# FORMATION OF THE IMAGE OF ANTIQUITY IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY: RECEPTION. COMMUNICATION. COMMEMORATION

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The relevance of the investigated problem is caused by the formation of interdisciplinary methodological approaches to the study of the representation of the historical heritage in modern society during the last decades. The article is focused on the study of theoretical and applied aspects of the creation of the antiquity image in the social memory. The leading approach to the study of this issue has become a sociocultural approach towards the reception of antiquity, that reflected itself in the actual connotations of this concept in the interdisciplinary humanities. The theoretical aspects of reception of antiquity as a communicative practice are studied. Communicative practice allows to combine individual perception and collective memory and create an image of the past corresponding to the contemporary social and cultural challenges. The proof of the great heuristic potential of the concept "reception of antiquity" has become the main result of the article. Wherein the author comes to a conclusion that in the XXth - the beginning of the XXIst century was formed a steady trend when a wide range of people of intellectual occupation involved in adaptation of rational knowledge in the interests of the mass consumer dominate among the actors of the reception of antiquity, which makes the reception of antiquity a communicative practice. Views of sociologist M.Halbwachs and historian J.Assmann are particularly considered. Their essence is that the individual in the process of communication leaves his share in the memory of a social group, forms the collective images of the past, which are conventional in nature. An important tool for the study of the reception of antiquity as the commemorative practice has become the conception of "memory space" of P.Nora. Egyptian Alexandria is investigated with the help of this conception as a "memory space" for the European intellectuals and artists of the XIX-XX centuries. It is shown how different combinations of individual and social experiences of the authors form their own, original image of antiquity demanded by society. Matters of the article may be useful for writing generalizing works on the problems of modern social reality construction with the help of the historical past, as well as for further researches on reception of antiquity issues.

*Keywords*: history, antiquity, reception of cultural heritage, sociocultural reception, collective memory, M.Halbwachs, J.Assmann, P.Nora.

## INTRODUCTION

Compared to the XIX century, which is commonly called "the century of history", to date the subject of the history has changed: a man with all his individual and collective manifestations and the relation to the past turned to be in the center of attention. Any reference to the past is an attempt to create an image of the past, i.e., an ideal reflection of the world in human consciousness, and insert that image into the fabric of contemporary culture. In this regard, such notion as reception appeared in humanitarian scientific discourse.

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In historiography the word-combination "reception of antiquity" appeared in the German "Dictionary of antiquity" in the second half of the XXth century, although the phenomenon represented by it has always existed in the antiquity studies. (Waldner-Bokova, 1979). Russian translation of the dictionary contains significantly shortened, somewhat more theoretically equipped and ideologically corrected version of the article about the reception of antiquity (Kuzishchin, 1989). The idea of social conditioning of the reception of antiquity dominating in this edition coincided in time with the emerging in Germany (Eagleton, 2008), for the first time in the world's humanities, the theory of "receptive aesthetics" ("Rezeptionsästhetik" - the modern equivalent in the English historiography "the poetics of reception") (Martindale, 2006). After a few decades, one of the supporters of the application of this theory to the ancient heritage Charles Martindale again drew attention to the heuristic value of the mentioned "model": it prevents the possibility of falling "into one of the two opposite illusions" - vulgar historicism and vulgar presenteeism (Martindale, 2013).

**METHODS**

Receptive aesthetics has focused on the perception of creations by the reader or listener, who, in turn, relies on all his previous life experience (Jauss, 1970). It is in the process of perception, interpretation, when "the new text" appears (Jauss, 1970), and thus the process of the reception becomes a historically biased act, since both the life experience of the recipient, as well as his "horizon of expectations" from the interaction of the present with the past in the process of reading the text do contain the historical component (Jauss, 1970).

Theoretical bases of the ideas about cultural memory were laid at the turn of XIX-XX centuries and in the first half of the XX century in the psychological and sociological constructs of A. Bergson and M. Halbwachs about the social or collective memory. "Collective memory" is not a metaphor. Halbwachs considers collective a subject of memory and reminiscences and speaks of "group memory" and "memory of the nation" not in metaphorical terms (Assmann, 1992).

In the historical consciousness, or "group memory" of society only certain images and symbols that pull interpretation and empowering by meanings defined by modernity from the past after themselves are often left. Not only personalities, events, phenomena, monuments, but also some of the geographic objects that have a so-called cultural trail may perform as symbols. For all this, the French historian Pierre Nora has found a capacious symbol - "memory space": "memory space is any significant phenomenon, material or intangible in nature, which by the will of man, or under the influence of time has acquired a status of a symbol in the memorial heritage of one or another community ... "(Nora, 1997, 15).

All these methodological remarks have given a fresh look to the perception of antiquity in modern culture.

## RESULTS

If we can mark the variant of reception based on the acceptance of the ancient aesthetic values as aesthetic reception, then the attitude towards ancient heritage in fields of Roman law, political process or philosophy demonstrates the variant of the pragmatic reception.

However, in both cases the existence of some receptional setting historically formed in the mind of a man by all the previous experience, not only individual, but also sociocultural is assumed. Thus we can talk about the sociocultural or historical reception of antiquity (Chiglintsev, 2015). This sociocultural orientation of the reception can be marked by special concepts (Hardwick, 2003). Today, thanks to the "democratic turn" associated with the researches of the school of receptive aesthetics (Hardwick & Stray, 2008), we can talk about the formation of a stable trend, manifested in the fact that among the actors of reception of antiquity begin to prevail not professional historians or classical scholar, but a wide range of people of intellectual labor (teachers and writers, journalists and workers of culture and art, advertising and entertainment specialists) that are engaged in the adaptation of rational knowledge for the benefit of the mass market; respectively, a massive consumer of this adapted historical knowledge performs as an actor himself. This trend declared itself in full voice at the turn of the XX and XXI centuries, which partly contributed to the transformation of the "reception studies" to the "cultural (or according to P.Burke, "Culture" - *E.CH.*) studies" (Martindale, 2006). That's what was reflected by L. Hardwick, building a program of a specialized magazine dedicated to the reception of antiquity: (Hardwick, 2010). Thus, the communicative aspect of the reception of antiquity now becomes, if not predominant, but very important.

Communication of the individual and the society about the ancient heritage does not just make the reception possible, but also gives it the fullness which contributes to the creation of individual and collective representations of the past, collective memory. This communication is intended simultaneously to preserve the meaning of the images of antiquity interesting to us and to make the information about them available. Reception of antiquity is the process of encoding and decoding of images through decoding the used marks and symbols (Halbwachs, 1952; Assmann, 1992, Repina, 2006).

Transferring the concept of "memory space" from the national to the intellectual soil presents a kind of a universal approach and allows it to be successfully used in the study of the reception of the ancient heritage. In this case, any historical phenomenon can become a place of memory ("memory space") in the intellectual environment where textbook knowledge of history, in particular, the history and culture of antiquity, are so incorporated into the consciousness that simple self-respect requires not just their reproduction, but a new interpretation.

For the European intellectual environment such kind of "memory space" at the turn of XIX-XX centuries has become Hellenistic Egypt and in particular - Alexandria (Panova, 2006). Alexandria as a "memory space" caused two lines of associations: firstly - with the scientific heritage of the Hellenistic world (philosophy, poetry) and, secondly - with the historical realities of the Hellenistic era (names, biographies, buildings, institutions, political events). The second line is just something that can be converted into symbols, perceived by the representatives of cultural labor. Materials of this kind are scattered in many works of writers, poets and playwrights and are included into the sociocultural context of the epoch.

In the famous historical play by B.Shaw "Caesar and Cleopatra" the author, along with images of the main characters, gives us a textbook image of Alexandria (decorations of the palace of Cleopatra, the Library of Alexandria, the Pharos island and the famous Pharos). In this regard, in Russian poetry of the "Silver Age" there is rather bizarre intertwining of textbook material and intellectual delights in regard to Alexandria.

For V.Bryusov the symbolic meaning of Alexandria became clear quite lately: in the last verses of the poet Alexandria performs as a symbol of Hellenism, the mutual penetration of the West and the East. Alexandria also arises in the poetry of Bryusov in connection with the images of Cleopatra, Caesar, Anthony (Bryusov, 1973).

We meet Alexandria in the poetry of K. Balmont ("Approaching Alexandria", 1912), and among the Hellenistic characters there are Cleopatra and Antony; V.Makkaveysky offers a very special metaphorical idea of Hellenism, as the death of Hellenic culture, in the poem "Stylos of Alexandria" (1918). But nevertheless Alexandria is the city of Alexander. That's how Egyptian Alexandria arises in the cycle of Yuri Terapiano "Egypt" (1926) (Anthology, 2006).

In the works of Mikhail Kuzmin Alexandria occupies a special place. However, in respect of Alexandria as a "memory space" M. Kuzmin went no further than epigonism. His hobbyhorse is a lyrical image of contemporary Alexandria. That makes him similar to another poet of the XIX and XX centuries - Constantine Cavafy. In the works of C.Cavafy Alexandria acquires metaphorical content, becoming the embodiment of hopes and dreams and at the same time the embodiment of fate: when life ends, it's Alexandria who leaves.

If it was possible to combine all the poems of Cavafy on Hellenistic Alexandria into a kind of a cycle, the cycle would be crowned by the poem written in 1931 with the title "In 200 BC", which presents a very complex stratification of the feelings and thoughts of the poet himself, his lyrical hero (Alexandria 200 BC citizen), the ancient sources and real events, causing the reaction of all the above-mentioned instances. In this poem Cavafy did not betray his principle of history representation. He does not refer to the great textbook personalities. They are just the background. It is easier for him to explain the essence of the events, using the

character of little significance, and known, but not fundamental fact to make a historical conclusion. That is why, in contrast to the Russian poets of the Silver Age, neither Alexander nor Cleopatra become the heroes of Alexandria cycle of Cavafy. Alexandria becomes a hero itself acting for its residents as an authentic "memory space".

## DISCUSSIONS

For researchers of the ancient cultural heritage, especially for classical scholars, the theory of receptive aesthetics, though not immediately (Martindale, 2006), has become the basis of research practices and reflection of these practices.

British and American researchers (Martindale, 2006; Hardwick & Stray, 2008; Porter, 2008) began to explore the "classical reception" particularly actively under the influence of the German school. They were developing the idea of Jauss about the necessity to consider the reception of the individual text, on base of the historical conditions of the recipient, "social context" (Martindale, 2006), and the idea of the reception as a dialogue "of antiquity and modernity, past and present," which "can be expressed by various terms "(Martindale, 2006; Whitmarsh, 2006).

One of the postulates of the M. Halbwachs' school is the assertion of the necessity to correlate our own memory with the memory of other people (Halbwachs, 1949), i.e., communicative aspect in the analysis of social memory is inevitable: "... the scope of collective memory is only the result, the sum, the combination of individual memories of many members of the same society," and they become one memory through interrelationships with others (Halbwachs, 1952). According to J. Assmann, who, in the late XXth century, has become the major theoretician in matters of social (cultural) memory, the central thesis of M.Halbwachs is a thesis about socially conditioned memory (Assmann, 1992). M.Halbwachs' idea, which he modestly calls his hypothesis, is an extremely important theoretical thesis having value for the study of reception. He believes that the "image", i.e. the image of the past, individual and collective, is born from the interaction of individual images; the unique images that emerge in each individual person, are perceived by others considering his individual nature, and only after that are grouped (Halbwachs 1952). Paraphrase of the idea is met in the works of J. Assmann. He believes that in the process of communication individual puts his share into the memory of a social group (Assmann, 1992). Finally, M.Halbwachs (1952) insists on the conventional nature of these collective images, and hence of the collective memory (Halbwachs, 1952).

However, the French sociologist didn't reach the term "reception" which is accepted today, but he was on his way to understanding this phenomenon: "Il n'y a donc pas de perception sans souvenir" (Halbwachs, 1952, 275). The deep sense of the position stated by M. Halbwachs, in my opinion, is related to the reception as well.

In this article, for the first time we propose to consider the reception of antiquity in terms of communicative practices within the theory of the collective memory and the concept of "memory space".

## CONCLUSION

Thus, interest in ancient heritage, constantly present in the cultures with European roots, makes the reception of antiquity a necessary tool of cognition of the past. Already in the early XXth century a steady trend was issued that finally prevailed in the XXIst century when among the actors of reception of antiquity dominated not the professional historians and classical scholar, but a wide range of people of intellectual labor involved into the adaptation of knowledge in the interests of the mass consumer, which makes the reception of antiquity a communicative practice and significantly expands the very concept of "reception of antiquity" in the system of human knowledge.

Reception of antiquity as a communicative practice allows to combine individual perception and collective memory to create the image of the past corresponding to the contemporary social and cultural challenges. The representations of the past are formed in the society due to the knowledge and impressions gathered by a creative personality from unrestricted flow of information in connection with the individual psychological and social preferences. In accordance with the principles of the social memory formation, set forth in the works of the French sociologist M.Halbwachs (1952) and the German historian J.Assmann (1992), a separate person in the communication process adds his share into the memory of a social group and forms the collective images of the past. Like the collective memory as a whole they are of conventional character. Communication of the individual and society about the ancient heritage makes the reception possible.

An important tool for the study of the reception of antiquity as the commemorative practice has become the concept of "memory space" of P.Nora (1997). The research of Alexandria, Egypt, as a "memory space" for European intellectuals and artists of the XIX-XX centuries shows how different combinations of individual and social experience of actors concerning reception of the antiquity form their own original image of antiquity, that is, in its turn, demanded by society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The results indicate that further study of the problem is possible in two directions. On the one hand, it is a continuation of the study of the translation arrangements of the individual perception of antiquity to the collective, especially in regard of the mass distribution of electronic communications. On the other hand, it is necessary to explore other examples of the intellectual and artistic commemoration of the ancient heritage of the XXth and early XXIst centuries.

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