

DIEISON MARCONI

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

dieisonmarconi@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-1883-652X

GABRIELA MACHADO RAMOS DE ALMEIDA

Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, Brasil

gabriela.mralmeida@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-8676-7621

IN SEARCH OF A QUEER PATHOS:
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ABY WARBURG AND QUEER STUDIES
EN BUSCA DE UN PATHOS QUEER:
CONEXIONES ENTRE ABY WARBURG Y LOS ESTUDIOS QUEER

KEYWORDS:

Aby Warburg, Queer theory, *Nachleben* and *Pathosformel*, Time, Chrononormativity.

The paper investigates connections between queer studies and the contributions of Aby Warburg to image theories, specifically the notion of time as a fundamental conceptual operator in the work of Warburg and his main exegete, Georges Didi-Huberman, from whom we sought help in the endeavor of envisioning a queer pathos that would survive in visual culture. Time is also at the core of a certain criticism by some authors of queer studies to the notion of chrononormativity as biopolitical regulation. This paper attempts to understand how Warburgian notions of *Nachleben* and *Pathosformel* help to investigate how abject and anachronistic gestures which keep reappearing as a queer symptom in culture, disorganizing a “natural model” of history of art and breaking with the history of progress that organizes relations between gender, body and sexuality according to disciplinary temporal schema.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Aby Warburg, teoría Queer, *Nachleben* y *Pathosformel*, tiempo, crononormatividad.

El artículo investiga las conexiones entre los estudios queer y las contribuciones de Aby Warburg a las teorías de la imagen, específicamente la noción de tiempo como operador conceptual fundamental en la obra de Warburg y su principal exégeta, Georges Didi-Huberman, de quien buscamos ayuda en el empeño de imaginar un pathos queer que sobreviviría en la cultura visual. El tiempo también está en el centro de cierta crítica de algunos autores de estudios queer a la noción de crononor-

matividad como regulación biopolítica. Este artículo intenta comprender cómo las nociones warburgianas de Nachleben y Pathosformel ayudan a investigar los gestos abyectos y anacrónicos que siguen reapareciendo como síntoma queer en la cultura, desorganizando un “modelo natural” de historia del arte y rompiendo con la historia del progreso que organiza las relaciones entre género, cuerpo y sexualidad según el esquema temporal disciplinar.

Introduction

The current research projects of this paper’s authors share a few interests in visual cultures marked by macro and micropolitical issues from the perspective of minority contexts, experiences, and subjectivities. By sharing these empirical objects, these projects also share some theoretical and methodological choices that have led us to reflect on the contribution that some authors from different research fields offer when thinking about the interactions between aesthetics and politics from these minority knowledges and experiences. Due to this convergence of interests around common aesthetic and theoretical repertoires, a set of texts from an associative and comparative perspective are being produced, seeking to establish a relation—one that is sometimes fraught with tension, and other times more peaceful—between authors and schools of thought whose dialogue would not be considered so evident at first.

For this strictly theoretical article, our starting point will be a statement by Georges Didi-Huberman (2013) about the work of Aby Warburg (1866-1929), a German intellectual who has interested us at different moments in our education. However, in spite of Warburg periodically returning as a phantasm in our works, we now find a moment to reflect more closely on his theoretical contributions that are not restricted to the History of Art; rather, they broadly aid the study of visual culture. Georges Didi-Huberman is quoted as saying the following about Aby Warburg:

Aby Warburg becomes superspectral just as everyone starts invoking him as the patron saint of the most diverse theoretical choices: the patron saint

of the history of mindsets, of the social history of art and of micro-history; the patron saint of hermeneutics; the patron saint of an alleged anti-formalism; the patron saint of a so-called “modern retro postmodernism”; the patron saint of New Art Story, or even a great ally of feminist critique (Didi-Huberman 2013: 30).

In making this statement, Didi-Huberman is aware that he himself uses Warburg’s fragmented work to promote the “marginal” or “anti-formalist” argument that Art History does not have an absolute origin or beginning, not even a systematic and chronological refoundation, as some of its most positivist theorists believed. Regarding Atlas Mnemosyne, for instance, Didi-Huberman explains that Aby Warburg considered montage to be a method capable of making memory work against the grain of a historicity that narrates deeds and actions in an allegedly complete way.

In Didi-Huberman’s understanding, Warburg’s work helps us to move away from the hegemonic reading of historicism (the search for the unity of time) and also of aestheticism (the search for stylistic unity). Both perspectives were quite frequent in a “natural model” of the cycles of life and death, demise and rebirth, grandeur and decadence in the History of Art, such as in the precursor work of Johann Winckelmann, as will be later explored. For Didi-Huberman, the imagetic montage in Mnemosyne (or even the literary montage in *Passages*, by Walter Benjamin) favors a “symptom-driven perspective” of Art History, in which the morphological movements of images become a temporal operator of the survival of gestures or pathos formulas. In other words, the author defends an epistemological perspective through which one could understand how certain pictorial forms continue to haunt, reappear or be reborn constantly in later times, but in a re-semanticized way. These pictorial forms would then be understood as a set of tensile and tensioned processes, movements of identification and imposition of change, displacements of purification and hybridization, gestures of order and diastases of chaos, traces of evidence and traces of inflection.

In different works (2006; 2011a; 2011b; 2013a; 2013b; 2020), Didi-Huberman invokes the phantom of Warburg, or its protective phantasmagoria, to continue the studies that Warburg himself could not finish. Furthermore, in this quote, we are intrigued by the researcher’s argument that, among other “unorthodox” theoretical choices/methodologies that are interested in the Warburgian argument that the History of Art must be open to the cultural, anthropological and morphological resonances of

images, the area of feminist studies also looked to Aby Warburg for inspiration for its critical theory.

In queer studies, we find in Elizabeth Freeman (2010) the statement that the stubbornness of the past is a hallmark of queer affect. By queer affect, Freeman refers to a set of obsolete and failed feelings, sensations and expressions that keep reappearing whenever it is necessary to refuse the romantic event-centered, goal-oriented, intentional narrative, one that culminates in epiphanies or major transformations. In other words, these affects survive by haunting such a narrative, disturbing its progress towards a redemptive future, imposing themselves as phantoms in the bowels of edifying sensibilities.

Inspired by this argument, it seems interesting to us to ask: which formulas of queer pathos, moving traces or species of symptom and vestige would take the place of a normative historiography of art and images? Which domains of interiorities are communicated by their survivals, or *Nachleben*? In other words, that which Warburg (2015) called “passions of the soul” or “engram” (a form of social, individual and collective memory and affect)? If there are queer affects that jumble certain political and economic projects, would there be a queer pathos that jumbles not only the History of Art, but that also disturbs some of the assimilationist projects in which the historiographical discourse of art and images is, to some extent, a participant?!

For Didi-Huberman (2006), the history of the visual arts (painting, sculpture, photography and cinema) should be seen as an immense history of figurative emotions, of emotional gestures that Warburg himself called “pathos formulas” (*Pathosformeln*). Then, which queer emotions and affects present in the images insist on reappearing and surviving? And in which works or visual works can we find the legibility of these surviving queer depictions? These questions should not only lead us to observe the survival of forms of representation, as Aby Warburg (2013; 2015) himself foresaw when studying the figures of the Nymph in Florentine paintings. They particularly lead us to the reinvigoration of certain psychic forces embedded “in the collective memory, crystallized as specters in images endowed with intense power” (Teixeira 2010).

In other words, these questions about a surviving queer pathos lead us to the study of a queer affect that crystallizes, disappears, returns, and survives with iconic strength. We must seek these engrams of emotional experiences (gestures, movements, adornments, objects, accessories, expressions) that can be seen and identified as queer (oblique, strange,

abject, resistant, unproductive, inconvenient, suspicious) that disturb the engendering of chrononormativity and its cultural engineering of gender, sexuality, race, and class.

Our proposal, in this article, is not to suggest a dedication exclusively focused on contemporary visualities, a moment in which queer arts or visualities allegedly have their “right to exist”. Firstly, because this statement is not entirely true. Secondly, because it would be necessary, methodologically, to look at truly broader temporal spectra, to pull the threads that connect certain pictorial phantasmagoria, to assemble, disassemble and reassemble different moments of images, to look at ancient images as if we were walking through a ruin and to perceive the movements of that which survives. And, in this same movement, to produce a space for reflection as if it were the creation of a domain in which subjects “critically distance themselves from the images.

In this “space for reflection” that we have just created, it is possible to remember Warburg as a saint or phantom who leads us to reject the strictly formalist and aestheticizing studies of images, attempting to understand them, as Felipe Charbel Teixeira (2010) reinforced, as part of a broader social psychology. That is, if Warburg’s studies can be seen as a “Science of Culture” of which the History of Art is its appendix, this contributes to a queer perspective that considers that the image and aesthetics are much more than passive objects of culture, temporal orders, and socioeconomic intricacies.

Warburg read by queer studies and feminist theories

In *The surviving image* (2013a), Didi-Huberman mentions, in a final note, the text *Retrieving warburg’s tradition*, 1993, by Margaret Iversen. In this article, Iversen argues that, up to the time it was written, there have been many reappraisals of the golden age of German historiography, some receptive, others critical; however, none of them would have taken on a feminist perspective. Thus, in an attempt to carry out a feminist critique in the field of historiography, Iversen judges that Warburg is a “valuable ally” for this politically situated enterprise, as well as an interesting ally for poststructuralist critique in general.

From the author’s point of view, the valuable use of a Warbugian tradition through a feminist prism is underpinned by the fact that Aby Warburg’s work contains an implicit critique of the ideal of total detachment

in both aesthetics and erudition, and that the historian knew how anticipate feminist critiques of phallogentric science and logic in multiple ways, including the ideal of neutrality and objectivity. Furthermore, for Iversen, even though polarities such as mind and body, reason and experience of the senses, logos and pathos are part of the structure Warburg's work, it is there that these binary categories lose any hierarchical order, whether fixed or strict, becoming dynamic and dialectic axes.

Matthew Ramplay, 1997, when reading *Retrieving Warburg's Tradition*, wrote that although Iversen's study indicates the political connotations present in Warburg's work, it is also true that any parallels between the scholar and feminism stem from the fact that both shared the moment of decentering of subjectivities and identities, which increasingly took place in the field of philosophy and in the humanities over the last hundred years. Furthermore, for Ramplay, Warburg's awareness of the recurring danger of a revival of "demonic antiquity" was closely linked to the fear of both psychological and political regression. In other words, the well-known hostility that Warburg had towards totalitarianism and anti-Semitism was already present here, even though he died before the rise of Nazism, as Gabriela Reinaldo (2015) also points out.

In the article *Warburg's intuitions in light of postmodern challenges* (2001), György Szônyi lists different reasons to justify the opinion that Margaret Iversen's reading is "feeble" and "biased". However, none of these critiques touch on the researcher's central argument: Warburg's work, despite appearing dated to some, is valuable for a feminist critique of the late 20th century. From our perspective, and although it is a proposal that has gained prominence in the field of poststructuralist feminist theory, *Retrieving warburg's tradition* is an article that does not go into much depth in its original proposal. In fact, the text spares no effort to carry out a recovery of Aby Warburg's studies, as well as a series of criticisms on his followers. But, also because of this, and very unfortunately, Iversen's work is still timid in terms of exploring a theoretical articulation of feminist studies with the reflections of Aby Warburg, leaving open a path that has not yet been properly investigated in a speculative capacity.

In the 1990s, the text announced that, in the midst of Warburg's renaissance in cultural criticism, his presence would become more frequent in poststructuralist feminist criticism interested in the culture of arts and images. Since then, Warburg was and has been recovered in many ways by different researchers from different areas of inquiry. However, in the field of Gender Studies, more specifically in Feminist Theories and Queer Stud-

ies, the “enchantment” with Warburg’s methods was not as pulverized as imagined by Margaret Irving’s text and other works published throughout the 1990s. In fact, Warburg’s work was collated in few of these surveys, and these same surveys tend to be temporally spaced from one another.

In *A Feminist Picture Atlas: In Images of Lactation in Medieval and Early Modern Art*, 2018, for instance, Jutta Sperling was inspired by Warburg to analyze recurrences of the gesture or pathos formula of offering the breast in modern and medieval painting. For the scholar, in these iconographies, the lactating breast contributes to the ongoing project of correcting Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan’s a-historical privilege of the phallus as a universal signifier and revising our understanding of the modern maternal body as a place of queer and utopian desire. Furthermore, according to Sperling, medieval and modern paintings of breastfeeding subvert the hegemonic fictions of patriarchal kinship and indicate alternative forms of belonging based on care. In other words, while these images of breastfeeding harbor the promise of anti-patriarchal utopias, these same images can be appropriated to express the most blatant hierarchies and exclusions of the patriarchy.

To develop her Warburgian appropriation, Jutta Sperling produces a “Feminist Atlas of Images” directly inspired by Aby Warburg’s *Atlas Mnemosyne*, paying mind to the many iconographic resistances and survivals that researcher Whitney Davis (2011) had already established in her critique of Erwin Panofsky, one of Warburg’s most prominent readers. More recently, researcher Alexa Winstanley-Smith published the article *Queer political astrology: problems and potentials* (2021), dedicated to reflecting on an exercise of queer astrology. Knowing the enormous interest that Warburg had in astrological studies, Winstanley-Smith uses the historian’s fragmented writings to posit that, seeing as it is uprooted from the role of theological servant of destiny for increasing figures of authority and apparently removed from the (implicitly heterosexual) reproductive model of a dominant “cultural industry”, queer astrology would be an anti-traditionalist and anti-conservative way of rethinking human biography in community.

In Brazil, but notably close the interests of the American researcher Jutta Sperling, Adriana Azevedo (2016) was also inspired by the Warburgian montage/atlas method with the objective of tracing a constellar landscape of queer experiences that affirm their lives through the reconfiguration of the ideas of “home” and “house”. To this end, Azevedo’s

research used various “object-events” (films, books, archival materials), such as the book *Stella Manhattan* (1995), by Silviano Santiago; filmmaker Derek Jarman’s home movies; personal materials of Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein archived at the Harry Ramson Center, University of Texas - Austin; the play *Domínio do Escuro* (2015) by Juliana Pamplona; the film *The Watermelon Woman* (1996), by Cheryl Dunye, and the film *Shortbus* (2006), by John Cameron Mitchell.

The recovery of Aby Warburg’s method in the work of Adriana Azevedo, and more broadly from a queer perspective in Brazil and Latin America, has arrived as late, if not more so, as the knowledge of Warburg’s work in the most diverse areas of inquiry. As José Emilio Burucúa, 2012, points out, it was only from 1992 onwards that Argentinean historians and anthropologists became willing to carry out a first translation and publication of Aby Warburg in Buenos Aires. In his bibliographic review, Burucúa lists five important works, from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, that contributed to the repercussion of Warburg’s work in a Latin American setting. Among these works, the author cites the book *Potências da imagem*, by Raul Antelo, published in Brazil in 2004.

However, in the field of Communication studies in Brazil, the Aby Warburg’s work has been spread, much more recently, through the translation and publication of Didi-Huberman’s books. Additionally, in recent years, some texts by Aby Warburg himself have been collected, translated and published in Portuguese, such as *A renovação da Antiguidade pagã: contribuições científico-culturais para a história do Renascimento europeu* (2013) and *Histórias de fantasmas para gente grande* (2015). In the midst of this growing interest in Warburgian investigations in the field of communication and in the humanities in general, but also aware of a timid appropriation of this author in the area of Queer Studies, it seems fruitful and necessary to us to carry out a more attentive and cautious verification of how the “Warburg phantom” could also be an ally of Queer Studies produced in Brazil and abroad.

It should be stated, therefore, that we are not referring only to an acritical inclusion/application of Warburg’s theory in research interested in the processes of production, regulation and control of bodies, genders, and sexualities. In fact, our interest is in sustaining a “friction test”: Can Warburg also be a “patron saint” of queer critique in the field of visual culture, as Didi-Huberman suggested? Which descriptive operations reflected by the Jewish historian would allow us to establish these connections? Which

articulations would be possible between Aby Warburg and a queer critique interested in the tensions between aesthetics and politics of/in images?

In order to proceed with this proposal, we find it necessary to consider that Warburg's commentators did not appropriate his studies in the same way. It would suffice to observe, for example, that Aby Warburg (2015) did not use the term "gesture" to refer to pictorial traces that survived from antiquity. The term gesture is more common in the reinterpretations of Georges Didi-Huberman (2013) and Giorgio Agamben (2010) while Ernest Cassirer (2004) opts for the use of the expression "symbolic form". Likewise, not all commentators are interested in notions such as *Pathosformel*, as there are those who have chosen to devote themselves to his studies on mythology and astrology. In this context, it is also worth emphasizing the fact that the term "queer" describes a set of multisituated studies as a political and academic movement, in other words, this area is far from being a uniform or homogeneous field of inquiry. It would be a big mistake, therefore, to seek articulations between Warburg and Queer Studies from a generalist, broad, or even macropolitical perspective.

For these reasons, also inspired by Didi-Huberman, we made a choice for a politics of the fragment. We chose two Warburgian notions, *Pathosformel* and *Nachleben*, to be articulated with specific reflections from Queer Studies, especially those pertaining to issues of time, history and memory; aesthetics and politics; resistance and survival. With this choice, queer authors also seem useful to this dialectical dynamic, especially the work of Elizabeth Freeman, and her reflections on historical discourse and chrononormativity.

As such, we will seek to establish a line of reasoning on how the notions of *Pathosformel* (a sort of pictorial/plastic index or mnemonic trace for the expression of commotions and shocks) and *Nachleben* (resemantified reappearance of these symbolic forms that were lost or dead in the past and which, in fact, were never lost, as they were stored in collective memory) contribute to investigating how some abject, strange, failed and anachronistic gestures or symbolic forms keep reappearing as a queer symptom in visual culture, disorganizing not only a "natural model" of art history, but also doing away with the history of progress and the narrative of the winners who organize the relationship between gender, body, and sexuality according to disciplinary temporal schema. In other words, we believe that Aby Warburg contributes by transforming the time of the gaze in the face of a queer pathos that was lost or disowned in

the past, but which continues to impose itself in a phantasmagorical way in the present.

Time as an analytical operator in Warburg and Didi-Huberman

In *The surviving image* (2013a), Didi-Huberman rereads Giorgio Vasari and Winckelmann in order to criticize the chrononormativity of Art History, while recognizing in Winckelmann the beginning of the construction of a historical method that makes the discipline move beyond biographical reports or anecdotal stories referred to as “antiquarians’ curiosity” (2013a: 15). Winckelmann (1717-1768) would present two levels of intelligibility that operated together as temporal models and aesthetic models, but his work would be based, in Didi-Huberman’s perspective, on a lifeless object, on an ancient art that, for Winckelmann, had already died. Thus – and even though Didi-Huberman reaffirms his doubt as to a “ground zero” of Art History —if we are to consider Winckelmann’s contribution as the foundation of Art History as a modern discipline, it is defined “as having as its object a fallen, disappeared, buried object (2013b).

This historical pessimism would be a mark of the modern historian who evokes the past and wistfully affirms its loss and who, guided by a biomorphic temporal scheme and by an epistemic norm that values an idea of “the essence of the object”, had dedicated themselves to pursuing something like an “essence of art”. At the same time, Didi-Huberman points out a contradiction between discourse and investigative practice in Winckelmann, which would, to the same extent, demand a History of Art that was not strictly guided by judgments of taste, but that in practice is not managed to avoid them, constantly bringing the aesthetic norm as the basis for his historical narrative and bringing to the surface, in later critical readings of his work, the question that driven Warburg and that continues to drive Didi-Huberman: what is the object of Art History as a discipline?

The aesthetic norm in Winckelmann appears to be associated with the idea of a model to be achieved, a model that refers to the beauty of classical antiquity but which, to the same extent, is considered intangible. Thus, the contemplation of the aesthetic object would not be the contemplation of a “true object”, since art is dead, but of imitations whose value would reside in their ability to refer to an ideal of classical beauty. This perspective excludes, for example, any formal experiences that depart from notions such as grandeur and nobility of spirit. Winckelmann (2013)

even refers to states of violent passion in which the body depicted in the work would reflect states of violence and coercion removed from rest and which would therefore result in an art of lesser aesthetic value.

The significant focus of art studies in the notion of time emerges in Warburgian developments, as well as in their later scrutiny by Didi-Huberman, who has become an essential analytical operator in this regard. It is in the attempt to make a living history of a living art tangible, regardless of the historical moment of its chronological existence, and in the aversion to the history of aestheticizing art, that time will appear underlying and transversal to the notions of *Nachleben* and *Pathosformel* in Warburg. This idea of a living art also underlies the understanding that forms never die: “This is the meaning of the word *Nachleben*, this term of post-living: a being from the past that does not stop surviving” (2013a: 29). *Nachleben* thus refers to a survival in the sense of resurgences, “of the passages or displacements suffered by the image through time that make it become a form under constant mutation, a sort of trace, rather than an object.” (Almeida 2018: 80).

Under Benjaminian inspiration, the insurgency against the excessively ordered and chronological narration of time, which Didi-Huberman (2011a) refers to as the overcoming of a “pacified time”, poses an important question about the possibilities of emergence of new objects or new questions in contexts that are already well known and documented. If every image carries a memory and accommodates a montage of heterogeneous and discontinuous times, an image in front of which nothing can be said is an image to which we do not dedicate enough time and courage to re-disquiet ourselves. No matter how old an image is, the present and the past keep reconfiguring themselves in front of it, and hence it makes no sense, for Warburg and consequently for Didi-Huberman, to think of a dead art whose present would be nothing more than an attempt to imitate an ideal.

But “how to live up to all the times that this image, before us, combines on so many planes? And, firstly, how can one account for the present of this experience, the memory it summons and the future it carries?” (2011b: 32). Being in front of an image, in Warburg, means opening up to a complex time, a time of the image that is separate from the time of history and that does not fit into universal evolutionary categories; it implies the opening to the “deterritorialization of the image and the time that expresses its historicity” (2013a: 34).

An expansion of the phenomenal field of Art History is strongly influenced by Anthropology under Warburg, with the invitation to the visible

incorporation of strangeness and difference in objects, which allows the transition, in his work, from a History of Art to a Science of Culture, affirmed in the entire Warburgian intellectual project, and that even baptizes his famous library (*Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*, or Warburg Library of Science of Culture, in a free translation). Didi-Huberman locates in the influence of the British ethnologist Edward Tylor and his notion of “permanence in culture” a formulation that will become essential for Warburg: this permanence “is not expressed as an essence, a global trait or an archetype, but rather, simultaneously, as a *symptom*, a trace of exception, a dislocated thing” (2013a: 47).

This “displaced thing” is not about what “returns” or “reappears”, but a latency, something that has somehow always been there. For Warburg, survival —*Nachleben*— would then be a “model of time pertaining to images, a model of anachronism” (2013a: 67) that opens a margin of indeterminacy in history based on the belief in the power of images to carry a memory, to accommodate heterogeneous and discontinuous times, which meet and interpenetrate. That is, in the power of images to always surprise, to originate new sensitive and intelligible arrangements each time.

By focusing a large portion of his efforts on the attempt to understand the survivals of Antiquity in the Florentine and Northern European Renaissance, a bet is made on an “archaeological science of pathos” (2013b) or a “psychological aesthetics”, in Warburg’s terms, for which the passions of the soul matter, since survivals presuppose a kind of unconscious memory. And the images also matter, “endowed with a demonic character, formed in abyssal depths of consciousness, linked to emotions that arouse phobic, traumatic reactions, inscribed in the mind and in the culture” (Reinaldo, 2015).

The *Pathosformeln*, or formulas of pathos, thus concern the problem of the expression of suffering and the languages that operate in the expression of movements (or gestures, if we may) that survive, both physical and of the soul. Not as a mere imitation or repetition of what came before, but rather as a symptom. In this context, what is essential are the represented gestures that are transmitted and transformed since Antiquity, arriving in the Renaissance and, one can think —if one is able to perceive them— also crossing other times: “gestures of love and gestures of combat, gestures of triumph and servitude, of rising and falling, of hysteria and melancholy, of grace and ugliness, of desire in motion and petrified terror” (2013c: 22)

The authors dedicated to the production of a critical fortune around Warburg that we have consulted so far have been unanimous in relating his ideas, writings and method to biographical data, such as his well-known psychiatric condition, which led him to go through in-patient care in a few occasions; or his trip to the United States, which allowed Warburg to experience, for a few months, between the end of 1895 and the beginning of 1896, rituals and indigenous cosmology, which would have caused him great restlessness and enchantment. This experience with indigenous people unfolded over several texts, some of which are included in the tome *Histórias de fantasma para gente grande* (2015), as well as in the book *Aby Warburg e as imagens em movimento* (2013b), by Philippe-Alain Michaud, which brings two texts by Warburg about this trip in its Brazilian edition. Although these relationships arouse a great deal of interest, especially for the suggestion that not only the work, but also the life of Warburg approaches a queer experience in levels other than strictly sexual (an “unproductive” and pathologized life), they will not be explored here due to the space limitations and the proposal of the paper.

Is the stubbornness of the past also a hallmark of a queer pathos?

So far, we hope it has become clear that for Aby Warburg (2015), as for Didi-Huberman (2013c), there is a time for images that is not just that of “life and death”, “greatness and decay”, “death and rebirth”, ideals whose values positivist historians would use for their own ends. This non-chronological time would then be the time of the phantasmagoria of images or, even, the time of a survival (*Nachleben*) of gestures, traces or symbolic formulas (*Pathosformeln*) that help us to perceive those symptoms that fracture the historical discourse that constituted Art History as a chrononormative discipline.

However, we believe that this constant return of forms of mnemonic traces, orgiastic gestures or anachronistic emotion formulas are not just phantoms that haunt the History of Art. Paraphrasing Elizabeth Freeman (2010), the stubbornness of the past that insists on returning is also a hallmark of the queer affect that haunts the ideal of progress and the chronological narratives that organize our embodied lives according to disciplinary temporal schema. For Freeman, our flesh is transformed into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation. This temporal binding, or “time bind”, is what submits our existence to a process

that the author refers to chrononormativity, that is, the use of time to organize individual and collective human bodies towards maximum productivity.

According to the author, subjects are connected and grouped together with the aim of feeling coherently collective, through specific orchestrations of time. However, Freeman points out that this argument is not particularly new. The scholar recalls, for instance, that Dana Luciano (2007) called this temporal architecture “chronobiopolitics”, or “the sexual arrangement of the life span”. In this direction, chrononormativity, for Freeman, would be a biopolitical technique through which institutional forces appear as somatic facts: schedules, calendars, time zones and so many other “hidden rhythms” (1977) that seem natural to subjects who “enjoy” them. However, it is precisely through this apparent naturalness of the manipulations of time that industrial, modern and contemporary societies have converted historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into apparently ordinary bodily rhythms and routines, which in turn organize the value and meaning of time and life. For Freeman, these temporal arrangements implied an aggressive retemporalization of bodies that were once attuned to the seasonal rhythms of agricultural work.

The author also highlights that chrononormativity is present in French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s reflections on *habitus*, that is, the set of gestural or behavioral dispositions of certain social groups. The *habitus* would structure the norms of temporal embodiment, personality and activity, including cultural expectations about the temporal lapses between receiving and giving, in such a way that they too seem innate. Thus, from Freeman’s perspective, Bourdieu’s work allows us to see that temporal manipulations exceed mere repetition, as its architecture implies an institutionally and culturally imposed rhythm, which shapes the flesh into a legible and acceptable embodiment: subjects whose individual bodies are synchronized not only with each other, but also with broader temporal schema and that, precisely in this way, experience belonging as natural.

For Freeman, in a chronobiological society, the state and other institutions, including representational apparatuses, link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of movement and change. For the author, these are teleological schema of life events or strategies, such as marriage, reproduction, child rearing, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, death and its accompanying rituals. In this sense, personal stories can only become readable when aligned with state-sponsored time guidelines.

Nevertheless, for Freeman, these temporal guidelines serve the economic interests of a nation. At this point, the author uses her own country, the United States, as an example.

The US, like many other Western countries, licenses, registers or certifies citizenship, which may be encrypted for tax purposes. At the same time, the country records marriages, paternity, maternity and domestic life (which guards and regulates the distribution of property) and death (which delimits the identities linked to state benefits, redistributing these benefits through family channels), in addition to diverse functions such as driving (for jobs and commercial establishments) or undergoing military service. All this machinery of “productive socio-economic moments” is what it means to have a life within a chrononormative perspective. And, clearly, these strategies are not entirely reducible to the State, but also to formal education, psychiatry, medicine, law, and capitalism, which contribute to organizing our embodied life towards maximum productivity.

In *Time blinds: Queer temporalities, Queer Histories*, 2010, Freeman’s argument easily allows us to establish connections with the reflections on “devices of power” (Foucault, 1987) and other theoretical keys that drank from this same Foucauldian source, such as “gender technology” (Lauretis 1994) and “politics of sex” (Preciado, 2014). Freeman’s book also leads us to the studies of Judith Butler (2003), more specifically to her argument that sex/gender is not named only at birth, but is established as a sequence of repeated acts that are hardened or crystallized to appear as if it has been there all along, that is, as if it were a timeless truth.

However, for Butler, the stability of sex/gender identities, ensured by rhythm and discursive repetitions, can also be questioned by the emergence “of beings whose gender is incoherent and discontinuous, who appear to be people, but do not conform to gender norms of cultural intelligibility by which people are defined” (Butler: 38). Similar to this argument, Freeman (2010), exposes that the chrononormativity that organizes our lives towards maximum productivity also suffers some setbacks, or hauntings, when anachronistic, obsolete, melancholic, traumatic, surviving or shameful queer affects challenge the temporal devices that demand a normative coherence between body, gender, sexuality, desire and sexual practice. Daniel Kvller and Luan Cassal, 2019, echo Freeman’s argument:

The heterosexual normative project provides for marriage, reproduction, professional achievements and the establishment of a monogamous nuclear family. In order to be able to follow this path, lesbians, gays, bi-

sexuals, transsexuals and transvestites are expected to go through a “preparatory” stage, which consists of taking on an identity (the infamous process of coming out of the closet), in self-acceptance (sometimes with specialized and mandatory assistance from psychotherapists, in the case of the transsexualization process) and in the affirmation of identity (LGBT pride). Then, once assumed and resolved in public life, they can return to the standard path in private life, a process already partly guaranteed by legislation and court decisions on marriages and name and gender rectifications. [...] First problem: in this campaign, coming out of the closet is thought of in an elementary way, as if it were, in fact, a piece of furniture, and not a complex structure that regulates regimes of visibility, enunciation, and subjectivation, through an “epistemology” of its own. Second problem: the underlying belief that being successful, that is, playing the capitalist game, can by itself solve the problem of segregation, LGBTphobia and lack of recognition. (Kveller and Cassal 2019: 43-44).

Kveller and Cassal suggest that the history of dissident sexualities and genders should not be understood merely as a grouping of marginalized voices inserted in pre-established narratives of progress and liberation, but rather as a way of destabilizing these narratives and their positivist values: “Rather than rejecting or assimilating abject narratives, queer studies have begun to investigate how they survive, exploring the ways in which they continue to challenge history and structure dissident experiences in the present” (Kveller and Kassal 2019: 43-44).

Both Freeman and Kveller and Cassal recall in their respective texts the work of Heather Love (2007), a researcher who also sought to analyze those sensibilities elaborated by artists for whom the emergence of modern homosexual identity was more embarrassing than liberating. Shame, passivity, melancholy and retreat would have been, then, a way of refusing the progressive logic by which becoming more and more visible meant obtaining more and more freedom. Perverts of the late 19th century, melancholically attached to obsolete erotic objects or fetishes that should have been overcome, subjects who repeated unproductive bodily behaviors sought to resist the commodity-time of rapid manufacturing and planned obsolescence.

Now, if queer studies began to investigate how certain abject affects and experiences survive despite projects that insist on taking the term queer towards the aseptic, positive, and well-behaved field of political struggle (Edelman: 2014), Kveller and Cassal are particularly interested,

with the help of Walter Benjamin, in pushing history against the grain, breaking with the narrative of progress and liberation, doubting an apparently neutral, chronological and natural historicization that is ultimately sustained by chrononormative engineering. Remembering this text by Daniel Kveller and Luan Cassal is not a gratuitous gesture of ours. We can even say that our proposals are similar. However, while the authors seek to build another historiographical angle for a history of dissident sexualities and, for that, connect Walter Benjamin to Queer Studies, our proposal is to approach Aby Warburg to speculate how “queer pathetic formulas” survive over time, piercing the fabric of a normative and positivist chronology of the History of Art and corroborating to understand the morphological movements of images.

Precisely because of the impure latency of a “Science of Culture” that studies the morphological and anthropological movements of images, Warburg’s studies have always maintained a link with the social and the political aspects. This connection on which we bet also does not necessarily occur from the perspective of a study of representation, imitation or repetition of/in images. But this is a way of understanding the survival, or afterlife, of a queer pathos that renews queer affects (individual and collective, therefore sociocultural) that are obsolete and catalyzes emotional experiences of unrest. Therefore, just as it is not a strictly formalist or aestheticizing hermeneutic, we also seek to move away from an argument that ignores aesthetics to the detriment of a “morally superior political value”. It is, in fact, a leap towards the politics of aesthetics present in queer affections displayed by the survival of pathetic gestures or formulas.

Final considerations

It was not our intention, with this article, to announce an answer, nor to deplete possible questions. For this reason, and also due to the spatial limitations inherent to the format of the text, we did not develop this study with a previously defined empirical object, although this perspective is on the horizon and the theoretical exploration of possible dialogues between Warburg and queer studies is a way of experimenting with a possible theoretical-methodological path to be explored in the future to think about a specific corpus of images.

We are searching, nearly groping, for the legibility of ghostly images that represent survival, or *Nachleben*, for queer pathos formulas (queer

Pathosformeln). Before taking the next steps, we think it is useful, therefore, to finish this introductory article in the form of notes. These notes will serve us not only as a reminder of how to bring Warburgian studies closer to queer studies interested in the relationship between aesthetics and politics of/in images, but also as a memory *in work*. That is, a memory that is quite possibly subject to revisions:

- Aby Warburg's rejection of purely formalist theories of art and images, as well as his departure from hegemonic historicism and aestheticism, contribute to our visualizing, recognizing and understanding the symptomatic appearances and survivals of pathetic formulas in their queer latency.

- Warburg became much more known for his library and the Atlas Mnemosyne than for his essays. Although this may hinder the approach intended in this paper, we join him and his commentators in inferring that the work of the Jewish historian sustained a link with the social aspect, especially through a Science of Culture interested in the survival of the ancient. Therefore, queer studies, a theoretical current that is strongly supported by culturalist approaches, can appropriate Warburg's work to understand the morphological, aesthetic, and political movements of the culture of images.

- Parallels between Warburg's research and queer studies can also be supported from the fact that both share, in the humanities, the same moment of decentering of universal, uniform and essentialist identities and discourses regarding objects of culture and subjects that are part of it. That is, it will still be necessary for us to bring Warburg closer not only to a culturalist facet of Queer Studies, but also to its post-structuralist markers.

- For Warburg, images are not a mere reflection or passive portrait of culture or socioeconomic structures, which contributes to the understanding of the survival of these pathetic formulas as gestures of agency and resistance engendered in the limits of this queer perspective of image policy.

- Warburg helps us work with memory against the grain of a historicity that narrates deeds and actions in a supposedly complete way and, for this reason, helps us to give legibility to the survival (*Nachleben*) of those

pathetic gestures and formulas (*Pathosformeln*) that chrononormativity wished would disappear and that, however, from time to time emerge in visual culture in all their phantasmagorical force.

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DIEISON MARCONI

Profesor e investigador en régimen de posdoctorado en el Programa de Posgrado en Comunicación y Cultura de la Universidad Federal do Rio de Janeiro, con trabajo de investigación financiado por la Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Rio de Janeiro. Tiene un doctorado en Comunicación e Información por la Universidad Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, con una pasantía de investigación en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España. Maestro en Comunicación de la Universidad Federal de Santa Maria. Posee un posdoctorado en Comunicación por el Programa de Posgrado en Comunicación y Prácticas del Consumo de la ESPM-SP. Es autor del libro *Ensaio sobre autorias queer no cinema brasileiro contemporâneo* (2021, PPGCOM-UFMG).

GABRIELA MACHADO RAMOS DE ALMEIDA

Profesora y vicecoordinadora del Programa de Posgrado en Prácticas de Comunicación y Consumo de la Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing (PPGCOM ESPM). Líder del grupo de investigación Sense - Comunicación, consumo, imagen y experiencia (CNPQ/ESPM). Doctorado en Comunicación e Información por la Universidad Federal do Rio Grande do Sul - UFRGS (2015), con pasantía de investigación en la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB). Máster en Comunicación y Cultura Contemporáneas por la Universidad Federal de Bahía - UFBA (2009). Es autora del libro *O ensaio filimico ou o cinema à deriva* (2018, Alameda).