

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE OF EVERYDAY LIFE: meaning and information in journalism

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SBPJor / Sociedade
Brasileira de Pesquisa
em Jornalismo

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ABSTRACT The theoretical foundations of this article are the conceptual principles of the French intellectuals Philippe Dubois (based on the book *Photographic Act*), Roland Barthes (book: *Camera Lucida*) and Henri Cartier-Bresson (text: *The Decisive Moment*). Their texts are references for the purpose of providing a comprehension of the meanings of photographs in journalistic narratives. It is a critical debate about the presence of the photographic image in journalism, reorganizing knowledge faced with its conceptual fragility, which gives digital photography an important role as document and information. One of the ideas to be considered rests on the assumption that today, in the reconfiguration of the photographic studies of urban everyday life (identity crisis caused by digital technology), the meaning becomes more important than the image as an image.

Key words: Communication. Visual journalism. Photo reporting. Urban life. Meanings in photography

INTRODUCTION

Since its emergence, photography has been creating visual texts in portraits of people, everyday life, cities, aboriginal peoples, landscapes, the animal world, botany and industrial objects, among others. And it has always been done in a way that stimulates imagination and interpretations. Photography allowed us to see reality in a different way and added unprecedented richness to the visual language. "From there, the perception of the world became more sophisticated and complex. Although photography - and film - reveal nothing of the world in the literal sense, they contribute educationally to seeing better." (AUMONT, 1995, p. 276).

In almost two centuries of existence, the sensitive surface of the photograph has gone from bitumen to metal, paper, glass and acetate (film). Digital photography has changed the theoretical and practical scene today. Not everything has become obsolete, although the contemporary eye is not the same (and could not be). Given these factors, how to update the photography issue - linked to the document

tradition – and its proximity to reality?

It is in this documental view that this article highlights the concepts developed by the reference authors Philippe Dubois, Roland Barthes and Henri Cartier-Bresson, relating and confronting them with the processes of new technologies. Thus it will be possible to bring a new dimension to the subject of photography, in light of the theoretical universe of digital technology, generated by the crisis of photography as information in social communication. This study aims to produce, as a contribution to citizenship and the understanding of contemporary urban life, theoretical reflections regarding the prominence that the digital image has been acquiring in the context of photojournalism in recent decades.

Giving a new dimension to the photographic issue involves analyzing the development of the humanistic approach in analog or digital processes, seeking the importance of the awareness of seeing in social communication. Or questioning the photographic act as a trail or trace left by the existence of something physical and material, seeking an expansion in the sense of the reconstruction of reality. The working hypothesis entails the reconfiguration of the photographic studies – identity crisis caused by digital technology – in which the meanings are more important than the image as an image.

Petrified shadow

The invention of photography resulted from the conjunction of two primary and distinct factors: optical (device that captures image) and chemical (device that sensitizes certain substances based on silver salts to light). Photography set up the habit of motionless perception of reality, under the prism of testimony in a space-time cross-section. That is, from its inception it acts as a technology of information and memory.

Therefore the photographic image has been used as a mirror representation of reality – with the legitimacy of a document – according to the assumption that it cuts out a unique moment and isolates a portion of the visible extension. That is, a fragment of a certain instant (time) in a certain place (space). The photograph, in short, retains a trace of the action of light. So analog photography is metaphorically considered a “petrified shadow”, leaving traces – materialized vestiges – in the silver grains of the sensitive surface at the moment of the click.

The nineteenth century had a conception of photography that I call discourse of mimesis, a concept of that epoch. The images were seen as a reproduction of the world as it is. It was an iconic idea.

It is true that the nineteenth century was marked by this sight of similarity, but it has not disappeared, it is still a contemporary belief, a very common point of view today. Laboriously, some theorists of the early twentieth century showed that the photographic image was not a neutral mirror, but a tool for interpretation of reality. Examples of such transposition were perceived: black and white contrasting with the reality in color, the static image and the ever-changing world, the two-dimensional image coming from the three-dimensional reality, the purely visual excluding any other auditory, olfactory, tactile or gustatory sensation. Therefore photography is not like the world, it transforms the world (DUBOIS, 2003).

In fact, in the late nineteenth century it was possible to contradict the thesis that the essence of photography was a true picture of reality (the argument for this view of “truth” was the fact that photography provided an image formed by the machine without human intervention). Thus, with the understanding of photography as a transformation of reality, the rejection of the perfect mechanical image could be sufficiently explored during the twentieth century, both in photographic production and in the construction of meanings.

Three stages

The referent, i.e., the real thing to be photographed – man, animal, landscape – is fundamentally linked to the act of making see an image. It is like saying any photograph announces its subject. The photograph as an indexical sign presupposes – thinking of the sign as a representation of a generator of meanings and the index as the logic of the trace left by something – the material existence of something before the camera, deriving from it multiple meanings. That is why the photographic act arises from the referent of the image.

A possibility for dealing with the sign principles of photography is the conception in three stages suggested by the American Charles Sanders Peirce (DUBOIS, 1994, p. 27). The threefold regency is implied by the icon (similarity), the symbol (historical view, cultural convention and plastic form) and the index (real connection with the referent). Photography as sign construction, based on three simultaneous movements, also embraces the idea of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. In this case, the synthesis (index) does not contradict the other terms and so there is no opposition between the icon and the symbol.

The icon stage serves as a basis for the understanding of photography, related to analogy and identity. That is, in accordance with the referent connected to the real. It is through this similarity that, by comparison and confrontation, we seek to understand the image. And how can the symbol stage be handled with regard to the historical,

cultural and aesthetic perspective? Philippe Dubois answers, pointing to the front page photograph of the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*, the image of two candidates for mayor of São Paulo in political debate, produced in the studios of a television channel in October 2000.

I note the red background of the photograph. It's because of the cultural knowledge that I can relate the red to a color politically identified with leftist movements. Besides, the color red is a thought like red, an idea itself, an aesthetic dimension or knowledge. It's not only knowledge about the content, but also about its expressive form (DUBOIS, 2000).

Finally the index stage, which belongs to the logic of the trace left by objects, in view of the materiality (or embodiment) of things, marked on the sensitive surface. Thus the confirmation of the fact occurs through the connection between index and referent. It is a unique quality of photography, which therefore belongs to the level of track, mark, trace and record. Photography belongs to a category of signs that differs from painting, sculpture or written text, that operate basically between icon and symbol.

In the three stages of sign construction there is also the (photographic) discursive production, which has three language elements: the before (the image conception that will be produced by the emitter-photographer), the photographic click (the trace moment of the message, exclusive of the camera) and the after (the contemplation of the picture by the receiver-reader). The photographic before and the photographic after involve both the icon and the symbol. That is, icon and symbol are incorporated when an image is produced and read.

It makes sense to bring together these elements of the communication circuit and the thought of Roland Barthes. He assigns a term of Greek origin to each phase of this ternary function: the before linked to the Operator (photographer), the click linked to the Spectrum (referent) and the after linked to the Spectator (reader). It is noteworthy that Barthes' thought gives priority to the relation of the Spectator before the photographic image.

Here's me myself as the measure of photographic "knowledge". What does my body know about Photography? I noticed that a photo can be the object of three practices (or three emotions, or three intentions): to do, to try, to look. The Operator is the photographer. The Spectator is all of us who consult newspapers, books, records and files, photograph collections. And who or what is photographed is the target, the referent, some kind of small simulacra, some kind of eidolon emitted by the object, which might well be called the Spectrum of Photography, because this word retains, in its origin, a relation with "spectacle" (BARTHES, 1981, p. 23).

The reading of meanings

How to read the meanings of a photographic image that represents its referent? Is there a difference between the existence (connected with the facts) and the significance (connected with the meanings) in what concerns photography? Or, as Roland Barthes says, there is the “it-was” - associated with the “real existence of its referent” - and, slightly distant from it, the “it-means” (BARTHES, 1981, p. 110). If photography is not read through its meanings, it falls back to the state of things which lie in ignorance (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2006, p. 172).

At the time of its emergence, photography was soon accepted as a documental and informative source, because painting was more related to the arts. From the perspective that says that the painters worked with an interpretive vision of the world, arose the Irwin Panofsky method (linked to the Spectator) for understanding the meanings of paintings. From the moment the idea that “the photograph does not interpret, does not select, does not rank” (DUBOIS, 1994, p. 32) collapsed, this method started being used in photography and film.

Description, cultural analysis, interpretation -these are the three basic premises of Panofsky, which allow the reader to interact both historically and culturally with the photographic image to obtain meanings and information for the construction of knowledge. In this case focused on the journalistic discourse, the description should be able to create a verbal narrative of the mirror representation. This is known as pre-iconography or primary significance, consisting of the recognition and identification of what is seen, of the objects visually recorded. It works with the physical content (the iconic notion of the nineteenth century). There must be attention to detail in this image reading to obtain (as a scanner) as much information as possible. It operates as a basic gesture and a relatively complete reading is recommended.

After these first identifications, it is necessary to examine from which cultural network photography operates, and make connections to clarify the events, creating a narrative fabric from the premises of journalism (what, who, how, where, when, why, because). That is, the relations that set themselves in motion before the descriptive recognition. The cultural analysis works with the objective and the subjective (the symbolic notion of the twentieth century), based on the dynamic images of historical knowledge and on the fixed images of cultural knowledge. It is known as iconography (icon writing) or secondary meaning, grounded in history and culture (typical habits of society, common sense, collectively transmitted values).

Also considered relevant are the author, place, date, camera, lens, character, setting, predominant color, line, form, light source, focus, composition, metering (ASA / ISO), speed and diaphragm. Besides, more information may arise from references outside the image. For example, the newspaper or magazine (print or electronic), the editorial place where the photograph is applied, resulting in new meanings of the image. And even other contexts of meaning arise from written, graphic or photo language, which can operate simultaneously with the studied image. For example, the cover photo of a newspaper interacts with the headline, the caption, the reference boxes, the texts, the other photographs, the infographics, the cartoons, the advertisements and even with the name of the newspaper.

In the cultural analysis there is a display of cultural ideas that go beyond the descriptive aspect of the image. For example, the white dove may mean peace in the Western world. The convertible and the imported car are understood as wealth and pride. The politician is assimilated as power, strength in attitudes or as a cursed culprit. The football player is regarded as the myth of the crowd. The artist is seen as a rebel, a political activist or a romantic. The woman is understood as creation, fertility, protection, beauty, seduction, family, sensitivity and intuition.

It seems simple to understand that between the Eastern reader and the Western reader, in both traditional and differentiated media, there are different cultural perspectives. Roland Barthes, focusing on the understanding of languages, considered other ways that should be added to the historical and cultural assumptions of Panofsky. These are the dynamic images of subjective knowledge, transformed into meanings in the interpretations of encoded messages by the ordinary reader.

Constructing meaning in reading is about making the reader's experiences and his knowledge about the world interact with the raw material he has before his eyes, through the formal and the contextual data of this material (PIETRARÓIA, 2001, p. 25).

Cognitive, affective, aesthetic and technical - these are the four elements, or dimensions, which contribute to giving broader meanings to historical and cultural data. The cognitive is linked to knowledge of the world, the historical and informative capacity and the journalistic assumption (well-informed reader). The affective is articulated by interests, desires, feelings or attitudes. The aesthetic interacts through taste for forms, visual thinking, graphic and/or plastic identification. The technical involves familiarity with photography and graphics.

Finally there is the interpretation. Here, indeed, the notion of critical vision is more apparent and therefore assumes risks. So a brief,

condensed interpretation is more prudent, considering even the eventual utilization of key words and of the main imaginary line in photography. It is known as iconology (the study of the icon) or essential significance, based on the argument of what is not shown. We must try to build something with certain strength, but the assumption is not always very safe and stable.

For one interpretation of images there may always be another, even a third or a fourth one. Photographs are always susceptible to multi-interpretations. Therefore it's not the same thing as cultural analysis. In tultural analysis, we fairly agree with each other. In interpretation we begin to see more subtle things and to propose hypotheses about the values of some signals. It's quite random. And nothing is so obvious, since everything is very debatable (DUBOIS, 2000).

Pictorial and verbal texts to remember loved ones

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) took literature as a reference for the photography study. The movement known as Structuralism was probably the pinnacle of the complaint about the reality effect, both in photography and film. In the semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes and Christian Metz, photography was seen as information and construction and included the (rhetorical) argument. It is worth mentioning that the book *Camera Lucida*, by Barthes, is posterior to his Structural phase, when he takes personal pleasure from the text (written or visual), information related to psychoanalysis and essential for the critical debate about photography as a language in mass communication.

Communication takes place when the text is able to achieve change and absorb the reader in an active way. Barthes recovers the narrative meaning through the taste for reading and the recognition of the Other. "I play without illusion, but with the exhilarating joy of the artist. In this amateur reading, full of reasons, no doubt, the pleasure of some kind of artisan comfort may intervene" (BARTHES, 2003).

After discovering Japan on three successive trips (1966 to 1968), Barthes turns to the delight of the amateur artist (to read, to write, to paint). Japan provides an example of a civilization where everything is image, without ever returning an ultimate meaning. The ritualizing of everyday life, the *noh* theater, the *shodo* (calligraphy), the *suibokuga* (painting) and the *haiku* (haikai) are ways to escape from the symbolic walls of the West.

Going to a *kissa-ten* (tea room or coffee shop) for an informal conversation among friends is somehow like producing *shashin*, photography (literally, reflection of reality or reflection of truth). There is a term for the art of tea making, *ichi ichigo*, matching the decisive moment of photography: a unique encounter in life, or also the treasuring of every meeting, which never occurs again (AVANCINI, 2008, p. 140).

In the 1960s he published his first texts related to Semiotics for studying photography, intending to research its codes. In them he perceives the written language as a clandestine practice that may, in a way, stir the subject and dissolve him in the page space. The pleasure of the literary text is an exercise of appropriation to relocate the author in the center of the utterance. That is why he starts to include life experiences in the field of subjectivity in his last works, besides discussing the cultural values of the subject-reader. His idea was to get rid of the theoretical aspects of Structuralism and deconstruct academic and dogmatic formalisms.

Since the death of his mother in October 1977, his life was devoted to research on issues related to love and death. The courses at the Collège de France in Paris, entitled “The Preparation of the Novel,” inspired the author by the sincerity of emotions and ideas, a way to transform suffering into transcendence. To Barthes, the notion of writer and reader is admittedly far from being stable.

“Roland Barthes with his mother”, the anonymous photograph taken at Bayonne/Marrac (France) in 1923, shows the eight-year-old boy wearing his school uniform, posing in the lap of his mother, Henriette Barthes (BARTHES, 1977, p. 9). And it also portrays the insecure boy, who lost his father in World War I, being sheltered by maternal protection. Faces close to each other, piercing eyes, arms interlocked: the image hides nothing, but says nothing. The secret is to uncover the obvious: the deep love between them. But for Barthes the obtuse way is to unravel the object (in this case, the photo) able to reflect the absent love.

From *camera obscura* to *camera lucida*

More than a reflection on photography, *Camera Lucida* (*La Chambre Claire*, 1980) is a meditation on the loss of love and the recovery of lost time. The last work of Barthes was written in the shadow of Marcel Proust (1871-1922). And the image-text, as the written text, recalls loved ones. Photography and written text are not guarantees of truth, but the photograph – in contrast to writing and painting – attests the existence and legitimacy of the incident through the presence of the referent.

In *Camera Lucida*, the maxim that “photography is unclassifiable” was an allusion to the parameters of written language, whose safer discourse could be discussed in greater depth (BARTHES, 1981, p. 17). To compare photography to reality is certainly not the best way to discover its nature. For the writer, the photograph does not access reality but

rather images. The photograph is invisible, blind, artifice, illusion, when compared to reality. And, moreover, it does not have a particular mark. Therefore photography should be demystified as a guarantee of truth.

In the literary essay *Camera Lucida*, Barthes presents a work endowed with a method to create new concepts. The book, written between April 15 and June 3, 1979, expresses the poetics of absence, wandering about the non-linear reading of the picture (exterior being) and about the death of his mother (interior being). In parallel with the photographic message, Barthes writes a verbal text which is fragmented, discontinuous, interpretive, and expressed in first person singular. He takes the reader's (*Spectator*) perspective, inviting him to enter the camera at the very moment of the click. First of all he deciphers the object photography to increase awareness about the constituents and organizing principles of this language. At the same time, he brings his personal essence: he speculates regarding impressions of the image "Winter Garden", produced by an anonymous amateur photographer in 1898. The portrait is a picture of his mother, who had just reached the age of five. That is, studying a photograph is to discover the meanings of who we are and what we see (read).

However, there is a frequent co-existence without which there would be no photography: the inseparable presence of something represented - the referent (*Spectrum*) - which adheres to the photographic image. He mentions the example that "a pipe is always a pipe, unfailingly" (BARTHES, 1981, p. 18). Thus, he contrasts a foundational concept of the plastic arts noted by the surrealist Belgian painter Rene Magritte (1869-1967) who, while representing a pipe, wrote on the canvas "*ceci n'est pas une pipe*" (this is not a pipe). Photography, otherwise, guarantees as representation the testimonial past of a given object, and offers a "certificate of presence" that authenticates something. "The seer of the photographer does not consist in seeing, but in being there." (BARTHES, 1981, p. 122).

Capturing the human essence

After becoming tired of the ruling class pictures or the images of pain in illustrated journals, during the Spanish Civil War or World War II, the humanist photographers, who had Paris as a creative epicenter, celebrated life – and peace – by producing images of anonymous people in their urban daily lives. The photographs were closer to capturing the human essence than the objective images of the press. André Kertész, Brassai (Gyula Halasz), Edouard Boubat, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Josef Koudelka, Marc Riboud, René Burri, Robert Doisneau, Willy Ronis and Pierre Verger were exponents of this movement.

These photographers inaugurated an era in which the actions of daily life were recorded by a personal vision: events and political manifestations, picturesque figures and couples, portraits of artists and intellectuals, cultural traditions and urban landscapes, stories about countries and police cases (*fait divers*). Seeking to be the reader's eyes in the news formats and contents, these photographers acted according to the principles of humanistic photography: not to hold back the truth, not to intervene and change the scene, to turn the city over to the citizens, to respect yourself and others. As current visual reporters, they rebuilt a reality ruled on the “act of reporting”.

When I refer to the act of reporting, I consider it as a manifestation of symbolic thinking which takes back this narrative form [...]. For capturing the past, narrative is required in the act of reporting. Among the various ways of giving meaning to what is experienced is this act which, through the many forms of language, either in verbal or non-verbal dimension, takes different forms and meanings [...]. The act of reporting makes a fact of the empirical world remade through the process of enunciating established in the Subject of this enunciation (TAGÉ, 2001, p. 162-163).

The decisive moment

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004) emerged as a photographer in the 1930s. He is considered the father of modern photography and photojournalism and his photos of everyday life dealt with situations that were continually disappearing. For Cartier-Bresson, the one thing that was important was to be bodily available for viewing and creating images. He had the practice of never imposing himself on the photographed situation. And he traveled the world with his inseparable Leica camera – recognized as an extension of the eye – conscious of the more suitable universe for making good use of it: urban life, people, public places and the streets.

He released his first book, *Images à la Sauvette* (1952), paraphrasing the Cardinal of Retz (seventeenth century): “There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment” (CARTIER-BRESSON, 1986, p. 9). The publisher Simon & Schuster made the title of the introduction of Cartier-Bresson, “L’Instant Décisif”, the title of the American edition, “The Decisive Moment” (1952), which became the mark of the photographer. Bressonian photography was permeated by the ethical principle of assuming the absorption of one point of view among the numerous ones possible. That is, it recognized the relativism of the cross-section, which could never fully incorporate the truth.

What is the “decisive-moment”? The first move of any action is guided by something invisible and dramatic: a decision. This

conceptual basis is reflected by the practice of setting photographically, in a public place, a precise instant at the apex of the movement, which is never repeated. "To photograph is to hold your breath when all of your faculties converge to capture the fleeting reality; it is when the quick recording of the image promotes physical and intellectual joy" (CARTIER-BRESSON, 1997, p. 24).

Cartier-Bresson noted how impossible it would be to photographically represent an entire eventual happening in a way that this event would be understood. So he sought a synthesis: unique photographs that caught the movement at its summit. This notion came from painting and "Gotthold-Ephraim Lessing, in his *Laocoon* treatise (1766), called it the pregnant moment" (AUMONT, 1995, p. 231). It should be noted that instantaneous (high speed) recording had emerged around 1860. The Leica camera, released on the market in 1925, leveraged this technique through its 24 mm x 36 mm frame, shutter speed (1/40 s), portability, accuracy and capacity of the lens. But no fetish regarding cameras was suggested by the photographer: "important as long as one could master the technique to communicate what is seen" (CARTIER-BRESSON, 1986b, p. 18).

The French photographer has become renowned for the "decisive moment" of a black and white image which records the profile of a man in a hat, leaping over a reflecting pool next to the Gare Saint-Lazare (1932), in Place de l'Europe, Paris. The leap caught in the air recreates the one made by the acrobat in the Railowsky circus poster (glued to the wall), but in the opposite direction. In the photograph, there are many bars and the feeling of freedom in the middle of the historic moment between the wars.

The use of the Leica camera was associated with street photography because of its easy transportation and handling. The opportunities and capabilities of the Leica - in spontaneous scenes - made room for artistic innovation in photojournalism. In addition to the simplification of black and white film (the usage of a color and its absence) and the search for what is human, Henri Cartier-Bresson sought the pictorial synthesis, i.e., photojournalism not needing subtitles.

The "decisive-moment" is born between reality and fiction. By removing images from the real and making associations, the meanings invented by the photographer arise and transcend the documental sphere. For Cartier-Bresson there was no concern with technical excellence: the photograph produced with the Leica happened naturally. Like the Zen archer, silent and detached, living the present moment was more important than the photograph itself. On the other hand, Cartier-Bresson used to say that his talent came from personal involvement with the work (MOREIRA, 2007).

Photo reporting

Bringing together elements of journalistic narrative, Cartier-Bresson began to deal simultaneously with the random, the fleeting, the esthetic organization, the sense of humor, the poetry, the criticism, the denunciation, the despised place, the periphery of the event.

This language viewed the act of photographing as an unpretentious reflection, being the precursor of photo reporting: to produce today's events in sequential visualities in a non-homogeneous way. That is, it helped to set aside the default and the cliché of press photography, providing a differential in visual journalism: the informative photograph (not just the illustrating picture, whose subtitle still indicates only one way of reading).

Cartier-Bresson warned the photojournalists to go everywhere respectfully and never "pull out" images (in opposition to the sensationalism or the paparazzi style of contemporary press). His photographs were ethical and scientific, artistic and documental, esthetic and informative. Within a specific assignment, the photographic act was unpredictable: it would be kind of "achieved" by the scene. He gave a face to the anonymous characters: street workers, the elderly, women and children, and he put a little of himself in each image produced.

Successively reading the pictures of Cartier-Bresson is like looking through a kaleidoscope. In the collective creation of the city – considering the terrain, the ecology, the architecture, the vehicles, the animals, the sculptures, the *graffiti*, the ads – the focus of his Leica camera was the people, and that is why it had a natural connection with the journalistic narrative. The ever-changing esthetics of urban life arose spontaneously from the asymmetry of each place's forms. It is in the penetrating gaze, in the immediate freshness and in the intermittent aspect of photographic language that the "decisive moment" converges as a concentrating focus.

Cartier-Bresson made a valuable contribution to photo reporting, esthetically dealing with the juxtaposition of two or more fragments (apparently disjointed) in a single image or in a combination of photographs. Not coincidentally, the French photographer considered himself a craftsman. He drew a parallel between producing images and building beautiful chairs. As opportunity and availability came they were not wasted: it was the time to point the camera. "I never try to make the big picture; it is the big picture that offers itself" (CARTIER-BRESSON, 1994).

Recognized for their esthetic aspect of great interest to

the media, the images in the service of journalism are also texts themselves. Photojournalism is the practice of relying on pictures to tell stories. Careful to raise public awareness, to complement written text information and to offer greater credibility to the news - and not simply to illustrate - Cartier-Bresson created a stamp applied to the back of his press photographs: "I request maintenance of the framework and subtitles" (CARTIER-BRESSON, 2004).

He founded the Magnum agency in 1947, along with David Chim Seymour, George Rodger and Robert Capa. The small group served as intermediary between the press and the photographers, seeking more creative and independent productions. Magnum fought for the news as a critic and for the photographic reporting assignment as a possibility to complement written information. In addition there was the requirement of owning the negatives, using author credit, not changing or cutting the images and letting the photographer develop the subtitle. "We formed a cooperative where we could choose the topics, rejecting those that we were proposed and in which we were not interested. We were not mercenaries in this sense." (CARTIER-BRESSON, 1986, p. 122).

Cartier-Bresson acknowledged his desire to match or beat others, but without a cold photo contest like "horse racing". How to imagine, for example, in those times before television, one documenting the last days of the Kuomintang, the Chinese revolution in Beijing (1949), without the company of other photographers? Or photographing Mahatma Gandhi in Calcutta (1947), forty-five minutes before this political leader was killed? "I hope the adventure aspect of the Magnum agency exists forever; you have to be adventurous in an activity" (CARTIER-BRESSON, 2004).

The crisis of photography

Based on the argument that the frame is the constructive basis of motion pictures, photography is situated in the gray area between fiction and reality. However, the analog image represents a place of the pre-existing world. With the emergence of the digital process, some authors consider that analog photography puts a kind of ending of the representation of the real by direct contact with the material dimension (ROUILLÉ, 2009, p. 136).

How to rethink the photographic act within the idea of the trace left by something? Does digital technology make all the theorizing about the analog process obsolete? The consequence of the emergence of electronic photography is the crisis of photography as a document and as "arbiter of truth" (MACHADO, 2005, p. 312). Today, the photographic act no longer certifies and legitimates the existence of a fact by the presence of the

referent. But this Barthian principle is at the root of electronic photography.

The digital photograph of the object broom - that may be related to the "The Open Door" (1843) by Henry Fox Talbot (the creator of the negative) - does not necessarily mean that this object was physically in front of the camera. Without debating the ethical limits of the sphere of communication, a manipulation nearly as perfect as the real is possible (technical photography). Several alternatives of photomontage on other sensitized surfaces have already made this possible, although not that perfectly.

From document to monument

With digital technology, the universe of photography becomes the appreciation of the pragmatic. That is, the coming into being, the becoming. The different supports of photography define its type: printed support (book, newspaper, magazine and poster), stock image, display in a gallery or museum, family album, animation (cinema, television, video), Internet (social networks, communities and websites). The same photo may acquire other meanings depending on its location (print, interactive and multimedia) (DUBOIS, 2009).

This means it operates simultaneously from the document viewpoint, still very important, and the image-monument. That is, the photograph is seen as a notable or shocking work (monument), but still passes on information and memory to posterity (document), going from document to monument or in the unceasing dialectic between truth and fiction.

In the electronic media there is malleability (interfaces with more possibilities than the physical media), which creates conditions for increasing the speed, the range and the social interaction of photographs. There are stock photographs, which provided photojournalism with more affordable prices. There are photo communities, promoting dissemination of digital portfolios. There are search engines that allow users to access the web addresses of photographers. All these aspects influence the way photography is produced and read.

The digital photographer's practice establishes some changes with relation to the analog photographer: instant viewing of the image; no production frame by frame; no need to return the film after the photographic act; deleting photos in the camera (formerly they were edited after the production of the contact proof); screens as basic support (from cameras to computers); auto focus on several possible areas of the scene; changing the sensitivity (ASA / ISO) with each click.

Does the immateriality of the digital process lead to an expansion

of the meaning of reality reconstruction, tending to a more abstract, floating, volatile and simulated representation? In fact it does; however it is worth pointing out that in order to offer services in the cloud through the overwhelming size of server installations, the computer companies make use of resources with very concrete foundations based on the ground. The term “cloud” – the concept of migration of digital data to distant points – has an ambiguous meaning.

“What is the purpose of making images? And what are the meanings we give to the pictures?” (FONTCUBERTA, 2010). Whether as a photographer or as reader, the windows are open to share interdisciplinary knowledge and confront points of view. In the multiplicity of contemporary images, mostly produced in the form of a monolithic cloud, the opportunity arises to devise non-verbal texts to leverage the condition of the pixel (primal element of image digitalization) not as a “petrified shadow”, but as a precious stone.

Final comments

In the urban social fabric, a kaleidoscope of stimulating images, the deep communication is lost between the drama and the joy of living, the social critique and ecology, causality and the expected, the successful and creativity. The news seems inclined to be guided almost exclusively by the media interests of the public, in the absence of journalism at the service of public debate. The appealing overexposure of violence in peripheral places serves as an example. The model of public concession of social communication in the case of radio and television, which does not coincide with the interests of Brazilian society, is a reflection of this situation.

Ed Viggiani, award-winning (Mother Jones Foundation) documentary photographer, recognizes the disarticulation of visual journalism by both photojournalists, concerning competitiveness, and editors, concerning the lack of search for content. “In the newsrooms of major newspapers and news magazines, there are few photographers employed, and there are no more photo-reporters in the branches, that is, there is little investment in the reporting” (VIGGIANI, 2010).

The uniqueness of the photojournalist profession is diluted with the advent of digital technology, which democratizes the purchase of cameras (which come even integrated with mobile telephony), turning everyone into a potential reporter. Can the Bressonian “decisive moment”, assuming the presence of the photographer on the urban scene, still be considered the reference (or the manual) of photojournalism? How does the photojournalism narrate daily life today?

Without any doubt, there are positive aspects. As an example, there is the interaction between photojournalism, documentary photography and art;

or the creative informative play between verbal headline and cover photograph, especially in the printed press; or the perception of image as text or even the dialogue between the verbal and nonverbal languages. But what is the social importance of contemporary photojournalism? Is the profession threatened?

There are websites on the Internet which sell photos – the never-ending search for the scoop – to photo agencies and/or media companies. It is the “citizen photographer”, the participatory journalism tendency, consolidated in cyberspace. In a single computer click, we connect with many people for the purpose of sharing images, words and sounds.

In mainstream journalism today, mirror representations are acrylic flowers. It is known that dilution of the culture and pasteurization of the language result from the communication industry. The visual reporter is not in pursuit of superficial information, but he remains faithful to the event in the appreciation of everyday life. It is a matter of fact that the photograph shown in journalism, whether analog or digital, is often more remarkable and remembered than the written text.

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