zanon



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Warburgian Studies in Portugal (2000–2025)

Fabio Tononi

The intellectual legacy of Aby Warburg in Portugal is not exceptional, but it nonetheless represents a notable presence in the Portuguese cultural landscape. It consists primarily of translations of some of his key texts, scholarly works on his ideas, exhibitions (especially of his *Atlas*), and university courses dedicated to his intellectual work (mostly taught by the author of this note).

More specifically, Portuguese translations of Warburg's texts include: *O Nascimento de Vénus e a Primavera de Sandro Botticelli* (Warburg [1893] 2012), *'Ninfa Fiorentina': Fragmentos de um projecto sobre Ninfas* (Warburg [1900] 2012), *Domenico Ghirlandaio* (Warburg [1902] 2015), and *O ritual da serpente: Um relatório de viagem: Imagens da região dos índios Pueblo da América do Norte* (Warburg [1923] 2024). It is noteworthy that the American edition of Warburg's collected works (*Renewal*) has been translated into Portuguese (*Renovação*). However, this is a Brazilian edition, which is not included in the National Library's catalogue nor in the online catalogue of most Portuguese university libraries. On the other hand, Portuguese research on Warburg's writings includes comparative studies focusing on Warburg and Walter Benjamin (Cantinho 2016), analyses and theoretical interpretations of his ideas (Silva Cravo 2010; Dall'Bello 2014; Guerreiro 2018; Mendes *et al.* 2012), and insights into some of his key concepts (Charbel Teixeira 2010).

Among the Portuguese exhibitions related to Warburg's intellectual legacy is the nineteenth edition of the Coimbra Photography Encounters, entitled "Projeto Mnemosyne" (Mnemosyne Project), curated by Delfim Sardo in Coimbra in 2000 (for the catalogue of the exhibition, see Corte Real 2000; see also Faria 2000. I would like to thank Patrícia Nunes Ribeiro Dias for this reference). It was a photographic exhibition based on Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*—which represents his attempt to map the transmission of expressive forms through the history of representations and to identify contacts and cultural exchanges between different civilizations—to explore the state of contemporary imagery. In his *Bilderatlas*, Warburg compared images from various sources, including reproductions of ancient Greek sculptures, Renaissance paintings, mythological figures, photographs, advertising images, and postage stamps, which he arranged side by side on large black felt panels. In this respect, the dialogue between classical antiquity and photography (and contemporary imagery in general) is evident for example in Panel 77, where a photograph of Erika Sellschopp playing golf (1928) can be considered a modern metamorphosis of the representation of an ancient

dancing Maenad (included in Panel 6), that is the origin of the *Phatosformel*, which—according to Warburg—unites different cultures (GS *Atlas*; see also *Einleitung*; and *Intellectual Biography*, 283–306). Some panels from Warburg’s unfinished *Bilderatlas* were exhibited at the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Coimbra, one of the exhibition halls of the “Encontros De Coimbra” (Medeiros 2000).

Finally, Portuguese university courses on Warburg include: “Aby Warburg and the Afterlife of Antiquity: Art, Culture and Memory”, taught (by the author of this note) between July and August 2025, and “The Aesthetics of Aby Warburg”, taught (by the author of this note) between August and September 2023. Both were part of the Summer School Courses of the Luís Krus Centre – Lifelong Learning of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCSH) of NOVA University of Lisbon, Portugal, and lasted 25 hours each. Furthermore, as some Portuguese students reported to who is writing, Warburg’s work is often mentioned and/or analysed in art history and curatorial courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate, at Portuguese universities.

I would like to express my gratitude to Gonalo Almeida Costa (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa), Ines Ariana de Freitas Pita (Universidade de Lisboa), and Patrcia Nunes Ribeiro Dias (Universidade de Lisboa) for sharing their experience and knowledge related to the intellectual legacy of Aby Warburg in Portugal.

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Abstract

With this note, Fabio Tononi outlines the reception of Aby Warburg's ideas in Portugal, examining their presence in translations, academic research, exhibitions and teaching. While Warburgian studies in Portugal are limited in scope, they have contributed to disseminating his concepts and facilitating a broader dialogue between art history, cultural memory, and visual studies.

keywords | Portugal; Aby Warburg; University of Coimbra; NOVA University of Lisbon; Encontros De Coimbra; Projeto Mnemosyne.



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