PHOTOJOURNALISM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BRAZIL:

A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstract

The essay focuses on the work of two German photographers, Augusto Stahl and Revert Henrique Klumb, whose work predates the journalistic genre of photojournalism in nineteenth century Brazil. The author proposes the use of a Foucaultian archaeology as a method of exploring and analysing the contributions of these photographers to the journalistic discourse, and to reporting in particular.

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German photographers Augusto Stahl and Revert Henrique Klumb become central to discussions concerning early Brazilian photojournalism. Their contributions, however, are missing from the study of photography. This essay explores this epistemological gap and proposes a Foucaultian archaeology for bringing to light their proximity to a journalistic order of discourse and their critical attitude towards its subjects proclaimed later by industrial journalism.

Stahl arrived in Recife in 1853, on board of the Thames of the English Royal Mail. It is assumed that he was a young German, between 20 and 30 years of age, who had improved his training possibly in England, where there were remarkable advances in photographic techniques. Although several foreign photographers had worked in the province before him, Stahl was the only one to settle there, opening a studio on Crespo Street, at the corner of the Cadeic Street. Klumb is reported to have arrived in Brazil as a German mercenary, fleeing from the French government that constituted the Second Empire in 1852.

Until the beginning of the 1870s the market focused exclusively on portraits. The portrait fever began in 1854 with the *carte-de-visite* format and the possibility of producing multiple copies of the same image for an affordable price. In contrast, exterior photographs, outside a studio setting, were prohibitively expensive, since they required the photographer to carry a portable chemical laboratory. Wet collodium plates, for instance, needed to be immersed in silver nitrate, and the negative had to be used immediately, while still damp, to produce the image (Corręa do Lago 2001, 19).

During the nineteenth century there was no photographic image in the Brazilian press. The development of printing between 1900 and 1920 brought about the birth and configuration of photojournalism in Brazil (Kossoy 1989, 88; Guran 2002, 45). Until the end of the 1930s newspaper photographers devoted themselves to the documentation of urban architecture or recorded a broad range of urban and rural themes, based on an over-optimistic, patriotic aesthetics that exalted the figure of President Getúlio Vargas and the accomplishments of the so-called New State, which coincided with the images of the country constructed by the regime. Since 1931 the major newspapers were under the control of censorship agencies of the Vargas administration. Magazines still used photographs as mere illustrations (Kossoy 2007, 89-90, 117, 122). Kossoy introduces the photographer, Hildegard Rosenthal, a Swiss immigrant, who worked until 1948 in a small and obscure news agency, Press Information. According to Kossoy, over a ten-year period, Rosenthal inaugurated a particular style of photojournalism in Brazil by systematically covering "urban views, entering the main metropolitan streets and squares, documenting their dynamics, buildings, transportation and the face of people. But her work is not confined to that. It also portrays the personalities in the world of culture and the arts. Thus, as a whole it constitutes a sensitive and encompassing picture of the scenarios and characters of the city of Săo Paulo" (2007, 94).

The same elements are introduced subtly almost a century earlier in the photographs discussed here.

On the other hand, in *História da Fotorreportagem no Brasil*, Ferreira de Andrade argues that photojournalism was introduced in newspapers by the middle of the nineteenth century in the form of "reporting images." Photographs were transposed into lithographic illustrations enabled by the printing process. The most important

artists, such as the Frenchman Daumier and Brazilian Araújo de Porto Alegre, illustrated hundreds of newspaper editions.

In spite of the popularity of portraits and the underdeveloped stage of photographic processes during the last decades of the nineteenth century, a conceptual shift took place from documentary and portrait photography to a genre containing two essential attributes of journalistic rationality: the recording of daily urban life and its contextualisation within larger events.

The exploration of the relationship between these German photographers and the press requires a decentring of the standard history of photography and a methodological choice. This involves exploring in different ways documents organised in the collections of photographers. The former are illustrated with images from the past. It also involves changing the entry point of journalistic photography located by various authors in the mid-twentieth century (Kossoy 1989, 207; Guran 2002) or, through lithography, in the nineteenth century (Ferreira de Andrade 2003).

When Foucault approaches the anthropological territory – not to ask about human beings or their subjectivity, but to discover the document from an ethnographic point of view in its complexity as a "monument"– he seems to propose archaeology as an appropriate mode of analysis of practices which, until the middle of the last century, occupied the exterior norms of formalised knowledge.

More concretely, Foucault's archaeology as a method of exploration and analysis of documents may reveal an element of rareness that exists in photographs of that period, which has to do with its early characteristics of reporting, yet unrealised by journalism. It is this rareness frozen in documents from the past that astonishes the present reader/archaeologist, who becomes a lonely witness to its secret dimension due to the possibility of having access to the denseness of the complex plots that are latent in the juxtaposed archaeological layers. Foucault refers to this element when he describes his feelings about the manuscripts left by Pierre Rivière. *"To be frank, however, it was not this, perhaps, that led us to spend more than a year on these documents. It was simply the beauty of Rivière's memoir. The utter astonishment it produced in us was the starting point"* (1991, xi).

Privileged Area and Rare Document

Because of its size, an archive may be associated with the contents of a library or museum, since both derive from the idea of keeping in one place all traces, be they words or objects of a specific period. At the same time, the archive recognises Foucault's archaeology as a research methodology; insofar as it is impossible to exhaustively describe a society's archive, an analysis will focus on a "privileged area." Under these conditions, the archive's description turns to rare documents based on valid and sufficient fragments. According to Foucault, if it were not for these elements, a greater chronological retrocession would be necessary (Foucault 1995, 150-151).

In operational terms, the archive implies a methodological cut and a system of functions. The document acquires the status of a monument, which raises questions about the role it plays, the knowledge culture to which it belongs, and the conditions of its emergence in a particular period. Thus, the archive in its wholeness constitutes the general horizon, a revelation that is never completely finished, while archaeology makes it into a living element, which yields a description of its

practices. The question then is whether the mechanics of the archive adapt to an actual approach to the nature of photography.

The small area of this study and the cut that highlights it do not only imply a subjective dimension, but also refer more specifically to a mode of photographic objectification that provides clues about a break with photographic practices of that time and a proximity to emerging journalistic practices. The latter signals recognition of later photographic practices, including journalistic objectivity and reproduction techniques that allowed photography to become part of the print media. The photographs involved cover a period of about 50 years and come close to what newspapers of that time reported about daily life, although the image still remained outside the journalistic discourse.

Furthermore, how could archaeology as a method be applied to the study of photography, since Foucault never devoted himself to photography? Although none of Foucault's studies explore an archive of photographic images, he approaches the idea of photography, however, through painting, whose analysis should focus on the painter's latent discourse (1995, 219-220).

Considering photography in its constitutive aesthetic and discursive layers, the modus operandi of archaeology would explore the distance among the visible elements that occupy the space of the photographic frame, their relations to depth, colour, light, proportions, volumes, and contours, and the availability of knowledge resulting from this practice in theories, speculations, or in journalistic practices during the period in question. Consequently, photography is a particular way of signifying, characterised by dispensing with words. In one of its constitutive dimensions—the one that comes close to the journalistic discourse regarding urban life—photography would prove to be a discursive practice embodied in images and techniques reverberating effects like many other objects treated and manipulated by journalistic language.

When photography is thus described, it no longer appears as a simple view of the most apparent objects, or as the practice of an individual, who had a reason to freeze a given aspect of reality. Instead, it is completely pervaded by journalistic knowledge and by a network of institutional discourses that focus on the daily life of cities reproduced in newspapers. On the other hand, just like newspapers of the time, photography may reveal a present-day mode of the past in its relations to what did not correspond to journalistic objectification of that period, but provide clues about what journalism would become, for instance, in relation to the inclusion of journalistic sources. The archive's function sheds light on all of this and in relation to the privileged area of this study.

Elements of Photojournalism

In the scenes of daily life in Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil at the time, and in Recife, Germans engage their contemporary journalistic discourse and present an early set of elements that will be incorporated by photojournalism decades later. The first element refers to the presence of what seems to be an embryo of the journalistic source and an indifferent public. In 1865, for instance, Klumb photographs the Pharoux Hotel with three men; the one on the left is situated in the foreground, the one in the middle is in a resting position with his arms crossed, and the third one holds one of his hands at his chest, He is the only one not wear-

Picture 1:
Street Life during the Corpus
Christi Procession

Photographer:
Revert Henrique Klumb

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 2:
Two Slaves and a Bored Woman

Photographer:
Revert Henrique Klumb

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 3:
Bourgeois Life

Photographer:
Revert Henrique Klumb

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 4:
Daily Routine

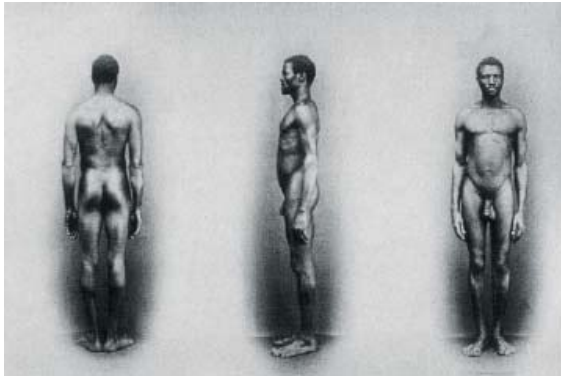Photographer:
Augusto Stahl

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 5:
Slavery

Photographer:
Augusto Stahl

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 6:
Serial Bodies

Photographer:
Augusto Stahl

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 7:
White Girl and Black Slave

Photographer:
Augusto Stahl

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

ing a jacket. They are wearing hats and seem to be in an apparent dialog with the photographer. In an 1860 photograph of the Imperial Chapel and the Carmo Church, Klumb records the movements of people in the street during the Corpus Christi procession (Picture 1).

A photograph of the dam at the Benett Hotel in the Tijuca Forest reveals clues of what would later become a second element of photojournalism: the exploration of novelty or the search for an apparent break with the norm. In this case it is the public exhibition of the female body. This picture is the oldest image made in Brazil showing a half-dressed person. In the same location, but in another image, Klumb suggests an approximation between the actions of the photographer and the voyeur who remains invisible in the previous photograph. The second photograph shows an unidentified man standing against a tree, who seems to be watching something. His body is in an oblique position in relation to the tree, with his legs crossed and his feet more distant. The man is wearing a hat, dark jacket and light-collared pants.

In another example of Klumb's interest in day-to-day life taken at the same place reveals his criticism of slavery, constituting a third element of photojournalism, which only appeared at a later stage in the Brazilian press. It shows two black female slaves with turbans, one sitting on the ground, the other one kneeling. Both are gazing at a tub between them while moving their arms seemingly engaged in washing clothes. Next to them a white girl's body is arched over a stone. She is holding her face in her right hand, which rests on the stone, and stares at the photographer. The diligence of the two black women contrasts with the bored look of the white girl languidly leaning against the stone while observing the slaves at work. A number in the left corner (262) seems to identify the photograph (Picture 2).

In an 1874 photograph, Klumb frames a barefoot black man, carrying a clay jar, at the foot of a staircase leading to an aristocratic home. A dog rests on the second step, followed by a man wearing a hat and jacket, who stands between the second and third steps. His right arm leans on the rail, close to a woman on the next step. Above them are two men sitting on both sides of the staircase with one leg in front of the other. They wear hats, have moustaches (one of them has a small goatee) and acknowledge the photographer's presence. At the end of the first flight of steps, a woman stands by a half-opened gate and seems to be waiting for guests. A man at the same level leans on the low wall by the side of one of the gate posts, with one elbow resting on the low wall while moving his other hand toward his mouth, as if holding perhaps a cigar. Further up, by the higher wall, a group of three men in suits and ties complements the scene, while a man with a top hat comes down the stairs (Picture 3).

Klumb organises scenes from the daily life of the poorest, as in the clandestine snapshot of a maid, who, with her back turned to him, crouches and probably performs some task behind the gas-works, or in the photograph of a muleteer from Minas Gerais, who is wearing typical clothes, boots, wide trousers, poncho and hat, with a cigarette in his mouth, while holding the reins of a horse, with one arm on the animal's back, his right arm at his waist, and the right leg crossed over the left one. He is in a relaxed position, not looking at the photographer, but apparently allowing him to make this record (numbered 282 in the left corner of the photograph).

Ten years earlier, between 1862 and 1865, Augusto Stahl pursued similar scenes in a series of photographs of downtown Rio de Janeiro and its surroundings. In the first one, on Direita Street, close to the governors' palace, trees in front of a house with a veranda and columns, renovated by the French architect, Grandjean de Montigni, cast their shadows on two individuals, who were probably tired of roaming the streets. Judging by their looks, they would not be welcome anywhere in the neighbourhood, so they rested at the curb. One of them, his back arched by the shadow of a heavy rucksack, lowers his head and stretches his legs. The other one with his hands between his legs directs an oblique look at the photographer.

On Floresta Street, near Rio de Janeiro, a group of five men—four blacks and one white—waited for Stahl's gesture as if they were pursuing a daily routine. At the entrance of a building stands a man with is hands in a pocket and his body aligned with the door frame. He wears a sparse beard, a cap, white shirt with a small tie, and a vest. He appears to be the owner of a small business, or perhaps he has a partner, who occupies an interior space with light coming through the window. He, too, has his hands in his pockets and wears a jacket. The other figures in the scene occupy the sidewalk. Among them is a white man, wearing a disarrayed jacket, one leg leaning on the other, while his shoulder rests against the light pole at the corner. One of his arms is at waistline, and the forefinger of his left hand points to the corner of his mouth. He is probably an employee of some small shop or an occasional customer. He seems closest to two black men. One of them, with folded sleeves, one arm on his thigh and the other one holding a crank to fill a watering can, seems to be a slave. The other black man, probably a freed slave, apparently of the same age, sits on the sidewalk close to the wall. He may have joined the group at Stahl's request (Picture 4).

At the centre of another 1864 portrait, a slave exhibits scars produced by rituals that connect him to his African origins (Picture 5), which Stahl neglected to show in dozens of anthropometric photographs taken for the Swiss naturalist, Louis Agassiz, when the latter visited Brazil in 1865-1866, while leading the Thayer expedition. In that instance Stahl remained more distant from his objects and recorded a series of bodies. The naked bodies facing the photographer, in profile and from the back, follow a regular composition, according to which the arms are resting, revealing their disproportionate length that follows the length of the trunk and a part of the thigh, with a relatively short trunk and the interdigital links that are more prolonged than in any other race. Studio lighting highlights certain areas of the body, like the pronounced abdomen and rumps of women and the salient torso of men. An ovate shadow gives another volume to these bodies and reveals Stahl's intention to avoid a barren serialisation (Picture 6). With the black slave mentioned above, Stahl shows the cruelty of slavery through an expression of revolt and mystery that are revealed in his frowning face and his sad countenance. Stahl does just about the same when he frames the distance between a black female slave and a white girl, which is marked by the difference between their positions in the scene or the positions of their arms (Picture 7).

The order of events materialised in the press of that time was different and may be seen in what could be considered a fourth strand of the work of these German photographers. It focused on monuments and pedestrians enjoying the beauty of Rio de Janeiro or turning to the fashion of portrait photographs. Klumb photo-

graphed a bourgeois woman who seemed to have carefully prepared herself for the scene, but turned her eyes away from the photographer, as if she wanted to be surprised in front of Palm Tree Alley in the botanical gardens. The female figure marks the first of a series of planes that give depth to the photograph: the small low wall, the fountain, the promenade, the long corridor of palm trees and another monument in the background.

In the botanical gardens Klumb framed two women who face him. They are separated by wide dresses with touching ends. One of them wears a hat while the other one, who looks older, holds a fold of her dress with her left hand. Behind them is a much younger man with a cane in one hand while keeping the other one at waist level, thus forming the letter V with his arm. None of them appears to see the photographer as an intruder in a private scene. A woman in the background may have been directing her attention to the photographer. The elements recorded by this photograph are on the same plane as nature with a set of trees forming an arch over the figures.

Stahl preferred nature and usually empty buildings in the city to scenes with individuals, which were more to Klumb's liking. Stahl devoted himself to documentary photography, which showed the precarious situation of people and nature, or turned them into a detail that would not interfere with the monument's protagonism. In 1865 he recorded a minuscule human figure lost in the centre of an exuberant natural setting that surrounds the small Petrópolis cascade. In 1872 Marc Ferrez used the original negative to produce a carte-de-visite. On the old bridge in Recife, Stahl photographed a set of historical buildings, placing himself on the Abacaxi quay from where he was able to include the bridge built by Count Maurice of Nassau in 1644, the Conceição Arch, the sacristy of the Mother of God church, and the customs house, built in 1844, as well as its piers. Three men on the river bank, located in the lower left corner, seemed unaware of the photographer's presence. Stahl engaged in another direct dialog with the Machado plaza. The palm trees at the right, the Glória mother church and the string of mountains in the background form the inner space of the picture. Once again the human figure is just a detail. With their backs turned to the photographer the squatting workers, who are paving with Portuguese stones, do not perceive the photographer's presence.

Stahl and Klumb also approached the journalistic agenda in their photographs of work scenes, including workers. The latter are present in Klumb's image of construction work in the port area of Rio de Janeiro, where a heterogeneous group of men, wearing hats, occupy different positions in the structure. Three of them form an imaginary line standing in front of the others and directing their look at the camera. A fourth one seems to be arriving. One man is squatting, in profile, in the foreground. He is located between the action of those behind him, their bodies partially hidden by a wall they are helping to erect and the elements in the foreground. In a photograph of the inspection of the imperial dike by the emperor on the morning after an accident in June, 1862, Stahl opens the scene for the workers, who occupy the lower left corner of the picture, separated by high walls from the higher ground with the emperor and his companions in the distance.

In other scenes that frame urban labour, Klumb develops what seems to be conceptual photography with a series of pictures of a gas plant, taken in the 1850s, in which he shows a heap of metal pieces. But at the building site of the City Improve-

ment Limited of John Frederick Russel, the piles of stones and tubes that dominate the picture are interrupted by small figures of workers. In the left corner a man with a top hat, a light jacket and an umbrella under his left arm, shares the reading of what appears to be a construction plan with another figure, whose legs and part of his top hat are visible. There is no indication here of any relation between the photographer and the individuals.

Recording official life—which is the fifth element of journalistic photography—is also part of the combined oeuvre by Klumb and Stahl. Both were photographers of the Imperial House. In this part of his work, Klumb included both, the monuments and their interiors and the authorities. The portraits of Empress Maria Cristina and Emperor Pedro II in 1865 were taken in the same place. Both stand in front of a small wooden wall, which ends with a higher column and a pedestal occupied by a large vase and an ornamental plant that extends beyond the picture frame.

The emperor has his eyes fixed diagonally as if looking at the reader of the image (Picture 8). His right hand rests on the wall, which is partly covered by a curtain. His left hand hangs freely along the body, his fingers form a shell and his feet are slightly unaligned with the right one closer to the wall. The empress seems to have carefully prepared herself for the portrait. She delicately holds a fold of her dress with the left hand, while her right arm rests lightly on the wall and her hand almost touches the dress and the curtain, which, just as in the emperor's photograph, covers the lower column and is partly covered by the wide skirt of her dress.

These scenes of the imperial family seem to be snapshots by someone who circulated freely in the royal environment. Princess Isabel and a group of friends seem to ignore the presence of the reporter/photographer, which is only noted by an inquiring look of a child in the background, sitting in a tree. In another picture the two princesses, Isabel and Leopoldina, share what seems to be a photo album with a friend. Slightly away from the table, Princess Isabel is looking at the photographer, with her arms resting on the wide dress. She stiffens and moves away from the back of her chair. Princess Leopoldina keeps her elbows on the table and one of the fingers of her right hand on the album. Their friend rests her left arm on the table, her fingers lightly touching the album, while her right hand helps turning its pages. She is the only one who seems to focus completely on the album, ignoring the photographer (Picture 9).

At the same time, during the second half of 1861, Klumb teaches photography to Princess Isabel, earning 800,000 reais for his services, paid in two instalments in January and March, 1862. For the emperor's other daughter, Dona Leopoldina, he also did professional work and received 4,443,000 reais in March and 4,443,000 reais in May, 1862. The images of the palace exterior seem to be designed to give meaning to their grandeur. The interiors undergo precise editing designed to appreciate the luxury and refinement of their objects.

Stahl's pictures of the court do not possess the vigour of his images of slaves. At that time North American and European portraitists used informal rules and standards liked by the bourgeoisie and therefore applied by Stahl. Unlike Klumb, Stahl was not called upon to accompany daily life at the court. Instead, his experience as an official photographer yielded pictures of buildings used by the nobility, such as the Madalena farm, where Empress Tereza Cristina was a guest. The half opened gate and the half closed doors on the upper floor of the large home are the only signs of movement.

Picture 8:
The Emperor D. Pedro II

Photographer:
Revert Henrique Klumb

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 9:
Two Princesses and Their Friend

Photographer:
Revert Henrique Klumb

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Picture 10:
Ten Minutes after
the Event

Photographer:
Augusto Stahl

Acervo da Fundação
Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil

Stahl's Snapshot

Beyond the journalistic elements and notwithstanding the technical conditions of his time, Augusto Stahl attempted to objectify events at the precise moment of their occurrence. Stahl's most important photograph as a precursor of what decades later would become photojournalism is the record of the emperor's arrival in Recife in 1859. To produce an image of the instant in which an event occurred, overcoming the difficulties of obtaining a photograph outside the studio that had determined his previous work, Stahl decided to record images of the same scenario successively at three points in time. First he photographed the arrival without the protagonists, recording a kind of near past. In the second photograph he recorded the protagonists at the time of the actual arrival, while the third photograph recorded the same scenario without the protagonists, indicating a kind of near future.

Concretely, Stahl photographed the quay, Cais do Colégio in Recife standing on the bank opposite to where the imperial family landed on November 22, 1859, producing four pictures: five minutes before the landing, at its precise moment, and five and ten minutes later (Picture 10). Stahl chose the smallest size for the image that records the arrival. The technical difficulty in obtaining this image may have made it less focused than the others, which also may account for its small size.

The French newspaper, *L'Illustration*, which did not yet use photographs because of lacking printing technologies at the time, published a print of the event by merging the various stages recorded in Stahl's photographs and sent to the newspaper by the photographer (Corręa do Lago 2001, 117-121).

Conclusions

Klumb and Stahl's production, which contains this limited study of photography, leads to two conclusions. The analysed photographs hold five elements, which, somehow, locate the epistemological entry point of photojournalism in the nineteenth century. Stahl and Klumb inscribe the journalistic in their photographic approach during the previous century, but their work has not yet been recognised by the history of Brazilian photography.

The second conclusion refers to the archaeological method. The Foucaultian conception of document, archive, and archival system of functions proves to be most adequate for exploring photographic documents and their narrow dialogue with newspapers at that time, although they were not part of them, because of the stage of press development. There are even clues that indicate that what has been said by these photographers exceeds the contemporary journalistic discourse.

Hypothetically speaking, the set of photographs registered outside the newspaper at the end of the nineteenth century invite a new object of study. Henrique Klumb and Augusto Stahl illustrated the daily life of poor people in different ways, which newspapers did not care to mention. The contemporary Brazilian press collected and transmitted ideas of the elite defending the power of the state, progress and order in a discourse against prostitutes, beggars, gamblers, vagabonds, and unemployed individuals (Marocco 2004). More specifically, newspapers classified beggars and the jobless in a hierarchy of species as harmful to life and noxious to progress. They constituted one of the most degrading social sores, while prostitutes were a cancer on society, and youngsters of the lowest social class children of the

evil. Newspapers demanded that police fight —like sanitary authorities battled mice, fleas and the bubonic plague—"those agents of social demoralisation, the saloon mice and rats." Yet, the experience of Stahl and Klumb introduces another form of journalistic work.

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