How Photographs Deliver a Message:

Personal Photography in Latin America

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Abstract

This project advances the hypothesis that the advent of the smartphone as a preferred way to take and share photographs has given photography a final blow, which has since seen its status change. From a medium that people used primarily to preserve memories, photography becomes a way of bringing images into circulation with communicative intention. This phenomenon opened up the concept of what was considered to be photographable until recently, anchoring the practice in the present. While in communication studies photography occupies a marginal place and is rarely understood as a medium of communication in its own right, my thesis offers a theoretical definition of photography as a *communicative gesture*, which emphasizes non only the aesthetic or representational side of the photographic image, but also the social issues and the of digital photography in communicative exchanges.

The study also offers an analysis of concrete photographic practices, by carrying out a historical and an empirical evaluation of the uses of the medium in Latin America - with an emphasis on South America - from a survey which aims to explore the role of photography in everyday life.

In order to study the passage of photography as an object that will be kept for future contemplation towards an iconic message that encourages circulation, the main question of the thesis is: what do we do with photography today? In order to examine the current social uses of photography, I tentatively respond that people discuss, post, and view images, and structure the chapters of this study around these gestures, which focus only on vernacular or personal photography, an increasingly accepted term to define amateur practice.

Résumé

Ce projet pose l'hypothèse que l'avènement du téléphone intelligent comme moyen privilégié de prendre (et de partager) des photos a donné un coup de grâce à la photographie, qui a dès lors vu son statut changer. D'un moyen que les gens utilisaient principalement pour conserver des souvenirs, la photographie devient une manière de mettre des images en circulation avec une intention de communication. Ce phénomène a ouvert le concept de ce qui était photographiable, en lui donnant un caractère ancré dans le présent. Alors que, dans les études en communication, la photographie occupe une place marginale et n'est pas appréhendée comme un moyen de communication en soi, ma thèse offre une définition théorique de la photographie en tant que *geste communicatif*, qui met l'accent non seulement sur le côté esthétique ou représentationnel de l'image photographique, mais aussi sur les enjeux sociaux et le rôle communicatif de la photographie numérique.

Afin d'ancrer l'analyse dans les pratiques concrètes de la photographie, la thèse propose également une évaluation historique et empirique des usages du médium en Amérique latine –avec un accent sur l'Amérique du Sud—à partir d'une enquête qui vise à explorer le rôle de la photographie dans la vie quotidienne.

Afin d'étudier le passage de la photographie en tant qu'objet qui sera conservé pour une contemplation future vers un message incitant à la circulation, la question principale de la thèse est : que fait-on avec la photographie aujourd'hui ? Afin d'examiner les utilisations sociales actuelles de la photographie, je réponds provisoirement que les gens discutent, publient et regardent les images, et je structure les chapitres de cette étude autour de ces

gestes, qui se concentrent uniquement sur la photographie vernaculaire ou 'personnelle', un

terme de plus en plus accepté pour définir la pratique chez les amateurs.

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Introduction

This study examines the changing ways in which photography is experienced in Latin America. This, then, is a thesis about the histories of the practice of photography as well as about how scholars study this medium, as different intellectual projects and research questions do make a difference in constructing an object of study and have practical ramifications for the ways in which photography gets researched and written about. The central idea of my project is the notion of photography as a communicative *gesture*, stressing our own doings both in the production of images and in the unfolding of a new function of photography as a current *message in the present* rather than as a document of the past.[1]

We often hear that we are being 'bombarded' by images, that they haunt us from every corner. The 'saturation cliché'—as we can call it, as it has become a common characterization within research on visual culture—however accurately it may appear to describe our time, suggests that we can somehow stand in separation from the images, that they come to us, that they are 'out there.' In sum, scholars tend to portray them either as *environment* or, conversely*,* by granting them agency*,* not doing real justice to the engagement we now have with the photographic. This study goes on to argue that the

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[1] All translations from Spanish, Portuguese, French, Catalan, Italian, and/or German are mine unless otherwise indicated. Any inaccuracies are thus my own.

eruption of mobile phones with built-in cameras delivered the *coup de grâce* for how people relate to the photograph. Until not long ago, photographing meant making the decision to reach for a camera, a move that the ubiquity of cellphone technology has rendered unnecessary. Moreover, the ascendance of the camera-phone made photography serve not only as a repository of memories for future contemplation but as a time-value product with a short shelf life. Put simply, what is novel is that photography is less about the *past* than it is about the *present*. It went from being an *object* to be preserved to a *message* that begs to be circulated. It is becoming ephemeral and dialogical, and as such, it is used to communicate with others. Two broad questions are the flesh and bone of this study: What do people do with photography today? Can we think of photography as a medium of communication?

Here I build upon two observations, one concerning photography's epistemological status, the other at the level of its practice. Going against the grain of scholars who see digital alterations as a threat to photography's credibility, I argue that digital technology triggers not disbelief in the medium's documentary power but its reinforcement. It is undeniable that technology has not only made it easier to trick, tweak, and even to create images from scratch that look like photographs, but it has at the same time fostered a *photomania* (Flusser 2012 [1983], p. 58) that consists in people contributing to a constant image production that rests on the assumption that photographs are an "automatic reflection of the world" (Flusser 2012 [1983], p. 59). While there is a newer awareness of the medium's talent to lie, we still take pictures to be a referent of what is out there, leaving photography's claims to objectivity largely untouched. In terms of its practice, there is a substantial and perhaps unprecedented desire to record and match every event, object, and subject with its photographic image. The

instantaneity brought by the smartphone coupled together with this *photomania* prompts the medium to fulfill a task of rapid communication, one that proves to be perhaps equally efficient as texting or talking, bringing photography closer to the fleeting quality of oral communication, and somehow eroding the lasting cherished value it used to have. In turn, since photographs are taken with camera-phones that rely on Internet connections, pictures become "less objects to be saved than messages to be disseminated", as Susan Sontag once said (2004), while their lifespan or value is reduced and anchored in the present time.

As in many other fields, the literature on photography is caught up in the geopolitics of the reproduction of knowledge. With very few exceptions, academics have had persistent trouble in researching the experience of the photographic without taking for granted that the action only takes place in developed countries (more specifically, in the United States and Western Europe). Both to counter this tendency as well as to resist the enticement of speaking of digital media as outright disembodied and universal due to the obsolescence of geographical categories, this study focuses on the Latin American region, with an emphasis (or perhaps it should be called bias) on the Southern Cone. In doing so, I accept John Durham Peters' invitation to look outside Europe and North-America (2008, p. 32) and join scholars who have reclaimed a line of inquiry that seeks to overcome the systematic overlooking of the history and culture of photography in all parts of the Americas.[2] A precision-searching researcher might be disappointed here, as the study will not focus on a specific location in particular in favour of a more comprehensive narrative that will exalt a

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[2] Scholars such as Boris Kossoy (2014) in Brazil and Josune Dorronsoro (1999) in Venezuela, who are the initiators of the impulse to study Latin American photography with its own cultural specificities.

common thread that includes as many Latin American countries, sources, and examples as possible in the hopes of gaining greater insight into the current moment. While each Latin American country is certainly different, they are all still affectively and effectively tied to one another, historically, economically, geopolitically, and idiosyncratically.

Latin American countries pose interesting and understudied cases, as they challenge the traditional idea of 'digital divide,' whereby behind the apparent democratization of the Internet that seems to be at everyone's disposal, there are still important differences in access. These differences exist but they are not always those that intuition would suggest, as access to technology does not necessarily mirror the traditional patterns of inequality. Manuel Castells points out that, for example, Argentina held at one point a higher level of cellular phone penetration than the US (Castells 2011, p. 13). In turn, first explorations on the subject in the Latin American context suggest that differentiation is to be found not so much in terms of access but fundamentally when it comes to the 'appropriation'[3] of certain technologies, that is, the set of practices that define the relationship with a given technology in everyday life (Castells, Fernández -Ardèvol & Galperin 2011, p. 321). What is more, cellphone technology reversed the usual pattern of dissemination of new technologies throughout the world—in the former Soviet Union, in Africa and Latin America—and therefore presents a very interesting case.

As the turn towards photography as short-lived and episodic is all the more noticeable *prima facie* in the amateur realm, I focus on 'personal' photography, which has become an

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[3] Appropriation of technology, a notion that accounts for the different ways in which an individual and/or group 'owns' and makes sense of an artefact in daily interactions, is a notion proposed and developed in (Stiegler 1998 [1994], p. 225).

all-encompassing term much preferred to 'amateur' (Cook & Garduño Freeman 2011; Van

House 2011; Gye 2007; Van Dijck 2008; Lee 2010) because it signals a new domain that

merges the public and the private, where snapshots are taken not only as a memory for

posterity, but as "a live currency or testament of lived experience" (Bate 2020 [2016], p. 42).

By referring to photography as personal, the distinctions between tourist, family, and amateur

vs. professional photography no longer seem to add much to the discussion of a practice that

appears to be unleashed from its traditional role of mainly registering special occasions such

as weddings, family reunions, travel, and so on.[4] Photography is better understood as

personal because it is becoming part of people's everyday language, "nearly as banal,

instinctive, and pervasive (or profligate) as talking" (Ritchin 2013, p. 11). As such, it has

opened itself to include the most trivial images of everyday life, such as a cake fresh from the

oven, the cup of coffee sitting on a table, the cover of a book, or just a 'Selfie,' a term that,

by 2013, the Oxford Dictionaries could no longer ignore (Wortham 2013, p. 8).

     I will examine photography's changing status, and how this turn affects the

construction of reality in personal photography, mainly by threading back to photography's

theory and social history to put it in conversation with media research and, as an illustrative

supplement to the main theoretical and historical purposes, by running a survey questionnaire

among adults from the countries under study. The goal is twofold: on the one hand, to blend

theoretical and conceptual discussion with current empirical analysis, and on the other, to

piece together a broad historical narrative that has yet to be told.

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[4] For a good read (in Spanish) on the construction of the role of the amateur in photography, see: Adriana
Moreno Acosta (2016).

The survey consisted of five broad sections, one for personal albeit anonymous information, and the rest centered on a set of specific photographic gestures, as follows: 1) a small demographic profile; 2) taking pictures; 3) chatting with pictures; 4) showing or posting; and 5) looking at pictures and 'snooping' online. It was circulated in Spanish and Portuguese among subjects living, primarily, in Latin America, in the months of February and March 2019. This was an online survey, and I relied on a snowball sampling method, so respondents were asked to share the online questionnaire to others, reaching a total of 512 respondents. Although this technique is supposed to trump bias by creating a large sample, the intention behind putting the survey into motion was not to provide totalizing or definitive statements about what people are doing with pictures in Latin America, but simply to pick their brains in order to be able to illustrate some of the described practices with their answers and comments. Surveys responses were subsequently coded using R, an open-source language used to conduct statistical analysis and R Graphic, an open-source environment to create graphics out of a given dataset.

Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's own survey carried out for his seminal study to determine the social uses of photography in France, which can be accessed only in the appendix of *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*'s French edition (1965), the first section solicits general information concerning the respondent (civil status, revenue, location, occupation, age, etc.), the frequency and number of pictures taken, the camera in use and the occasions in which picture taking takes place. While the second part of the questionnaire is dedicated to finding out about communicating by uploading pictures in a chat platform, the third section asked respondents about how they showed and posted pictures online. Finally,

the issues raised by the last section of the questionnaire, entitled *Peeking* –that asks how

having loads of pictures available to look at promotes and feeds into a thirst for curiosity—

will be briefly discussed in the conclusion, in the hopes that it will provide fruitful ground for

future research.

  This study does not center around the survey, which was mobilized as an effective

tool to enquiry about photographic practices to a great number of people. Moreover, the data

gathered for the survey is not representative of photographic practices in the broader Latin

American population. Not only does it present bias regarding the overrepresentation of

certain nationalities (from Spanish-speaking countries in particular: 87%); the respondents'

age (60% were between 25 and 44 years old) and education level (more than 50% had a

university degree), but also because the method of recollection through Google Forms

required access to a smartphone or computer, and to an Internet connection. Many live in

realities so restrictive that whatever pattern arises from this survey might not apply to them at

all. But the survey results, however partial, are revelatory and interesting nonetheless. An

English version of the questionnaire is available in the Appendix.

  In order to study the passage from photography as an *object* to be preserved to a

message that begs to be circulated, a concrete question arises: what do people do with

photography today? This interrogation gets at another way of inquiring about photography's

social role. In a nutshell, in order to examine photography's past and current social uses, I

will tentatively respond that people *take* (Chapter III)*, share* (Chapter IV)*, and look* at

pictures (Conclusion), and I will structure some of the chapters of this study around those

gestures. Though presented separately, of course each gesture in the photographic practice references one another.

Before exploring the past and current practice of photography, this thesis addresses photographic discourse in general and develops a broad account of the debates that the medium generated throughout its history by summarizing the key claims. Chapter I offers an outline of the most significant controversy in photographic studies, that is, the critique of realism and modernism in the 1970s and 1980s, when the debate on photography as truthful or deceitful gained resonance. If anything, the literature review—which deals mainly with art historical concerns—helps show how the referential relationship that ties photography to the real is very much center-stage in both canonical and current discussions. It also helps frame the discussion of what I will contend is an opposing characteristic of current personal photography: whereas real-time pictures tend to reinforce realistic representations in everyday communication, they foster, at the same time, experimental practices with the potential of subverting the medium's realism. Chapter II will start by reflecting on where photography stands in the field of communication studies and will then move on to develop the theoretical approach of the dissertation, which proposes to enter into the discourse on photography via a constellation of concepts coming from media theory, sociology, and philosophy.

While Chapters I and II reflect on intellectual and epistemological issues that, in one way or another, frame the treatment received by the photographic medium in academia, Chapters III and IV cover the gestures of taking pictures and sharing them, respectively. Both chapters take a historical plunge into how the actual protocols around domestic photography

took shape and the role that photography got to play in peoples' lives at different moments in time, providing the reader with a Latin American-based socio-historical view of the medium. Both Chapters have a chronological backbone but neither of them offers a straightforward history: they are far from comprehensive or complete. Chapter III delivers a cultural and historical account of the imagined figure of the photographer, which in turns provides insight into the gesture of photographing itself. Chapter IV centers on the gesture of sharing pictures with others and starts by chronicling an early expression of the wish to put pictures into movement encapsulated by the postcard. The postcard, social and networked by nature, allows us to introduce our consideration of the temporal dimensions in which photography as a medium is put into use in the present time. The last section of Chapter IV is dedicated to discussing the selfie as a photographic genre that somehow seems to encompass the sensibility of our era. *How Photographs Deliver a Message* culminates with a brief conclusion that engages with the gesture of looking at pictures and suggests that the availability of personal pictures online fosters a new kind of curiosity around the lives of ordinary people.

CHAPTER I: On Photography

This chapter offers a review of scholarly literature on photography, setting up the theoretical foundation that will be continually referenced throughout its history as an object of study. It begins with an introduction of the very term that names the practice, briefly describes how photography gradually acquires a public life through the illustrated press at the turn of the twentieth century, and then pauses in the late 1970s-early 1980s, when alternative paradigms for describing and critiquing photography emerged. I will call the group of scholars who opposed the then canonical treatment of photography 'postmodernists' and their intellectual disputations "the postmodernist quest." They are also known as the 'social historians of photography', because their interest lay not so much in the aesthetic value of pictures but on their institutional anchorage and ideological underpinnings (Pasternak 2020 [2018], p. 41). Needless to say, this does not define their whole intellectual production, which many have moved on from and that far exceeds that simplifying label, but just singles out that precise sensibility and moment in time in which their work was defined by their opposition to modernism. The mighty intellectual energy of this moment arises from the underlying philosophical views in the discussion of issues such as medium specificity, index, resemblance, the referential, objectivity, and so on. In turn, the relative disregard communication studies consistently had towards photography, never really addressing it as a medium of communication in and of itself, coupled with the pre-eminence of art historical scholarship taking photography seriously as an object of study and dominating the discourse

around it as a result, explains why a large section of this chapter discusses key terminology that emerged from that corner of the humanities.

The primary goal of this chapter is to establish and briefly contextualize historically the main debates in photography theory. Then the last sections introduce its later developments since the advent of the digital and point to other sets of concepts that would become central in photography thinking.

I.I. First elaborations on the photographic

Photography can be seen as the matrix or basic unit of our visual culture, its "primordial soup or original cell" (Fontcuberta 2014 [2010], p. 8). Brazil-based media theorist Vilém Flusser coined a comprehensive term, *technical images*, to describe those images created by apparatuses, but he always went back to photography as the primary abstraction from which all images that are produced by media ultimately derived. Like Marshall McLuhan, he labeled writing as the most important invention of all times and the condition of possibility of history. And, unlike perhaps anyone else, Flusser considered photography as the key point of rupture from a culture dominated by writing into one conquered by images.[5]

The term *photography* means, in its original Greek, writing (*graphos*) with light

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[5] Flusser may have overstated his argument that photography was the most important invention ever. It is indeed an all-too-common exaggeration to place images as what best defines modernity, and it comes from a vision-centered paradigm that ended up occluding other forms of knowledge (Sterne 2003a, p.2-3), but Flusser's enthusiasm and insistence over the importance of photography also pushes against a history of neglect from Western thought towards the medium.

(*photo*). Although conventional wisdom about photography attributes the coinage of the term to an 1839 entry in one of Henry Fox Talbot's notebooks, the word actually came into its own at least five years before that in Brazil. It was Antoine Hércules Romuald Florence, based in São Paulo, who not only came up with the term, but also carried out pioneering discoveries such as one aimed at finding a way to get copies from a master (Kossoy 1998b, p. 23; 2006 [1977]). However, as he lacked the most fundamental technological conditions as well as a community with whom to share his discoveries, he eventually abandoned his photochemical experiments. As has been shown by Boris Kossoy, when Florence found out about Daguerre's invention, he sent a communiqué to the press of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, affirming that "two persons can have the same idea" (1998b, p. 25). The fact that Florence, Talbot, Daguerre, and Bayard were pursuing the same objective at around the same time demonstrates not only that "the idea of photography was in the air" or that there was a certain "craving to photograph" prior to photography's invention (Batchen 1997, p. 180-81). It also goes to show that in the social context of the Industrial Revolution, photography was experienced as a 'burning desire' as Batchen put it (1997) and a necessity, as noted by authors such as Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, Régis Débray, and Lewis Mumford (Brunet 2000, p. 27). In turn, Florence's independent discoveries, although ahead of their time, fell into oblivion (Kossoy 1998b, p. 25). In any case, as contested as the point of departure may be, the 'history of photography' describes the institutional crystallization of the idea of photography throughout the nineteenth century (Geimer 2011, p. 33).

The etymological origin of photography grasps the fundamental contradiction of the medium, one that would become the core of its theoretical elucidations: the magical value of

the most meticulous technology (Benjamin 1980 [1931], p. 202). Or, put differently, photography's puzzle consists in its capacity to benefit from a certain status as art while, at the same time, being "burned with reality," in Walter Benjamin's words (1980 [1931], p. 202). Photography resisted pigeonholing from the beginning, as it proved to be a technology of contradictory and antithetical impulses: an objective rendition of the world yet also a personal expression; an iconic presence of a material absence; an arresting and a rendition of reality; a connoted or coded message developed on the basis of a message *sans code*; a tool for control and a means for emancipation. Was photography magic or science? Was it objective or biased? Mimetic or creative? Photography's contradictory basis, I argue, was precisely one of the reasons why attempts to define it took refuge in phenomenology, which took up the challenge to theoretically delineate what had proved to be such an evasive and slippery object (Bazin 1960 [1945]; Barthes 1980; Kracauer 1995 [1927]). So, for a long time, the question "what is photography?" did in fact dominate its theoretical conceptualization.

Even though the idea of 'medium specificity', that is, the desire to define photography ontologically, is conventionally assumed to have arrived in mid-twentieth century art criticism, that urge was already present at its invention. Already in 1844, when William Henry Fox Talbot wrote *The Pencil of Nature*, the new medium's astounding capability to reproduce likeness was signalled as the quality that made it stand out from other pictorial media; it was as if the image was "imprinted by Nature's hand" (1992 [1844], p. 75). Unknowingly, by portraying photography as a naturalistic method of documentation, Talbot was setting out the tone for much of nineteenth century writing on photography, which—

some contend—reflected the desire to actually access an unmediated reality, most often described by the catchphrase of wanting to see "the thing itself" (Emerling 2012, p. 18).

I.II. An Ontology for Photography

Over decades of long, slow technological advancements which were fueled by the desire for the sharing, with a community, of durable photographs that could be reproduced in large numbers, photography finally became an affordable means of mass reproduction (Snyder 2016, p. 36-7). While the camera started to be routine at any social event (von Dewitz & Lebeck 2001, p.64), the mass duplication of photography actually changed its status: from a personal elitist object that people used to keep and cherish, to the basis of a large-scale production of prints that were made available in stereoscopes, postcards, posters, cards, and more, inaugurating a visual economy where photographs acquired an unprecedented public life.

The press was the most obvious instance of this new mobility. As Thierry Gervais and Gaëlle Morel point out, although photographs were in use in the press since the early 1840s (its oldest registered record tracing back to an engraved picture of a fort in Veracruz published by the French *L'Illustration*), photographic plates had to pass through an engraver who would copy (and enhance) the image in wood in order to be published (2020, p. 14).[6] So it was not until the halftone printing revolutionized journalism –firmly established as an

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[6] Thierry Gervais points out that engravers were usually disappointed by the illegibility of photographs and that they often 'corrected' the images by adding missing elements (clouds, tress, a shadow) or adjusting the composition in order to make them more enjoyable, signalling that truthfulness was secondary to aesthetics when it came to the prerequisites for an image to be considered publishable (Gervais 2017, p. 85-6).

inexpensive way to massively reproduce pictures on press paper by 1900—(Harris 1979, p. 197), that photographs gradually started to fill the newsstands in the Western world.[7] Wood engravings, once the dominant illustrations in the press, were progressively left behind. In parallel, photographs' circulation intensified while photojournalism, which developed gradually as a distinct occupation from the 1900s on, positioned documentary photography as revealed truth, reaching somewhat of an apogee and becoming the "main conduit for the news" (Gervais & Morel 2020, p. 13).

The 1920s and 1930s saw the first generation of people encountering great numbers of photographs on a daily basis, as a range of professions dealing with organizing images, such as picture editors, appeared in different fields (Campany 2010 [2008], p. 63). The transition of cumbersome equipment to lightweight 35mm cameras together with the news industry flourishing and picture press enjoying its highest levels of circulation made it conducive for women to enlist themselves as photographers and participate in this new culture of illustrated magazines, many of which, in fact, catered to women. Several iconic photographers, whose work made hairsplitting distinction between reporting and art seem pointless, delivered what are now iconic images with their hand-held cameras: Henri Cartier-

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[7] Weekly magazines started slowly including pictures already by 1885. In Mexico, for instance, Puebla's *Semanario Mundo Ilustrado* is credited for having published the first journalistic press picture in the country (Castellanos 2004, p. 55). Conversely, newspapers, with less time to prepare their daily editions, caught up with the half-tone only later; for instance, in the U.K., the *Daily Mirror* started including half-tone reproductions by 1904 while the *Illustrated Daily News* from New York did so by 1919 (Freund 1974 [1936], p. 101).

Bresson in France, Alfred Eisenstaedt and Martin Munkacsi in Germany,[8] Tina Modotti and Manuel Álvarez Bravo in Mexico,[9] among many others.

The emergence and consolidation of photography in the press marks, in fact, the medium's definitive broadening of its sphere of circulation, from the initial intimate circle of the commissioned portrait, to the full-on collective reception of news that "opened a window onto the world" (Freund 1974 [1936], p. 102).

In the context of this "photolific revolution" (Gili, Jones & Marcoci 2016), the craving to understand photography 'as such' intensified, giving birth to what was described as "the era of the search for the ontology of photography" (Van Gelder & Westgeest 2011, p. 10). In these inter-war years at least two critics would stand out in the study of photography: the Germans Sigfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin. The latter wrote the oft-cited "Brief History of Photography" in response to the former's insights on photography published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. His piece "The Work of Art in the Era of Mechanical Reproduction" (1970 [1936]), continues to be widely cited throughout the humanities. Ironically, taking into account the later development of the photographic discourse which is prone to Manichean framings, far from adopting an essentialist all-or-nothing stance, both thinkers saw the promises as well as the threats of photography. Even when in "The Author as producer" Benjamin warned us about the beautification and trivialization of reality via the photographic (1982 [1934], p. 26), he also saw the democratic character of photography as an opportunity

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[8] For brief essays on photojournalism in both Europe and the US, see:
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/edph/hd_edph.htm

[9] For an analysis in English of Tina Modotti's work in relation to and independent from that of Edward Weston's, as well as Manuel Alvarez Bravo's oeuvre on Mexico City, see Tejada (2009).

for the masses to seize control over the work of art (1980 [1931], p. 212). In a similar way, Kracauer was overwhelmed by photographic images, as he was certain that they had the historical role of revealing to society its material base (1995 [1927], p. 61). Photography was, for both these theoreticians, a contradiction in terms. Kracauer devoted his writings to understanding the nature of the relation between the image and the real and the underpinnings of realism (Didi-Huberman 2003, p. 173). Benjamin worked to question realism's ways of establishing truth by way of 'so-called facts' (Cadava 1997, p. 3) and called for photographers to use captions in order to free images from literality and put them to work for revolutionary purposes (1982 [1934], p. 24).

Later on, during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, thinkers were still driven by trying to answer the question of "what is photography?" and distinguish it from other media, but the discussion gradually shifted from medium specificity to photography's multiple meanings and diverse uses (Van Gelder & Westgeest 2011, p. 10). However, whether to reaffirm it or debunk it, the issue of *resemblance*, to a lesser or greater extent, remained the center around which discussions about photography always gravitated.

If nineteenth-century realists emphasized that the photographer lacked the freedom of an artist, having to always reproduce the objects before the lens, a century later, critics would still be struck by photography's link to its referent, its quality of being an imprint of the real. French film critic André Bazin saw photography as "the object itself" (1960 [1945], p. 8). Kendall L. Walton asserted that photographic pictures 'are transparent' in the sense that "we see the world through them" (2008 [1984], p. 22). In a similar vein, Roland Barthes called this phenomenon *ça-a-été* (1980, p. 121), and argued that the photographic image offered a

"literal reality" (1978 [1977], p. 3); meanwhile, Susan Sontag described it as "a trace, something directly stencilled off the real" (1990 [1973], p. 154). All of them found that the resemblance between reality and what was shown on the surface of the photographic print seemed superior to the representation achieved by the non-photographic arts, and all of them compared the photographic image to that of painting. While Bazin considered photography as a liberating force for "the plastic arts from their obsession with likeness" due to photography's superiority in rendering the real (1960 [1945], p. 7), Barthes saw that, in contrast to photography, painting could fake reality without the painter having necessarily been there. Instead, photography was unavoidably tied to the real (1980, p. 120), a point also echoed by Sontag (1990 [1973], p. 154).[10]

As the likeness factor is the very condition of the portrait, based as it is on a living model that it mimics, portraiture became the perfect example in discussions about photographic resemblance. This was not only because portraiture pointed to the contradiction of how photographs can make present, in the form of likeness, that which is absent or the way in which they can bear witness "to the absence of that which they make present" (Belting 2011 [2001], p. 6). It was also because resemblance, as we understand it now, had only appeared since the Enlightenment as central to the invention of identity. As Hans Belting pointed out, "'likeness' now comes to mean not the making manifest of the 'body,' which was the goal of artists' efforts at mimesis, but rather the making manifest of the 'Self'"

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[10] Vilém Flusser describes painting as an activity where it is required to form an idea to fix a phenomenon on a surface, whereas in photography it is "the phenomenon itself that generates its own idea for us on the surface" (Sontag 1990 [1973], p. 16, 154; Barthes 1978 [1977], p. 17; Didi-Huberman 1997, p. 38; Arnheim 1974, p. 155).

(2011 [2001], p. 81). Both Allan Sekula and John Tagg would later on show how portraiture is based on naturalized notions stemming from theories of physiognomy deployed in the nineteenth century, in which the face already monopolized attention and to which we impute "*la qualité morale et la vérité profonde, totale de la personne*" (Bonnin 2006, p. 202).

I.III. The Postmodernist Quest

Some metaphors hold the power of striking our imagination in order to condense, in a figure, a whole intellectual position. In the late 1970s, in what is now a *célèbre* catalogue of a travelling exhibition, John Swarkowski argued that photography was either viewed as a mirror—a projection of the photographer in the world—or as a window—an opening to the world that showed reality as it is. These two metaphors exemplify the two ends to which elucidation on photography seemed to gravitate until postmodernism took over: the artistic, as a means of self-expression, and the documentary, by which the photographer captures a truthful depiction of the real. Both these poles of meaning assume photography's objective rendering of reality and are constitutive of what Allan Sekula called 'the folklore' of photographic communication (1987 [1982], p. 108), a folklore that a group of intellectuals sought to deconstruct and debunk in the mid 1980s. To adequately address the postmodernist quest against photographic objectivity it is first necessary to understand what this, at the time dominant, modernist position entailed and what were its underlying assumptions. This discussion of photography, which transpired under terms set within the larger discourses of art history, offers, inevitably, a glimpse into art historical concerns.

The formalist theory of modernism, which had become close to a dogma in the mid 1960s, was epitomized by Clement Greenberg, an art critic who, due to his successful championing of abstract expressionism, had become dominant and mostly unchallenged in the world of art since the 1940s.[11] What his theory stands for is the aesthetic autonomy of art, which he develops in terms of medium specificity. In an essay published in 1960, he argues that from Claude Monet on, painting has been moving towards its 'fate.' Its formal traits such as flatness and color were the inner and unique characteristics which propelled painting's journey to its own individual 'essence' (Emerling 2012, 53). In his own words, "each art had to determine, through the operations peculiar to itself, the effects peculiar and exclusive to itself" (Greenberg 1993 [1960], p. 86). This would apply not only to painting but also to any other art medium, whose essence would always be irreducible and unique. While for painting Greenberg promoted abstract expressionism by boosting figures such Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko, he believed that photography was best characterized by its literality and transparency, which explains his inclination towards straight photography (Wells 2004 [1996], p. 262).[12]

A group of Anglo-American critics responded to this assessment of photography—and

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[11] Greenberg was no doubt the most powerful art critic in the US of the 1960s and is usually considered a key actor in the relocation of the art center of the world from Paris to New York, and responsible, for instance, for a big selection of paintings defining the 1940s and 1960s in the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Gopnik 1998, p. 70-72).

[12] Straight photography as in the sharp-focused style that promoted photography without any sort of manipulation, emphasizing documentation and detail, and which emerged as a response to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century pictorialism, which in contrast, made photographs look almost like paintings, emphasizing beauty and composition through certain darkroom techniques.

to what they felt was a fossilized art world—with the exact opposite view.[13] What postmodernists rebelled against was the tradition of (late) modernism. So if modernism insisted in finding an essence, they replied that there was no defining character of photography but only loose traits to be found in the history of the medium. If modernism separated art from everyday life, they argued that the photographic image was embedded in a culturally and historically specific context. If the modernist paradigm exalted issues of form and style, postmodernists moved the analytical focus to an inquiry into the social functions and uses of photography (Batchen 1997, p. 12). If modernism courted an apolitical fine art practice welcoming a universal photographic form, then critical postmodernism insisted upon the conventional, institutionally bound character of artistic and photographic practice and sought to bring back the political question that had been pushed aside since the late 50s. In sum, critical postmodernism sought to break the mould of what they saw as a belief system or ideological framework disguised as a 'given' in order to liberate photography from "the gravitational field of nineteenth-century thinking (…) in which the frame of the photograph is seen as marking the place of entry to something more *profound*—'reality' itself, the 'expression' of the artist, or both" (Burgin 1987 [1982]-a, p. 11).

The tension between the referential and the ideological gathered steam in the 1980s. Intellectuals turned to Walter Benjamin, whose writings acquired full visibility in the

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[13] Postmodernists did not aim at Barthes or Sontag, who in many occasions are labeled as 'realists' for acknowledging photography's material ties. Rather, as Susie Linfield (2010) notes, they became a constant and unchallenged reference. Although Sontag's take on photography diverges in some points with that of postmodernists, in the end she did not see in photography any subversive powers to alter the status quo and in that way she is said to have collaborated to establish "anti-aesthetic discourse by turning to photography as a means to challenge the autonomy of art and its functions within culture" (Emerling 2012, p. 115).

Anglosphere only in the 1970s through their translation and compilation,[14] and saw in the notion of *Aura* the opportunity to claim art as historically specific (rather than autonomous and elitist) and photography as not only inherently political but also as a technology implicated in the inner workings of power. Benjamin's theses provided a model of socio-historical analysis that, at the same time, conceived of modern experience of history itself as quintessentially photographic: fragmented, losing its connection with the past that "flashes up at an instant" to be gone the next (Benjamin 2007 [1968], p. 255). With the premise that behind the appearance of an objective medium there were capitalist interests in the service of the dominant classes, postmodern art historians embarked upon the re-conceptualization of photography via a materialist history of the medium.

In 1980, Victor Burgin called for the application of an inter-disciplinary method to the analysis of photography as a practice of *signification*, in an attempt to define photography's crucial aspect as that of creating and circulating meaning in society. In such a way, while resorting to semiotics, he was locating the medium in the wider intellectual debates of the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, a large number of Burgin's essays, in the edited volume *Thinking Photography*, are devoted to anchoring photography in the "general sphere of cultural production" (1987 [1982]-a, p. 9). Burgin calls the idea that a photographer must wait for the right moment to catch an instant of truth through the lens—also known as 'the decisive moment'—a "great mystification" and consequently rejects that meanings are to be found in a neutral reality (1987 [1982]-c, p. 40). Reality is neither innocent nor natural before the lens

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[14] Walter Benjamin's contemporaries such as Gisèle Freund or his Frankfurt School peers may have been aware of his theoretical theses, but they became fully known as per their translation and compilation (Nickel 2020), which first appeared in the late1960s (Przyblyski 1998, p. 8).

of the camera, he posits, because it is intelligible to us through language, which in the form of abstractions locates the object within a system of ideology whose main characteristic is that it conceals its contingent character (1987 [1982]-c, p. 46). Photographs seen as *texts* are then 'transversed by language' each time that they are looked at, and that language engages in a series of intertextual chains of signification that transcend the photographic discourse, from which meaning depends (1987 [1982]-b, p. 145). Burgin rejects the figures that nineteenth-century aesthetics attached to photography (the window onto the world or the product of a talented photographer). Instead, he calls it a *place of work*, "one signifying system among others in society which produces the ideological subject in the same movement in which they 'communicate' their ostensible 'content'" (1987 [1982]-b, p. 153). For him, the object of photographic theory is not the picture per se, but the discourses that constitute it and participate in the production of its meaning (Batchen 1997, p. 10).

This is not quite the approach of Allan Sekula or John Tagg, two other postmodern theorists of photography, who differ from Burgin in the general theoretical framework they employ (the former drawing on Edmund Husserl and C.S. Peirce and the latter following Louis Althusser's notion of the ideological apparatuses of the State). Yet, both these authors share with Burgin the ambition to uncover photography's ideological inner workings by distancing themselves from the photograph as such in order to find its logic in a larger ensemble; namely, in the history of certain institutions. It is fair to say that many thinkers from the 1980s onwards followed a tendency to step back from the image itself in order to use photography as a prism to approach other issues by emphasizing context (Van Gelder & Westgeest 2011, p. 11). In other words, in an attempt to break free of the theoretical *corsé*

that had constructed photographic meaning as unproblematic, scholars raised questions about

society as a whole while taking photography as a starting point.

Allan Sekula argued, in the influential article "The Body and the Archive" (1986),

that the matrix of photography's social significance had to be sought in the emergence of a

novel repressive system at the end of the nineteenth century that stemmed from the success

and popularity of the physiognomic paradigm in the 1840s and 1850s, at least in the United

States (p. 12). The conceptualization of a 'criminal body' made use of photography as an

instrument that condensed the authoritative claim of a technological device as well as the

authority of an image that could speak an allegedly universal language based on mimesis.

The artificiality of a system of representation that made the human face the carrier of

identity is made particularly evident when one learns how Alphonse Bertillon, who worked

for the *Préfecture de Police de Paris*, invented a system of identification wishing to "tame

the contingency of the photograph" by coming up with the *portrait parlé* as a way "to

overcome the inadequacies of a pure visual empiricism" (Sekula 1986, p. 30).[15] Le

bertillonage institutionalized what is now common in ID pictures of all sorts, from passports

to the gym card: full frontal pose, neutral background, rigid pose and frozen expression. It is

not supposed to catch someone inadvertently under the supposition that candour is closer to

objectivity. On the contrary, it is the subject's rendering to the camera, under strict aesthetic

norms, a full genre of individualization "to better expose the subject before the eyes of the

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[15] Bertillon designed a system of cards with profile and front portraits with additional verbal information on the correspondent colors and other details (Solinas 2011, pgraph 4).

state" (Solinas 2011, pgraph 13).[16] The repressive grammar of these ID portraits refers to a disciplinarian society that while acknowledging subject as citizens also reduces them to numbering and classification, revealing that objectivity is indeed a muddy term dependent, in this case, on ideologies of individualism and on institutional notions of scientific knowledge.[17]

The conventional character of the photographic meaning as an unmediated copy of reality emerges as a historically purposeful outcome deployed within certain institutional contexts. As a result, Tagg suggests, we must stay away from ontological discussions of photography since "the problem is historical not existential" (1993 [1988], p. 5). Hence, insisting on the apparently unmediated photographic image, whose independence from culture confers upon it an ahistorical meaning, only makes us accomplices of an instrumental use of the medium by reinforcing the deceitful premise on which it is based to exert societal control. While Philippe Bonnin noticed that portraits did not really emerge to represent individual identity but social lineage (2006, p. 205), both Sekula and Tagg saw that the two ends of meanings of portraiture—as social recognition and as moral reprimand—were instrumental tactics deployed by the State to control the social body.

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[16] In Latin America, Paola Cortés-Rocca marks two inaugural moments in the deployment of portraits as social control, that of the Regulation for the Registration of Prostitutes and the Regulation for the Control of Prisoners, both passed in 1965 in Mexico City (2011, p. 55). In the original: *Reglamento para el registro de mujeres públicas de la ciudad de México* and *Reglamento para el control de reos cuyas causas se sigan en la ciudad de México*.

[17] Coincidentally, not so long ago *Les archives de Montréal* released a series of police portraits that were taken to sexual workers in the 1940s. These portraits featured in an exhibit called "Scandal! Vice, Crime and Morality in Montreal 1940s-1960s" in the Centre d' Histoire de Montréal, testify to an objectifying aesthetics by which "the self is sacrificed to its image" (Cadava 1997, p. 109). To access the pictures, click on: http://www.flickr.com/photos/archivesmontreal/sets/72157633840133730/

Tagg traces back the origins of the police portrait only to find that what was once considered a privilege had been reversed, becoming the "burden of surveillance" (1993 [1988], p. 59). Sekula finds that, more than a reversal, there was a melting together of the two poles of practice, whereby surveillance was introduced in everyday life keeping both the "honorific and repressive functions together" (1986, p. 10). Ultimately, what both these scholars locate historically is the use of photography as an instrument of control and domination by the powerful, something that was already pointed out by Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, when he noted that photography stood at the service of the owners of the press (qted in Sekula (1987 [1982], p. 95). As much as portraiture has a history, the transparent way in which photographs are read also goes back in time. Far from being the essence of photography then, realism emerges in these accounts as just one social function of photography, among many others.

I.IV. *The Comeback of the Index*

The postmodernist quest to unmask the ideological workings of the photographic technology that underwrote the nineteenth century epistemic paradigm did not happen in a vacuum but was part of a larger academic restructuring in the 1980s known as the 'cultural turn' and resulted in a shift of focus in how scholars treated photography. Even when postmodernism challenged the previous empiricist epistemological paradigm by highlighting

the ideological nature of knowledge,[18] for W.J.T. Mitchell, editor of *Critical Inquiry,* there was "an intellectual friction and discomfort across a broad range of intellectual inquiry that converged in pictures" (1994, p. 13) and he coined it, more specifically, the *pictorial turn*, a turn that would foster the status of the visual image as a "primary datum of the human sciences" by insisting "on the image or icon as 'firstness' (as Charles Sanders Peirce called it) in the production of meaning and emotion" (2013, p. 21).

Thus, in order to theorize photography as ideological and political, the Peircean notion of *index,* as a sign that has "a physical connection" with that which it represents, stood out (Peirce 1998 [1894], p. 6). In fact, the 'issue of the index' and the question of 'medium specificity' are part of the same debate. Yet there is conflict surrounding the term, as some think the index adds little to the understanding of photography, and others claim it is

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[18] For Margaret Dikovitskaya, it was the broader rethinking of the humanities in general and its concerns over the interplay of power and knowledge what caused art history to fracture as a discipline (from art to visual, and from history to culture), allowing the intellectual formation of a new interdisciplinary field whose focus would be centered on the visual as a signifying system that makes up culture (2006, p. 2). If photography does not enjoy a discourse of 'wholeness,' then visual culture studies—as a broader field that does not revolve around one single medium—takes part in all sorts of controversies: from the role of art history in regards to images, the use of the term 'visual culture,' the relationship between visual culture and art history, to the more basic understandings surrounding its object of study, preferred methodologies, and the history of the field itself. In sum, visual culture studies is not any different from other fields that also emerged in the twentieth century without ever accomplishing formal recognition as a discipline.

photography theory's seminal concept.[19] To an extent, this is an old idea, a notion that comes

from the sign theory of semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce, who in the 1860s designed a

complex categorization of signs in which the index had an existential connection with the

object it represented. The photograph is indexical, then, inasmuch as it is a trace that

originates through the impression of light upon a chemical surface. However, in

photographic discourse the indexicality of the photographic image is often addressed as

isolated and decontextualized from Peirce's overall sign taxonomy, leaving little space to

differentiate the photograph from other categories of representation and blurring the semiotic

distinction between different kinds of images as a result. Nor can we point to one of

photography's specificities, which was the goal for invoking the index the first place. Many

remark upon the methodological inconsistency of referring to the indexical sign in isolation

(Elkins 2007, p. 131), especially when Peirce's theory states that it functions inseparably

from the *icon*—which signifies by resemblance—and the *symbol*—whose mode of

signification functions by cultural investments. As film scholar Martin Lefebvre, explains:

> Restricting photographs to their indexical status is just as unproductive as
> restricting verbal language to the status of symbol without considering the
> various semiotic functions of words in, say, a proposition. Images and language,

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[19] *Photography Theory* (2007) picked up this debate. Edited by James Elkins, a British art historian who has written extensively on the subject, the book assembles the opinion of many of photography's most respected thinkers—mostly in the British and Anglo-American context—on the issue of how photography is best conceptualized. Given a surprisingly scarce new theorizing on the medium since the 1980s, the back cover promises to pose this question in the context of an Art Seminar that took place in 2005 in College Cork, Ireland, where Elkins teaches. The book offers a brief description of the current state of photography theories as well as several articles on different topics. But what is more telling is that it includes a transcript of the oral discussion that took place in the context of the seminar and an assessment of it by scholars, some of whom participated in the seminar and some of whom only had access to the transcript. All in all, if the volume fails at offering a cohesive answer to the question at hand, it does succeed in giving a fair depiction of the state of affairs of present-day theorization on photography.

like most other semiotic systems, are composed of signs that possess iconic, indexical, and symbolic functions (2007, p. 221-22).

Besides Roland Barthes, who used the notion of index to make the case about the 'referential force' of the photograph, we probably owe its present resonance to the writing of one of *October*'s founding editors, art historian Rosalind Krauss, who in pieces such as "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America" (1977a) deploys Peirce's notion against the notion of medium specificity, central to modernist doctrines of art. She contends that "as distinct from symbols, indexes establish their meaning along the axis of a physical relationship to their referents" (p.70) and describes photographs as "a type of icon or visual likeness, which bears an indexical relationship to its object" (p.75) In the second part of the essay, which was published separately, Krauss went even further, drawing on Barthes' oft-quoted passage in which he claims that photography is a *message sans code* (1977b, p. 59). In it Barthes states that even though photography implies a reduction in regard to perspective, lighting, color, etc., it is not a 'transformation' since the image may not be reality itself but it is its "perfect *analogon*" (1978 [1977], p. 17). Similarly, in "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," Krauss refers to the photograph as "a kind of deposit of a real itself" (1981, p. 26). If according to Peirce the index holds an existential connection to that to which it refers, Krauss—and for that matter the postmodern index-grounded critique in general— claim that photography has a particular ontological status, as the index was nothing but a way of establishing photography's identity as a truthful representation of reality. The underlying assumption in both perspectives is the existence of reality pre-representation—that also goes by the name of the Referent as Barthes called it, the object, the thing itself, or subject

matter—from which photography is inseparable. The notion of the index is anchored in the very assumption postmodernists challenged; that is, the existence of something of which photographs are actually 'taken.'

Geoffrey Batchen makes an interesting observation here: while the contribution of postmodern critiques is valuable in its own way, in the end, they did not manage to escape from the binary thinking (nature vs. culture; representation vs. reality; original vs. copy) ascribed by nineteenth-century modernism (1997, p. 200), that constructed photography along a "desire for positivist certainty" (2002, p. 22). Instead of displacing its logic, they ended up reasoning *within* the parameters established by prior debates. Although he is hardly ever mentioned, philosopher Henri Van Lier, [20] who was skeptical about the indexical take on the medium, showed not only how Peirce never thought of a sign to be fully an icon, an index, or a symbol –instead believing that types of signs contained and complemented each other (2007, p. 118) –but also how in fact the Peircean index is defined too broadly for photographs to be ranked as indexical (p. 119). He introduced the distinction between *indice* (in French) and index. The *indice* would be Peirce's index, the physical result of a cause it signalizes physically (p. 17). In turn, Van Lier describes the index as intentional, working the same way as a finger pointing to an object. Photographs would then be indices that signal their cause, or "possibly index indices" (p.118): both a trace in the Peircean sense, and an intentional sign that can be read off the photograph and points to the decisions and subjectivity of a photographer in choosing an angle, a frame, etc.

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[20] In the introduction of Van Lier's book, by Jan Baetens and Geert Goiris, they explain why it took 25 years to translate this work into English –which is why he remains still rather unknown in North-America.

At a time when the deployment of the Peircean theory was dominant in photography thinking (he initially published his central work on photography in *Cahiers de la photographie* in 1983) (Durden 2013, p. 246), Van Lier wondered about the reason why "so many of our contemporaries are so infatuated with 'the index according to Peirce'" and noted that sometimes "for reasons of academic conviviality, a vague idea and a white lie are more lucrative than clear and distinct ideas" (p. 121).[21]

I.V. On Photography after Photography:

For a long time, the theorization of photography was dominated by ontological questions. However, photography's varied and eclectic social uses, its malleability, reproduction, and the decoding of photographic meaning seemed to conspire against capturing what was supposed to be the intrinsic and unique nature of the medium. Opposed to that essentialist view, postmodernists asked questions about photography's uses, arguing that photography's inherently heterogeneous character made it irreducible to a specific nature. Instead, photography was tied to the ends for which it was mobilized. Scholars went from concentrating on the image itself to reformulating their questions so as to throw new light on issues of power and politics, in an attempt to clear a space for a discussion on the social functions of images in visual culture. In particular, Michel Foucault's genealogy of power and Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction resonated in the ways photography

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[21] In the present, rants about the overuse of Peircean language are not unusual. Almost anyone acquainted with photography theory would nod along to a footnote where W.J.T. Mitchell complains about the semiotician being cited "*ad nauseum*" (2013, p. 24). But at the moment in time when Van Lier was writing, putting into question Peirce's usefulness to the study of photography was definitely a provocative move.

was constructed as an object of study. From focusing on the representational value of the photographic image, thinkers engaged with forms of critical theory that attempted to understand photography's larger social, political, and institutional imbrications.[22] Conceptualizing photography through the notion of *task*, as Allan Sekula proposed (1987 [1982], p. 86), defined a typology according to its instrumental uses, among which we find bureaucratic imagery (used by the state to exert control over the social body), press pictures (which provide proof for journalism's written word), advertising photos (used to attract clients to buy a given product), family pictures (whose task is to preserve private memories), artistic images (which circulate in galleries and museums), medical images (used in the practice of health sciences), and so on and so forth. The concept of *photographies* as opposed to *Photography* (Tagg 1993 [1988]), meant to further decenter previous ahistorical phenomenological stances by focusing on the medium's plural and many times conflicted uses. But just when it seemed that photography was building firm ground to assemble the elements of a theory, the merger of digital and mobile technologies brought photography's objectified rendition of reality back to the fore. If the indexical quality of photography was considered the causal link of the image to what stood in front of the camera at the moment of taking a picture, then the digital, which opens the possibility of creating a simulacrum of reality from scratch, came to challenge photography's anchorage in reality. The emergence of what was called 'the post-photographic era' complicated future elaborations, leaving the theoretical status of photography unsolved, as Peter Geimer claims in *Theorien der Fotografie* (2009, p. 9).

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[22] For several examples, see Wells (2003) and Holland et. al (1986).

The term *post-photography* emerged in the early 1990s. Although it was first used in a 1991 anthology edited by Paul Wombell, *Photovideo: Photography in the Age of the Computer*, it gained momentum thanks to Willian J. Mitchell's *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*, published in 1992 (Lister 1997, p. 257). Mitchell makes the case that digital photography is an altogether different technology from its analogue counterpart and, by using the prefix 'post', locates photography within the complexities of the postmodern era, that is, at the center of a culture of simulation where notions such as 'original' and 'copy' have been rendered obsolete (Price & Wells 1997, p. 27).

An initial critical reaction to digital photography resuscitated the debate about realism and photography's alleged 'indexical nature.' Given that photography's objective rendition was grounded in its causal link to reality, worries multiplied about a loss of 'authority' that would eventually lead to no longer believing pictures to be representations of the real. Along with reshuffling the *index*, the advent of digital technology also instilled apocalyptic diagnoses for the medium. "The referent has come unstuck," announced William J. Mitchell, referring to Barthes's *adherence of the referent* (1992, p. 31). With regards to photojournalism, in 1991 Fred Ritchin fearfully announced that digital technology meant the "end to photography as we have known it" (p. 8).

The differences between analogue and digital photography are as obvious as they are undeniable, and scholars certainly did not wait before characterizing digital photography as an altogether different technology from its analogue predecessor. As W.J. Mitchell elaborates, the distinctions are primarily based on the "fundamental physical characteristics" of each (1992, p. 4). First, digital imaging does not permit us to differentiate the copy from

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the original (p. 6). Secondly, digital photographs are intrinsically easier to manipulate than analogue ones (p. 7). In the end, even when digital photography arguably still has an analogue component, as it uses light and a lens, what is troubling for some scholars is that what is received by the lens is quickly translated into bits (Henning 2007, p. 51). At that point, perhaps wary of a newborn technology, William J. Mitchell pled for a more "vigilant interpretive stance" towards digital photography, one appropriate to "the indeterminacies of verbal meaning" (1992, p. 225), somehow overlooking the fact that such a suspicion would have been equally desirable in the analogue era, as simulation and trickery have been present since photography's early stages.[23] In photojournalism, the inherent manipulability of the digital image meant that it would be really easy for an editor to work and modify any aspect of a photograph at their will, pretty much as it happens in written journalism (Ritchin 1991). In fact, the capability of generating realistic images that could model and distort the news was seen as "the most dramatic and significant development of this new post-photography" (Robins 1991, p. 55) because it would, eventually, do away with our belief in photographs.

The use of photography to manipulate is not new, as from very early on, photographers' experiments made obvious the malleability of photographs through several techniques, such as featuring objects in a close-up that could turn a red pepper into a sensual figure (with Edward Weston in mind), or that of montage, which marked twentieth-century

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[23] Sontag gives the example of a German photographer who, already in 1855, invented how to retouch Talbot's negative. In the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, she describes how people would gather around the portraits' original and retouched versions (1990 [1973], p. 86). Simulation was even present in academia: for instance, in the 1890s Franz Boas, one of the pioneers in North American cultural anthropology, posed as a cannibal spirit in order to create a photographic reference for the sculptor at the National Museum's Kwakiutl (Pinney 2011, p. 83).

European vanguard art. Spiritual photography also made the point of making ghosts visible in print, allowing spirits to cross into the material realm in the late nineteenth century (Sante 2006). However, the differences between analogue and digital photography are palpable when it comes to the extent of their manipulability. According to William J. Mitchell, if Walter Benjamin suggested that the mechanical reproduction of images replaced cult value with exhibition value, then the digital puts in motion another type of use value, where digital images are nothing more than networked bits of data. "The age of digital replication," the media scholar noted, "is superseding the age of mechanical reproduction" (1992, p. 52). These ideas were seconded by another scholar in a celebrated essay, who referred to the digital image as threatening "to break the assumed link between photography and the outer world" (Stallabrass 1996, p. 13).

With time, some of these authors let go of the apocalyptic tone, coming to see *lignes de fuite* that could eventually lead digital technology to prompt photography to expand its vocabulary and 'transform itself' (Ritchin 2013, p. 47) as had happened to artists in the nineteenth century who felt freed from realist representation and turned to more creative languages (such as Impressionism, Cubism, and others). Although a clear-cut division between analogue and digital photography was quickly labeled as monolithic,[24] this sort of assessment is hardly limited to the conceptualization of digital photography in the 1990s.

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[24] For example, John Roberts argues that "the effects of the new technology have been incorporated in the new writing of photography and culture in the most orthodox historicists terms as the supersession of chemical photography and realism *tout court*. This is incredibly short-sighted, and not just on the ground of confusing realism with empiricism" (1998, p. 11). Martin Lister is also on the team of those who do not pursue a monolithic account of the alleged passage from analogue to digital photography. See: "Introductory Essay," in *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, 1995 (p. 5).

Quite the contrary: we still hear that "[t]he indexical 'content' of the work is no longer pinned to a particular syntax. Nor can the iconic appearance of the world be assumed to reflect an indexical cause based in the natural world" (Collins Goodyear 2007, p. 213) or that "as photography becomes an encoded, networked object [it becomes]… a kind of unstable surface that produces meanings not through indexicality or representation but through the aggregation and topologies of data." (Rubinstein & Sluis 2013a, p. 156) This tone is echoed by Nancy Shawcross (2007, p. 209), Laura Mulvey (qted in Andermann 2010, p. 178), Hans Belting (2011 [2001], p. 122), among many others. The inherent 'manipulability' of the digital together with the possibility of manufacturing an image on the screen without extracting it from reality, if not seen as cause for alarm certainly prompts some scholars to think that we are witnessing a definite break in photography's long tradition as a realistic technology. What is more, the convergence of the robotics of face recognition and machine learning, which are already being used not only by governments[25] but by smartphones,[26] leads to pessimistic predictions and, in most cases, to questioning the photographic image as having any 'ground' at all (Steyerl 2018 [2017]). However, there is often a significant disparity between the way in which critics characterize photography, by extrapolating its potential development into its future, and the ways in which ordinary mortals experience the medium.

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[25] For instance, the government of Canada launched the expansion of its biometrics collection for foreign visitors (Harris 2018).

[26] The Iphone X, launched in September 2017, has a function that allows for the owner's face to be identified as a means to unlock the phone. Besides the controversy that this new feature triggered along the lines of security and privacy, The New Yorker magazine writer Vinson Cunningham compared the 'masks' Apple used to test the camera's dexterity to distinguish between a real and a fake face, to Cindy Sherman's latest Selfies on Instagram, where the artist distorts her face to the point of creepiness (2017).

The existence of a drastic juncture that makes comparison with older times impossible is present both in those who are enthusiastic about the changes brought about by digital technology—such as W.J. Mitchell—and in those who are principally concerned about it—such as Fred Ritchin (Lister 1997, p. 288). One of the things the past reveals, Sarah Kember writes, "is that many of the present reactions to new technologies are not in themselves new" (1998, p. 2). These reactions, whether dystopian or utopian, are in fact quite similar in tone to Socrates' sombre perplexity before the invention of writing (Plato 2019 [370 BC], 69-70), or Baudelaire's laments on the growing hegemony of the daguerreotype (1999 [1859], p.3-4), which we may take as an invitation to be more cautious about negative responses to new media.

Other scholars argue that what digitization truly revolutionized was not the photographic image per se, which is still grounded in a belief in the medium's objectivity, but the ways in which it is now possible to store and distribute photographs, changing the roles of photographer and spectator (Baetens 2009, p. 93; Lapenta 2011). Digital images might not necessarily bear a continuous and causally linked relationship with reality, but the substantial transformation is that they "can then be stored, transferred, or manipulated at the level of numbers" (Lunenfeld 2000, p. xv).

It is interesting that by calling digital photography *photographie numérique*, the French language reminds us that the fabric of digital pictures is nothing more than algorithms. This is a substantial alteration vis-à-vis analogue photography because it sees photography as 'computer graphics' consisting "of algorithms and only of algorithms" (Kittler 2001, p. 36). Many scholars find it hard to still use the term 'photography'—so traditionally charged with

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the 'adherence' of the referent—and use 'algorithmic image' in order to address a process expressed "*as, with, in* or *through* software' (Rubinstein & Sluis 2013a, p. 29). Whatever the term of choice –digital photography, computational photography, or algorithmic image— there is an ongoing call for critical engagement, pushing us to move away from issues of representation to address *reproduction* as the core of digital culture (Rubinstein 2009, p. 140).

As if confirming that reproduction and circulation were the crucial stakes, the global diffusion of the mobile phone and their built-in cameras as the go-to devices to take pictures, made of *mobility* a key notion within digital media. But while the dominant concepts in unpacking digital culture relate to movement, interaction, transmission, and closeness, these terms seem to more accurately describe the technologies that are in play than the culture that puts them to work. There might be, indeed, a contradiction between technologies facilitating communication and connection and the chance that people are also experiencing the reverse, that is, a turn inward that translates into feelings of disconnection, loneliness, and boredom. We may be inclined to think that this prevailing mood is a direct outcome of digital and mobile technology that puts too many consumables and entertainment at our disposal at the cost of taking away deep meanings in our existence. However, in the late 1960s Guy Debord had already pinned down that eliminating geographic distance produces distance internally (1989 [1967] p. 133-4), while Marshall McLuhan also made the point that in tourism, the photographic image replaced the experience of movement. For him, electronic media brought the world closer at the same time that they produced an estrangement from it in return (Marchessault 2004, p. 211). This was also taken up in more recent analyses of how mobile

devices, the phone in particular, produce a virtual life on the screen that would eventually shift the meaning of co-presence (Urry 2002, p. 258), a trend that the coronavirus pandemic seems to have sped up, rendering almost all human contact outside one's own household mediated by a screen.

Mobility and circulation, as analytic notions, have been deployed across sociology (Kaufmann 2002; Urry 2002; 2000; 2007; Beer 2013; MacKenzie 2005), anthropology (Appadurai 1996), geography (Cresswell 2007; Merriman & Cresswell 2011), and feminist theory (Mazali 2011; Martin 2001), covering a wide range of topics such as the movement of money in global financial structures (LiPuma 2004) and, most notably, in elucidations on the flux of contemporary city life (Boutrous & Straw 2011; LiPuma & Koelble 2005). The study of media forms has not been an exception, as circulation is one of the notions put forward by a combination of media archeology and new materialisms that attempt to look past traditional hermeneutics in order to focus on the physical side of media (or hardware) and, most crucially, on the process of mediation as a codification system of discursive patterns of interaction between inscriptions, bodies, and technological and cultural forms.[27] Pushing against a trend that characterizes digital media as ephemeral and immaterial, the reshuffling of circulation in media theory urges us to look at infrastructures –screens, software, wires, etc.—that are used as conduits of capital and commodities that, relying on algorithms, seem to manage and control the movement of objects and bodies at a global level (Bollmer 2018, p. 6).

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[27] For an in-depth account of materiality-tuned works of media archeology when it comes to thinking about media, and Kittler's influence (and criticism for being media-deterministic), see Jussi Parikka (2012).

The puzzle of how circulation and mobility seem to play an essential role in global culture, invited researchers to note that these notions were governing the shape and design of technological gadgets, turning computing technology—formerly seen as indoor stable furniture—into conveniently portable gadgets to be carried everywhere. As Adam Greenfield put it, "computing has leapt off the desktop and insinuated itself into everyday life" (2006, p. 9). Another illustration of such a cross over can be found comparing the first and second editions of one of the first scholarly edited volumes to confer critical attention to digital photography. Indeed, *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, which first appeared in 1995 starts by describing a scene in which screens are flickering and humming in "small studios and facilities houses, colleges of art, media and design, homes and schools" (Lister 1995, p. 26). Seventeen years later, the introduction to the second edition could not but acknowledge that the digital image has transformed itself into the *networked* image,[28] contributing to a sense that there is "a new transcience of the photographic image as it is assimilated to a global flow of data and information" (Lister 2013, p. 4).

The networked image is thus nothing more than an image that reproduces itself instantaneously on the internet and that can multiply itself into any number of copies fostering repetition over signification and representation (Rubinstein & Sluis 2013b, p. 154). This paradigm shift meant the transformation of photography: from being a 'discrete medium' to becoming one that has converged with the computer" (Kember 2013, p. 57). However, photography had already 'morphed' into bits with the advent of the digital and

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[28] For conceptual depth on the term 'network' and how it has come to act as a metaphor for imagining current technological and societal dynamics, see: Darin Barney's *The Network Society*, especially chapter 1 (2004).

before computers became mobile gadgets. So, conceptually speaking, what is key to a new understanding of the medium is not only the transition from the material analogue to the synthetic ephemeral digital but, most crucially, the fact that digitization allowed the camera to be absorbed into the cell-phone, enabling a degree of mobility impacting the user, the device, the image, and the recipient. Since this holds for photography as it does for video, phone, texting, e-mailing, and others forms of communication, we have seen the emergence of arguments that call for a more comprehensive field beyond photography theory, as Sarah Kember (2013, p. 57) argues referencing other scholars with the same concern, such as Geoffrey Batchen (2002).

I.VI. Omnipresence and Overload

Digitization also meant that the photographic image could be *ubiquitous*, spreading itself and invading every corner of our lives like a virus –a common metaphor. So pervasive are photographs, so unprecedented our exposure to an online and offline torrent of images produced by ourselves and others appears to be, that photographs are often described as an integral part of an information and content overload that fills our lived experience (for instance: Ibrahim 2020).

This notion of ubiquity is tied to what was first developed by Mark Weiser and others in reference to the possibility of computing technology mediating every aspect of everyday life (Bolter & Grusin 2000 [1998], p. 217). Ubiquitous computing comes from a place of enthusiasm over technological devices becoming 'smart.' The term is in itself a play on words: on the one hand, it refers to a certain technological 'brainpower' that anticipates

hardware failures, and on the other, as an acronym, it stands for Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology. Among technological non-connoisseurs it may just refer to the high level of connectivity and automation of a user-friendly device, most likely the mobile telephone. Ubiquitous computing is also a phrase that signals the perils of an Orwellian total-surveillance kind of scenario where the overexposure leads to an image economy characterized by saturation. By being embedded in a smartphone, photography absorbed both the quality of being ubiquitous, as well as that of being "woven into the fabric of information technologies and economic, social, political and cultural forms" (Hand 2012, p. 12), turning out to be *everyware*, as Adam Greenfield coined it (2006, p. 9).[29]

In addition, the ubiquity of photography is to be understood in the context of the erosion of photographic authorship. The challenge to the idea of author is two-fold: there is the increasing automation of the equipment element, and the retreat of influence of the professional photographer. On the one hand, the automation of the camera reduces the spectrum of decision-making of the photographer, rendering their traditional skills progressively obsolete (Palmer 2020, p. 387). On the other hand, professionals are no longer the main producers of imagery for the public domain. Rather, "contemporary photography is

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[29] One effort to untangle this massive production of photographic images we encounter on a daily basis was carried out by Paul Frosh, who writing from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, brought to attention *stock photography* as a "global industry which manufactures, promotes and distributes images for use in marketing, advertising, sundry editorial purposes, and increasingly for multimedia products and website design" (2003, p. 3). Said to populate 70% of what circulates in Western 'visual industry', stock photography enjoys "what appears to be a powerful ideological advantage over other sectors producing contemporary visual culture, *invisibility*" (p. 7). According to Frosh, the manipulation of photography enabled by digital media has not fundamentally changed stock photography, which emerged as a business in the 1970s, but it has certainly extended its boundaries: "such transformative power is new in degree, it is not new in principle" (p. 178).

not characterized by the outstanding works of the few but by the middling work of the many"

(Rubinstein 2009, p. 139). In the face of what at some point felt like a rather overnight

emergence of amateurs competing for attention as they chronicled events with their own

phone-cameras, critics noted that in comparison with professional photographers, who are

often driven by the desire to capture a representative image of the unfolding of events, cell-

phone photographs taken by regular people often look more spontaneous, less perfect, and

therefore, more honest "with fewer elaborately constructed attempts at the larger,

synthesizing statement" (Ritchin 2013, p. 11). Some of these pictures report events of public

significance and end up making their way into the press, which rather than being fed by

documentarians working individually to get an emblematic take, is shaped by a complex

system of image distribution. What was a rather closed system of photographic

representation sustained by professional photographers, has morphed into a different scenario

where depictions taken by 'journalist-citizens' ultimately push through, making their way

into mass media and also reproducing themselves ad infinitum in online informal networks.[30]

     Although as Rubinstein and Sluis put it, "photography has become something

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[30] The emergence of the journalist-citizen not only changes the kind of images that circulate in the press, but also transforms, or at least puts into question, certain classic conundrums of the photojournalist practice. For instance, the irresolvable ethical dilemma of photojournalism about publishing or not certain pictures that may seem crude or that may expose the victims depicted. Susan Sontag once said at a symposium that photographer Richard Avedon had called her to ask her opinion on whether or not to print some pictures he had taken in the early 1970s of napalm victims of US bombings in Vietnam "He said, 'I don't know what to do,' and I said, 'I don't know what you should do either; after calling me up to ask my opinion I think I'm just as puzzled as you are. I can think of very good arguments for not doing it, and I can think of very good arguments for doing it.' (1975, p. 116). Today that kind of discussion seems unlikely given that, whether the photographer decides to publish it or not, it is very likely that somebody else would do it anyways.

immense, even unimaginable" (2013b, p. 153) it is wise to take the idea of the ubiquity of the photographic image with a grain of salt. For ubiquity, however 'new' it may appear to be as a concept, actually goes way back, and almost every single thinker regarded and experienced photography as omnipresent and pervasive in their own time. Among these, we may think of Charles Baudelaire, who was preoccupied with the proliferation of images: "Our way of seeing changes and gets to be sharper (…) introducing the unprecedented needs and customs into the everyday. Everyone will have their portrait; a privilege once exceptional" (1999 [1859]). Or Sigfried Kracauer, who also noticed that "the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. The assault of this mass of images is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the potentially existing awareness of crucial traits" (1995 [1927], p. 58). Gisèle Freund similarly described photographs as omnipresent: "In contemporary life, photography plays a major role. There is hardly a human activity that does not make use of it in one way or another. It has become essential to science as well as to industry (…). It spreads daily in thousands of newspapers and magazines. (…)" (1974 [1936], p. 6). Almost half a century later, Susan Sontag voiced a similar impression: "…there are great many more images around, claiming our attention. The inventory started in 1839 and since then just about everything has been photographed, or so it seems" (1990 [1973], p. 3). More recently, and yet way before the irruption of the smartphone, commentators found, again, that "the extraordinary proliferation of images cannot cohere into one single picture for the contemplation of the intellectual. Visual culture in this sense is the crisis of information and visual overload in everyday life" (Mirzoeff 1999, p. 8). Contemporary thinking also feels that way now, and it is often pointed out that there are, in fact, more cameras in use than ever

before, "making technologies and practices of photography *radically* pervasive across all domains of contemporary society" (Hand 2012, p. 12), facilitating a non-stop, untameable, photographic capture, a new visuality of information overload that can only be compared with the feeling of living in a glasshouse society, where a "naked humanity," having been stripped off any sense of privacy, sees the visual culture reclaim "the material body as an immaterial offering online" (Ibrahim 2020, p. 16).

In any case, whether peculiar to our present time or not, the sentiment of being exposed to loads of images produced by ourselves and others is a shared one. Even when this "superabundance of signification" (Dudley 1997, p. x) might not be always addressed in depth, it is very often the implied scenario where the consumption, production, and circulation of photographic images is assumed to be taking place in the present.

The fact that present-day photography is mostly practiced through networked devices and is no longer viewed as a discrete entity has had a two-fold effect when it comes to academic scrutiny. On the one hand, photography has triggered more interest in other disciplines beyond art history and anthropology. Indeed, the publication of a number of books in the field of digital humanities and on photographic culture in general is an

indication that the study of photography is experiencing a shift in orientation.[31] But on the

other hand, the discussion seems to have acquired a largely technocratic tone that tends to

overlook the theoretical trajectory of photography studies.[32] Already in 1991, Kevin Robins

spotted this –at the time emerging—tendency and called it "the techno-fetishist approach to

new image technologies" (1991, p. 56). Thornton Caldwell also warned about a prevailing

theoretical and historical amnesia in the study of newer electric media (2000, p.14-16).

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[31] For instance, *The Versatile Image: Photography, Digital Technology and the Internet* is a compilation
of essays presented at a multidisciplinary conference held at the University of Sunderland and Newcastle
University in 2011. Similarly, another anthology entitled *Digital Snaps: The New Face of Photography,*
edited by Jonas Larsen and Mette Sandbye and published in 2014, sets out to account for how amateur
photographs fuse with everyday life as never before, transforming the once private photo-album into
images that become available to a general public (p. xvii). Rather than a breakthrough from analogue to
digital technology, the book calls for a 'new media ecology' that emphasizes a process of *remediation*;
that is, a refashioning of older media into newer ones (Bolter & Grusin 2000 [1998], p. 45)—or what
McLuhan called the *retrieval* law of media, whereby a new medium brings back knowledge, structures,
and older actions (Gordon 2010, p. 148). With an emphasis on considering photography from the
perspective of a practice, the book is structured around the exploration of several subgenres of amateur
photography such as tourist, family, friendship, and celebrity photography. Similarly, in the last couple of
years, the role of photography in interpersonal communication has caught the attention of scholars based
in Scandinavian and Dutch universities. Mikko Villi, from the University of Helsinki, has worked on
photo-messaging as a ritual communication that is similar to the early use of postcards. Also, José Van
Dijck, a media scholar from the University of Amsterdam, has written extensively about the relationship
between digital photography and memory. While she argues that photography still serves a memory
function, she acknowledges a shift in photography's role that is not to be understood as the outcome of
digitization, but as part of a broader cultural transformation of individuation that goes back to the 1960s
and 1970s (2008, p. 62). Lately, *Photography Reframed* (2020 [2018]), edited by Ben Burbridge and
Annebella Pollen, offers a compilation of articles touching on different issues of contemporary
photographic culture such us war imagery, the citizen photographer, the photo album, among many others.
Also, *Photography Off The Scale: Technologies and Theories of the Mass Image* (2021), edited by Tomáš
Dvořák and Jussi Parikka, gathers together several photography scholars (many of them with a
communications studies background) to reflect upon several effects of the massification of photography in
our contemporary visual culture.
[32] For an exemplary fit of this trend, see Nancy A. Van House (2011) or Rubinstein and Sluis who, for
instance, call for "a different metaphysics of the image, not one of system, dialectics, light, vision and
truth but a metaphysics that can engage with the indeterminate, fragmented, recursive and multiple image
produced and sustained by the world wide web." (Rubinstein & Sluis 2013b, p.156).

I.VII. Theorizing Photography

All in all, and perhaps not more so than any other object, photography has been, throughout its invention and until the present, an elusive object for theoretical elucidation. It has caught the attention of various disciplines and singular approaches overlapped according to their disciplinary reading. However, as much as semiotics, anthropology and others have indeed shown interest in the photographic image, art history still constituted, for much of photography's own history, the disciplinarian lens that dominated its discourse.[33]

Although to be fair, there have been plenty of attempts within the art historical to

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[33] Curiously enough, art historical outliers wrote the three most important texts that gained canonical status. In 1931, when photography was experiencing a boom Walter Benjamin published *Brief History of Photography*. The other two seminal manuscripts appeared almost simultaneously: Roland Barthes' *La chambre claire* (1980) and Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977). All the three transcend the limitations of the academic style, and all three are delivered in a hauntingly literary tone, capturing, some would say, the intrinsic mystery of the medium.

address the ubiquity of the image beyond the fine arts,[34] this proliferation and dispersal of photography caused first by digitization and reinforced by the multimedial smartphone pushed several scholars to acknowledge that the art historical dominance of the photographic discourse has not helped to grasp photography in all its pervasiveness (Batchen 2003, p.28-29; Wells 2007, p. 343). Having failed to account for "how vital photography has been to ordinary personal lived experiences across society, in private and public, and within different cultural settings" (Pasternak 2020 [2018], p. 42) questions about what the study of photography might involve becomes ever more prevalent in the 21st century (p. 40).

If a theory is supposed to work based on establishing a set of universal propositions that are shared by a given system, an overarching photography theory is then still waiting to be articulated. Rather than constructing a solid base of agreement from which the medium

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[34] We have already discussed postmodernist 'social historians' who paid attention to the institutional framings that legitimized photography with ideological purposes. There are other examples: for instance, in Germany, there is the long tradition of *Bildwissenchaft*, a branch of art historical research that focuses on vernacular images. Over there, art historical scholarship did push for the expansion of their own disciplinary limits in order to interrogate about how images in general function in society (Belting 2011 [2001], p. 12). For instance, in *Bild-Anthropologie* (2001, translated and published in English in 2011), the German Hans Belting adopts an anthropological framework in an effort to account for a vast range of images, and not only for those falling behind the definition of 'work of art.' He argues that the pictorial medium is intrinsic to the visual and one cannot be conceived of –and for that matter, study—without the other. The medium, or "the technology or artisanship that transmits the image" (p.15), captures for Belting the fundamental contradiction of images: that they "make a physical (a body's) *absence* visible by transforming it into iconic presence" (2011 [2001], p. 3). Similarly, Horst Bredekamp, another German art historian, developed the *Theorie des Bildakts*, where he draws a parallel between the images and the acts of speech, claiming that the former possess a semantics of their own (2007). Both these *Bildwissenschaften* refuse to reduce images to a signifying system separate from the real and advocate for art history looking beyond the work of art in order to make sense of our visual culture. However, according to Horst Bredekamp, although there are plenty of exponents of art history as *Bildwissenschaft* in English-speaking academia, these are very often seen within the discipline itself as "heretical 'visual studyists'" (2003, p. 428). An English edition was published based on the 2015 second edition of *Theorie des Bildakts*, see: *Image acts: A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, De Gruyter: Berlin, Germany, 2018.

could be analyzed, attempts to theorize photography have proven to be a fruitful arena for intense contention and political debate. We see photography locked in Manichean traps: from the denotation/connotation duet to the art/science controversy, the realist/constructivist approach, the *index* and the *icon*. And as George Baker pointed out in his analysis of these dichotomies faced by photography theory, "one could go on" (2005, 125).

Mirroring this lack of cohesiveness and the difficulties in seizing its object, the titles of works in photography theory often bear the word 'towards' (as in aspiring to reach a theory of photography') signifying that such theory still does not exist—which was already proclaimed by Victor Burgin in 1982—or in the plural, as *theories*, which gives testimony to a particularly contested and fragmented field. Photography theory is such a messy terrain that scholars still wonder what would be the object of such theorization: the photograph, the photographic practice, or its functions (Kriebel 2007, p. 5). However, what may have obstructed the development of a conceptual thinking that could establish itself as an accepted referent in academia is not the complexity of the object (a quality shared by almost any virtual object of study) nor the insistence in coming back to discussing the same set of foundational principles (something that in fact drives most disciplines). With art history dominating much of its theorization and easily escaping from it in the current moment, what characterizes the theorization of photography versus other media forms is that the disciplinary space in which its discussion happens is not coherent or enduring.

To the dismay of photographers, such as Mexican Pedro Meyer, who insists the debate around the fidelity of the photographic image be left behind and superseded (2014), the key issue that always divides waters in the study of photography remains the relationship of the

photographic image to the pre-photographic reality. Photography's relation to the real has

been at the core of any attempt at theorizing it and, as much as many would like to announce

the end of an era with the introduction of the digital, the referential relationship that tied

photography to the real still remains right there, very much at the center-stage. Susan

Sontag's observation that "the picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that

something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture" (Sontag 1990 [1973], p. 5),

is still valid today. In the following chapters, we will see that the ability to edit pictures (by

cropping them, adding or suppressing light, applying filters, sticking emojis, and so on and

so forth) and the fact that "we are all photographers now"[35] intensified the camera's role to

produce images that are read as documents and has not debased photography of its realistic

function.

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[35] Such was the name of one of William Ewings' 2007 interactive exhibition in the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland. For more on this exhibit, see: McKay & Plouviez (2013).

CHAPTER II: Photography as a Medium of Communication

This chapter offers a theoretical framework to think about photography via a constellation of interrelated concepts that stem from media theory. As such, it undertakes an alternative point of view to the 'classic' scholarly approach to photography. I attempt to decenter photography's established conceptualization, which revolves around the relationship of the photographic image to pre-photographic reality, and develop an alternative discussion. My focus on the 'new function' of photography, as a real-time message, engages with the issue of representation, but the emphases will be altogether different. But before laying out the prism through which to look at photography, I will take two brief detours: first, I concisely describe how two interdisciplinary fields and two disciplines other than art history have approached photography in the humanities and social sciences, so as to provide an arbitrary spectrum sample of scholarly interpretations of photography.

Second, the statement that photography has not been the main concern of media research, which was advanced in Chapter I, forces us to address communication studies' status in knowledge production and academia in general before developing a set of conjectures that attempt to explain why the field has not engaged in analyzing photography thoroughly. Finally, this chapter defines the vocabulary and conceptual apparatus on which it draws to make sense of photography's pivotal role in communicative exchanges.

II.I. Photography in different lights

Photography has caught the attention across seemingly different disciplines and subject

areas of study, which has resulted in an array of diverse approaches and contributions that fall under the rubric of "photography studies," defining a diverse field grouping scholars with different academic backgrounds who share photographic issues as a common interest (Pasternak 2020, p. 1). To speak only within the parameters of the arts, humanities, and social sciences, from being almost entirely restricted to the art historical discourse, the study of photography has come to be dispersed across different scholarly fields in academia (Batchen & Gitelman 2018, p. 206). In order to offer a glimpse of this conceptual diversity and the seemingly different interpretations photography has triggered, I briefly describe how two interdisciplinary fields like semiotics and memory studies shaped up their understandings on the medium. This responds to an arbitrary choice, as I could have picked other interdisciplinary clusters where photography is an important object of study such as queer studies (Vargas Cervantes 2014; Foster 2014; Gopinath 2018; Pierce 2019). Or feminist and gender studies, which has explored a feminist political economy of digital culture such as the practice of photosharing and the implications for young people, as well as photography's role as a means of expression and self- representation for minority groups (Hasinoff & Shepherd 2014; Shields Dobson 2015). Postcolonial studies also stands out (Landau 2002; Ramaswamy 2014; Rivera Cusicanqui 2018), as well as more recent turns to photography such as that of visual criminology, whereby the optics of crime and criminal justice play a pivotal role as analytical tools to understand certain image-based economies across institutional and punitive societal structures (Finn 2009; Ferrell 2017; Carney 2015; 2017).[36] Other undertakings would have equally deserved to be developed, such as new

[36] For more on visual criminology's critical concerns, see: Carrabine and Brown (2019).

visual history's renewed interest in images, including photographs, as narrative devices to construct historical interpretations and as key to understanding the formation of distinct historical consciousness. [37]

After touching upon photography's treatment by semiotics and memory studies, I then move on to concisely describing the anthropological and sociological treatments of photography.

II.I.I. Photography in memory studies and semiotics

Memory studies, an interdisciplinary field that was born in the 1970s out of a 'memory boom' triggered by a *fin-de-siècle* sentiment both in society and in academia (Huyssen 1995, p. 5),[38] has also granted photography a somewhat central place.[39] Like memory itself, which is never unequivocal, memory studies is far from cohesive but it does depart from a common understanding of the notion of *mémoire collective* and *cadres sociaux de la mémoire*

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[37] See for instance, Daniela Bleichmar's *Visible Empire* (2012)*,* where she reconstructs the history of the Spanish empire's expeditions in the Americas by tracing back botanical images created between the late 1877s and the early 1800s.

[38] For more on the 'memory booms', see Winter (2006).

[39] In the 1980s, growing interest in matters of cultural memory gained momentum in different academic settings. In France, it took shape around Pierre Nora's conceptualization of *les lieux de mémoire*, advanced in the homonymous three-volume project that set out to list the places where French memory was somehow condensed. In Germany, it took shape under the influences of thinkers such as Jan and Aleida Assmann, who worked on memory in Ancient times (Erll 2008, p. 9). In the United States, scholars articulated issues of memory and trauma around the Shoah, installing notions such as *post-memory*, whereby a newer generation can seem to have memories of moments in history that they did not live but which they feel they have somehow experienced. These explorations, in turn, served as models for the study of other traumatic experiences from other intellectual traditions.

developed by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s (1992 [1942]).[40] Perhaps because the use of photography as a mnemonic artifact has had a long-term impact in how we make sense of the past as "what is remembered mentally could converge with what is retained pictorially" (Ruchatz 2008, p. 373), and also because photography arose as a key medium of memory within the family by the late nineteenth century (Erll 2011 [2005], p. 117-8), it can be said that memory studies has given critical attention to the visual, privileging pictorial images as repositories of memory that are peculiar to the camera over other memory forms.[41] Within memory studies photographs are very often described as cherished objects while their closeness to death –its predicament of depicting those who are absent but offering them the eternity of the still image in return— and the fact that pictures are often the silent vestiges of any event, have made photography central in elaborations within the field, especially those related to traumatic collective experiences such as the Holocaust (Kuhn 1995; Hirsch 1997; Liss 1998). In the Latin American scene, and with Elizabeth Jelin as one of its top theorists, memory studies has also conferred upon photography the status of a chief site for intellectual inquiries. Photography has triggered a body of work that goes from reflecting on the medium as an analytical tool in fieldwork (Jelin 2012) to the role on the construction of the memories of state repression (Feld & Stites Mor 2009; da Silva Catela 2012; Blejmar, Fortuny & García 2013, to name but a few).

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[40] In an effort to find earlier theoretical foundations of the field, some assert Maurice Halbwachs should not be considered as *the* founding father of memory studies and that others before him, such as Ernest Renan (in the late 1880s) or experimental psychologist Frederick Bartlett (in the early 1900s), had elaborated on the importance of social remembering and should be seen as having contributed to the origins of memory studies (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi & Levy 2011, p. 21-2).

[41] This has, in turn, also instilled criticism on the problematic commonsensical assumption that photography is the perfect container of memory (Shevchenko 2016, p. 278).

Conversely, the semiotic mind regards photography as *text*; a place of signification condensing the logics of signifying social practices. That photographs operate in different levels of signification has been a widespread assumption beyond its semiotic birthmark, as many interdisciplinary cultural studies have adopted such a perspective. Its centrality is indebted to Roland Barthes, who published the now canonical *Chambre Claire* in 1981, and developed famous concepts such us *punctum* (probably among the most debated terms in the language of photographic analysis)—as that inexplicable and irrational feeling that 'pricks' when looking at an image that moves us—and *studium*—as the ordinary cultural interpretation. Along with *punctum* and *studium*, in *Image, Musique, Texte* (1978 [1977]), Barthes also introduced the notion of *connotative* and *denotative* dimensions of the photographic image, a notion which has become the default prism through which press photography is analyzed. From this perspective, the 'photographic message' and other 'analogical reproductions of reality' such as drawings and paintings operate within a pendulum of signification that swings back and forth from the literality of the analogue (denotation) to the 'coded' image that carries upon itself the weight of a culture (connotation) (p. 17-8). The photograph, however, by virtue of its "analogic plenitude," as Barthes calls it, seems to be entirely occupied by a denoted message. Soon enough he added that a photograph's objectivity "has every chance of being mythical" (p. 19). But because the press photograph is not only worked on at the level of its production (by a professional choosing a frame, light and deciding what to make visible from a particular ideological stance) but is also received in a certain cultural context and therefore "connected more or less consciously by the public that consumes it to a traditional stock of signs" (p. 19), a paradox arises as the

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main characteristic of the photographic. For Barthes, there is a tension, a resistance, between the analogical and realistic force of the photographic and its cultural investment, which makes it both "'objective' and 'invested', natural and cultural" (p. 20). More recently, the linguistic analysis of digital photographs—which can fall within different paradigms in semiotics such as critical discourse analysis or systemic functional semiotics—recognizes the 'multisemiotic nature' of the image, in which meaning is produced in the interplay among the image and other verbal, contextual, and historical elements (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996; Lassen, Strunck & Vestergaard 2006).

II.I.II. Photography in anthropology and sociology

Anthropology's peculiar relationship with the photographic medium is marked by the fact that anthropologists were quick to employ it as a tool for recording ethnographic data. Treating photography as more than an object of study, the anthropological approach to photography usually deals with a reflection on the role of photography in the making of anthropological knowledge, in a line of analysis that peaked in the 1970s but that is still an active site of critical anthropological thought (for fully developed versions of this critique, see: Scherer 1996; Attané & Langewiesche 2005; Morton & Edwards 2009; Pinney 2011). In contrast with art history, which recognized photography primarily as an object of study, anthropological work granted photography a central role in recording and transmitting information when carrying out fieldwork. Since anthropology and photography had coincidentally synchronous careers through the nineteenth century, the portability of the daguerreotyping technology came to resolve—and problematize at the same time—the issue

of documenting natives in their own environments, a key endeavour for an emerging

anthropological field. For anthropological practice, what Heidegger called the 'image-world,'

that is the way in which photography presents the world as separate from the viewer,

engendered simultaneously both the promise to have proofs and the destruction of what was

being observed (Pinney 2011, p. 28).[42] Stories of how anthropologists deployed an array of

strategies to challenge the obstacles the still image posed to capturing the desired depiction

(such as placing grids against which subjects were photographed so that bodies would fit into

prototypes) are instructive of how Western visual academic knowledge dealt with

photographs' 'imbecility' (their muteness) or, put in opposite terms, with "their insistence on

always telling their own story" (Pinney 2011, p. 80). In addition, photography's great appeal

as a technology capable of storing and transmitting information came with the price of

objectifying experience and depicted subjects. With ups and downs, anthropology

consistently mobilized the photographic medium to collect ethnographic material and

critically elaborated on the possibilities and constraints of the medium for anthropological

purposes.[43] For instance, while in the 1930s Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson reshuffled

the photograph for anthropological work—this time not simply as a truthful rendition of the

real, but as a trigger for critical reflection within the discipline—and Claude Lévi-Strauss

took 3,000 pictures during fieldwork in Brazil (Garrigues 2000, p. 130), in the 1940s and

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[42] Anthropologists' ambition to record and classify is captured in "*A menor mulher do mundo*" translated as *The Smallest Woman in the World* (1960), where Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector describes a French explorer's *contretemps* when he came across a four-foot-tall woman in Congo. How "his heart pounded, for surely no emerald is so rare" how he failed to classify her smile (p. 94) and how her life sized photograph was published in the Sundays newspapers.

[43] For more on photography and ethnography, see chapter 1 of *L'écriture photographique: essai de sociologie visuelle* (Garrigues 2000).

1950s photography was discredited as an anthropological research method and served merely as illustration (Pink 2006, p.9). Fast-forward to the late 1980s and photography was still used primarily to show what was found out by other means, which encouraged works on the systematization of photography as an anthropological research method (such as Collier & Collier 1986).

Some sociologists also strove to find a way to analyze still photographs systematically as a cultural product stamped with symbolic systems that helped explain cultural norms and social relations.[44] Howard Becker, in a seminal article intended to shake sociologists' scepticism towards the worth of photographs as object of analysis, wrote that if we count Auguste Comte's first publications as the birth and coinage of the term "sociology," we will find not only that photography and sociology were born simultaneously, but that both were after the same kind of endeavour, "the exploration of society" (1974, p.1). What sustained them as a practice, together with positivism, was the belief that reality could be observable and quantifiable, and thus, recorded (Berger 2015 [2013], p. 92).

Many others, now considered classic authors, echoed the determination to grant photography a significant place in sociological research; such as Gisèle Freund—who historicized the emergence of bourgeois photography (1974 [1936])—, Pierre Bourdieu, who studied photography as a social practice in France (1965), Ervin Goffman—who analyzed the way in which gendered stereotypes are constructed and reinforced in advertising images (1976).

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[44] For instance, Hugo José Suárez compiled the elements that would facilitate a sociological engagement with photographic images (2008).

To separate sociology from anthropology in order to show how these two disciplines engaged with photography as an object of study and as a research tool, might be a futile exercise in the sense that, as Elizabeth Jelin, rightfully pointed out to me in an interview, sociological and anthropological projects and methods usually permeate each other, making it difficult to pigeonhole them in one disciplinary category (Jelin 2021). Today, even though visual sociology has certainly come a long way, creating a significant network of scholars interested in how societies relate to the image (Zuev & Bratchford 2020, p. 3), photography is still not fully established in sociological territory—nor as an object of study and reflection, and especially not as a recording device to carry out research. This in fact marks a difference between anthropological and sociological work, as anthropologists have put cameras to use from the outset and are positioned "in the mainstream of the discipline" (Harper 2012, p. 5), while the practice of employing photography is still rare among their peers in sociology (Harper 2000, p. 2).[45]

Certainly, offering an exhaustive catalogue of all the ways photography has been academically defined is likely to be an impossible task–as Jorge Luis Borges pointed out, all lists abound in omissions (2000 [1968], p. 100)—[46], and yet the predominant disciplinary lens that dominates photographic discourse is, undeniably, art history. Looking closely, photography's theoretical dilemmas do bear an unmistakable art-historical stamp. As

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[45] Among the exceptions, see the reedited volume –published originally in 1987—of *Podría ser yo: los sectores populares urbanos en imagen y palabra*, by Elizabeth Jelin and Pablo Vila (2018 [1987]).
[46] Borges' complete quote, compiled in a transcription of a series of lectures he gave in 1967 and 1968, in English, at Harvard University is: [Referring to books that had been important for him] "I know that this list will abound in omissions, as all lists do. In fact, the danger of making a list is that the omissions stand out and that people think of you as being insensitive" (p. 100-1).

developed in Chapter I, first, the eagerness to define photography's specificity as a form of expression brought to the front ontological elaborations about the intrinsic and universal characteristics of the photographic image. Second, and in connection with the first debate, the questions about the photograph's status as art; with critics, photographers, and artists arguing to grant it the same status as painting. Art historians invented photography criticism, and we even owe to them a great many of feminist approaches to photography that articulated feminist theory in the analysis of artworks (see, for instance: Solomon-Godeau 2017; Giunta 2019). In the end, it is only logical (and fair) that the art historical focus has put their organizing principles at work, shaping an object of study by relying heavily on representational and aesthetic issues and pushing somewhat aside some of photography's broader social and communicative implications as a result. But from another perspective, a whole other set of issues might become perceptible.

II.II. Photography in Communication Studies

II.II.I. A Fragmented Field

Despite the clear connection between visual culture studies and the media, communication studies does not appear to have participated much in discussions of photography. This assertion is debatable in every particular inasmuch as communication studies is a hard-to-define field, a "confused" field if you may (Peters 1988, p.316), with porous boundaries and a trajectory of resisting simplistic definitions. To answer the questions that communication studies might ask about photography, a detour through the fragmented

status of the field is necessary in order to show that any categorical statement about what would be considered in or beyond the field might be subject to debate in and of itself.

Certainly, one of the main reasons for the loose boundaries of the field lies in its multidisciplinary status (Waisbord 2019, p. 17). But another major contributing factor is that communication studies shapes itself differently across countries according to its academic 'foundational conditions.' In other words, the original area of knowledge from which interest in communication matters sprung in different parts of the world have made a difference in raising certain epistemic questions and downplaying others, setting up a diverse intellectual genealogy at a global level. For instance, in Germany, *Kommunikationswissenschaft* was born out of studies on the written press (*Zeitungswissenchaft*), which evolved into studies of public opinion (*Publizistik*). After WWII, the field went through a process of 'americanization' as a way of distancing itself from its Nazi past (Hardt 2004 [2002], p.153). In contrast, communication studies arose as a result of politics studies in Italy. In France, it came into being hand in hand with semiotics, and in Latin America it stemmed from journalistic studies (Orozco Gómez & Viveros Ballesteros 1997, p.77), and took roots in critical theory and in '60s and '70s debates about the dynamics of power and politics in capitalist societies (Waisbord 2014, p. 3). In Nordic countries, communication studies came about from a variety of disciplines—such as political science, economy, sociology, literature, history, and linguistics—that used to sideline media related questions (Carlsson 2007, p. 224). To a large extent, the birthmark of communication studies has defined the development and historical trajectory of the field in each region, encouraging scholars to grapple with certain sets of problems and approaches (Orozco Gómez & Viveros Ballesteros 1997, p. 77)

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and setting different challenges. For example, disciplinarity is not seen as an issue in the Latin American context, as defining neat academic boundaries is even seen as contrary to the essence of the subject of study (Waisbord 2014, p. 4).

The fact that many regional and national traditions come to communications in very different ways prevented the existence of "a common analytical watershed from which different streams of research flowed (…) or an intellectual orthodoxy that set clear and shared lines of inquiry" (Waisbord 2019, p. 39) and it also made it difficult to even share a common ontological understanding of what communications is. [47] Communication could be a concept that condenses the modern utopia where nothing is misinterpreted (Peters 1999, p. 2), a new superseding paradigm in the social sciences (Mattelart 1996, p. 373), and "…. a phenomenon, a practice (…); symbolic and material support of social exchange as a whole; an area where power is generated, lost or gained (…); set of images, sounds and senses, (…); device of representation; tool of control at the service of a few (…)(Orozco Gómez & Viveros Ballesteros 1997, p. 28).

Back in 1990, John Fiske asked himself in his now classic "Introduction to Communication Studies": "can we properly apply the term 'a subject of study' to something as diverse and multi-faceted as human communication actually is?" (p. 1). The answer is still uncertain but perhaps it is precisely this 'universal' trait of communication that defines the human condition that causes communication to branch off into several perspectives (Valdettaro 2015, p. 24) to become a "multi-disciplinary area of study" open to the

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[47] For a political, intellectual and ethical genealogy of the notion of communication, see *Speaking into the Air* by John Durham Peters (1999).

juxtaposition of distinct scholarly traditions. However, the vastness and incommensurability

of certain phenomena (like society or politics) did not prevent other disciplines from

discussing and settling on a prevailing and coherent discourse to study and explain them. But

communications studies, far from debating and coming to terms regarding preferred

methodologies and theoretical corpuses, has come to be a space of confrontation and

disagreement that reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, the debates in the social sciences in

general (Scolari 2008, p.33).[48]

All disciplines deal with the prominence of certain paradigms at different moments in

time, but the inconsistency in communication studies suggests a liminal zone that on the one

hand hosts a thriving and eclectic community of scholars, but, on the other, has affected its

academic prestige and status in negative ways:

> The lack of clear disciplinarity has been a great strength: it's opened up some
> fertile approaches. We sit in and between the humanities and the social sciences.
> But this interstitial position has also been a cause of weakness: it's dissipated our
> academic recognition and reduced our clout (Schlesinger 2014 [2000], p.182).

In 1986, John Durham Peters wrote an essay in *Communication Research* entitled

"Institutional Sources of Intellectual Poverty in Communication Research" in which he

prompted the field "to decide what it means by communication" (p. 549). The piece triggered

a back and forth with another communication scholar, Hernando González, who seemed to

be hurt by the harsh critique and proceeded to defend the field and those 'working towards' a

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[48] If 'communication' is a series of misunderstandings, as defined by theorist Algirdas Greimas, what
other fate would run the discipline in charge of studying it?, asks Barcelona-based media scholar Carlos
Scolari (2008, p. 24-5).

definite disciplinarity (1988). The specifics of the discussion are beyond the point, but Durham Peters did identify one reason that may hold back communication studies in its path to become a discipline: the fact that it is driven by social instead of intellectual issues (1988, p. 316). In other words, the urgency of providing an account of current important phenomena often gets more attention than fundamental matters, such as acquiring a solid theoretical base that would make those issues cohere intellectually. This could have possibly been the case at that moment: that scholars were so preoccupied with the 'here and now', that there was not time to develop solid theoretical foundations. Four decades later, it is telling that Peter's article does not read dated, as the field finds itself in the same fix. So when a situation perceived as a 'crisis' at one point lingers on in time, it is an indication that it has perhaps been assimilated into the status quo, into just how things are.[49]

Whether this apparent incoherence and the lack of established theoretical canons is more characteristic of communications studies than of any other fields could still be debated. After all, all disciplines are fragmentary and prone to branch off into subfields and specializations. But if one were to look for a word to describe communication studies, that would be "heterogeneous"—a quality that is reflected epistemologically, theoretically, and methodologically. It is a feature that is also constitutive of communication itself and, in the end, communication studies deals with conceptualizing heterogeneity, which has come to destabilize any potential simplification (Grimson 2014, p. 118).

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[49] The same goes for trying to explain the incoherence of the field by pointing to its youth, as the first systematic investigations on communication started right after WWI: from the present, the argument feels like over-extended (Scolari 2008, p. 45).

For communication studies, disciplinarity works well as a utopic ideal (Gehrke & Keith 2015, p. 2), a sort of pull towards unity and diversity that is never to be settled. And while this might breed stimulant academic production, in the end, scholars in communication studies often do not share a common language, which does not help to secure a firm position in academia, particularly within the social sciences. At the level of academic labour, lying between the social sciences and the humanities poses challenges to both the program's solidity as well as to securing long-term academic employments (Griffin 2011, p.1827). While the conditions of academic labour are for the most part explained by specific institutional and national configurations, communication studies' limited institutional recognition might also have an impact on its academic conditions of labour (Sterne 2011a, p. 1854; McConnell 2018, p. 71).[50]

On a different but interlocking level, to speak only about the Americas, the increasing academic institutionalization of communication studies has consolidated two starkly different approaches in the U.S. and Latin America, the former with a heavy reliance on empirical research and distinct "organizational logics of arguments" in Martín Becerra and Florencia Enghel's terms, in contrast with the latter's essayistic tradition. This is not merely a matter of language or writing style, but of theory and empirics being articulated differently (Enghel & Becerra 2018, p. 122). None of these 'schools' are exempt from critique: whereas the Anglo

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[50] Another matter that speaks to communication studies' institutional dispersal are the professional associations representing its scholars and the academic journals that publish media research: both show that the field is far from presenting well-defined intellectual contours, which in turn, makes it difficult to assess the field's standing in the job market, as a communication-related job would encompass anything from journalism, to organizational communication, to performance studies, and so on (McConnell 2018, p. 72). For a thorough discussion about the issues facing communication scholarship in terms of academic labour in North America, check out Volume 5 (2011) of the *International Journal of Communication*.

North American version of communication studies emphasizes work based on empirical data and on fieldwork observation, the resulting studies tend to be so specific that they resist any anchorage with a broader systematic theoretical framework beyond the case under analysis (Orozco Gómez 1997, p. 118). In contrast, the Latin American essayistic analysis on communication matters has had a progressive disdain for primary sources and empirical data. And what was once the trigger of a critical stance towards media partly evolved into an area of research where loose speculation—sometimes amounting to charlatanism—is not at all hard to find.[51]

Communication in Canada finds itself in a peculiar position, and one might venture to say, mid-way between the US and Latin American scholarships. Even though Canadian communication studies has its roots in the study of political economy and policy (Taylor & op'tLand 2019, p. 93), the interaction of francophone and English-speaking universities in Quebec, which acted as an epistemological bridge between French semiotics and British cultural studies in the 1970s and 1980s (Robinson 2007 [1987], p. 3), has made up a field where few scholars seem to be carrying out quantitative, 'social-scientific' research, setting it apart from the U.S. Although the analysis of race, colonial power, and whiteness in the dynamics of our own field were insistently pushed aside (Chakravartty et al. 2018, p. 169), Canada's own history of knowledge-production tensions vis-à-vis the hegemonic center represented by the U.S., has shaped up a field attentive to power structures and its own marginal position since their early days, which has its points of contact with Latin American

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[51] For more on this critique, see "O estranho caso de certos discursos epistemológicos que visitam a área de Comunicação" by Wilsom Gomes (2003).

thinking.

This state of affairs complicates potential conversations between Anglo-Saxon and Ibero-American scholarship, as they generate very distinct narrative genres; one constrained by rigorous empiricism and a somewhat stiff writing style, the other prone to let itself go adrift in literary and essayistic forms (Scolari 2008, p. 47). In addition, as happens in nearly any other discipline or field in academia in terms of knowledge circulation, a geopolitical power dynamic is in place in a two-fold way. On one hand, the bests journals in Spanish or Portuguese receive far less diffusion than second-rate ones in English (Scolari 2008, p. 44). On the other hand, it is evident that while publications in English are addressed and discussed in Latin American academia (perusing articles on communication journals in Spanish or Portuguese shows clear evidence in that direction), the majority of their Anglo equivalents do not reciprocate the gesture. With the exception of French theorists, key in most 1980s and 1990s cultural studies works, the Anglo-Saxon academic community shows little interest in engaging beyond its established theoretical frameworks (de Moragas Spà 2011, p. 300).[52] Meanwhile communication studies in Latin America has always engaged with European and North American intellectual production, and its own identity owes a great deal to the long-standing influence of, discussion with, and resistance to Western knowledge.

Marked by the 1970s' military dictatorships in the Southern Cone, the development of the field in Latin America cannot be understood without putting in historical context the pressing matters that were at stake, when many researchers and intellectuals took up

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[52] And I am only mentioning one vector of inequality. For instance, to inquire on communication studies' citational politics in terms of gender, race, and sexual orientation, see: Mayer et al (2018). And focusing on race and colonial power, see: Chakravartty et al (2018).

residence primarily in Mexico. As much as Nazism severed the lives of the Frankfurt School

critical theorists forcing them to leave Europe and shaping their intellectual production as a

result, so did military dictatorships—which, incidentally, were funded and supported by the

U.S. government (Recalde 2010, p. 28-30)—deeply affect communication scholars in South

America. Their intellectual work in exile was naturally defined by that urgency, leading them

to "reinforce a concern with dependency, whether upon imported capital, technology,

professional practices or ideas" (Schlesinger 1993, p. x). Media research is since then carried

out in the context of a latent critical push-and-pull with Western theory, which is why recent

calls to "de-Westernize" the field of communication studies are interpreted differently in the

global South—as an act of critical resistance that is far from being news—and in Europe and

North America—as a plea to inclusiveness and a rupture with parochialism in scholarly

research (Waisbord & Mellado 2014, p. 362).[53]

But however divergent both academic cultures might be in style and methods, they are

somehow united by a sense of fragmentation and self-consciousness regarding their place in

academia. In fact, the 12 volume-*The International Encyclopedia of Communication* that

collects 1339 entries divided into 'areas of research' (edited by Wolfgang Donsbach and

published by the International Communication Association) is nothing but a testament to the

field's enduring fragmentation at a global level (Donsbach 2008). Far from being a case

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[53] Other examples come to mind regarding academic moves that were politically progressive in the other
contexts, but their adoption was seen, from the standpoint of scholars based in the periphery, as a gesture
of the oppressive power of the U.S. academic industry over local formulations. For instance, cultural
studies and postcolonial studies frameworks were initially received in Latin America with a great deal of
suspicion, being signaled as silencing the essayistic tradition and reproducing a hegemonic grammar and
vocabulary alien to a Latin American locus of enunciation (Richard 2002, p. 4).

closed, the status of communication studies is still up for discussion and serves as the unifying theme to field-wide conferences (such as the one organized by the *Asociación Mexicana de Investigadores de la Comunicación* (AMIC) in 2015). Journals have also devoted special issues to this topic, such as the *Journal of Communication*, which in 2018 published the third sequel—the second came out in 1993, the third in 2007—of the "Ferment in the field" issue originally published in 1983, which discussed the past, present, and future of the field (Fuchs & Qiu 2018). Even edited books on media discuss the issue—see, for instance, the introductory chapters to *Cultural Studies and Communications* (Curran, Morley & Walkerdine 1996), *Media and Cultural Theory* (Curran & Morley 2006) or the introduction to the series *Reimagining Communication* (Filimowicz & Tzankova 2020b); among others. Lingering questions of disciplinarity and institutional anchorage seem to be inherent to the academic study of media.

Put it differently, the field struggles to define a cohesive identity. The lack of a shared intellectual heritage, a coherent vocabulary, and a shared perspective hinders the field's ability to differentiate itself from other centers of knowledge production, building up a permanent tension that works both as the field's main asset (it is always exciting and in movement) as well as its central weakness (it makes for a feeble institutionalization in academia). What others described as being "always in flux, never at rest" (Gehrke & Keith 2015, p. 1), Guillermo Orozco Gómez, the Mexican theorist, called "*un estado de fragmentación efervescente*" (a state of effervescing fragmentation), which engenders both richness as well as contingency. "Our field," further elaborates Jonathan Sterne, "is as intellectually diverse as it is institutionally diffuse, and it continues to grow and meld with

allied disciplines" (Sterne 2011a, p. 1853). It has been called an "impossible discipline" (Pias 2011, p. 16) and, more recently, a *post-discipline*, "detached from clear-cut disciplinary allegiances" (Waisbord 2019, p. 127).

In spotting the field's fragmented condition and its unsuccessful attempts to become a discipline, the question about the existence of a *regard communicationnel* arises. In search of a peculiar trait that would provide a unifying umbrella for communication studies, Régis Debray came up with the notion of *médiologie*, arguing that what defines a discipline is not the object of study, but the way in which it is approached, *l'angle d'attaque* in his own words. If we look at the ample spectrum of the human sciences, he maintained, we will notice that each one of them draws on the same anthropological center, a distinct figure (2001 [2000], p. 14). What questions would a communication-centered study ask about photography?

Despite this and other efforts, communication studies never presented a united front. This muddles further the attempt to chart if and how photography has been a subject of the field's elaborations. Yet, with this caveat in mind, it is not far-fetched to point out that the study of photography has been curiously underdeveloped within our field, even though media research seems to be a potential natural fit for a deepened understanding of the photographic medium.

II.II.II. Why is Photography Left Out?

One reason that there was not a perceived need to study photography within communication studies lies perhaps in the historical development of the field, which emerged

concurrent with radio (and only slightly later with television), so that the newspaper, which may have raised the question of photography, was not the central focus it might have been. On top of that, in the context of the rise of mass media, a distinctive activity and field of study that emerged in the 1930s (Peters 1999, p. 22), photography was not scrutinized as part of the broadcast phenomenon, which at least in Anglo North America, came to stand as the predominant form of media. Unlike newspapers, the TV, the radio, or film, still photography was not seen as 'mass medium,' less because of issues of scale—it had acquired a mass base already by 1890—but because it did not fit easily into the 'one-to-many' transmission model of mass media. Like the fax or the telephone that were deprived of academic attention because they did not adjust to the broadcast narrative (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006; Light 2006 p. 372), photography was always underdeveloped within media research, deemed secondary to the printed news that accompanied it, and finding a better intellectual reception in the domains of the art historical, where its status grew to approximate that of painting, to be later embraced by all museums as an indisputable work of art.

This is not to say that communication scholars have been completely indifferent to photography. But even when photography was originally conceived "as a medium of communication in the strictest sense of the term –a tool for putting images in movement in order to be carried, marketed, and transported" (Leonardi & Natale 2018, p. 6) –the pursuit of image analysis often came at the expense of an integral reflection upon photography as a medium of communication. Photographs have been analyzed as being part of a given medium other than photography or simply hidden under the big umbrella of 'images' and not as a medium in their own right. Perhaps because the history of early photography was

inextricably tied to the advent of the graphic press (Leonardi & Natale 2018, p. 7), some

communication scholars have tried to achieve an understanding of the journalistic framing of

press photography.[54] In these works, the connotation-denotation duet developed by Roland

Barthes usually comes in handy to show the duplicity of meanings in a photograph.[55] Barbie

Zelizer, for instance, showed how the entrance of the United States in World War II changed

the function of photojournalism, which entered the scene with the clear mission of calling out

the "inadequacies of print journalism" (1995, p. 152), relying on the denotative function of

photography rather than on its constructed or connoted meanings. In spite of how significant

photography was in redefining the practice of news reporting,[56] the journalistic world is said

to have a history of ignoring the discussion of its visual elements (Zelizer 2005, p. 173).[57]

Scholars have pointed to communication studies' lacunae when it comes to sound

media, for example, showing how the field has systematically been visually-centered (Beard

& Bodie 2015, p. 208-9). But this identification of a visual bias in the field[58] makes it all the

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[54] Although, as a recent book on visual journalism remarks, press photography remains an understudied object (Hill & Schwartz 2020 [2015], p.3).

[55] One could say that, in general, introductory courses to communication studies usually touch upon photography as a realistic mode of visual representation on the week or class devoted to semiotics and to Barthes' notions of connotation and denotation, which is in fact the only instance in which photographs are generally used.

[56] As referenced in Chapter I, a recent book on the history of press photography posits that in the transition from engravings to the adoption of the halftone process in the press, photographs were actually becoming one of the most relevant ways of delivering the news (Gervais & Morel 2020, p. 13).

[57] According to Barbie Zelizer: "Though recognized at least in the popular imagination as powerful and authoritative, photographs remain a vehicle for news relay that is unaddressed by the community most relevant in determining their use – journalists" (20005, p .173).

[58] In addition to Marshall McLuhan (2011 [1962]), Walter Ong (2002 [1982]) and Michel Foucault (1975), for an interesting reading on the hegemony of vision in Western epistemology and culture, see for instance: Evelyn Fox Keller & Christine R. Grontkowski (1983), Christian Ferrer (1996); Emmánuel Lizcano (2006), among others.

more surprising that photography is still something of a sidebar within media research.

Photography certainly sits low in the hierarchy of communication studies, so much so that it is hardly ever included as a *medium* in theories of communication. Most communication theory books and readers do not mention photography at all [for instance, in Wolf (1987 [1985]), Mattelart & Mattelart (1998 [1995]); Stacks & Salwen (2009); Packer and Crofts Wiley (2012); Stacks, Salwen & Eichhorn (2019); Bruhn Jensen (2012; 2021)]. Sometimes photography is just mentioned in passing (Curran & Morley 2006; Papathanassopoulos 2010; Filimowicz & Tzankova 2020a; Lievrouw & Loader 2021)]. Some readers with foundational texts on communication research refer back, at most, to one author of the classic triad—Roland Barthes, John Berger and/or Susan Sontag (Cobley 1996; Beck, Bennett & Wall 2004; Craig & Muller 2007). But few if any tackle photography as a medium of communication as they do with the TV, newspapers, or the radio, which are seen as 'the media' before the Internet, whose shared characteristic is its 'dailiness' (Jensen 2021, p. 227). Coincidentally, several anthologies devoted to digital culture, written mostly by media scholars, systematically leave the photography chapter to art-historical faculty (for example: Cobley & Albertazzi 2010; Daubs & Manzerolle 2018). In the same vein, it is at least suggestive that in The Routledge Introduction to Media and Communication series, for instance, it is invited artist Stephen Bull, based in the department of Arts and Culture at the University of Brighton, who writes the book dedicated to photography (Bull 2010).

It is also revealing that a keyword search of one of the most important communication studies journals in North America shows that the term 'photography' appears very rarely

compared to other media forms.[59] In line with this state of affairs, scholarly works on the history of media are not an exception, as they also tend to overlook photography as a medium, granting it attention only in passing (Leonardi & Natale 2018, p.1), and undercutting photography in contrast with the consideration given to telegraphy, sound recording, film, and television (Natale 2018, p. 34).

Even though twentieth century's dominant definition of mass media as "agents of mass control and persuasion that somehow, via their repetition, ubiquity, and subliminally iniquitous techniques bypassed the vigilant conscience of citizens…" (Peters 1999, p. 94) seems like nothing so much as a description of the photographic medium, photography still does not make the cut and, if anything, it is deemed a 'pre-existing technology' along with the telephone, the telegraph, and sound recording, which both radio and television have supposedly grown out of [see, for instance, McQuail's seminal textbook, *Mass Communication Theory* (2010 p. 34)]. In fact, past Baudelaire's generation, photography was hardly ever to be shortlisted amongst the 'new media' to which scholars were paying attention; not in the peak of so-called broadcasting media, nor in the advent of digital media. However, photography has proved nothing but resilient and has adapted and survived each and every announcement of its death, suggesting that it is a technology "with manifold and conflicting possibilities" (Mumford 1934, p. 343), as much as a cultural burning desire, as Batchen once put it.

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[59] In a recent online search (February 2019), the term photography appeared only 56 times in *New Media & Society*. Moreover, 52 of these references were about digital photography. In contrast, searching for the term 'television' in the same journal results in 499 hits, while other terms such as 'computer,' 'radio,' and 'film' were mentioned 754, 314, and 225 times, respectively.

What does this state of affairs say about communication studies and photography? Probably, that communication scholars did not feel they had enough vocabulary with which to speak about photography beyond Barthes's *connotation/denotation* formula and the terms and framework of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (2008 [1972]), which are part of most introductions to communication studies courses. According to Will Straw, "the social uses of photography were always studied with more finesse by sociologists and anthropologists" (2015b).

In the end, any effort to define photography from a communicational perspective will confront the difficulty of the lack of a common language to talk about it and the need to mobilize our own vocabulary to address the medium. A media researcher would "lay aside the specialized lenses of the aesthete" (Debray 2000 [1997], p. 109) in order to think photography in terms of production, transmission, and reception.

Jonathan Sterne observed that disciplines never fully constitute their objects. Instead, they fight over them: geographers wrestle with the notion of space; anthropologists over the notion of culture, and so on (2005, p. 251). If each perspective calls for a different framing of its object, then when it comes to photography, communication studies has yet to consider and debate the medium in order to make a solid contribution. Since each field is not only an arena of conflict and symbolic capital play in the Bourdieuan sense, but also a 'conversational net' with its own linguistic agreements (Scolari 2008, p. 23), let us imagine how photography might look within our field (actually, within this study, but I will overstate this in the interest of discussion).

We will embark upon the deployment of media-focused language to talk about

photography, in that way pushing against the emphasis on the aesthetic implications of the

photograph in order to give space to talk about photography as a medium of communication.

My aim here is not to stake out the field's boundaries—a tricky, tedious, and useless

objective as proved above—but to disrupt the narratives of the so-called photographic

critique[60] by taking 'communication' as photography's analytical point of departure. In other

words, I seek to change the point of view from which we ask questions about photography

and raise a critical awareness regarding photography's mediating role as one of the dominant

contemporary visual experiences.

II.III. Photography in This Study

To imagine photography as a medium of communication requires elucidation of both

these specific terms, which, in tandem, offer a particular way of developing a sense of

photography as a communicative gesture, and in the end, as a form of action. I now turn to

discuss how these two categories allow for photography to be conceived of in a creative way,

one focused on studying photographic interactions and the shared understandings –and

perhaps internalized expectations—around the practice of taking, sharing and looking at

pictures.

II.III. I. The Photographic Medium

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[60] For a succinct yet exhaustive panning of Western photographic critique, see: Gattinoni and Vigouroux (2017).

In ordinary parlance, *medium* immediately suggests the human intermediary through which a spirit communicates with the living world. John Durham Peters shows that far from an arbitrary connection, electrical media were originally understood through a spiritualist metaphor. The telegraph was seen from the outset as a mechanism to bridge the gap between the living and the dead, and this "cross-fertilization between spiritual and technical realms is decisive in the making of the modern vocabulary and vision of communication…" (Peters 1999, p. 95). That photography and spiritualism would cross paths seemed to be only a matter of time,[61] especially given their coincident development throughout the nineteenth century, as spiritualism—although an ancient practice—took momentum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century not only in the U.S.—as documented by Peters—but also in England, in France a decade later (Chéroux 2005 [2004], p.47), in Spain (Ardanuy & Flò Csefkó 2018, p.489), and in Latin America in general (Muñoz Salinas 2012). In the 1860s, photography and spiritualism converged in antithetic uses: at the same time that it sided with spiritualist premises by proving that communication with the beyond was possible, it made fun of it, producing iconography with two simultaneous and opposite functions (Chéroux 2005 [2004], p. 46). The term "medium" in this context referred both to an intermediate facilitator as well as a *means* for doing something. Only later, in the 1960s, did it come to denote the general sense of *mass* media, to then return to just *media* in

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[61] The history of photography and that of spiritualism have many points of intersection and the most prolific interaction took place between 1870 and 1930 since the wars encouraged the practice of spirit photography, as those who had lost a loved one were more than willing to try and communicate with them (Apraxine & Schmidt 2005 [2004], p. 15).

everyday and academic contexts in order to include a wider range of communication

platforms, such as digital media (Jensen 2008, p. 1).

As it turns out, media is as complex a notion as politics, in the sense that it can

comprise virtually everything under the sun, as long as it does the job of mediating or

carrying information. German New Media Theory in particular advocates for a more

inclusive notion of medium, blurring the boundaries between nature and culture, and

cheering for a wider conception of a media ecology based on intermedial relations where all

forms of matter count as media (Herzogenrath 2017 [2015], p. 4-5). And it appears that it

makes increasingly less sense to reduce the notion of media to technologies of

communication strictly speaking, nor to any cultural form or even symbolic system (Pias et

al. 2004, p. 10). John Peter Durham argues for an enlarged sense of the term, one that

includes environmental natural elements that do not strictly produce meaning but make its

existence possible in the first place (2016, p. 3). Even Friedrich Kittler's purposefully

reduced categorization of three media functions (processing, transmission, and storage) gives

way to an extended catalogue of media, from the eyeglasses that remembers its owner's head

size to the bagel whose hole carries out the inscription of an older function –vendors used to

carry them on poles (Straw 2015a, p. 128). But what is interesting about the notion of

medium is not necessarily its elasticity or capacity to show that practically any object has

medial attributions, but the invitation to the exercise of examining a given technology or

cultural form by pausing to ponder its medial functions.[62]

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[62] For instance, see Will Straw's piece on the medial functions of the music chart (2015a).

It is somewhat ironic that throughout the ontological search for that which defined

photography, many missed the point that photography was, essentially and above all, a

medium of communication. Susan Sontag lucidly took note of that critical myopia when in

On Photography she insisted that the question of whether photography is an art was a

misleading one. "Like language, " she stressed, "it is a medium in which works of art (among

other things) are made" (1990 [1973], p. 148). [63]

In order to think of photography as a medium, some of Marshall McLuhan's insights

come in handy. Indeed, McLuhan's thought has much to offer to the study of photography,

both because of this thinker's place within communication studies—traditionally reviled as

an exemplar of technological determinism and more recently experiencing a comeback

especially in German media theory—and because McLuhan's distinctive approach to

'electric media' can help us reflect on some of the implications of photography in the present.

His "the medium is the message" adagio, celebrated and slandered in equal proportions,

brings in the analytical need to distinguish between photographic image and photographic

medium as the conduit for that image, which is also useful to mark a distinction with

'medium' as understood in art historical jargon, that is, as the artwork's genre or as the

material employed by the artist (Belting 2011 [2001], p. 18). Although materially inseparable

from the image, the medium—historical and subject to change—hosts and codifies that

image in a particular way, "imposing its structural character and assumptions" (McLuhan

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[63] Sontag goes on to provide examples that equates the creative force of photography to that of language in
general: "Out of language one can make scientific discourse, bureaucratic memoranda, love letters,
grocery lists, and Balzac's Paris. Out of photography, one can make passport pictures, weather
photographs, pornographic pictures, X-rays, wedding pictures, and Atget's Paris" (1990 [1973], p. 148).

1960, p. x). While the technical possibilities of the medium in question seem to inevitably shape the message, the emergence of newer media generates different affordances and social norms that can be particularly visible in the early stages of their introduction as they get crystallized in a set of naturalized expected behaviours and uses. But at the same time that media are "effectors of ideology," to borrow Jean Baudrillard's words (1981, p. 168), the notion of medium allows one to acknowledge photographers as active producers of information. Media in this sense accommodates a more comprehensive definition of photography, one that not only encompasses aesthetics and representational issues, but that also includes activities, practices and social arrangements related to photographs in the digital era and the fact that they are very easily produced, stored and transmitted (Logan 2007, p. 7).

If in the past, print paper was the leading external support for photography, nowadays the hegemonic host of pictures is the screen; specifically, the phone's screen. As no medium can exist in a stagnant mode, photography—while essentially keeping much of what came into being in the late 1800s as it still extracts a still image of what is out there as an effect of the interplay of light and lenses—has obviously changed in form, uses, and mode of deliverance in our contemporary media logics. Photography now shares its affordances of representation with a newer media, the portable computing device that has descended from the older telephone: the smartphone. In this medial junction, a hybrid medial phenomenon takes place. The point of analytically separating photography from the multifunction device in which it now takes part, is to identify those established social norms that "never entirely fade but continue to shape patterns of use and the sense of what a specific medium is and

how it differs from other media" (Chadwick 2013, p. 23). At the same time, if approached with "mediological curiosity", as Régis Debray would put it, photography and its convergence with digital and mobile technologies would naturally raise the question of the type of communication this novel configuration engenders. To put it differently, media research invites a rethinking of photography through its communicative functions and its role "in reorder(ing) interaction" (Peters 2006, p. 121).

II.III.II. Photography Becomes Conversational

Prior to the internet and mobile technology, photography did not incite much talk about interaction or conversation, as it functioned as a one-way medium that did not seem to provoke an immediate visible response or a response at all. As a quick coming and going was not established between the photographer and the viewer, they were not temporally connected. If anything, the impact of photographs, particularly documentary pictures denouncing a harsh reality, was understood either as an eye-opener and call for action with respect to the depicted situation, or as its opposite, the anesthetization of the viewer towards what was conveyed, which could even lead to finding beauty in the portrait of a horrible situation. [64] Photography has indeed been charged numerous times with taking part in (and

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[64] Beautification can happen either because the photograph has "lost its locus in the world" (Belting 2011 [2001], p. 41) and starts to be shown in the art circuit—galleries, museums, etc—or because of the very composition of the picture itself. For instance, critics accused Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado of creating gorgeous images out of devastating situations of poverty supposedly reinforcing "our passivity toward the experience they reveal" (Lévi-Strauss 2003, p. 8).

being complicit with) what it depicts if only by making a spectacle of what it shows.[65] But as a means of transmitting non-verbal information, its statements were still often taken as a *fait accompli* more than as a message or a unit eliciting a conversational chain or a dialogue. Networked mobile technology came to disrupt that for photography, making evident that in our common experience there is more than being simply 'bombarded' by images. The 'iconic turn' might have bestowed agency on the power of images (Stocchetti 2011, p. 11), but the smartphone twisted that equation around by turning everybody into photographers who engage with the photographic in more than just passive contemplation. Lurking, snatching, posing, posting online, sending, editing, cropping, storing, deleting, printing, and chatting make for an incomplete list of actions involving photography, and bring communicative features of the medium into everyday interaction.

In other words, by turning photography into a personal and ubiquitous instrument, the smartphone has turned photography into a conversational medium, one that is enmeshed in the back and forths of small talk on the screen. People are seen clicking casually and offhand, infusing their daily interactions with an added meaning. "Conversation", John Durham Peters elaborates, "has often come to approach something like mass communication, in its miscellaneity, juxtaposition, automatism, and jumbled editing" (2006, p. 124).

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[65] Susie Linfield argues that it is unfair to demand photography to take responsibility for the events it portrays. The real question behind this situation, she says, is not how gruesome or pornographic images are, but what we—as viewers—do about them. By relocating the focus of attention on our reactions to journalistic depictions instead of on images per se, she aims to call for an 'ethics of seeing' "transforming our relationship to photographs from one of passivity and complaint to one of creativity and collaboration" (2010, p. 60). As Didi- Huberman once said, maybe we are demanding too much of a photograph (2003, p. 32).

This is hardly the first time that a new technology pushes photography closer to the everyday. What is going on in the present with the smartphone is reminiscent of the launch of the Brownie in 1900, marketed for one dollar and giving rise to the auto-chronicling of one's household, or that of the Leica, in 1925, which also changed the kind of pictures and who was able to take them up to that moment (Hockney & Gayford 2016, p. 304). It is, however, the first time that people send and receive visual reports that are looked at in a glance as part of their daily interactions and quotidian conversations. Continuous connectivity and the portability of the mobile phone camera is, then, the basis for the heightened role that the camera phone has in the present. Photography has been made available at all times. It is a wearable device, which makes real and convenient the possibility of engaging in online chats or conversations where photography plays an essential role in getting a message across, breaking free with former conventionalisms that tied the practice to a certain propriety. The conversational potential of photography, which we are only recently discovering, disorganizes previous social uses and embedded rules of the medium.

In the same way as writing, and by extension, reading meant a turn to one-self inasmuch as people "learned to read silently" (Kittler 1986 [1999], p. 8), electronic media, conversely, seem to bring about a 'retribalization' McLuhan deemed a function of speed (p. 118). McLuhan saw that electronic media advanced a return to some of the basic characteristic of so-called 'oral cultures'; namely, the simultaneity of verbal communication. His disciple Walter Ong, in turn, developed a canonical theory of orality and coined the terms *primary orality* –to which he assigns a mindset that corresponds to cultures with no knowledge of writing—and *secondary orality*, that addresses the confluence of oral and

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literate elements in mass media in the 1960s, such as the TV or the radio (2002 [1982], p. 10-1).[66]

A big caveat arises in bringing a near-oral character of photography into attention, as the very term *orality* and all its etymological derivatives, are unavoidably attached to Ong's theory, once canonical within communication studies in North America and elsewhere. It is a loaded notion, and a controversial one at that, for a number of justified reasons. For one, it is firmly rooted in the classic Western episteme whereby the sense of hearing is subordinated to that of seeing, a binary opposition that some scholars struggle to undo. Then, there is the issue of the theological and ecclesiastical core set of beliefs that it stems from. As the central concern behind the notion of orality has to do with a spiritual search to be in the presence of God, this ultimately informs the theoretical account as a whole: from a certain nostalgic longing towards more 'authentic' interactions to the 'secondary orality' in which Ong finds a light of hope in the modern context (Sterne 2003a, p.16-7; 2011b, p.217-8). A close study of Ong's oeuvre has also shown technical errors in its theological approach (Sterne 2011b, p. 217). Not unrelated, McLuhan's and Ong's characterization of an oral mindset reveals the works of whiteness in their oversimplification towards sound-based societies (Sterne 2011b, p. 220).

While the incentive to "free ourselves from the concept of orality" is a strong one (Sterne 2011b, p. 209), some of the purported features of an oral culture, if taken with a big

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[66] Following Ong, a few media theorists noticed a revitalization of orality in digital culture and called it *tertiary* or *post-secondary orality*, which would describe our current ground, where subjects "are mediated through technological interactivity" (Lamberti 2012).

grain of salt, are still worth a look when exploring this rather novel dialogical trait of photography, as they point to several issues undergirding our present day. Because telecommunications crossed with the digital camera leads to the real-time transmission of these "statements without syntax" (McLuhan 1964a, p. 201), some of Ong's speculations regarding the temporal anchorage of oral societies are of particular interest, such as that they live very much in the present by unburdening themselves with memories that are not significant in the now (2002 [1982], p. 46). What is more, with the internet and specially with smartphone technology, photography is expected to provoke a response as much as a text message does: if not immediately, at least in a short time frame.

This suggests that photography may be in the process of turning its temporality comparable to that of sound or face-to-face communication, which would be a pretty big turning point for the medium in terms of its uses. Traditionally, the photographic image translated into a surface has been regarded as a *token* or *trace* of the past, a survivor of the passing of time, a guarantee we can access a past that we have not lived yet constitutes us as a society.[67] Conversely, in oral communication, utterance coincides with disappearance (Langford 2001, p. 122). I would like to develop that feature characteristic of sound to explore how photography may be becoming more dialogical, turning its temporality comparable to that of sound or face-to-face communication.

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[67] For an overview of the theorization of photography as trace, see: "Das Bild als Spur. Mutmassung über ein untotes Paradigma," by Peter Geimer (2006, p. 5), and "L'acte photographique. Pragmatique de l'index et effets d'absence," by Philippe Dubois (1990). Dubois also elaborated on the passage of analogue to digital in terms of the trace-image and the fiction-image, zooming in on a principle of doubt introduced by the possibility that images could be computer-generated (2016).

II.III.III.A Communicative Gesture

This brings us to *communication*.[68] The overarching notion informing the study would be to conceive of it as something we do, a form of action, and "above all else, a techné" (Sterne 2006, p. 91). The term *techné*, as originally developed by Aristotle, encompasses both a practical art (understood as the process of producing things in the world) and as a practical sense or *savoir faire* (as contingency knowledge behind such production). As a general metaphor for communication, it stresses the individual *action* of communicating as well as its social dimension (Sterne 2006, p. 94). Moreover, *techné* implies that a certain skill is put in motion in the transformation of a raw material (Stiegler 1998 [1994], p. 93). In *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle reminds us that techné "is concerned with coming into being" and looks for technical and theoretical means of producing a thing (1984 [350 B.C.E], Bk VI, 4, p. 1799). Thus, *techné* is nothing other than the production of forms, and through it, of judgement (Stiegler 2009 [1996], p. 147). In the end, all human activity is related to *techné*, all the more language, even if speech is not the forte of the person speaking. At the same time, *techné* is inherently related to the idea of artifice and prosthesis, of tool or instrument. Drawing on these ideas, this study inches towards focusing on what

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[68] Different theories of communication have tried in vain to settle on an encompassing model and definition of communication: "We can say even say that the theories of communication haven't been anything more than a great conversation to clarify the meaning of the term communication" (Scolari 2008, p. 24). Each and every communication theory is also based on a metaphor, drawing attention to and playing down on different aspects of the communicative process. Recapitulating: a canal, a tube, a contract, a net, and so on.

people *do* with photographs, how they experience photography, and the 'protocols'[69] around

such a practice, instead of on what people actually say with or through them, a perspective

that takes us away from striving to find a unifying essence in photography and to conceive of

communication as a merely instrumental notion. Instead, taking the cue from Jesús Martín-

Barbero, this perspective rejects a notion of communication that assumes all cultural and

social changes to be simply the by-product of technological innovation and busies itself to

better our understanding of the role of communication in the formation of specific cultures

(1993 [1987], p. 209).

By the hand of the cameraphone, which has put photography at the core of social

media, several scholars have been compelled to acknowledge the imperative of thinking

about photography by putting the issue of representation on hold in order to pay attention to

it as a specific social practice, rather than being preoccupied by its ontological status.[70] This

study joins this modest crowd, and it does so by bringing Pierre Bourdieu back into the

discourse of photography in a two-fold way. The first is by reclaiming his insights on

photography, which, as Abigail Solomon-Godeau notes in *Photography Theory*, are virtually

absent in art historical analysis (2007, p. 257), even when he was the head researcher behind

one of the first sociological-driven studies of amateur photography. Bourdieu's *Un art*

moyen: essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie (1965) deserves to be read in the

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[69] I borrow this term from media historian Lisa Gitelman, who defines media protocols as "norms about how and where one uses [media]," that is, conventions and uses around a given medium that become self-evident due to social process (2006, p.5).

[70] For instance, Patrick Maynard defined photography as a technology whose uses amplify our powers to do certain activities and he centers on imaginings things and detecting things (1997, p. x). Edgar Gómez Cruz sees it as a practice that bestows meaning onto the pictures (2012, p.55).

light of current photographic practices (Paquet 2016). The second is by defining photography

as a practice with a social function through his notion of *practical logic* (closely related to his

oft-cited concept of *habitus),*[71] which Bourdieu came up with to designate the repertoire of

practices that become 'second nature' or embodied knowledge (1990 [1980], 80-97; 1998

[1994], p. 127-40). Through this prism, we are invited to think about photographic

communication as an action in permanent tension between consciousness and automatism, a

mechanical gesture that is yet spontaneous. Or in other words, we will think about the

seemingly spontaneous and common-sensical behaviour of taking, sending, and sharing

pictures as a voluntary act that is both socially acquired and regulated.

A central appeal of this perspective is that it captures and explains the significance of

media and cultural shifts without ever falling into technological determinism or

anthropocentrism. Moreover, this notion poses interesting challenges to photography for the

purpose of reflection, as it tends to set the medium momentarily apart from the actual

production of meaning—the picture per se—while stressing the complexity of the action of

photographing. It allows us to think of photography dialectically, as an action that imposes a

logic on its agents while being simultaneously appropriated practically, "reviving the sense

deposited in them and at the same time imposing the revisions and transformations that

reactivation entails" (Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 57).

One of the paradoxes that Bourdieu observed in his 1965 seminal study was that

amateur photography, which to all appearances does not follow any rule set in stone, was in

fact a highly regulated practice, constrained by a certain 'correctness' that ensures its

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[71] I will be following Jonathan Sterne's call to use Bourdieu in the analysis of digital media (2006; 2003b).

continuity over time. This 'system of dispositions,' which guarantees the continuity of a practice and becomes objectified in bodies becomes a sort of *docta ignorancia;* a kind of knowledge that does not master any knowledge at all of its own governing principles (Bourdieu 1990 [1980], p. 102). In fact, one could say that this characteristic is standard when it comes to describing the relationship between people and technological gadgets as we, for instance, send pictures to one another without giving it a moment's thought. The majority's lack of technological knowledge and the subsequent power in possession of a handful of coding superstars who are in charge of the built-in grammars by which technologies function was duly noted by Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser, from whom I borrow the notion of *communicative gesture* in order to account for the habit of snatching and sharing (by sending or posting) photographs.[72]

The concept of *communicative gesture* acknowledges an intention driving the act to photograph as well as an ostensible body predisposition that is somehow enmeshed with the apparatus (the camera phone in this case). We always create images within the camera's terms. We work *against* it inasmuch as the camera does what the photographer commands, but the photographer has to will what the camera can do (2012 [1983], p. 35). As a result, the camera's technical possibilities actually shape the mass of images that are created, resulting in the predominance of a certain kind of imagery. But the gestural side of photography reminds us that even if this is the case, we can still observe an intention in the gesture of photographing, a technologically constrained will but a moment where decisions are taken all

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[72] McLuhan also saw the majority being manipulated due to its lack of knowledge about the nature of electronic forms (1980 [1977], p. 122).

the same. As a notion, a *gesture* addresses our own involvement in the production and circulation of images, an aspect that a communication studies approach should account for and that is many times eclipsed when scholars talk about the ubiquity of photographic images. It points to an ostensible mode of getting a message across, provided the gesture is seen. At the same time, the gesture implies both exteriorization and prosthesis, "and there can be no gestures without tools and artificial memory, prosthetic, outside of the body and constitutive of this world" (Stiegler 1998 [1994], p. 152)

While the *gestural* aspect of photography implies an intention behind picture-making, the *practical logic* or *sense* informing the same act also acknowledges that photography is a highly conventional practice and part of a crystallized set of operations. In addition, the Bourdieusian notion also calls for a rejection of the metaphysics of photography (to which writings on the subject are prone) as an entity in itself, external, and previous to its practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995, p. 95).

As stated previously, my working hypothesis is that the ascendance of the camera-phone changed photography's predominant social function (that of recording and storing 'souvenirs'), making the photographic image serve no longer, or not primarily, as a repository of memories for future contemplation but as a time-value product with a short life. I frame this study under the assumption that photography has undergone a shift, and I argue that this shift is a temporal one. Several thinkers have pointed that we are indebted to writing for the emergence of historical temporality (for instance: Heidegger 1967 [1927]; Flusser [1987] 1992; McLuhan 1964b; Stiegler 2009 [1996], among others). Alphabetic writing made us experience time in a progressive and unidirectional manner, and thus—among other

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cultural changes that came along such as the invention of the printing press—made the emergence of the idea of history possible. Photography, another form of recording, induces a different kind of temporalization, one that could be described in terms of an 'all-at-onceness' (Poster 2011, p. xvi). McLuhan actually used that expression to develop the notion of *acoustic space* in electronic media, by which he attempted to describe the difference between the basic structure of a medium that unfolds in a linear form and stresses a "one-thing-at-a-time awareness" (1980 [1977], p. 123) and one that fosters the exact opposite. In spatial terms, this notion speaks to a sort of embeddedness; from a temporal point of view, it solicits simultaneity.

If media (techné) produces time, photography could only present time as late, or deferred, an *après-coup*. Analogic photography was characterized by what Barthes called *ça a été*, that is, the coincidence between the instant of when a photo is taken with the instant of that which is captured, a collusion of past and reality triggering a 'reality' effect (or *certitude*, in Barthes' terms) granted by photography's possibility of reproducing mechanically what could not be repeated existentially (1981 [1980], p. 4). Simultaneous transmission came to disrupt this definition, for 'real time'—perhaps the essential attribute of current technology—confers upon photography live transmission: captured event, input, and reception of this input all coincide in time. According to Bernard Stiegler, "this inaugurates a new collective as well as individual experience of time as a departure from historicity" (2009 [1996], p. 115) that makes it difficult to distinguish the event from its input and reception. The lack of delay or deferral between an event and its image represents a historical break for photography, which now seems to be trapped, like Jorge Luis Borges' Funes, in the present tense, in an

"unending production of temporal objects and the veritable conflagration of time, the quotidian being produced by the generalized performativity of quotidians of all sorts. Any event produced in this way is necessarily affective: it tends always to be treated as a brief news item…" (Stiegler 2009 [1996], p. 122).

All in all, the number of pictures together with their instant transmission paints a scenario where the act of making and circulating takes precedence over the act of meaning. One would think that now that there are photographers everywhere, images would be released to the anarchy of individual taste. Yet photography is still one of the most aesthetically regulated practices, as Bourdieu once noted (1990 [1965]-b, p. 7). The present proliferation of photographic images that tend to be quite similar to one another testifies to that phenomenon. One only needs to type 'sunset' on the picture-sharing site *flickr* and thousands of look-alike images that users uploaded will come up. This is exactly what the New York city-based artist Penelope Umbrico did for a solo exhibit where she displayed a thousand and fifty-eight pictures of people posing in a sunset background, pasted together in a grid mounted on a wall.
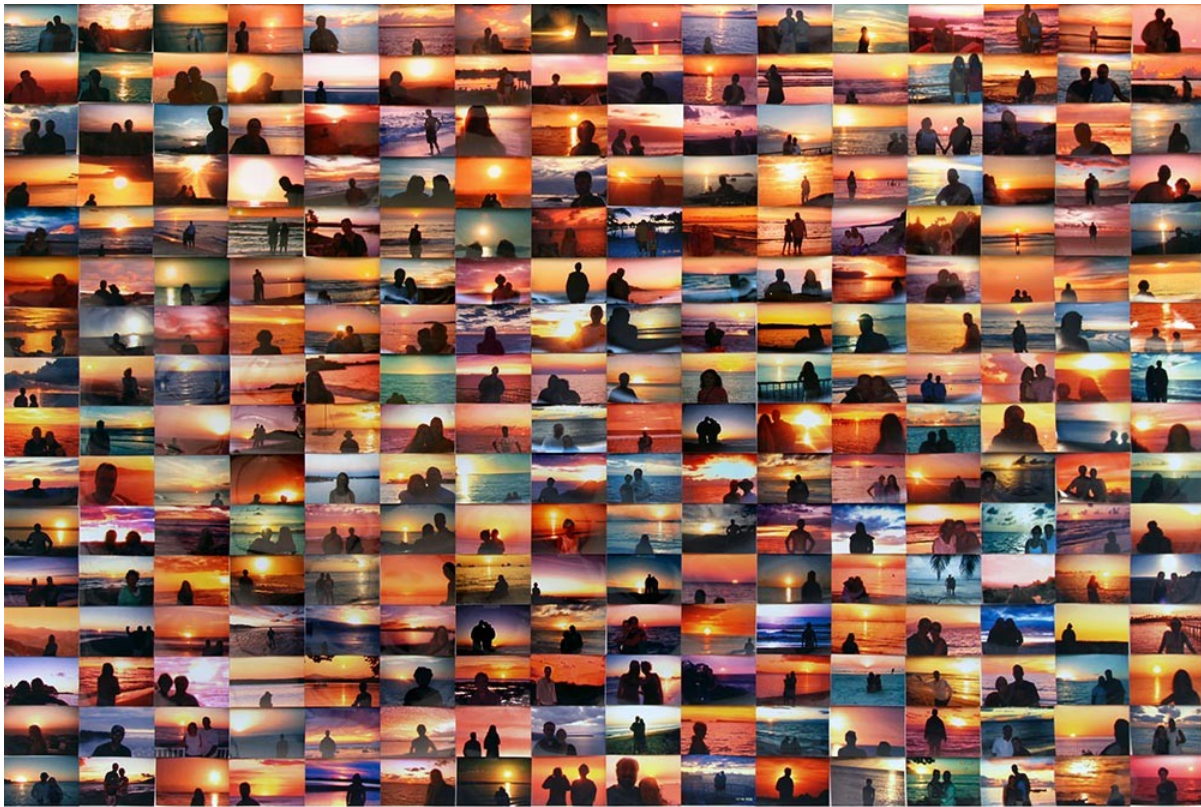
Penelope Umbrico, *Sunset Portraits 2011*. Courtesy of the artist.

In *Sunset Portraits, 2011*, the artist captures the contradiction between "the individual assertion of 'being here' in the photograph, and the lack of individuality that is ultimately the experience when faced with so many assertions that are more or less all the same" (Umbrico 2010). If nowadays, the prevalent use of photography makes it fit the description of 'orality,' which Walter Ong once described as redundant, situational, and evanescent (2002 [1982]), then it is worth pushing past a reading of images that centers on meaning to explore other significant aspects of photographic communication.

Through this triad (*practical logic/gesture/medium*) I am essentially proposing a constitutive relation between image, body, and apparatus. I attempt to sketch how the role of photography has transformed itself not only through the technological changes it underwent, but also through the experience of its users as their practices transform photography and "essentially *make* the technology in the first place" (Sterne 2003b, p. 374). I mobilize *practical logic* to counterbalance the notion of *gesture* that portrays a rational subject acting by deliberate will, but I keep *gesture* to grant the subject something more than just being subsumed into societal structure.

The following chapters center on specific gestures of past and current photographic dealings: taking photographs; sharing and sending photographs; and, finally, the conclusion touches upon looking at photographs online. I develop the theoretical implications of conceiving of photography as a medium of communication, weaving together the above theoretical points in the unfolding of each chapter.

CHAPTER III. Taking Pictures

This study seeks to provide an interpretative account of key aspects of photographing by employing a new type of focus that departs from classic concerns in photographic literature. It attempts to do so by breaking down photography in its different dimensions, which although impossible to understand independently, allow the luxury of providing undivided attention to each identified aspect; namely, taking pictures, sending and sharing them, and looking at pictures. These are different actions but are intertwined with one another.

This chapter devotes attention to taking pictures, perhaps one of the initial actions of any photographic experience altogether. But in the same way as the photographic image is said not to belong to the world of nature but to be a product of human labor (Damisch 1978 [1963], p. 70), and in that way inseparable from its cultural history, the same can be said about the photographic act. In order to provide a condensed narrative that does not disregard changes through time in this practice but does not fall into an exhaustive chronological account that would consume the entire chapter, I will center the analysis around three figures that can officiate as representative of juncture moments in how the medium shaped and was shaped by its operator, the photographer. The figures are: that of a *director*, which encompasses the first experiences of taking pictures and the role of the photographer in commanding the scene to be photographed; that of a *hunter*, who comes along when the photographic technology gets out of the studio and into the streets, prompting amateurs and

professionals to await the 'decisive moment' to snatch an image; and finally, that of the *communicator*, through which I seek to map out a reorganization of social interactions around the photographic *prise* with the advent of the smartphone. These figures do follow a chronological timeline, yet the historical approach rests primarily neither on technological discoveries nor on factual instances in photography's *parcours*. Instead, it is a narrative that chooses to not let go of chronology in order to allow the element of change to emerge and provide comparison between the chosen, arbitrary moments.

III. I. The Photographer as Director

The gesture of taking pictures usually slips into invisibility because the image takes pre-eminence before the academic eye. In the course of a couple of centuries, taking pictures went from an indoor activity left to professionals and the wealthy to be present in practically any household, touching and transforming all activities, science, and art alike.

The burden of picture-taking in the past is always fun to revisit, as it appears comical in comparison to how little the photographic technology currently demands of us. Suggestions about how to play around the early daguerreotype's incapability for taking portraits strike a smile: "Paint in dead white the face of the patient; powder his hair, and fix the back part of his head between two or three planks solidly attached to the back of an arm chair, and wound up with screws!" (*Quebec Gazette*, 13 November 1839, qted in Greenhill 1965, p. 21). Or how the need to hoard as much light as possible would force the sitter to be near a skylight, and preferably, under a boiling sun, to a dripping-sweat point (Freund 1974 [1936], p. 66).

Or how photographers made their way through technical limitations and the sitter's impatience by coming up with ingenious props, such as a movable pedestal that a London photographer devised to get the portrait in as little time as possible to prevent the sitter from losing "all animation" (Pritchard 1882, p. 71).

Early photographic experiences challenged sitters to be still for as long as thirty minutes, a period of time for which they would be strapped to some collar chains fitted to the back of their chairs (Nijhuis 2013). This scene is not simply amusing, but depicts a moment in which the introduction of a new media shows itself raw before being crystalized into habit. These moments reveal the arbitrariness of the set of dispositions that followed: the photographer was (and still is) working with and against the camera's technical prospects, bending even the sitter's will, many times resistant to using the head clamps.[73]

The sweating, the chaining, the occasional fainting due to the nervousness of posing for posterity (Robinson 1867, p. 112), the painting of the face, the torturous immobility on the beholder's end make the camera inevitably reminiscent of a torture instrument, as if the subject was literally surrendering herself to the machine in order to get her own image (Manovich 2001, p. 107). The emergence of a new occupation (that of photographer), arranged around an indoor yet luminous space—attics with rooftop skylights were most coveted—, the studio, which came into being due to a combination of factors such as the

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[73] British Victorian photographer Henry Peach Robinson gave tips to fellow photographers in a text entitled "How to manage your sitter" about how to convince the poser about the necessity of head clamps "ALWAYS USE A HEADREST- Explain that it is indispensable, and that it will give the portrait a better expression. You will have difficulty in persuading him of this, but try the effect of appealing to his good-nature, by telling him that the thought of there being much less chance of his spoiling the picture through moving, and giving you the trouble of taking another negative, ought to send such a glow of happiness through him, that it is certain to appear in his face" (Robinson 1867, p.113).

need for long exposure, the demand for portraits, and also the portraiture tradition in painting (Marbot 1987, p. 25); the expeditions to spread photography globally, the rise of the portrait as the keystone of the new medium—as it was both lucrative and compatible with the camera's limitations (Rouillé 1987, p. 51)—all will show that before becoming an essential element of modern civilization, the photographic medium had already started to have a key role in rearranging interactions in society.

III.I.I. First Picture-takers in Latin America

The propagation of photography is nothing but an early example of globalization, as the technique, cameras, ways of photographing and selling images were imported directly from Europe and the U.S. into the rest of the world. No wonder then, that Latin- American nineteenth-century portraiture is very similar to that of those regions. Physical features of the sitters, attire and certain uses marked distinctions, but cameras and the way of operating them were universal (Príamo 1999, p.5). The news about photography arrived in Latin America almost as simultaneously as it was invented. We can certainly relate to the excitement and the sensation caused by Arago's announcement in France if we think about today's dramatic unveiling of the latest Iphone (Zilio 2018, p. 17).

The *Jornal do Commercio*, a newspaper in Rio de Janeiro—the capital of the then Empire of Brazil—reports the thrill about the novelty already on May 1st 1839, only a couple

months after it was introduced in France.[74] The camera would actually disembark on Brazilian shores the following year, in Bahia, one of the destinations reached by the many Daguerreians who set sail to propagate the art of photographing. After introducing the camera in New York and Boston in the fall of 1839 (Palmquist & Kailbourn 2000, p. 5),[75] which constitutes the first photographic experience in the American continent, the carioca[76] newspaper *Jornal do Commercio* documents on January 17 1840, in the first left column of page 1, that "finally the daguerreotype arrived to these seas, and the photograph, which until now was only known in Rio de Janeiro in theory, has far exceeded what was read in the newspapers" (1840b).[77]

The training ship called *L'Orientale* had sailed from Nantes in the month of October 1839, taking forty French and Belgian students of distinguished families onboard along with a daguerreotype and a French priest called Louis Compte, who had been instructed on how to use the camera by Daguerre himself (Gesualdo 1990, p. 117). A long

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[74] An English translation of the piece published in the *Jornal do Commercio* in 1839 can be accessed in Kossoy (2018 [1977], p. 62-4).

[75] In the American continent, the first daguerreotypes were taken in New York in 1839 by D. W. Seaver, Samuel Morse, and John Draper. But they are no longer in existence, leaving the Brazilian ones to be the oldest surviving exemplars (Ferrez & Naef 1977, p.75-5).

[76] The term 'carioca' is a demonym that refers to someone or something from the city of Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil.

[77] Echoes of the arrival of the new technology happened all around almost at the same time: Caracas' *Correo* announced it in 30 of July 1839's edition (Dorronsoro 1999 [1985], p.11), *El observador* of Bogotá did the same on September 22th (Serrano 1983, p. 12). Mexico joined in in December in Veracruz's newspaper and on Mexico City's *El Cosmolita*, on January 15th 1940 (Casanova 2005, p. 21). *El Comercio* of Lima reported about it on September 25th 1839 but the technology appears to have arrived in 1842 (Schwarz 2007, p. 42).

first-page piece entitled "The Daguerreotype" on the *Jornal do Commercio* describes how the

process of taking a picture was demonstrated before the Brazilian imperial court:

> Having deigned the Emperor and Imperial Highnesses to accept the office made
> by Captain Lucas, commander of the school ship L'Orientale, to see put into use
> the Daguerre apparatus to take views. The said principal and the abbot Comte,
> in charge of the handling of the instrument, appeared in the palace of Boa Vista;
> and the latter had the honor of explaining the whole process in the presence of
> noble spectators. At that moment, the view of the facade of the palace taken
> from one of the windows of the tower was formed in 9 minutes, and then in the
> same time the general perspective that enjoys the balcony with all the smallest
> remains and variations. YE. and Imperial Highnesses were very satisfied with
> the experience, whose progress deserved all the attention, and whose products
> S.M. the Emperor deigned to accept (1840a, p. 1)

The corvette *L'Oriental* continued its course and arrived at Montevideo, Uruguay, in

February 29th, where the priest made a series of public demonstrations. The first of them

resulted on an image of the Cathedral taken from a balcony of the Cabildo in *Plaza Matriz*

(Cuarterolo 1995, p. 17) for which a set up process that may have lasted one hour or so was

required before taking the picture (von Sanden 2011, p. 29). The ship did not drop anchor in

Buenos Aires, as a naval blockade by the French Army had shut the port in 1838 (Galasso

2000, p. 530), which delayed the introduction of the daguerreotype into Argentina by three

years. The ship, which is said to have served as inspiration for Jules Verne's *Deux ans de*

vacances, was initially intended to circumvent the globe but touched at Valparaíso, Chile,

only to sink in Pacific waters shortly after leaving the Andean country, on June 23rd 1840

(Gesualdo 1990, p. 118).

There is an intrinsic randomness in the first steps of photography's propagation, as it

was not only tied to the erratic fate of travelers and their accidents of circumstance, but also

its impact depended on—often turbulent—political or social contexts (Marbot 1987, p. 13)[78].

The geographical accessibility of certain cities was also a contributing factor, as in the case

of Bogotá, a hard-to-reach and isolated city in the Andes, where a French diplomat and

enthusiast of Daguerre's invention, Jean Baptiste Louis Gros, imported the daguerreotype

that initiated Colombia into the new technology in 1841 (Moreno de Ángel 2000, p. 63).[79]

But the first studio to treat the elite was opened several years later, in 1848, by the New

Yorker John A. Bennett (Moreno de Ángel 2000, p. 172), who passed along the art to the

person who was probably the first Colombian photographer, the painter Luis García Hevia.

Conversely, Cuba's geographical closeness to the U.S. as well as the commercial importance

of its port, explains why it welcomed the daguerreotype early on, already by 1840 (Bermúdez

1991, p. 6). Chile, for instance, owes its relatively late introduction into the technical

reproduction of images to the fact that the artifacts that were intended to be brought into the

country were damaged on the way there. Only the third attempt, in October 1843 by the

French Philigone Diavette, would be finally successful. Yet, he did not know how to operate

the camera, and it was not until 1845, with the arrival of the brothers Ward from the U.S. that

Chile developed a steady daguerreotypist activity (Rodríguez Villegas 2001, p. 19-20).

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[78] The social landscape impacted not only the propagation of photography but also its discovery, as Boris Kossoy points out regarding the lack of conditions –socioeconomic, political and cultural—of the Brazilian context in the 1820s to welcome the photographic discoveries developed in their own territory by the French Hercule Florence. See: (Kossoy 2006 [1977]), or the French and English versions, respectively: (2016 [1977]); (2018 [1977]).

[79] Gros took the most antique daguerreotyped images of Colombia in 1842. One is the *Vue de la cathedrale de Bogotá*, and the other *Calle del Observatorio*, considered to be "an important piece in the history of photography" according to historian Eduardo Serrano, quoted in Moreno de Ángel (2000, p. 68).

Venezuela also suffered a fruitless attempt to introduce the daguerreotype, when a French businessman lost it in customs in de la Guaira (Dorronsoro 1999 [1985], p. 11).

Unlike the resistance that the new technology faced from painters in Europe, where photography was conceptualized mainly as a simpler way of reproduction than painting more than as a new form of expression and communication (Bermúdez 1991, p. 4), the Latin American artistic community, which was not still well established, did not appear to offer much opposition, as photography was seen as a technological advancement rather than a practice antagonistic to the arts (Cuarterolo 2006, p. 42).[80] What we study as the classic controversy between painting and photography, which urged painters to keep up with a faster pace to compete with photography (Buck-Morss 1989, p. 134-5), did not last long in Latin America, with the latter acquiring an independent status practically from the outset.[81]

In spite of the press enthusiasm, however, the daguerreotype did not strike the same popular interest in, say, Buenos Aires as it did in Paris or New York, probably mainly because of its elevated cost (Cuarterolo 1995, p. 18),[82] which made it ultimately an indulgence for the élite. For instance, John Elliot,[83] the first daguerreotypist to arrive in

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[80] There is an English version of Cuarterolo 2006. See also: Cuarterolo (2015).

[81] See page 89-90 in Mauad et al. (2015) for Brazil's case.

[82] To provide some reference, in Uruguay a daguerreotyped portrait would cost an equivalent amount to a construction worker's ten days of salary (von Sanden 2011, p. 36).

[83] John Elliot, the first daguerreotypist who arrived in Buenos Aires published a series of advertisements in several newspapers such as *La Gaceta Mercantil* until he left for a newer destination, the first of which read: "Portraits of Daguerreotype: Mr. Elliot has the honor of announcing to the respectable public of Buenos Aires that he has just arrived from the United States equipped with all the perfected machines of the Daguerreotype, and is able to offer his services in everything that corresponds to that admirable art, taking with utmost brevity and accuracy the portraits of people who would like to honor him with their trust and could attend to Recova Nueva, number 56, Plaza de la Vitoria from next Monday 26th, in which he will start his work" (1843).

Buenos Aires, remained the one and only for one and a half years (Vertanessian 2017, p. 97)[84]. And whereas the 'occupational portrait' that intended to depict the individual's métier was already widespread in North America, cutting across social classes in the form of cheap tintypes that "offended the photographic establishment,"[85] such a genre never took hold in South America except to depict high-rank military men, due partly to its high cost which restricted it to the rich (Vertanessian 2017, p. 94-5).

Figure 2. Occupational portrait of a seamstress, circa 1853. From the Library of Congress Daguerreotype Collection in Washington DC, US.

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[84] Gregorio Ibarra, who owned a lithographic studio, published an ad simultaneous to that of Elliot's, announcing that he had received two daguerreotype cameras, which was followed by another ad a couple of months afterwards where he sells the equipment; an indication that he had difficulties in mastering the technique (Cuarterolo 1995, p. 18)

[85] Occupational portraits, which emerged in the U.S. at a moment in time where work was turning increasingly impersonal and standardized and were meant to portray the individual pride of the working class, gradually decreased until they were no longer taken anymore by 1888, where people were more likely to pose with their toys rather than with their tools (Carlebach 2002, p. 53-4)

There are also some daguerreotypes in which the occupation of *estanciero* is revealed in the *gaucho* outfits, in blatant contrast with a luxurious furniture and setting, signaling a rural-urban juxtaposition specific to the agricultural wealthy of the Río de la Plata region (Cuarterolo 2006, p. 52). Brazilian photographer Marc Ferrez[86] also took pictures of people in their daily work dealings in his country (Bermúdez 1991, p. 18). Christiano Jr. produced studio photographs of slaves posing as if working, invariably barefoot, and not showing their names (Jaguaribe & Lissovsky 2008, p. 180-5). But rather than being 'occupational portraits' that the subject would strive to get, these *cartes de visites* were sold as 'types' to illustrate the life and people in the Americas (Mauad, Muaze & de Brum Lopes 2015, p. 87). The idea was to portray a treatment of slaves that, far from being cruel, was civilized and in keeping with a modern sensibility. In the following image, Christiano Júnior arranged the scene of a barber cutting the hair of another slave, dressed up in bourgeois outfits, but barefoot, an indication that they were indeed slaves (Machado Koutsoukos 2007, p. 465).

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[86] Marc Ferrez is most notably known for achieving the first vista of Rio de Janeiro in one take. Jorge R. Bermúdez laments the rather scarce recognition the photographer has in the history of photography and asks whether this would be the case had he been working in Europe or the US (1991).

Figure 3. Barber (*Escravo de ganho – barbeiro)*. José Christiano de Freitas Henriques
Junior, c. 1860 - c. 1870, Museu Histórico Nacional do Brasil.

While in Europe photography was closely related to the ascendance of the bourgeoisie and a celebration of capitalism, in Latin America the incipient modernity did not entail an ordering that followed a rigorous plan, as argued by Carlos Monsiváis (2012, p. 93). Several examples come to mind, but Brazil is one country where photography left an imprint of such eclecticism. As rich proslavery plantation families were the main consumers of photography, portraiture attempted to reconciliate seemingly opposite notions such as modern ideals with aristocratic values, liberalism with slavery, and the individual with patriarchal family values. In so doing, photography defined the paradoxical contours of citizenship, slavery, and the state of Brazilian society (Mauad, Muaze & de Brum Lopes 2015, p. 88).

Perhaps with the exception of Lima, Peru, where the daguerreotype was introduced early on in 1842, even before its arrival to Berlin (McElroy 1985, p. 5), numbers are categorical when comparing the elephantine quantity of daguerreotypes taken in New York with those produced in Buenos Aires or any other Latin American capital city.[87] This serves as evidence that the medium was far from settled on firm ground in the region. Perhaps due to its proximity to the United States, where more than 3 million daguerreotypes were taken by 1853 (Cuarterolo 1995, p. 17), Mexico had by the 1870s, 74 registered photographic studios, in contrast, for instance, to Colombia—back then called "Nueva Grenada"—which by then had 26, or to the 31 studios listed in the Río de La Plata region in Argentina (Debroise 2001 [1994], p. 30). Part of the explanation for this slow development is that photographers in South America were all foreigners and all itinerant, and they would set up

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[87] Whereas, by 1848, there were only 10 itinerant daguerreotypists in Buenos Aires, New York counted 77 established studios, which reduced dramatically the cost of the daguerreotyped image from 15 dollars to only 1 dollar in ten years (Cuarterolo 1995).

photographic studios provisionally in each South American city, always in the search of more profitable cities as the clientele was rather small; a point made by historian Vicente Gesualdo, who documented photographers' comings and goings in the Americas in detail (1990). Newspaper announcements of their services—many times directly published in English or French—spoke to the emergence of a nomadic and male-dominated occupation that remained itinerant until the mid 1850s (Debroise 2001 [1994], p. 28). Although generally accessed mainly by the rich, the Southern Andes region can claim to having had a profuse consumption of photographic images that went well beyond the elite, as studied by Jorge Coronado (2018). In Peru, and in Lima in particular, *cartes-de-visites* were a hit, so much so that those featuring famous personalities or foreign vistas were imported from the United States and France for a crowd of avid fellow collectors. This excitement over Disderi's invention also led into the fabrication of luxurious native-patterned albums inlaid with tortoiseshell and mother-of-pearl scrollwork (Sougez & Pérez Gallardo 2007, p. 602).

Those who toured Latin America clicking on their cameras had passed down their photographic knowledge to their local apprentices, who having learnt the métier under their tutelage, became, shortly thereafter, the first local photographers. By the end of 1840s, the profession of the photographer, once transhumant, slowly started to settle on urban centers and the business quickly became dependent on imported goods such as chemical substances and plates (Casanova & Debroise 1989, p. 40).

III.I.II. Photography and the idea of Nation

When Brazil established a monarchy of its own by 1822, independent from the Portuguese, most Hispanic American countries had also freed themselves from Spain. So while these newborn nations were shaping a visual national identity anew, photography came in handy for visually shaping the citizenry and a common narrative, launching "a particular mode of conceiving the nation" where sovereignty was built based on new forms of knowledge and classification (Cortés-Rocca 2011, p.13-4). In other words, "it was necessary to *make* the Brazilian, the Peruvian, the Colombian, or the Mexican…" (Navarrete 2017 [2009], p. 53). However, there is a historical gap in the photographic symbolism of the nascent nations, as photography was invented almost 30 years after the emancipatory wave, which explains why the 'great liberators' were not photographed in their prime. The only daguerreotype in existence is one of José de San Martín, which was taken in Paris in 1848, when he was already 70 years old (Laura Malosetti qted in Schvartzstein 2020).[88]

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[88] In episode 2 of the documentary series *La huella en la Imagen* (2020), directed by Darío Schvarzstein, researcher Laura Malosetti also explains how several men who had participated in the liberation of Latin American countries would pose, years later, on their uniforms. As years had passed, they would not fit properly, or would lack buttons, revealing the poverty in which many of them ended their days. It is, the director's voice in off adds, as if the daguerreotype wanted to rescue their past glories.

Figure 4. General José de San Martín, 1848, Museo Histórico Nacional de la República Argentina.

Paola Cortés-Rocca points out that instead of contributing to an already existing system of representation, photography inaugurated a specific way of constructing the common narrative of the nation. She gives two examples where photography sealed the deal hand in hand with the political actors: when Amadeo Grass takes the picture of the *Constituyentes* celebrating the first constitution of the Argentine confederation in 1853, and when Miramón

y Mejía takes a picture of Maximiliano I's firing squad, an act that sought to mark the foundation of a new Mexican order (2011, p. 13-4). The project of a nation, emanating from the urban conglomerations to more remote areas, was casted in instances where photography was state-sponsored (like the examples above) and by individuals, who through self-representation referenced their social milieu and status. Moreover, in small Latin American countries like Ecuador, puzzling out group family portraits can provide the genealogy of powerful alliances that constituted the elites of the new republic (Chiriboga & Caparrini 2005).

In spite of traits that are no doubt peculiar to each country, the coincident correlation between the nations being forged and photography's arrival in Latin America brings into view a shared "continental rhythm" (Cortés-Rocca 2011, p. 13). But what is interesting here, as noted by photography theorist Boris Kossoy, is the fact that the construction of the national via the photographic, rather than being based on autochthonic values, was conceived from the outside in. That is to say, the performance in photographic studios reproduced the expectations of a national character from the point of view of a European, in that way offering a rendering that satisfied their stereotypes. "The exuberant vegetation and the ethnographic series of the groups considered as racially inferior (…) were subjects that the European expected to see when it came to photographs of Brazil, or of other Latin American countries" (Kossoy 2014, p. 201)[89]. They were essentially *cartes de visites* or stereoscopic images portraying what were supposed to be typical characters of a given country—again,

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[89] The 'national types', for instance, was a photographic genre that became popular at the global level, including Latin America.

from a Eurocentric point of view. These became a central source of income for photographic studios, as they were collected or bought as touristic souvenirs (Kossoy 1998a, p. 40).

The universalization of photography imported and disseminated a Eurocentric gaze that left an imprint all along the continent.[90] However, in nations where the national identity was in health and in its full glory, as in Mexico, the international and commercial character of the portrait was not able to obliterate the emanation of genuine expressive local autonomy, as Jorge R. Bermúdez notes in reference to the photographs of Romualdo García (1991, p. 23-4). Photography not only had a role in constituting a national imaginary within Latin American countries, but it also projected a representation of each one of them in international conventions and fairs, which provided the main setting to communicate the advancements of the time.[91]

The daguerreotype, made with a light-sensitive plate held within a wooden cased camera, was well established in the nineteenth century and only by the start of the second half of the century saw its dominance diminish over paper photography, which was now capable of keeping up with the new culture of vulgarization (Fabris 1998, p. 16). Particularly in France, the United Kingdom and the United States, research efforts attempted to reduce the time of exposure and free the sitter from being stuck for a long time in order to get their picture made. Exposure times were so long that street scenes would not portray pedestrians

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[90] In Mexico city, for instance, the photographic studio of the Valleto Brothers was a perfect exemplar of European patterns applied into the conventions of portraiture (Negrete Álvarez 2003, p. 84)

[91] Claudia Negrete Álvarez points out that, for instance, in the pavilion dedicated to Mexico for a convention celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival to America in Chicago in 1893, the pictures exhibited followed an archeological aesthetics, whereas for the 1900 Paris Exposition, Mexico presented more Europeanized, less "national and exotic" images (Negrete Álvarez 2006, 53-4).

or traffic, as they moved too fast for the lens to record their image (Newhall 1937, p. 26).

The same erasing fate met the clouds of the Argentine pampa's sky in Benito Panunzi's

renowned work (Bermúdez 1991, p. 15). This setback was partially overcome with the

invention of silver-plated sheets of copper in 1839, which created one image, and were

superseded by the prints made from paper negatives Talbot dubbed 'calotype.' Yet these

were not able to displace the daguerreotype as a favorite means of image-making technology,

as the prints it produced had blurry contours (Fabris 1998, p. 14). But the invention of wet-

collodion process in 1851, which produced a high quality negative, merged the

daguerreotype's sharpness with the reproducibility of the calotype, with an exposure time of

between 2 seconds to one minute depending on the image in question (Fabris 1998, p. 16),

paving the way for modern reproducible photography. Although elites still favored the

daguerreotype until well into the 1860s (Fabris 1998, p. 20), the reproducibility of

photography eroded the character of relic that the daguerreotype still had, with a filigree

brass matte in a velvet-lined luxurious package (Mauad, Muaze & de Brum Lopes 2015, p.

78) meant to protect the image from outside damage. As fidelity was not as revered as in

Europe or North-America, the Latin American daguerreotype was often tinted over. Its image

was conceived as a strictly personal object of veneration, like jewelry; but one that was also

unique, as it did not allow for reproduction (Debroise 2001 [1994], p. 22). As Carlos

Monsiváis put it, "to the taste of knowing how other sees us corresponds the diversification

of the market"; so then the *cartes de visites* took over (2012, p. 13). Much cheaper and sold

in quantity, they initiated the habit of leaving one behind after a visit and of collecting them

in turn, at first on a tray, then as they grew rapidly in number, in a basket (Marcondes de

Moura 1983, p. 26) until the appearance of the album by 1850. People would pay a visit to someone, leaving a *carte de visite* behind, often with a dedication on it, that the host would paste into an album, crafting in that way a sort of catalog of the person's friendships (Vertanessian 2017, p.151). These albums were left close at hand in the living room for the visits to take a look at, and some were really luxurious and had built-in music boxes (Mauad, Muaze & de Brum Lopes 2015, p. 82).

III.I.III. New Media Establishes Embodied knowledge: taking and posing

The XIX century saw the popularity of the portrait grow as the most common photographic expression, whether in the form of a daguerreotype, a calotype or an ambrotype—also known as the 'the daguerreotype for the poor' due to its low cost and inferior quality (Fabris 1998, p. 16). The daguerreotype begged for stillness to record an image which, in turn, made posing an imperative. The long exposure times initially set the pose at the center of the photographic enterprise; yet this encouraged an exchange between both photographer and photographed in order to convene an appropriate tone to the image (Mauad, Muaze & de Brum Lopes 2015, p. 81), as well as the use of an array of other practices and artifacts to set the stage. The non-stop technological innovation rendered the necessity for posing obsolete by 1844 (Freund 1974 [1936], p. 30) as the exposure time was significantly cut down. Still, the spatial settings of the pose turned into "some sort of consensual misery" (Turazzi 1995, p. 16). In other words, portraiture's hold-still composition, originally a need imposed by the technical limitation of exposure time, became both ritual and embodied knowledge to everyone involved, developing a sort of

'performative competence.'[92] While the sitter had to prepare to perform before the camera, the photographer was in charge of dealing with the composition of the scene (Turazzi 1995, p. 14) in order to create a "new reality that would prevail after the referent's death: the reality of the photographic document" (Kossoy 2014, p. 111). Except for post-mortem photography, up until the 1860s having one's picture taken was not about registering special occasions—as it happened later when portraiture became a common practice also for the middle class. Rather, portraits were just a 'simple reminder' of a person or group (Príamo 1999, p. 6).

Confined to a studio space, taking pictures was the reign of the professional photographer, whose job was to create a tableau vivant worthy of a portrait by controlling three variables: the costumes, ambiance, and the pose (Cuarterolo 2013, p. 40). With the permission of technology, neutral backgrounds gave space to experiments with other ornaments, and soon enough the photographer was able to recreate, by means of theatrical backdrops and ornamental add-ups like columns, faux fire places, books, etc—spaces that lingered between the intimate and the public (Casanova & Debroise 1989, p. 50). Miss-matches flourished in a studio that became a "dressing room and stage" (Marcondes de Moura 1983, p. 12), where the photographer recreated interiors that later on developed into backdrops with fantastic motives such as fairies or make-believe boats (Lemos 1983, p. 57). Faux-courtly outfits were also at the sitter's disposal, as advertised by several photographic studios of the time.[93] Sure enough, several collections of daguerreotypes and *carte de visites*

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[92] I borrowed this term from Pauline Escande-Gauquié and Valérie Jeanne-Perrier (2017).

[93] For instance, a photographic studio in the province of Tucumán, Argentina, ran by photographer José María Aguilar advertised to be in possession of " a decent room for the reception [of clientele] as well as for changing their clothes should they wish to" (Gómez 1986, p. 65).

reveal that certain pieces of clothing that were supposed to elevate the person's character in fact defeated their original purpose by revealing, through their incorrect fit, that they did not belong to the sitter.[94] A hat too big here, a way too long jacket there. Even the living spaces—that photographers mounted most likely with backdrops and props imported from Europe—looked nothing like a room of any given Brazilian household, for instance (Lemos 1983, p. 60-1).

The photographer moved around his territory like a theater director, and the substance of these initial gestures still survives in the current professional studio photographer. Studios were usually set up in hotel rooms. The poses required—and got—were those of European courtesans, as photographers favoured the details of their subjects' dress, accessories, and class. The sitters assumed the pose but relied on spoken directions as it was the photographer who, educated on the laws of pictorial representation, would direct their posture in order to capture the subject in their most favorable light. In order to hold the sitter's attention, children in particular, and fix their look in one point, photographers held a small chirping brass bird with one hand and took the picture with the other, which gave birth to the expression "watch the birdie!" –still heard in Brazil as "*olha o passarinho!*" (Riboldi 2009).

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[94] Examples of pictures taken in Brazil where robes were obviously borrowed to the sitter can be found in Lemos (1983).

Figure 5. Brass birdie. Courtesy of collector Scott Bilotta.

But however much expert knowledge photographers possessed when it came to handling the camera, they were, at best, considered to be skillful operators of the apparatus, as authorship and photography were still not conceived of in pairs. Instead, in this blurry moment where photography's status is still in the makings, the photographic act was seen as the work of nature itself; the photographer a mere intermediary between the camera and its subject matter. Reminiscent of how Talbot described photography as a the result of "Nature's hand," the fact that this technique was perceived as "too magical to be scientific

and too technical to be artistic" (Cortés-Rocca 2011, p. 19) counteracted the notion of authorship for photography.[95]

It would be reductive to think that we owe the photographic pose, a habit that can be traced back to ancient times, to a technical limitation that forced the sitter to be at the mercy for an extended exposure time. On top of that contributing factor, earlier media use habits were shaping photography's functions, "making media seem inevitable in an unself-conscious way" overtime (Pingree & Gitelman 2003, p. xiv). In other words, old media uses shaped and made sense of photography, making evident that its history is "less the evolution of technical efficiencies in communication than a series of arenas for negotiating issues crucial to the conduct of social life" (Marvin 1988, p. 4).

It is at the very moment in which photography was still somewhat of a novelty, in which the medium's affordances and social meanings were still not clearly defined, that new kinds of media uses blended into old habits. Photography also went through a period of 'confusion,'[96] as its use as a social signifier was still in the workings. Illustrative of the disparate understandings of photography's meanings was that, in the Buenos Aires of 1899, coach drivers held a demonstration against a new regulation that would have them get an ID license card. They were insulted, as portraiture for identification purposes—aka, Bertillon's

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[95] Some years later, starting in 1861, spirit photography, would again locate authorship neither on the photographer nor on nature, but fundamentally, on the medium itself (Cortés-Rocca 2004, p. 117).
[96] Lisa Gitelman uses the term 'confusion' and any of its derivatives to account for a moment where the uses, protocols, and social meanings of new media are in the process of being crystallized (2006).

method[97]—was common for criminals and prostitutes (Cuarterolo 2012, p.139). In a picture kept by the Argentine National General Archive we see they held banners that read: "Make portraits of common thieves," "we are not vagrants," and "take portraits of freeloaders" (Unknown-Photographer 1899).[98] That today we take for granted what was cause for indignation in the past suggests that habitus also implies forgetting. Pedro Miguel Frade reversed the question following Martin Heidegger's line of thinking, pointing to the many things that had to be consigned to oblivion from the very moment that the daguerreotype was invented in order to learn to be modern and acquire such proximity with mechanical images (1992, p. 14).

Referring to the introduction of new electrical media, Carolyn Marvin stated that "new kinds of encounters collided with old ways of determining trust and reliability, and with old notions about the world and one's place in it: about the relation of men and women, rich and poor, black and white, European and non-European, experts and publics" (1988, p. 5-6). Indeed, in photography's debut in Latin American societies, there was a great deal of complex articulation between the expertise of foreign photographers, the fact that most nations were in their infancy having had just attained political independence, and traditional

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[97] As described earlier, Alphonse Bertillon invented a system of identification portraiture called descriptive anthropometry for the Parisian police in 1872. Bertillon published his theories in *La photographie judiciaire: avec un appendice sur la classification et l'identification anthropométriques* (1890). His niece, a writer and journalist, wrote his biography. See: *Vie d'Alphonse Bertillon, inventeur de l'anthropométrie* (1941). For a brilliant analysis and comparison between France and Mexico's application of Bertillon's system see Álvaro Rodríguez Luévano's work entitled *Miradas y rostros transferencias técnicas y culturales de la Fotografía judicial entre Francia y México 1880-1910* (2014).
[98] A digital copy of the picture can be accessed here:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c0/Huelga_de_cocheros%2C_Buenos_Aires_1899.jpg

ways of social representation such as painted portraiture. In that complex constellation, the habitus in posing, not only established a new set of distinctive practices, but also became a tool for social classification, and in the end, an actual language and a principle of "vision and division" (Bourdieu 1998 [1994], p. 8). This is particularly clear, again, in the earlier moments of the technology because such social divisions were translated into the arrangement of the scene to be photographed. Brazil provides an interesting and peculiar case in that regard, where the mediating relation of photography that referenced the social position of the photographed subject becomes evident (Bourdieu 1990 [1965]-b, p.9). While in Europe photography was tied to the social rise of the bourgeoisie, the wealthy plantation families in Brazil maintained a slave-based economic structure while carrying out consumption practices associated with European bourgeois culture—such as those having to do with clothing, etiquette, education, and also, photography (Mauad, Muaze & de Brum Lopes 2015, p. 80-1).

So while photography came to serve, as a collective practice, the need to portray a new national self, its function was also tied to the reaffirmation of the individual and the reproduction of one own's image, re-enacting, in the Americas, what the Europeans had learned from aristocratic modes of self-representation. But unlike the European bourgeoisie in ascendance, who got used to posing before a miniaturist painter before the invention of the photograph (Freund 1974 [1936], p. 12), in Latin America people generally arrived inexperienced at their first encounter to produce their likeness (Debroise 2001 [1994], p. 21). In their transition to become the subject matter of pictures, this lack of theatrical disposition is evident in the sitters' startled expressions:

They [the *señoritas* from Mexico's inland, rural provinces] seated themselves uncomfortably, assuming a conventional pose in compliance with the "maestro's" orders, eyes wide with anxiety as if expecting something terrible to happen (Debroise 2001 [1994], p. 21).

In commanding the subjects to freeze in a pose, photography established the basics of a media protocol that came to stay. It also made evident what many have noticed before: that even as an internalized action, photography—portraiture in particular—is a theatrical act, from the point of view of the sitter who poses, as well as from that of the photographer, who ponders on the composition of a scene to get a message across, and from that of the viewer as well (Silva 1998, p. 28). And what is a theatrical gesture if not an old form of telling a story, that is, passing a message along? Seeking for applause, the theatrical as an allegory of the photographic act would be expanded later by more recent media technologies that generate the expectation of 'likes' and approval (Arnheim 2000, p. 167). Yet, it is clear from these early experiences that "photography introduces a relation to the event that is inseparable from the will to communicate it" (Lavoie 2002, p. 191). Like any merchandised commodity, in turn, the act of acquiring one's picture communicated a desire of social ascendance (Carneiro & Ferraz 2005, p. 282).

III.II. The Photographer as a Hunter

Societal and technological changes made it so that by the turn of the century, photography was no longer considered "a mysterious process whose bizarre workings

escaped common understanding" but a "routine practice" (Debroise 2001 [1994], p.173).[99]

While amateurs progressively gained terrain, professional photographers survived by

confining themselves even more to the representation of stylized bourgeois propriety (Levine

1989, p. 61).

The launch of the Kodak camera in 1888[100] was a clear landmark. At first, the camera

operated with a paper roll, which was replaced in the subsequent year by celluloid film

(Sougez 2011 [1981], p. 182). This is a chapter in photography's history that, even when it

incarnated a social and cultural revolution by inaugurating photography's *second âge*,

usually appears as a *de côté* to photography's "grand history" (Brunet 2000, p. 215).

However, Kodak, the company founded by George Eastman, was at the center of redefining

the protocols around the medium: who got to take pictures, for whom, when, and where.

Needless to say, Kodak was not the only or main initiator of this turn, as it happened in

the context of broader and complex societal changes such as the expansion of industrial

capitalism, cultural penetration of the United States via corporate business, consumerism tied

to a new conception of leisure and family, among other things.

Perhaps counterintuitively, what made the company ground-breaking in photography's

history was not so much the genius of its invention or the roll film system per se—which had

been around for quite some time and was despised for the bad quality of the images it

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[99] By this time there were more than 74 photographic studios in Mexico City and around 300 scattered throughout the country (Debroise 2001 [1994], p. 173).

[100] For a deep plunge into George Eastman's attempts to simplify the photographic process, see: "Technology and the Market: George Eastman and the Origins of Mass Amateur Photography by Reese V. Jenkins (1975) and "Photography for Everyone: The Beginning of Snapshot Photography" by Karl Steinorth (1988).

produced. Rather, Kodak's innovation consisted in the fact that its marketing and commercialization, as well as the actual design of the camera, were attuned to the logics of an emergent industrial capitalism. Photography, from that perspective, was a business eager to make an impact on the masses based on a strategy of large-scale production. The potential uses of photography were created right then and there, ultimately shaping how people engaged with it.

III.II.I. Take a Kodak With You

The role of Kodak in the history of photography is far more significant than that of a successful firm or technological advancement. Instead, the brand triggered a "key conceptual change in who was to predominate in the practice of photography from the professional to the novice" (Jenkins 1975, p. 19), and is therefore key to understanding the new practices of shooting pictures.

By fomenting the concentration of capital in the very product—Eastman and camera-inventor William Hall Walker patented every single feature of their photographic process—the company also made sure to make the company indispensable at a global level. In fact, initially the camera came loaded and needed to be sent back to their headquarters to develop the images, monopolizing in that way the service of revelation and replacement of film. And if at the beginning individual shops from all over imported Kodak's photographic products from the factory in Rochester, slowly but systematically Kodak established subsidiaries in each country, as a way to centralize and control the import of goods—and also to punish

those who dared sell other competing brands such as Agfa.[101] According to the Mexican newspaper *El Informador*, in Latin America, the first Kodak plant opened only in the 1970s, in Guadalajara, Mexico, when the brand was already a giant corporation (1970, p. 2-C).

Launched globally with a polished marketing strategy, the famous "you push the button, we do the rest" also circulated in Spanish as "*usted oprime el botón; nosotros hacemos el resto*" (Kodak 1890). In fact, as the corporate business grew, the advertising companies that worked for the company opened branches in several countries, many times simply translating their original advertisements in English into the local language, adapting—if it came to it—the imagery to the local culture (Sosenski 2014, footnote 40). The same slogans would prove ubiquitous and effective in several places at the same time as almost every single one that was poured onto the North-American society found its correlate in Spanish and Portuguese: "Take a Kodak with you," for instance, appeared in a Brazilian advertisement as "*Leve um Kodak comsigo*" (Afonso de Aquino 2014, p. 70)[102], and in Spanish as "*Lleve una Kodak consigo*" (Martell 2016, p. 6).

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[101] The story of Federico Buckhardt, who had Kodak's exclusivity in Cali, Medellín, follows that line (Goyeneche Gómez 2009, p. 103).

[102] I am citing the PhD thesis of Livia Afonso de Aquino entitled "Picture Ahead: a Kodak e a construção de um turista-fotógrafo" (2014) due to the fact that it was impossible for me to get ahold of the homonymous book that was published shortly after, published by Edic. do Autor, 2016, in São Paulo, Brazil.
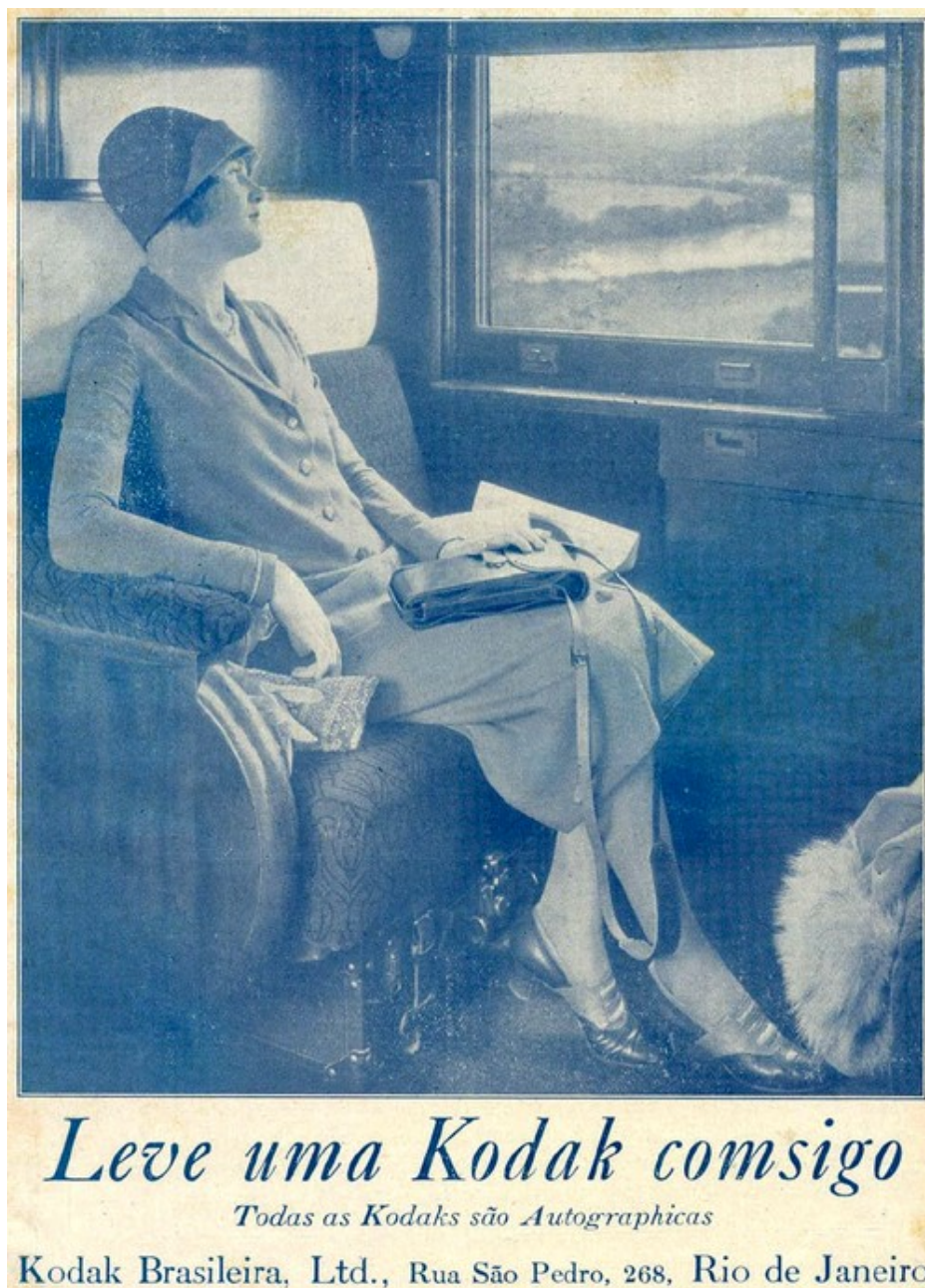
Figure 6. Kodak advertisement (1927), *A Cigarra* (Brasilian *varieté* magazine 1914-1975). Source: Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo, Brasil.

Figure 7. Kodak advertisement (1920), *Caras y Caretas* n. 1150 (Argentine *varieté* magazine 1898-1941). Source: Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Figure 8. Two small Kodak advertisements with the same motto. On the left: Newspaper *La nación*, Santiago de Chile, Saturday 7 July 1928, p.22. On the right: Newspaper *El pueblo*, Quito, Ecuador, Wednesday 12 September 1934, p. 2.

If up until this moment the photographer proved to be—with a few individual exceptions—a male-dominated activity, then Kodak did away with the esoteric character of photography, transforming it into a widespread common practice, instilling the reorganization of certain social roles, and pushing for women to join in (Brunet 2000, p. 239). The emphasis on the easiness of the procedure, along with an institutionalized disdain towards the professionalization of photography, condensed the objective at Kodak's heart: to bring photography "within reach to every human being who desires to preserve a record of what he sees" (George Eastman qted in Newhall 1982 [1945], p. 129). The striped-dressed 'Kodak girl' was to become a constant in the advertisements from the 1910s until well into the 1960s (Brunet 2000, p. 239). However, Kodak's insistence on welcoming women—or

kids—to photography is less the product of a progressive mindset than the explicit ambition to transform photography into a widespread object of consumption. It is also an example of how the firm took advantage of sociological knowledge—the centrality of women in an alleged consumerist behavior as well as their vital role in the cohesion of the family unit—in order to come up with its business strategy (Brunet 2000, p. 240). "Anybody can use it. Everybody will use it," stated an ambitious promotional Kodak booklet (qted in Coe and Gates 1977, p 18), and so everybody did.

In Latin America, the introduction of Eastman's brand in the marketplace started gradually in the 1910s and built up momentum during the 1920s and 1930s (Martell 2016, p. 20). Operating mainly from Buenos Aires but with subsidiaries all over, Kodak's advertising targeted the upper classes' presentation, leisure, and whiteness (Martell 2016, p. 7). However, as many if not all ads were directly translated from their original English into the local language in question, it is hard to say if this was a deliberate choice or just a side effect of publishing ads that were originally directed to a different audience (whose target was United States' white middle-class, to the exclusion of other groups).

The influence of advertising in directing the uses of the practice, analyzed quite profusely in the United States,[103] also took place in Latin America and elsewhere, guiding the

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[103] See *Kodak and The Lens of Nostalgia* by Nancy Martha West (2000), where the author advances the thesis of Kodak as having shaped the genre of domestic photography as an idyllic narrative. For a discursive analysis of Kodak's advertising strategies and its impact into certain institutions related to modern life such as vacations and travels, see: Munir and Phillips (2005). See also the article "Advertising and the Rise of Amateur Photography: From Kodak and Polaroid to the Digital Image" by Marita Sturken (2017). In Spanish and still circumscribed to Kodak's advertising in the United States, see the doctoral thesis by Claudia Pretelin Ríos (2016).

ways in which photography would be deployed in the domestic realm, targeting women and kids from the get-go. George Eastman cared a great deal about marketing and advertising and, at least for the US market, went to great lengths to penetrate certain activities and domains with the practice of photography, such as vacations. The firm would even arrange touristic attractions in Hawaii—like staged hula dances—or put up signs across the US highways announcing a vista worthy of a picture in order to generate good opportunities for tourists to take pictures (Boordin 2012 [1961], p. 128). Kodak's marketing strategy was, no doubt, "a crucial step in the history of the idea of photography, where the promise of its invention was both realized—at the industrial and social level—as well as devaluated—at the cultural level: an art without art, accessible to all by definition" (Brunet 2000, p. 217).

III. II. II. Unguarded Moments: The Rise of the Amateur

The imperatives of Kodak's marketing, in line with the logics of industrial capitalism, impacted the uses of the medium, signaling a turning point in the practice of photography. As Afonso de Aquino noted, in selling photography as the perfect addendum to virtually any occasion, adventurous or ordinary, Kodak contributed to the "institutionalization of habits that ritualize and organize the experience of photographing and the ways of consuming photography" (2014, p. 15). On the technological front, Kodak inaugurated a system based on three pillars (ease of handling, celluloid roll film, and a develop-and-print service) that subsequent photographic technologies built upon (Pritchard 2015, p. 34). Digging deeper, photography expert François Brunet identified another fundamental cultural breakthrough

moment that Kodak uncorked: the fact that from that moment on, photography's technical implications would be occluded—if not totally hidden—from sight, a particularity noticed before by British sociologist Don Slater (1985). Photography's process, of which the photographer was, until then, in charge, was to be divided into two compartments. On the one hand, the shooting (*la prise de vue*), an activity that would no longer require complex technical knowledge in order to make use of a camera; and on the other, the laboratory work necessary to reveal the pictures (*les opérations de traitement*), which would be carried out by technicians (Brunet 2000, p. 222, 26). In other words, what was revolutionary about Kodak—to the point that it defines the practice of photography to this day—is a profound scission between the operator of the camera and the photographic process.

The commercialization of cheap automatic cameras reached a public that ultimately changed the implications around the idea of amateur photographers. They went from someone knowledgeable about photography's technical aspects who was in pursuit of a certain aesthetic value and able to reveal their own images, to—from the 1920s onward—someone who was simply concerned with the act of snatching a picture as a means of chronicling the high points of domestic life (von Sanden 2018, p.180). From the 1930s taking pictures was, more than a hobby, a recording activity of middle-class contentment, a 'generator of memories' for the future, as shown in an analysis of camera magazine advertisements in Uruguay (von Sanden 2018, p. 182). The slogans are a testament of this shift: "*si la memoria falla, la Kodak las recuerda*" (if memory fails, Kodak remembers") (von Sanden 2018, p. 182), "si recordar es vivir, con la Kodak no se olvida" (if remembering

is to live, then Kodak does not forget), "*Todas las Kodaks son autobiográficas*" (All Kodaks are autobiographical).

Figure 9. Kodak advertisement (1928). Magazine *Films*, vol. V, 1, January, p. 3. Source: Filmoteca de Catalunya.

At the same time, there was an ongoing change in mentality regarding the involvement of the photographer in the production of the image. While in the portrait studio of the XIX century the photographer acted as a director to get the best take whilst the machine itself or even nature was understood to be in charge of producing the image, the emergence of the portable cheap camera meant—in practice and symbolically—the birth of the photographer's

gaze. Perhaps this is precisely the reason why at this point in photography's history almost every historic account of photography turns its attention to the work of individual photographers, putting aside the unpretentious image production of an increasing mass of 'button-pushers,' as Stieglitz derisively called them (2014 [1896], p.91). As he went on complaining: "every Tom, Dick and Harry could, without trouble, learn how to get something or other on a sensitive plate, and this is what the public wanted—no work and lots of fun" (2014 [1896], p. 91). Implicit in this disregard for the immense majority of images that were produced is the notion of 'photographer of genius,' "possible only through the disassociation of the image maker from the social embeddedness of the image" (Sekula 1987 [1982], p. 103).

So, to the annoyance of many who were nostalgic for photography's previous cachet, amateurs came to stay and joined in the snapshot experience: some of them chronicled memorable occasions of family life, some others became really enthusiastic and founded clubs around the practice. We often read about the Photo-Secession movement founded by Alfred Stieglitz in 1902 in New York. In Latin America there were also those ready to defend photography as an artistic expression more than anything else. In Uruguay, the first photo club opened its doors in 1884 in Montevideo and in 1905 the *PhotoClub* started its quest in defense of Pictorialism (Broquetas et al. 2011, p. 35). In Brazil, historians document a feverish activity from 1897 onwards in several cities: *PhotoClub Helio* at the heart of the German community in Porto Alegre, founded in 1907 (Costa Rodeghiero 2014, p. 510), or the most important *FotoClube Brasileiro*, which from 1923 and throughout the 1940s defined modernist photography in Brazil (Bandeira de Mello 1998, p. 68). The *Sociedad Fotográfica*

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Argentina de Aficionados was founded in 1889 (Príamo 1999, p. 10) while the first

fotoclubes proliferated in the 1930s (Pérez Fernández 2011, p.11-2). All followed *le model à*

l'Européenne, that is to say, they distanced themselves both from professionals, whose work

they considered commercial and unoriginal, as well as from amateurs, whose domestic

images were growing in number (Hassner 1987, p. 80). [104] Every Latin-American urban

center worth its salt had its own photoclub.

At the same time, the introduction of new portable photographic mechanisms—

epitomized by the famous Leica designed by Oskar Barnack in 1913—also turned the

photographer, whether professional or amateur, into a participant instead of just an observer;

a jump that is particularly noticeable in war photography where bulky equipment prevented

photographers from being in the front lines until the advent of lightweight cameras (Debroise

2001 [1994], p. 176).[105] The professional photographer, once tied to the studio, went out and

about, becoming "'the person on the street, who 'grabs the story'" (Debroise 2001 [1994], p.

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[104] Although in Brazil's case, Adriana María Pinheiro Martins Pereira points out that amateurs did not really mark distinctions amongst them (those who practiced domestic photography versus those who were members of a photoclub) but they did so mainly against professionals (2010, p.62).

[105] Even when the origin of the portable camera is said to have occurred in the 1880s, and that decade is considered to be the starting point of the massification of photography—and in many respects it is—it can be said that Latin America really saw vernacular photography gain momentum from the 1930s onwards, when the practice truly started its path toward popularity. The *Río de la Plata* press celebrated the arrival of color photography by then, but it was only well past the Great Depression when panchromatic films reached a wider public, as the throes of the worldwide crisis had slowed down the import of photographic material. While in the U.S. and Europe amateurs made use of color film since the postwar period, in Latin America it remained expensive and inconvenient until well into the 1950s, as the film had to be mailed to the country where it had been made in order to be revealed (von Sanden 2018, p. 163). Following the market launch of the Kodakchrome in 1938 (Bellone & Fellot 1981, p. 179), color conquered first the magazine industry, when several magazines published colored photography for the first time. But it was not until the late 60s and early 70s that color photography spread to reach almost every home, hand in hand with new cheaper cameras (like Kodak's Instamatic, launched in 1961), carrying with it a new form of sociability tied to consumerism as a form of social ascendance.

184), and turning the arrangement of the scene, which was formerly a prerequisite and job of the photographer, into an antithetical contradiction to the realist essence of photography.[106] Off with the tripods, the photographer was now inclined to wait patiently for the right moment to snatch a picture of "unposed reality" (Ford 1988, p. 10).

Snapshot—the term that in English encapsulates amateur photography—meant, in hunters' jargon, a shot made without the time to aim at the prey properly. It became common in photographic vocabulary by the 1880s (Steinorth 1988, p. 26). Several sources point to Sir John Herschel as the one who, in 1860, coined the term in the context of photography, even when back then it was hardly possible to act impulsively with a camera, as the bulkiness of the equipment and the complicated photographic process certainly did not allow it (Crain 2008). In Spanish or Portuguese, the photographic vocabulary also belongs to the semantic family of the hunter, but the equivalent term to snapshot, *'instantánea,'* refers only to the temporal cut rather than to the act of shooting.

The symmetry between the demeanor of the hunter and that of the photographer did not take long to materialize in photographic vocabulary: from shooting, target, trigger to cartridge, loading, target, and so on. The affinity between both activities went well beyond semantics, as the design of the actual photographic cameras borrowed from the manufacturing of guns in terms of parts and chemicals, both resorting to guncotton as the chemical of choice in their cartridges (Landau 2002, p. 148). In fact, there are indications that guns and the easiness in which hunters carried out their hobby (in terms of the portability of

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[106] Although many famous photographers kept on arranging their photographic images before shooting, doing so was perceived as somehow deceptive.

the equipment as well as in the execution of the act) served as both inspiration and aspiration to a photography manufacturer such as Kodak. In her study, Livia Afonso de Aquino dug up a number of Kodak ads from 1891 that equate photographing with hunting as well as later ads—appearing in England, the United States, and Canada—that directly presented photography as the perfect companion to record an actual hunting trip (2014, p. 91).[107]

The figure of the hunter and photography's rapacious edge, in keeping with Sontag's description of the act of photographing (Sontag 1990 [1973], p. 14; 64), captures the combination of freedom and constraints that results from the use of this new technology. The photographer was now free to move around, but constrained by the finite amount of film, having to approach the subject "*à pas de loup, meme s'il s'agit d'une nature morte*" (Cartier-Bresson 1952). It required a skilled and patient character to lie in wait and pull out the camera just in time to catch the fleeting image in "ecstatic truth"[108]. Cartier-Bresson's *Images à la sauvette* (1952), [109] translated as 'the decisive moment,' suggests that images are snatched hastily, robbed even (Warner Marien 2012), a characterization that seems fitting to describe the spontaneous creation of an iconic moment that is taken from reality. If the photographer's movements were at first comparable to those of a theater director, tied as he was to the composition of the scene, the portability of the camera placed him equal to the hunter's genuflection, who chooses distance and camouflage "to surprise his motif into an

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[107] Afonso de Aquino devotes a whole chapter to photography as hunting in Kodak's advertising entitled "Capítulo 2: Sobre caçadores, turistas e fotógrafos" (2014).

[108] Werner Herzog's expression to name those photographs that even when having captured an instant of sublime reality have the power to elevate from the "merely factual" (2010, p. 1).

[109] *Images à la sauvette*, which became an "*untrouvable*" (Amar 2019, p. 27) was reedited in English by Steidl in 2015 and in 2018 in what proves to be thorough facsimile under the direction of Clément Cheroux, reproducing even the original Matisse cover.

unguarded moment, so as to turn it into an object" (Flusser 2011 [1983], p. 290). In a way, Kodak reduced the act of picture taking to one fundamental gesture: that of pulling the trigger.

III.II.III. Latin America's 'Americanization'

Together with a redefinition of the 'who' of photography came changes in the 'how.' While the early atelier of the photographer used to cherish the representation of one's 'best self' (because, among other things, the opportunity of getting a picture taken was a special event and, in most cases, a one-in-a-lifetime occasion), the second half of the twentieth century sees the camera clutched by the hands of a family member, turning the camera into a domestic object.

While amateurs still opted for posing on many occasions, there was now a new value in capturing unrehearsed scenes. In contrast with the artificiality of the pose, in this period an aesthetic of the simple took hold exalting the honesty of an unposed depiction, the opposite of the taste for epic dignity that was the hallmark of earlier portraiture, where the sitter "surrendered to the photographer's authority the way actors surrender to a director" as the precondition of any good photograph (Crain 2008).

For both professionals and amateurs, the desire of the photographer to capture a fleeting spontaneous shot together with the impossibility of the camera to offer an indiscriminate amount of takes all came together in the search of that instant *décisif*. This turn is well reflected in Latin America's family album, which used to display only individual or group portraits (Príamo 1999, p. 5). In fact, before the 1870s, the album did not seem to

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depict special scenes of family life but served as a reminder of individuals and groups (Príamo 1999, p. 6). Images of first communion, wedding pictures, and pictures that followed the criteria of Bourdieu's *family function* only started to be made after photography was accessible to the middle classes (Príamo 1999, p.6). Amateur photography amplified the album's content by including more intimate pictures that were mixed in style and subject matter (Di Bello & Nicholson 2006), centering on children instead of on older members of the family.

The pose also adopted a new facial etiquette: extremely rare in the fine arts, previously frowned upon in the repertoire of aristocratic stereotypical poses and relegated to lower classes or people unable to control themselves (Schroeder 1998, p. 115), the modern smile enters the scene.[110] While, in general, the pose in the nineteenth century tended to replicate a certain French demeanor—as France played the role of cultural affirmation of the broken ties with Spain—now the United States became a major influence that traveled across geographies particularly via their film industry, introducing a new set of mannerisms for photographic posing as it consolidated as a capitalist enterprise.

The casual photographer added *'digan whisky'—say cheese—*to his usual commands in order to summon automatic upturned lips, a convention with roots not in portraiture's

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[110] An interesting racialized history of the emergence of the smile in the United States can be found in an article by Tanya Sheehan (2014). For a broader cultural critique of niceness as a distinctive archetype of U.S. idiosyncrasy, see Tirado Bramen (2017).

heritage but rather in the influence of film (Trumble 2004, p. 154), a trend that Kodak seems to have followed, not inaugurated (Schroeder 1998, p. 142, n.8).[111]

However, Kodak did make marketing efforts to establish photography as a pleasurable experience through its powerful advertising machinery, which was mainly carried out by magazines, published by Kodak itself, like *Kodakerías* and also by one-page advertisements on already established *varieté* magazines. Christina Kotchemidova argued that part of the reason why grinning was accepted eagerly by popular photography was that Kodak had it introduced and disseminated visually, through illustrations on advertisements, instituting a gestalt communication specific to visual communication. As she put it: "the smile sits in the visuals, taken for granted. It is *assumed*. In a McLuhanesque sense, it was internalized by the public as part of the informational environment of the technology that produced it" (2005, p. 14).

But Kodak was not the only promoter of happiness. Hollywood and Latin American star-systems —in particular, that of Mexico, whose movie industry became a true capitalist corporation, operating around a limited number of studios—also reached a phenomenal apogee that translated into vernacular images, as people emulated the celebrities' postures for their own photographic impersonations—such as high-class Chilean women, who started performing a wide range of expressive gestures for their portraits, playing with the gaze and smile (Robles Parada 2016, p. 208). Mexican cinema, which greatly influenced Mexico and

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[111] *Photogénie,* a term that began describing the photographic process in its earliest days arises as a plus in ordinary language: the special capacity of a subject to lend herself well to photographic capture (Wall-Romana 2016, p. 25).

Central America (Monsiváis 2000, p. 15; Castro-Ricalde 2014), reappears, for instance, in the form of the 'Mexican pose' *or "pose charra"* in Colombia's lower class family pictures of the 1970s (Silva 1998, p. 136). A ranch aesthetic, with ample sombreros, embroidered costumes, and a bushy moustache for men, or pompous dresses and braids for women, would mirror the rural heroes who had starred so many Golden Age films.[112]

The United States' standing as the locus of 'real modernity" (Molloy 2017 [2012]), in tension with earlier European models (Purcell 2009, p. 66), created a point of inflection in the 1920s that was picked up by magazines and newspapers covering the mounting crisis of cultural clash and the shake out brought about by the paradigm shift. In short, forms of urban sociability promoted and popularized by Hollywood took hold in new ways of dressing, dancing, and listening to new music (Purcell 2012, p. 43). These were cause for concern and admiration in equal parts. Even the face of Latin American big cities changed as they built the first skyscrapers, modelled after New York City, seen as keenly symbolic of an urban "new beauty" (Rinke 2013, p. 163). Soon, the interior of houses would, at least imaginarily through the magazines of the time, welcome pictures of cubist inspiration, furniture with geometric lines, and décor with abstract motives, showing a new sensibility at play (Sarlo 1988, p. 25).

The United States had awakened Latin America to their version of the modern by dominating its movie theaters to such an extent that in the 1920s Mexico film critics and

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[112] See, for instance, a picture of Pablo Escobar dressed as Pancho Villa, reprinted in James Mollison (New York, US: Chris Boot, 2007). For a quick look at the picture:
https://elpais.com/diario/2007/09/16/eps/1189923356_850215.html

journalists came to refer to the phenomenon as "the Yanqui invasion" (Serna 2014, p. 3). This feeling was replicated elsewhere in the region. In fact, the massification of the film industry—roughly from 1910s to 1930s—fueled the illusion of modernity through the promotion of the 'American way of life.'[113] As a result, advertisement in general, and Kodak advertisement in particular, soon emptied domestic photography of any hint of sadness or dark moments, which were common before (West 2000, p. 139). However, Kodak culture is not to blame for the disappearance of images related to death, such as the *angelit*os—little angels, pictures of deceased children—which were within social decorum until the 1840s, and were later discarded due to a new sense of taboo around death (Príamo 1999, p. 26, n. 2).[114]

Of course, neither Kodak's advertisement nor cinema's influence fully explain the new behaviours and expectations around the act of picture-taking, which respond to the specific and complex configuration of modernity in the Americas. Yet, pulling at these threads one gets a sense of how powerful those two factors were in shaping a social shared understanding of what came to be the badge of 'being modern.'

III. III. The Photographer as a Communicator

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[113] In cinema, a global advertising strategy of certain products was put in motion: either by the stars using or consuming a product in the actual film, such as Dorothy Bernard drinking a Coke in 1912 D. W. Griffith's *The Girl and Her Trust*, or by showing US firms' advertisements before the film (Purcell 2009, p. 47).

[114] On the vanishing of death portrayals in the albums of the United Kingdom and the United States, see the chapter entitled "Death Takes a Holiday, Sort of" by Vicki Goldberg (2005, p. 209-37).

In the times of the so-called "Kodak era"[115] –roughly from the late nineteenth century

to the 1990s, which saw the popularization of digital cameras[116]—the photographer seemed

to be a hunter in wait for the precise shot, a characterization that seems out of place currently,

at least when it comes to non-professional photographers. As our relationship with

photography shifts, the metaphor that captures what is at stake in the gesture of taking

pictures with a smartphone is not the *flâneur* either, which once condensed in a figure the

urban middle-class photographer in search of the city's B-side (Sontag 1990 [1973], p. 55-

56). Photographing today seems to have less of waiting and preying on images and more of

routine iteration. The smartphone, with little limit to picture storage, has deemed waiting for

the desired image pointless, favoring a *sequence* of pictures rather than the one and only take

of the era of chemical films, when its cost and limited capacity compelled us to be more

selective. As a symbolic move, the photographic now prefers repetition over patience: the

desired image is now caught through insistence, taking multiple shots of a given object most

of the time. More than the operator, it is now the smartphone that is constantly present and

waiting, ready to be put into use at any moment.

This 'waiting' of the smartphone is akin to the possibility of talking, as available and

ready to spring into action as language is. Whereas analogue cameras were common to every

household, they were not "a daily use tool" but were taken *ad-hoc* to chronicle specific

events (Fraga Pérez & Forti Buratti 2017, p. 140). By living with an Internet-connected

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[115] Not to be confused with "the Kodak culture" coined by Richard Chalfen (1987, p.10), which permeates and still informs the behaviors, values, and some of our expectations around the photographic practice.
[116] William J. Mitchell marks 1989 as the year in which photography as we had known it was "permanently displaced" (1992, p. 20).

cellphone at our disposal at all times, the act of taking photographs turned to many into a convenient information tool. In this context, it was only matter of time before photographs were added to complete a given message: attached on tweets, messages, e-mails, chat platforms, or social media, "almost like a period at the end of a sentence" (Joshua Allen Harris qted on Malik 2017).

III.III.I. Photography Meets the Smartphone

Up until this point, the progress of photography followed a somewhat smooth linear narrative that ran parallel to capitalist industrialization. However, digitization and the advent of the smartphone significantly transformed and altered its history as a medium. The smartphone made photography leave its longstanding yet metamorphosed technological support which survived even at the cusp of the digital era—the stand-alone camera—to become one of the applications of this new device. As a result, the qualities, uses, and general understanding of what photography as a medium had served for not only shifted but diversified, entering for the first time into the immediate dealings of interpersonal daily communications, attached to other formats as an addition to a given conversation being held via text, orally, phone, or other. Photography now branched out into all sorts of connections that had little to do with what we used to relate photography to and are hard to chart due to its omnipresence but also because "the ground seems to move so fast beneath your feet" (Earle 2020). The smartphone, as the device that condenses technological convergence, is as great a cultural shakeout as Kodak was to amateur photography.

Cameras have become essential features of smartphones, for users as well as for tech

companies. The survey conducted for this study shows that over 90% of respondents

consider cameras an important or very important feature of their smartphones (see Figure 9).

On the tech company front, photography's recent years have been characterized by

technological races and business speculation, with companies strategizing whether to roll out

their prototypes or not. For instance, Nokia apparently had touchscreen smartphone

prototypes by the late 1990s that were never released to the market, leading to a missed

opportunity to lead the smartphone market (Troianovski & Grundberg 2012). Being

inexorably caught up in the speculative business of the mobile industry, photography as it is

today was impacted by the rivalry, competition, and sometimes myopia of the leading mobile

technology companies, something that rings akin to early industrialized photography patent-

war days.[117] The stories go from Microsoft's former C.E.O., Steve Ballmer, laughing at the

IPhone's lack of keyboard,[118] or dismissing it outright for being too fragile a device—unable

to survive Nokia's test, in which the phone was dropped repeatedly five feet onto concrete—

to accounts in which Blackberry went from being the top company in the smartphone

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[117] Patent fights were present from the very outset in photography's history when, for instance, Talbot rushed to exhibit his photogenic drawings in order to claim original invention out of fear of being challenged by Daguerre's similar discovery (Warner Marien 2006, p. 19). The emergence of photography as an object of mass consumption also saw Kodak gain the status of a monopoly thanks to a labyrinthine system of patents (Pollet 2012, p.1) , but years later, in the late 1960s, that same strategy to block competition came back to bite the company bringing it near bankruptcy after having to pay a millionaire settlement to Polaroid over patent infringement. To get an idea of how companies such as these would lawyer up to make of patents a way of doing business by locking up the market and forcing competition to work around copyrights, see: Christian Bonanos (2012, p. 123-34).

[118] Check out the video: https://www.wired.com/2014/09/tech-time-warp-of-the-week-watch-steve-ballmer-laugh-at-the-original-iphone/

technology to seeing their shares drop to 10 US dollars (Vauhini 2013). History shows us that the joke was on those who did not take the IPhone seriously.

Figure 10. Table: Camera Importance by Age and Gender

	#Total	Age			Gender		
		18-34	35-54	55<	Female	LGTBQ+	Male
Importance							
Very important	61.0	64.2	64.1	43.7	69.9	58.3	54.3
Important	29.3	26.0	29.0	35.2	25.2	25.0	31.9
Not that important	9.7	9.8	6.9	21.1	5.0	16.7	13.8

In retrospect, just as Kodak made use of existing technology to redefine the practice of photography, Apple—the company that came up with the IPhone—did not invent the smartphone but rather perfected earlier versions, setting the baseline on which future technology would be built. After all, Steve Jobs was not as much an inventor as he was a *tweaker*, as a *New Yorker* article advances (Gladwell 2011). Amidst an excitement reminiscent of how societies welcomed photography in its earliest days, in 2007 Apple's late CEO Steve Jobs famously rolled out the first touchscreen IPhone at San Francisco's Moscone Center,[119] in what is believed to be a ground-breaking moment in the history of telecommunications. Having perfected the first versions of smartphones that had appeared seven years before, Jobs marveled the audience showing how one device could materialize the dream of communicating easily, of being networked at all times (Reid 2018, p. 36).

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[119] Steve Jobs' presentation can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vN4U5FqrOdQ

Amidst wows and ovations, Jobs demonstrated how built-in cameras and a photo-management app would allow users to create a library of pictures, scroll through them, "pinching" to zoom, and setting the wallpaper with an image. Jobs did not invent the smartphone, but he certainly opened the way to its glory days. Jony Ive, whose designs are responsible for the IPhone and extend to a wide range of Apple products—and who incidentally announced he was quitting the company in June 2019[120]— said "we were very nervous—we were concerned how people would make a transition from touching physical buttons that moved, that made a noise… to glass that didn't move" (qted in Parker 2015).

Before that very moment, companies such as Nokia, Blackberry, and Ericsson tended to produce a variety of totally different devices (Rossatto Queiroz 2018, p. 52). With the IPhone's debut came a new proprietary operating system (IOS) that soon became the model for other smartphone companies, shifting the creative emphasis from hardware to the software, also redefining a new way of doing business through the development of online applications (Rossatto Queiroz 2018, p. 53). These 'apps' would take the camera phone into unexplored domains of playfulness—explored more in depth in the following chapter—fueled by developers immersed in a creative race to make their app-business stand out to survive. Shooting aesthetically appealing pictures by altering the image in every way possible (washed out from over exposure, or darkened for a sense to convey a sense of intimacy, or aging it by recreating what many years of handling and time decay would do to a printed pic, among many others) was followed by the possibility to attach digital 'stickers,'

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[120] Ive announced his departure from Apple during an interview with *The Financial Times* (Bradshaw 2019), which provoked a cascade of analysis mirroring the 'end of an era' atmosphere in the tech world.

emojis, filters, adding sound, and so on and so forth. Already by 2010, taking pictures was a fundamental characteristic of smartphone use (Chesher 2012, p. 107).

Again, reminiscent of the Kodak era, where only a few companies concentrated all the business, mobile technology came to be dominated by two biggies: Apple and Android. This explains why advances of the smartphone are integrative—involving the adding or perfection of applications—and not conceptual, as the companies do not have the incentives to come up with breakthrough innovations (Rossatto Queiroz 2018, p. 58). Indeed, watching Jobs onstage more than 10 years ago holding an early IPhone model, the hardware's similarity to that of the latest IPhone models is striking.

III.III.II. Smartphones in Latin America

The prevalence of Apple in the United States and Canada creates the impression that it dominates the market. However, as of May 2019 Samsung was the leading brand in the Latin America region, with 47% of the smartphone market, followed by Motorola with near 17% (Statista 2019). This overall market distribution is reflected in the survey, as over two thirds of the respondents reported using Android based smartphones (see Table 3.2). The reason behind this market structure is that while Apple's operating system centralizes its software, Android took the path of designing its operating system as an open source ready to be applied into any hardware and modified by any developer. Soon after its launch in October 2008, the Android system was available to be downloaded for free, allowing any handset manufacturers and companies such as Ericsson, Motorola, or Samsung, to develop their phones using the Android platform, eating into Apple's sales volume as a result (Rossatto

Queiroz 2018, 56-7). Moreover, there are only four Apple stores in the region (one in São Paulo and another in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and two in Mexico City),[121] which makes the IPhone accessible, in many Latin American countries, only to those who travel abroad or know someone who travels. IPhones are also extremely expensive, which is perhaps the main reason for the rise of the Android, as they are marketed in US dollars rather than in local currency, making them aspirational objects as well as a marker of status.

Figure 11. Table: Smartphone Brand

	#Total	Age			Gender		
		18-34	35-54	Over 55	Female	LGTBQ+	Male
Brand							
Samsung	33.7	26.6	36.0	41.5	31.4	20	30.7
IPhone	30.7	28.4	33.6	26.2	30.7	30	35.2
Motorola	20.2	25.4	17.0	20.0	25.0	40	13.6
Other	15.4	19.5	13.4	12.3	12.9	10	20.5

In terms of the level of connectivity in the region, there are contradictory studies. Some market studies show a tremendous growth in the telecommunications industry in Latin America, with high penetration rates of broadband and mobile services (GSMA 2019; Navarro 2020a), while other research, coming from a more tech-academic setting, emphasizes the existence of a large gap of people lacking connectivity (such as: Galperin & Mariscal 2009; Alma de la Selva 2015; Galperin 2016; Eliseo et al. 2019). At the same time,

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[121] See Apple's store list: https://www.apple.com/retail/storelist/

prepaid mobile subscription promoted smartphone adoption with offerings that increased the affordability of both broadband services and the ownership and usage of the phones, locking in 80 percent of all users in the developing world, including Latin America (World Bank 2012, p. 109). In 2018, smartphone adoption reached 64% of Latin America's population, with variations across countries, some reaching saturation of their markets—such as Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay—and others with relatively low smartphone penetration—like Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua (GMSA 2018, p.9-14). Furthermore, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, that rendered the internet a basic need, made evident that the level of connectivity is far from generalized in the region, with people struggling to get access to a device and/or a fast connection that would enable them to work or attend classes online.[122]

Some regions, rural in particular, are far from achieving any sort of digital inclusion. However, it is worth noting that Latin American urban conglomerates seem to be as connected as any other "first world" counterpart. Even in Havana, Cuba, where smartphones arrived before the possibility of getting an internet connection (Noris Martínez 2017), people hooked up to their smartphones are an unavoidable and taken-for-granted part of the urban landscape. In the survey conducted, 97% of respondents owned a smartphone, while 92% owned a computer, and only 57% had a home phoneline.

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[122] Newspaper pieces about the difficulties of having to work or attend classes online without having the proper equipment or access to an internet connection were and still are prevalent throughout the region. For instance, see this Peruvian newspaper article that describes, among many other examples, how a university student walks almost seven miles from his village to a 4-meter hill where he is able to get signal to attend his online classes (Gallegos 2020).

Figure 12. People hanging out in a wifi-hotspot in Havana, Cuba.
Courtesy of Jorge Noris Martínez.

The penetration of smartphones resulted, for instance, in the extinction of the once omnipresent "cibercafés," which played a key role in Latin America's initial access to the Internet (Finquelievich & Prince 2007, p. 22). Also known as '*telecentros*' in both Spanish and Portuguese, or '*locutorios,*'[123] they had gone from being relatively small family

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[123] In Brazil cybercafés are also called "lan houses", which are those cybercafés or *casa da rede* specially catered to play video games.

businesses to make ends meet in a time of crisis, to becoming somewhat of a crucial space

for digital inclusion and socialization in Latin America (Rueda Ramos 2008, p.121; 213).[124]

 While the expansion and growth of mobile technology in Latin America went hand in

hand with the global trend, it did have some peculiarities: for instance, that a major

proportion of users (75 per cent of them, by 2015) accessed the technology via prepaid

offerings (buying top up credits from street kiosks and 'recharging' the phones, which are

more costly than monthly plans but offer the possibility of keeping costs at bay) and not

through more longstanding fixed plans with internet service providers (Becerra & Mastrini

2011, p. 136; 2017, p. 210).[125] Not having access to the web at all times and depending on

free wi-fi around the city to get connected also acts as a marker of differentiation (Urresti,

Linne & Basile 2015, p. 60). In other words, the Internet is 'consumed' but not 'owned,' a

distinction made by Vialey, Belinche & Tovar (2008, p. 23). Also, in contrast to developed

countries which put in place policies to mitigate media ownership concentration,[126] in Latin

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[124] In her book, *Acceso público a Internet: los cibercafés en México* (2008), Érika Rueda Ramos offers a detailed account of how cibercafés work in Mexico in particular and in Latin America in general, as well as a history and comparison of how these *cibercafés* were conceived of differently in other parts of the world, such us Europe, for example, where Internet cafés were mostly associated with providing a service to tourists.

[125] While there are market reports and assessments about the level of connectivity in Latin America, unfortunately, there is hardly no academic social historiographies of communication technologies providing a critical and detailed account of smartphone adoption in the region.

[126] In France, for instance, it is not allowed to own more than two television channels or two radio stations with an audience exceeding 4 million viewers or 30 million listeners, respectively. As for newspapers, one single company is not allowed to own more than 30% of daily national newspapers. In Germany, a media outlet that reaches a nationwide rating average of 30% per year is not allowed to buy shares in other media outlets (Barbosa, Freire & Mônica 2018). According to a report from Carleton University, Canada stands out within developed countries for showing high level of media concentration given that four vertically integrated communications conglomerates (Bell, Rogers, Shaw and Quebecor) represent 56% of the network media economy (Winseck 2019, p. ii).

America the impact of the introduction of telecommunications bolstered conglomeral configurations with no restraints, with a few companies dominating several media and services at the same time, including cellphone provision and Internet services (Becerra & Mastrini 2017, p. 191).

In Latin America, the omnipresence of photography in daily interactions went hand in hand with the landing of the first telephones with Internet connection.[127] From a device that the family owned collectively for emergencies or special occasions, mobile phones transitioned to become a 'personal' gadget, owned individually and considered a private object. While the first camera phones were seen as a standard device in the early 2000s (Agar 2013 [2003], p. 221), their lack of connectivity did not foster much traffic of images. The spread of the Internet through the PC kicked in throughout the 1990s with the appearance of the "cyber-cafés", which were set in urban regions and welcomed a wider sector of the population unable to purchase a computer or sign up for an Internet plan (Urresti, Linne & Basile 2015, p. 31). These cyber-cafés did not serve coffee at all and played a crucial role in technological inclusion and digital literacy (Finquelievich & Prince 2007, p. 10; Bouille 2008, p. 109). They went from protruding into every nook and cranny across the region to now expelling their last breath.[128] Once one in every corner,[129] in decline since 2006 and now

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[127] For a report on Internet access in Latin America, see Hernán Galperin (2016). For a forecast on smartphone adoption in Latin America by 2025, see GSMA's report (2019).
[128] With the exception of Ecuador, where cybercafés seemed to be in expansion until well into 2015. See: Camana Fiallos (2016).

in near extinction, cybercafés are being eradicated by the high penetration of smartphones

(for instance; in Argentina: Clarín 2010; in Brazil: Riff & Onça 2015; in Chile: Yáñez 2017;

in Colombia: Buitrago 2020; in Ecuador: El Comercio 2017; in Mexico: Alonso Rebolledo

2017; in Uruguay: Pisa 2019, etc.).

Whether downloaded at home or at a cybercafé, pictures started to be shot with the

cellphone, which was then plugged to a computer in order to be able to download them, and

pasted into a blog, a phenomenon which proliferated from the mid 2000s—especially vivid

in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Spain—and one academics duly took note of (such as: Sibilia

2005; Elissalde 2008; Goszczynski 2008; Freixa 2012).[130] But the pictures in question were

of such poor quality that the cellphone camera would not yet cast a shadow on the social and

familial functions of amateur digital photographic cameras, serving instead as "mobile

personal imaging device(s)" (Chesher 2012, p. 105). Their use was associated with the more

ephemeral one-time-use cameras (Goggin 2006, p. 144). At that moment in time, the few

scholars that were working on mobile imaging (many of them from Japan and centering on

the ketai camera such as Itō, Matsuda & Okabe 2005) were surprised to see an apparently

emergent 'unique niche' in the uses of a camera phone that seemed to be particularly directed

to capture "fleeting and unexpected moments of surprise" in the everyday, leaving the

'special' moments of life such as travels to be captured by a stand-alone camera (Goggin

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[129] A study carried out by the CEPAL or the ECLAC in English (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) gathered together numbers from different sources that give an idea of this "cybercafenization phenomenon" (p.100): by 2004, only in the Buenos Aires region there were 20,000 cybercafés; in México city 50,000; in Peru 18,729. By 2005 there were 794 cybercafés in Ecuador and 700 in Costa Rica (Hilbert & Maeso 2006, p. 24).

[130] For an analysis of how blogs in their different forms –photolog, audiolog, moblog, videoblogs—ended up shaping out the Facebook interface, see: López & Ciuffoli (2012, ch. 2, p. 27-58).

2006, p. 145). In 2005, Carole Rivière saw what the photographic act would become before it had actually taken full form:

> The [cellphone] brings photography into the 21st century as an agreeable form of communication or language, one that can be used by anyone, anytime, anyhow (..), [making] photography "commonplace", stripping it of every intention other than for one's own pleasure and the pleasure of expressing something in the immediate present (p. 172) [131]

Although stand-alone cameras were far from being displaced at this point in time, this is still a defining moment that hinted at the progressive acceptance of the presence and usage of the camera phone in social settings and the incipient turn towards photography becoming 'personal.'

In the times of film photography and also when mobile phones were still a luxury item, it was rare to see teenagers taking pictures, as the camera was generally reserved for the adults (Fabricio Zanin 2010, p. 2185). But by 2007-2009 the mobile phone had become a personal coveted object. A study carried out among Chilean teenagers suggested that it also functioned as a marker of belonging in their social life (Muñoz 2011, p. 33). Teens, who in June 2000 were in fact the intended initial targets of Samsung's first digital camera phone (Pritchard 2015, p. 211),[132] turned out to be pioneers in pushing the limits of a stiff rule-constrained amateur photography. In their hands, vernacular photography got a gush of fresh air while the cellphone camera was used as a toy ready to catch scenes of mockery that were later downloaded into the PC, to which the phone connected through a cable. Soon enough,

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[131] Gerard Goggin (2006, p. 145) also quotes this passage from Carole Rivière's piece.
[132] The SCH-V200 had a built-in integrated camera able to take 20 low-resolution pictures –350,000 pixels (Pritchard 2015, p. 211).

however, it was also used as a means for taking pictures without consent for bullying, harassing, and/or shaming purposes (Muñoz 2011, p. 41), a phenomenon that with the growth of connectivity, became a very real problem for teenagers globally. Although the early germen of cyberbullying was already present 15 years ago, certain technological limitations such as the scarce memory capacity of the phone and the lack of mobile connectivity, certainly constrained the circulation of images.[133]

III.III.III. A New Practical Logic

With the smartphone, previous technical limitations disappeared, such as reduced picture storage or low connectivity and battery power, etc., opening up photography to a distinct sensibility in which the past, present, and future of the practice permeate one another in the production of a reconfigured habitus. In its early days photography came to satisfy functions that existed prior to its invention, such as rituals that had to do with the immortalization of social life (Bourdieu 1990 [1965]-a, p. 21). Similarly, the need to take photographs in the present time does not start at *point zéro* but feeds into, keeps and challenges what was an established convention before. Just as children were not the center of attention of society yet became the stars of any family album worth its salt from 1945 on, now past conventions are reconfigured as we choose to snap a picture that was previously unthinkable and off-limits for a camera.

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[133] For a comparative survey-based study on a, at that moment, somewhat emergent cyberbullying among teenagers in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela, see del Río Pérez et al (2009). For a study on the general uses of the internet by children and teenagers in the Latin America of the 2000s, see: Bringué Sala and Sádaba Chalezquer (2008).

One of the most insightful points of Bourdieu's 1965 study of photography lies in its elaboration of photography as fulfilling a social function: reinforcing social and family ties through pictures that merit preservation in order to evoke a family's past and ratify its present unity. Over time, this very function seems to have extended itself to a broader communicative task going beyond family cohesion. This added social function pushed for an extension of the limits of the photographable redefining the terms under which someone or something 'deserved' an image. For more than a century, photography remained quite static in terms of "its objects, its moments and its intention" (Bourdieu 1990 [1965]-a, p. 37). But from where we stand now, even a cursory exploration indicates that what began as a "manufacture of domestic emblems" (Bourdieu 1990 [1965]-a, p. 28), is now deployed on objects that are far from solemn or familial. Perhaps paradoxically, this has not made the practice of photography any less tied to conventions. Carried individually and constantly, the camera, now absorbed by the smartphone, brought about a change in the use of the medium. The photographic intention—that is, the need to photograph— the occasions for doing it, its subject matter, and its temporal projection as a pictorial message, morphed into a different kind of embodied experience than the one we had known.

The fact that the camera became part of the mobile telephone had a domino effect on photography, leaving hardly any side of the practice untouched. In terms of availability, photography became as ubiquitous as the device itself. For instance, according to the survey conducted, over 40% of people take photos every day, and another 50% take photos at least a few times a week (see Figure 13). Just as the phone became a personal object, photography

also became an individual yet shared practice, to the point that everybody and anybody became a potential photographer.

Figure 13. Table: How often people take photos

	#Total	Age			Gender		
		18-34	35-54	Over 55	Female	LGTBQ+	Male
Takes photos							
every other day	33.1	30.6	35.3	34.3	30.5	16.7	27.2
every day, a few times	25.4	32.9	24.4	9.0	29.4	33.3	26.1
around twice per week	20.5	18.5	20.5	26.9	17.9	8.3	31.5
every day, multiple times	15.0	12.7	17.1	9.0	17.6	33.3	8.7
almost never	3.3	2.9	1.9	9.0	2.2	8.3	3.3
once per month	2.8	2.3	0.8	11.9	2.5		3.3

The smartphone also had a noticeable impact on how the camera was held and aimed at its object. Whereas in the era of film, analogue cameras needed to be kept near one eye—which implied closing the other eye in order to focus and flatten out the image, making it two-dimensional—earlier digital cameras with small screens were meant to be held with both hands and semi-stretched arms to create the necessary distance to look at the screen. The phone, light, flat and buttonless, also favors the distance of an arm's length but offers more options in terms of pointing directions—on oneself, upwards, and downwards— changing the ways in which the camera was usually held and the gestural dynamics of picture-taking as a result. Because it is slim and lighter than a digital camera, it also facilitated taking picture with only one hand. In addition, touchscreen-operated smartphone photography altered the physiology of the practice, shifting its tactile affordances by kissing the mechanical button

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goodbye. Buttons are simulated on the screen, but they are drawn on the screen's glass surface, putting an end to the physicality of 'pushing a button' that defined photographic practice, but keeping the analog feeling of activating a change in the apparatus by touching it. The function of the computerized flat buttons is to provide a direct reference to the sturdiness and stability of the machine, even though its materiality is no longer there (Pold 2008, p. 32), something particularly evident in the persistence of the sound of the analog click, which is now digitally reproduced by our smartphones. In turn, a new tactile aspect arose in picture taking. The now established terms to describe certain actions related to photographs speak of a tactile and quick-movement engagement: "pinching," "double-tapping," "sliding", "scrolling," "flicking."

Along with its ubiquity and the increased use of the practice, the implications of the new materiality of cameras rapidly translated into a different picture-taking experience and, as a result, into the emergence of a new kind of imagery.

"Could you describe the last 3 sequences of pictures you have stored on your phone's camera roll?" asks the anonymous survey deployed in Latin America amongst more than 500 respondents. Answers included: "my lunch (a salad); the rain, and a Selfie;" "a book cover to ask a friend if this book was the one she was referring to, the car's registration card so the mechanic could buy a replacement part, some correction fluid that my son uses and that I wanted to show my sister;" "folded clothes (I wanted to show my mom the Marie Kondo method), my grandfather drinking *mate*, me and my boyfriend;" "a friends' get-together posing for the picture before lunch; pictures of some house fixings, my hospitalized son before going into surgery;" "a price tag at a supermarket, the number of kilometres I had run

at the gym, the sunset"; "work meeting, clothes, and a ticket;" "three selfies in different settings: one in bed, another one at a party, and the other one in the kitchen;" "the three [sequences of pictures] show my cat doing funny or interesting stuff for some reason;" "three pictures of my face, reacting to a comment made by my boyfriend and my friends;" "my son waking up, the view from my house, a bank deposit;" "mould spreading on the ceiling, a pair of earrings, a documents, a screen-capture of the weather;" "a landscape, a book, traffic, my apartment after clean-up," amongst hundreds of others.

From our current standpoint, these pictures show nothing out of the ordinary. But rewind less than a decade, and many of these shots were not within the range of possibilities shown by "*les lunettes de l'habitude*" one puts on for picture taking (Bourdieu 2013, p. 91). With the smartphone, pictures can be taken, stored, sent, viewed, and reacted upon in a manner of seconds, and this temporal shrinking of all four actions meant a great deal to the photographic habitus, as it made photography almost as quick an act as talking and less of a burden than writing.

Our gestures and their repetition transform photography into a distinctive embodied movement that—consciously and more often not— communicates a codified meaning, opening up another space of objective potentials, as Bourdieu would say using Max Weber's vocabulary (2013, p. 91). As a result of this symbolic movement, some of these pictures convey a present status or state of affairs (what we are eating, the traffic in which we are currently stuck), while others simply describe an object or situation (mould ceiling, a pair of earrings, etc.) in a quicker and more efficient way than a written or verbal message, acting as a graphic complement to an exchange.

The technological marriage of digital media and the Internet, which kick-started the use of computing technology in information transmission and storage linking all computers to a network system, placed connectivity at the basis for the heightened role that photographs now play in our daily dealings as message recipients as well as producers and senders of photographs. This has refashioned media such as photography by incorporating them into a multi-medial ecosystem that "challenges" them to satisfy today's *hypermediacy* needs (Bolter & Grusin 2000 [1998], p. 15). That is, by reducing all textualities to a mass of bits, digital technology articulates a set of hybridizations within the media system (Scolari 2008, p.114). And yet there is a continuity in the gesture of taking pictures and in how the act of taking them informs the expectations around them as to "how photographs acquire their meanings or do their jobs" (Olin 2012, p. 15).

Back in 1965, Bourdieu detected that on certain occasions, such as holidays, there was a broadening in the range of what was considered photographable, which extended and intensified the practice (1990 [1965]-a, p. 35). However, since photography was fulfilling a particular socially defined function, the practice remained invariably "ritualistic and ceremonial, and therefore, stereotyped" (Bourdieu 1990 [1965]-a, p. 38). Photography was roiled by the speed and leisure of modern life, and yet caught in the grip of earlier, more traditional ideologies that kept it loyal to its conservative use (the depiction of peak moments in life, the exaltation of family values, etc.). Currently, however, there is more going on than an intensification of the practice. Yes, smartphones are ubiquitous, and yes, they have become the primary devices to take pictures and connect online, so more pictures are shot

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and shared. However, along with all this, images of a different nature are brought into existence, following a logic distinct from that of the solemnization of social life.

One of the notable new type of images produced in this context is the selfie, which will be discussed in depth in the chapter dedicated to sending and sharing pictures. According to the survey, over one in four people count selfies as one of the types of images they usually capture with their smartphone cameras. Seen as symptomatic of a narcissistic society (for instance, see: Sibilia 2008, p. 10; Sola Morales 2013; Naivin 2016) and "a contemporary form of alienation" (Furedi 2019, p. 194), the selfie has managed to elbow its way into photography thinking. Currently, the accepted wisdom of it as pathological is progressively being challenged for being reductive of the phenomenon (for instance: Gómez Cruz & Thornham 2015, p. 2; San Cornelio 2015; Shah & Tewari 2016, p. 866; Lachance, Leroux & Limare 2017, p. 7; Berry 2017, p. 48; Eckel, Ruchatz & Wirth 2018, p. 9-10). But selfies are certainly neither the only nor the most pervasive photographic images that define our current engagement with pictures. In the survey conducted for this study, for instance, selfies came up side by side with other images that do not necessarily turn the camera on ourselves and have little to do with vanity: pictures of objects that act simultaneously as proof and shortcut to a verbal or written description ("a picture of my face that I sent via whatsapp so I don't have to explain how I feel"). Specific objects such as checks, documents, food, a book cover, price tags, etc. are also favourite targets of photographic intention.[134] The responses to the survey, we will see, contained many other examples of this latter type of objects.

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[134] For an analysis of the emergence of people sharing their home cooking on social media or via messaging applications, see: Zelcer (2021).

The practice of amateur photography, which used to be ruled by the capture of 'special' moments, is now also tied to the everyday texture of quick communication interchanges. A shift in the same direction took place with the rise of the snapshot, which moved the focus to previously overlooked scenes of domestic life. However, more than only 'scenes,' the photographer now seems attracted to steering the phone to catch the uttermost ordinary minutiae. In spite of this, the tropes and general exposé of grandeur with which mass photography has been associated is far from something of the past. Generation after generation, the same sense of dignity remains present in amateur family photography.[135]

On the whole, though, the photographic habitus—as the interiorization of the dispositions that regulate the practice (Bourdieu 1994, p. 19) —remains tied to its usual traditions while also developing a function that is altogether distinctive of our times. We can graphically appreciate it by looking at Figure 14, which presents a Word Cloud produced for this study created out of all the Spanish language responses to the survey question about the last three sequences of pictures stored in respondents' phones.

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[135] This sense of 'dignity' is also found in the photo-op culture in general, whereby politicians and public figures get camera-ready to create the perfect picture of an event (Adatto 2008).

Figure 14: Word Cloud.

The list of items detailed by the survey's respondents is revelatory in its melange of the
stereotyped ritual (children –*hijos*, friends –*amigos*, holidays –*vacaciones*, and birthdays –
cumpleaños) and imagery that served the task of depicting something for a punctual purpose
(receipts –*comprobantes*, screen –*pantalla*, transfers –*transferencias*, condo fees –*expensas*).
While the former may aspire to be conserved as mementos, the latter fulfill other social
functions that have little to do with the ritualistic or ceremonial side of photography. They
seem to be, instead, anchored in two peculiar principles going against the grain of the limits

contoured before the smartphone's appearance. On one hand, they do not merit being kept in the long run because they are 'meaningless' or rather, because their meaning is intended to be short-lived. On the other hand, many of these pictures' *raison d'être* lies in the assumption of photography as a realist medium able to provide a credible rendering that can serve as proof ("a bank deposit") or as a memory aid ("I took a picture of my dirty shoes, to remind myself that I need to have them cleaned", "Internet passwords"). "We are dealing here", writes Vilém Flusser, "with a typical post-industrial act: It is post-ideological and programmed, an act for which reality is information, not the significance of this information" (2012 [1983], p. 39). In contrast to the way photography had been formerly appropriated socially, these images seem to be free of any symbolism or future projection, remaining fully anchored in the present time because their reason for existence is tied to a purely instrumental use, and a communicative one at that.

III.III. V. A Common Motive

The "taking" of the image—a term already in use 50 years before the actual invention of the daguerreotype (Delmas 2011, p. 151)—has prompted discussion particularly when it happened in extreme circumstances, when life was at stake. Didi-Huberman's *Images malgré tout* (2003), for instance, is a fine illustration of the reflection around how the act of photographing can mean more than the naturalized custom of recording ourselves. The four pictures of an Auschwitz's crematorium, taken by an unidentified prisoner who took them from inside the gas chamber, infuse the actual images with the paradox between the forthcoming annihilation of the observer and the unrepresentable quality of the testimony

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(Didi-Huberman 2003, p. 6). The attraction of snapping such a scene, born from an antithetical condition, becomes an affirmation of existence. "To snatch an image from that in spite of that? Yes. Whatever the cost, form had to be given to this unimaginable reality" (2003, p.9). Lives were put on the line in order to take these pictures, as the camera had to be smuggled in by several people. Yet both behind these images as well as behind the current picture-taking of the unremarkable objects or everyday dealings (a coffee, nails, a cat, or whatever) lies a common expressive urge: the need to produce a message that once delivered would confront the viewer with an irrefutable description. In practice, both photography's projection into the future as well as its anchoring of meaning in the present, find their roots in the long belief of photography as a transparent medium, able to reproduce if not provide proof of at least some semblance of what is out there.

CHAPTER IV: Sending and Sharing

This chapter embarks upon an exploration of the use of photography as it is put into circulation by sending and sharing pictures. Although it maintains a chronological structure that mirrors the juncture moments sketched in Chapter III, the two initial moments, which focused on the photographic practice in its first years and modern photography, are discussed here in a single section. The reason for merging these two moments is that while that act of taking pictures changed through time with transformations in photographic technology, the act of sharing them (by showing or sending them to others), remained more or less similar when it comes to the limited number of outlets amateurs had to make their photographic production public until the emergence of the Internet (Carlón 2016, p. 42), and, most crucially, with smartphone technology. The chapter opens up exploring how in a time marked by mass migration, photographs mediated between far-flung correspondents. Then, the analysis shifts to the present time in following sections, which take up most of the chapter.

The first section goes back in time to the infancy of the sharing of pictures, when photography was not 'connected' and it took days, maybe months, to get a hold of the precious long-awaited print image by the post. After briefly exploring the practice of mailing pictures as attachments to letters, the chapter then turns to picture postcards as the preferred medium for swapping short written-messages in the reverse of a picture, worthy of travelling long distances to be shared with someone else, and the direct precursor to using an image as a message (Gunthert 2014, p. 5). The uses in the act of sending and sharing pictures remained

practically unaltered throughout the second half of the twentieth century, with perhaps

decreased enthusiasm in the use of the post as a means of communication with the emergence

of the telephone. Since throughout the digital transition visual practices were only marginally

transformed (Gunthert 2014, p. 2), the last and longest section fast-forwards in time and is

devoted to current experiences related to sharing photographic images.

The distinctive issue that is of interest for this chapter concerns the temporal relevance

of the images people put into circulation. The goal of the analysis is to explore the temporal

trope or pattern both when sending pictures in the context of a chat or via text message, as

well as in the displaying of personal photographs online (by *posting* or *uploading* them). Is

there a social expectation at stake as to when these pictures should be looked at? The central

argument advanced in the section entitled *Photography Now* draws on Chapter II, where we

examined a distinct kind of 'utilitarian' picture that is mobilized with a pragmatic end in

mind (to deliver a given message, to provide an accurate description). Now the ongoing shift

is related to a novel temporal construction emerging from the possibilities of circulation that

come with smartphone technology. By relying on some of Walter Ong's elaborations on

orality, I briefly draw a parallel between oral and photographic interchange in order to

compare both communication acts. Far from plunging into the discussion about the dialectic

between oral versus written cultures (as Ong did), the usefulness of those categories in

contrasting orality with photography can help us appreciate the nature of the shift in the

photographic practice.

The chapter then reflects on the conditions of photography's intelligibility and

concludes with an analysis of the Selfie as a current photographic genre whose raison d'être

lies in its "shareability" on social media. The last two sections also integrate the findings of the survey conducted for this study, which urges respondents to reflect on their communicative practices via photos.

IV. I. Sending pictures by the post

Pictures have always been addressed to a potential someone. Even those that were not meant to be sent somewhere or shown to someone else were made with a viewer in mind. From the get-go, the mere gesture of posing assumed the idea of an audience that, at some point, was going to confront the resulting image. Destroying pictures or cutting one self's or someone's head out of it, a habit not at all rare in the analogue era[136] also suggests an imagined viewer, whom the depiction in question had to be kept away from. The act of sending a picture to someone, whatever the subject matter of the image, only makes evident what was ever-present all along, from the very moment when taking a picture became something worth pausing for: the acknowledgement of the viewer's existence. In fact, it is fair to say that whether for familial, scientific, bureaucratic or any other purpose, all of photography's varied uses come down to this 'public' character of the practice that ultimately shapes the protocols around it.

As a practical system of symbolic storage, it was only a matter of time until photographs would be put into motion for communicational purposes in a classical Jakobsonian sense of "the addresser sends a message to the addressee" (Jakobson

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[136] In retrospect, destroying pictures with success was a luxury, given that nowadays deleting does not guarantee the complete elimination of all surviving trace (Eichhorn 2019, p. 2). On the deliberate decision to destroy or getting rid of pictures to forget, see: Michel de Oliveira (2015).

[1960]1985, p. 150). This was even more so in a world where great contingents of people were moving out of their countries and into new territories, leaving loved ones behind. Mass literacy gave rise to letters as the hegemonic medium of communication at the time when photography was invented. Letters started to include an almost mandatory portrait, the absence of it proving to be the cause of much disappointment. Pictures, however, did not necessarily illustrate the letter in a complementary manner. If anything, photographs sent from Latin America to Europe tended to contradict the written statements that emphasized the difficulties faced in the new country by depicting, instead, one and only thematic strata: party or joy (Ceva 2005, p. 520).

Pictures were key, so much so that the content of many letters usually revolved around them (Chinski & Jelin 2014, p. 51. n. 21). In a world shattered by displacement *en masse* it is not surprising to learn that expressions like the Yiddish *"papirene kínder"*[137] (children in paper only) emerged around the 1900s to give name to the pain of Jewish families who had seen their offspring emigrate from Eastern Europe to the Americas, only to return back home by means of a photograph (Ciuciu 2009, p. 213; Chinski & Jelin 2014, p. 49). Distance and challenging communication turned these pieces of paper into precious objects representing— if not somehow vicariously replacing—the person who had left.

By the 1860s, times were ripe for the epistolary form to welcome a briefer and simpler postal exchange (Milne 2010, p. 103). At the turn of the century, and helped by the half-tone process that allowed for the reproduction of images and text (Warner Marien 2006, p. 168), a

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[137] An Argentine artist, Natalia Pzellinsky, made a sculpture entitled "Papirene kínder" in reference to this. See: http://nataliapzellinsky.simplesite.com/437792481

postcard craze kicked off in the Western world,[138] giving way to the postcard's industrialization and with it, to the habit of collecting and of sending them out to others. Postcards became "the new media of its day" (Cure 2018, p. 3), cheaper than the letter and also the telegram, which had a cost associated with the number of words and a limit of characters for each word. In Latin America, a region especially touched by the arrival of large flows of immigrants that had left their countries behind, people would send letters and postcards to give news to their friends and family members. This practice can be considered as one of the first explicit exercises in using pictures, strictly speaking, as carriers of messages conceived to travel the world in order to deliver a written and an iconic message, one on the reverse and the other on the front of the thin cardboard.

The Universal Postal Union (UPU), which was created in Switzerland in 1874 in order to unify the administration of international mailing service among states, smoothed out national borders for postcard circulation (Reinalda 2009, p. 89), allowing for a new experience of postal correspondence (Henkin 2006, p. 174). It also established the cost of mailing a postcard at one half the rate of a letter and passed a provision to make postcards measure 9x 14 cms. At first, the message had to be written almost literally on the image itself, until Britain allowed postcards to have a divided back in 1902, a move that was seconded by other countries such as Canada in 1903, France in 1903, Germany in 1904, Spain in 1905, the U.S. in 1907. In the Americas, the year that marks the beginning of the

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[138] The postcard boom coincided with the proliferation of photographic practice, giving way to the "real-photo postcard" –named so to distinguish it from the mass-produced ones, as they were made by small-town professional photographers and amateurs alike and printed in the hundreds in their darkrooms. They came to be extremely popular in the U.S. and apparently at least in Mexico and Cuba as well (Sante 2010, p. 24).

divided back is 1906 (López Hurtado 2013, p. 54; Arnavat, Teixidor & Posso 2017, p. 48;

Sánchez Torija 2017, p.310).

The left section would be, from then on, destined for the written message and the right

side for the iconic message (Montellano Ballesteros 1998, p. 13-7). They were for the most

part mailed *à decouvert*, without an envelope, and managed the delivery of a quick missive

for a couple of pennies. Popped into the mail by the million, postcards combined the basis of

an epistolary tradition and the passion and method of the collector in preserving, curating,

and assembling, quickly becoming a major source of entertainment.[139] Previously

monopolized by the state to be later controlled by the market, an industry sprung up,

allowing postcards to be issued by thriving private local postcard businesses, particularly in

Argentina, Brazil and Mexico (Navarrete 2017 [2009], p. 101). Many types of postcards

emerged according to the image they bore: congratulation postcards, touristic, uses and

customs postcards, poetic, erotic, among others (Silva Morales 2005, p. 94-125). By 1907,

taking duly note of the enthusiasm towards postcards and domestic photography, and just as

the postcard was transforming interpersonal communications, Kodak launched into the

market a small portable camera with a film adapted to the size of the postcard, allowing for

photographic studios and photographers in general to offer printing services that would turn

any picture into a personalized "real photo postcard" (Wilson 2020, p. 2-3).

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[139] For a literature review around the act of collecting and a description on the collector's drives, see the section entitled "Neophilia and the Collection" (p.164-69) in Straw (2002). For a tracing back of the notion of patrimony, informing the practice of collecting, see Fusco (2012). Susan Sontag also masterly described the quirks and obsessions of the collector through the main character of her novel, sir William Hamilton, in *The Volcano Lover* (1992). For a historical account on collecting and entertainment related to photography and the gramophone in the U.S. and Europe, see Chapter 4 in Flichy (1991). For a paper on Walter Benjamin's philosophical interpretation of the figure of the collector, see Tello (2016).

Figure 15. Real photo postcard. Courtesy of Sylvia Viscay.

Photographers themselves earned a living by selling postcards, which circulated by the millions, particularly in Brazil (Beger qted byLevine 1989, p. 61). For many years, professional photographers busied themselves by having a large catalog of prints that they would usually sign upon selling, and whose price was ostensibly lower than that of "regular" photographs. These were produced at large scale, portraying key hotspots of a given city (Gonçalves Monteiro de Barros 2008, p. 228). Contrary to what one may think, the topics covered by the picture postcard went well beyond the cityscape, to the point in which any attempt to enumerate them would be endless (Masotta 2002, p. 423). As anything deemed of interest made it to the postcard form, the covered topics ranged across a wide spectrum of themes. Among them, images connoting the epochal idea of 'progress' were one of the most prevalent.[140]

The photographs on the front side functioned, typically but not always, as geographical markers of enunciation, as they often depicted a vista from where the sender was located. Even though at that early stage postcards had still not become the generic picture-perfect prints that they turned out to be on the second half of the century with the rise of tourism, from a very early stage they complied with the stereotype of providing visual indications of progress.

As much as family photography does not include negative scenes of domestic life, postcards today do not make room for the city's less idyllic vignettes. However, in the early

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[140] In reality, sights, types and customs were already sold in the 19th century glued to cardboards, individually or assembled in albums, but the format declined in the late 1890s precisely due to the postcard boom. The crisis affected the support but not the photographic genre, which continued to be cultivated with the same traditional criteria (Príamo & Tell 2020).

stages of postcards, it was not at all surprising to come across exceptions as some collections

show, for instance, Buenos Aires' '*conventillos*' (tenements where immigrants used to

live).[141] German scholar Hinnerk Onken also found a postcard of the city of Porto Alegre that

was sent to someone in Altona, Germany in 1910, whose message reads: "*Hier ist alles besch*

…!" (Here everything is shitty!) matching a grim barrack landscape with a poor hut (2019,

p.208-9).

    The opposites of that time were summoned in the postcards crafted by the North-

American photographer H.G Olds. Images of poverty–such as slums or garbage dumps—

coexisted in a seemingly unproblematic way with those of wealth and prosperity—like those

of Buenos Aires' Palermo Parks where the high society used to hang out (Alexander &

Priamo 1998, p. 31). A picture of a rubbish dump with the rubric of *"Recuerdo de Buenos*

Aires" (Souvenir from Buenos Aires) would be unimaginable today. The reason, Alexander

and Priamo point out, is that rampant inequality was accepted by the dominant Zeitgeist.

That all photographs have political valence might be common knowledge today but back

then, only with the emergence of the genre of 'social photography' images started to be read

as loaded with social denunciation, which automatically disqualified them from the postcard

(1998, p.31). From then on, the iconic side of the postcard would fully embrace its

propagandistic tone.

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[141] Hinnerk Onken also identified one postcard, of the Daniel Cisilino Collection, printed by Jacobo Peuser –who was one of Argentina's most important postcard publishers—depicting one of Buenos Aires' '*conventillos'* (2014, p. 56) . Also, in the Patricia Harris Postcard Collection held by the University of Texas at Austin there are some 'non-picture-perfect' postcards, one of a *conventillo* (also printed by Peuser), and one most likely by H.G. Olds of a precarious cabin. The image, circa 1901, can be seen here: https://en.cifha.org.ar/recuerdo-de-buenos-aires/

But besides these rarities that prove to be the exception to the rule, underprivileged housing areas did not form part of the postcard's world view as cities were shown from their best side almost invariably (Rocca 2008, p. 6).[142] If they ever included precarious settings, chances are that indigenous people or *gauchos* were depicted in their non-urban 'natural habitat,' emphasizing an 'ethnographic function' in the postcards by means of their 'informative' captions. Indigenous populations postcard portrayal fell on the exotic, and paradoxically so, also on the typical (Masotta 2002, p. 431). As key figures in the construction of a national identity they served as a peculiar looking glass showing an Other, under the sign of undesirability, and at the margins of progress (Rigat 2018, p. 101), echoing Octavio Paz's words: "*el extraño, el Otro, es nuestro doble*" (1956, p. 134), or "the strange one, the Other, is our double" (p.117 in Ruth L.C. Simm's translation). Mexico and Argentina stand out among Latin American countries where 'typical' figures were exalted through the postcard, as the printing industry flourished locally giving way to an essentialist iconographic production whose main subject matter singled out 'archetypical' figures such as the *charro* and *china poblana*, and the *gaucho*, respectively (Navarrete 2017 [2009], p. 73-4).

In times when capitalism was in expansion, postcards, which had become a hot commodity, also featured images that served as propaganda of a given nation's technological progress and level of civilization. For instance, postcards from Costa Rica from the first quarter of the twentieth century illustrated the arrival of the corporation FruitandCo and,

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[142] A great deal of those touristic postcards was centralized by the Spanish brand "Escudo de Oro", which had distributors in the United States, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Chile and Argentina (López Hurtado 2013, p. 78). With the irreversible slump of the postcard in the 2000s, they reoriented their business to selling touristic souvenirs (Galtés 2013, p. 71).

again, the exaltation of progress around the productive process of banana plantation, and the exploitation and exoticization of black labour (Camacho Navarro 2015, p. 18). Precedents along these lines actually go back to postcards printed for the Universal Expositions, in which European countries and the U.S. meant to show their colonial power by displaying people from their colonies along with technological advancements in said Universal Expositions (Rodríguez Idarraga 2020).[143] These *tableaux vivants,* that were none other than human zoos*,* would wind up as obscure collectibles. All these examples go to show, as poet Malek Alloula pointed out in reference to the colonial postcard of harem women in Algeria, that postcards are a sort of 'degree zero' of photography, in the sense that they bear a photo that comes to be filled with a discourse; in other words, they are "photographed discourse" (1986, p.130 n.14).

In general, postcards featuring Latin American scenes or landscapes oscillated from imagery of infrastructure and railroads cutting across vast extensions of territory to be conquered, to images of opulence of Latin American metropolis, suggesting that they—the city of Buenos Aires in particular—did not pale in comparison with other European cities (Onken 2015, p.150).

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[143]For more on the Latin American countries performance and the modernizing narrative they attempted to construct in the Universal Exhibitions, see: Uslenghi (2016).

Figure 16. Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires, taken by J. Cunill circa 1910.
Courtesy of Hinnerk Onken.

Railroads, trains, planes, hot air balloons, and any other means of transport, also made it to the postcard, as they came to embody a nascent urban upper and middle-class longing: consumerism and travel (Cuarterolo 2013, p. 180). Even if many did not get to actually practice tourism, the expectation and gravitational pull around getaway vacations were already well established in the 'social imaginary'[144] thanks to the profuse circulation of images in magazines, guides, and postcards (Silvestri 2011, p. 339).

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[144] 'Social imaginary' as understood by Charles Taylor as, in a nutshell, a common understanding that allows to make sense of certain practices in society (2002, p. 106-11).

Postcard enthusiasm as the go-to communication tool declined along with First World

War's economic restrictions, partly because Germany used to be the main ink supplier and

many postcards were also printed there (Holt & Holt 1971, p. 41; Sante 2010, p. 9) and partly

because the telephone had taken up the role of mediating popular communication.[145] In

Picturing the Postcard: A New Media Crisis at the End of the Century (2018), Monica Cure

challenges this widespread understanding that the war meant a turning point for the postcard,

claiming that the medium itself did not disappear as much as its status as a 'new media' did.

Her argument proves valid for the remainder of the twentieth century, as postcards did not in

fact vanish but actually lingered mostly in their ¨*Gruss aus*" (greetings from) form by

travellers,[146] which had a comeback in the 1970s and was alive and well throughout the

1980s.[147] The following postcards testify this resurgence:

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[145] See the last chapter of Monica Cure's book (2018). See also a book review of Cure's book published
by the Times Literary Review (Henkin 2019).

[146] *Gruss aus* postcards series are originally from Germany, as they were produced as self-promoting
images by small localities in the 1880s, but ended up spreading all over the world as a distinct postal genre
(Confino 1997, p. 181).

[147] Postcards were repurposed, for instance, to communicate with war prisoners in World War II. In
Canada, they were also used by hospitals to communicate with the families of wounded or dead soldiers.
See:
https://www.banq.qc.ca/archives/entrez_archives/branche_histoire/documents_iconographiques/cartes-
postales/index.html?language_id=3
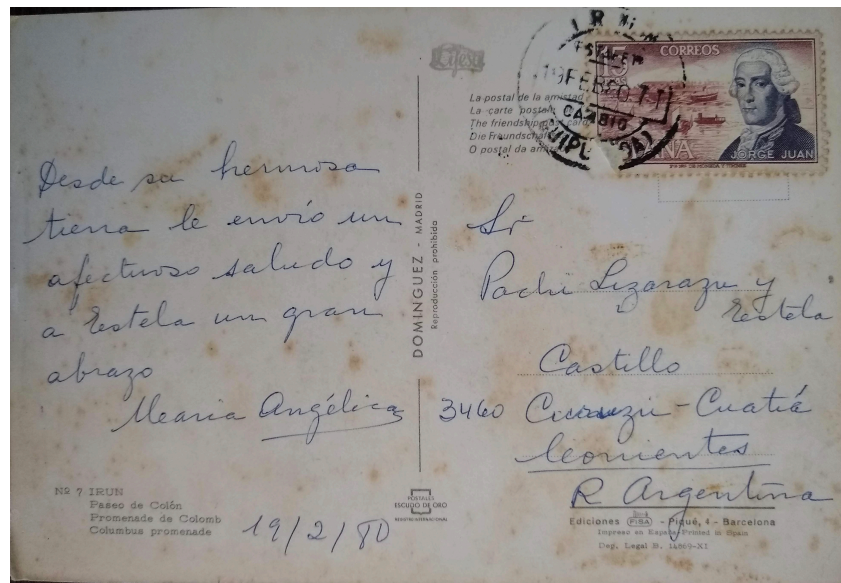
Figure 17. Postcard of the Columbus Promenade in Irún, Spain sent to Curuzú Cuatiá, Corrientes, Argentina in 1980. Courtesy of collector María Cristina Barrandeguy.
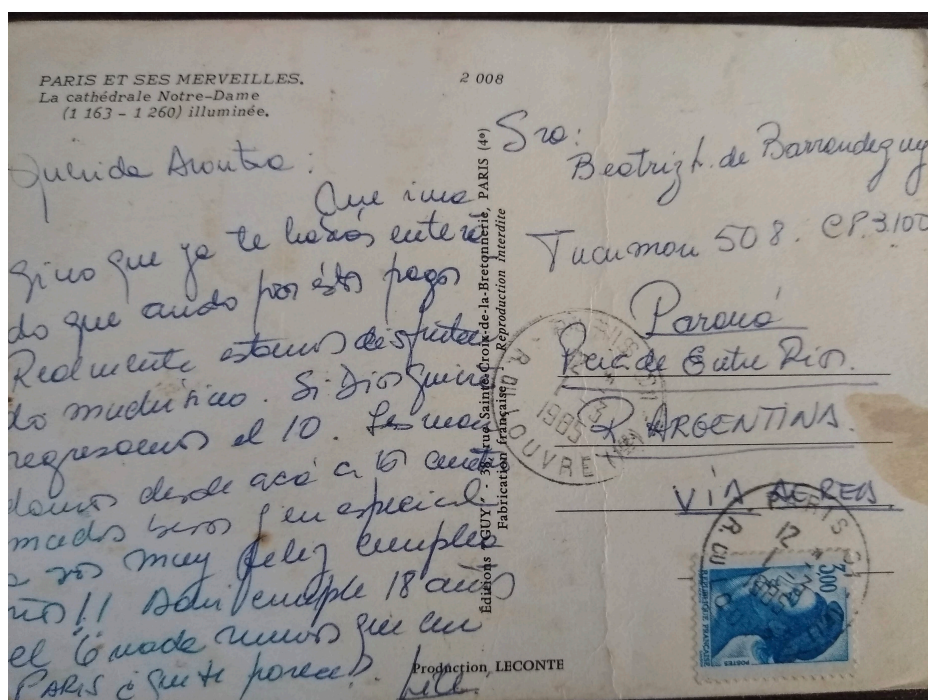
Figure 18. Postcard of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris sent to Paraná, Entre Ríos, Argentina in 1985. Courtesy of collector María Cristina Barrandeguy.

Nowadays it is safe to say that postcards have become valuable objects for the avid collector of past memorabilia more than anything else. But however quaint mailing a postcard may appear now, they remain key to grasping the currency of photography in the present, as they prefigured a set of features that the photographic practice would take up in its 'connected' phase.

First, postcards signal the strengthening of the public over privacy, as they literally invited anyone that stumbled upon them to read their content and view their picture at pleasure, marking a shift with correspondence that was until then supposed to be confidential—in principle, as the post was proven not to be such a secure channel (Peters 1999, p. 166).

Secondly, postcards anticipate the practice of putting strangers into contact, creating a network of like-minded connoisseurs, in essence prefiguring today's online social networks (Riego Amézaga 2010, p.3,14). The interactive and global nature of the traffic of these cardboard pictures that had people from distant corners sending messages to one another at a novel quick pace for the time set up a 'transnational' space.

Moreover, as the social practice of collecting boomed, postcards quickly became objects worthy of assemblage, catalogue, and an absorbing entertainment. Thousands of postcards were sent and received in South America, and there were even magazines entirely devoted to the subject (Silvestri 2003, p.2), such as the *Anuario Cartófilo Sud-Americano*, printed in Buenos Aires in 1904, where thousands of people from around the globe would advertise their addresses in the interest of exchanging this or that postcard (Arnavat, Teixidor & Posso 2017, p. 49).

Unlike other objects that acquire a 'collectible' appeal usually when their circulation dwindles down and time separates them from their original use value—such as cars, comic books, old furniture or stamps (Kopytoff 2013 [1986], p. 80)—postcards' role as communication media and their commoditization value as collectible objects took place at the same time. That is to say that the so-called 'golden age' of postcards saw people that were urged to mail them in order to message someone just as they were also urged to complete their collections. Perhaps for the first time, photographs were explicitly used for interpersonal communication and as entertainment. A truly interactive act was at work here, probably because postcards, as mass-produced commodities, were meant to be exchanged, or better, because their *exchangeability* was their most "socially relevant feature" (Appadurai 2013 [1986], p. 13).

Third, like text-messages in chat platforms, postcards engendered a form of communication that was 'democratic' in spirit. In contrast to the epistolary form, a genre which required formal skills to express the obvious with pomp and roundabout expressions (Monsiváis 2014 [1991], p. 25), the postcard did not discriminate against those who were not well-versed enough to engage in long and elaborate letter exchanges (Masotta 2002, p. 424). Their cheap rate together with the small space available to the written message made sure that it was accessible to new groups, making writing 'painless' and at the same time conducive to expressing one's feelings, thereby tightening the bond among friends and relatives that were apart (Corbin 1999, p. 421).

Finally, postcards also served the purpose of sharing a picture of a thing or a place that had been seen by the senders themselves, manifesting in so doing "a modernist preference for

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the present tense" (Clare Brant qted in Milne 2010, p. 111) and anticipating a logic that would show up in contemporary times. Whereas taking pictures was traditionally made with a deferred intentionality in mind, as photographs were often regarded as keepsakes to be looked at in the future, stepping back to consider the postcard offers a precedent into today's temporal articulation in the act of taking, sending, and displaying pictures.

IV. II. Photography Now

Much has been said about the inextricable relation between photography and time. Researchers have elaborated on this complex and slippery relationship from very different points of departure—academic, philosophic, and literary, and oftentimes, all three combined (Machado 1984; Lemagny 2008 [1992]; Baetens, Streitberger & Van Gelder 2010; Kember & Zylinska 2012; Lister 2012; Kossoy 2014; Jussim 2019; Raymond 2019; Hand & Scarlett 2020, to name but a few). Time seems to be the core raw material of any media-technology; yet in the act of photography time takes on an evident paradoxical nature, as photographing "presents time by fleeing it and flees it by presenting it" (Stiegler 1998 [1994], p. 225).[148]

When it comes to media, the notion of time was traditionally thought of as a constraint to overcome. With the construction of the first railroads the idea of 'speed' emerged as a fundamental staple of progress (Fidler 1997, p. 81). Through the idea of *speed*, in fact, one can think of the history of the photographic act as an overall history of the desire to overcome slowness or beat time so as to remain on par with fast-paced modernity. Benjamin

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[148] Stiegler is in fact describing a chronometer.

thought of it in that way in his *célèbre Brief History of Photography,* as an "ever-accelerating development" that did not allow us to look back (2015 [1931], p. 59).[149]

In early photographic experiences, emulsions required long exposures to fix a still object into a silver plate, which made the speed of the shutter the means to win the quest. "From Niepce's thirty minutes in 1829 to roughly twenty seconds with Nadar 1860", describes Paul Virilio, "time may have exposed itself independently in the photograph, but it ticked away very slowly for its exasperated practitioners" (1994, p. 21). The actual physical gesture of snapping a picture was also granted with the ease of movement, becoming a quick body motion that could inflict a cut on the temporal continuum, singling out an instant in one seamless movement. In parallel, an industrial time punctuated by "a technical novelty, as well as the demise of things obsolete and out of date" came to stay (Stiegler 1998 [1994], p. 14). In science, astronomy in particular, photography had also been at the center of attempts to construct it as an evidentiary medium, which would eliminate the problem of subjective observation given its superior ability to display images at a tenth of a second speed (Canales 2009, p. 109-11). As one of the fundamental moments in the history of medialization, the emergence of photography extended radially and simultaneously over every facet of social life (Verón 2013, p. 248).

Traditionally, the social role of photography had to do with conserving images of the past, visually shaping said past as a result. Until recently, photographs were primarily associated with offering the '*what-has-been*' in a depiction, and also, as a '*that will be*'

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[149] Paul Virilio placed the question of *speed* at the heart of his critique on communication technologies throughout his intellectual life. For a review of the notion of speed in his work, see: (Hill 2019).

conjured in a 'future anterior' whose ending would be death itself (Barthes 1981 [1980], p. 96).[150] In other words, with the exception of journalism and the postcard that operated in the present tense,[151] the communicative intent of the photographic act functioned, in general, as a deferred message: one that having been produced at some point would be delivered or realized after some time, harbouring in it the way the past—no matter if long gone or recent—used to look like. The photographic image was, by definition, always late (Stiegler 2009 [1996], p. 17). However, in the last years we seem to have reached the point in which the time between taking a picture and its transmission as data has been reduced to the point of often coinciding in time. This synchronicity gives way to a new conception of temporality different from historicity, whose grounds lie on time as deferred (Stiegler 2009 [1996], p. 115). The photographic gesture becomes less an act of *coupure*, which separates an instant out of the world and into a separate fixed time as Philippe Dubois had it (1990, p. 160-1), and more a gesture towards its integration with the continuity and flow of the lived present.

Kracauer somehow predicted that photography's "substantive meaning will change depending upon whether it belongs to the domain of the present or to some phase of the past" (1995 [1927], p. 54). As we saw in Chapter III with the emergence of a specific type of imagery, the prevalent temporality of technical images seems to be led by the immediate present, which suggests a shift in the way that photography and its users had until now made

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[150] In *Camera Llucida*, Roland Barthes also formulates the photograph's relation to this "anterior future" whose result is death, particularly in his description of Abraham Lincoln's portrait. On this account of photography and its implications, see the introduction to Kaja Silverman's *The Miracle of Analogy or the History of Photography*, Part I (2015).

[151] Back when smartphone technology did not exist, linguist and cultural critic Eliseo Verón pointed out that press photography operated in a "pure present," "it is the *have-been-there* of only a few hours or just a few days ago" (1997, p. 62).

the medium time specific. Nothing better illustrates this rather prevalent 'presentist' time sense than the ways photographs circulate in online dating sites: posting an old profile picture of oneself is commonly seen as flat-out lying.

If photographs are 'patiently waiting to be distributed', in Vilém Flusser's words, (2012 [1983], p. 49), then the duration of that alleged hold-up has shortened to the point where the gesture of photographing and that of showing the given image is more often than not one and the same. Barthes masterfully described the double temporality of photography in the analogue era, and that dual temporality rang true even when the digital had turned photographs into bits. But now the 'there-then' of the capture that photographs used to bring into the 'here-now' of the viewing (Barthes 1978 [1977], p. 44) feels out of step with the photographic gesture of snapping and sharing in a matter of seconds. Basically, because the 'there and then' is generally sent and read as a 'here and now' or even as a "brief news item" (Stiegler 2009 [1996], p. 122), similar to the news picture's predicament on "immediacy and ability to condense and concretize knowledge" (Hill & Schwartz 2020 [2015], p. 2).

It is as if photography's 'temporal anteriority,' which was for the most part conceived as fixed, has gotten close to what was thought as a staple of film's time construct: a virtual immaterial projection that unfolds in the present tense. Back in the 1930s Lewis Mumford wrote: "time and space are not merely co-ordinated on their own axis, but in relation to an observer who himself, by his position, partly determines the picture, and who is no longer fixed but is likewise capable of motion" (Mumford 1934, p. 342). He was talking about the moving picture, but he might as well had been referring to photography as we experience it today, with its ability to snap and share on the go: a handy expressive tool.

Because the photographs that are put in motion online are invariably reaching out to a potential someone, time also comes up in the photographic gesture as imagined and projected, manifested in the *intent* backing the gesture. Even if for a split second, behind any photograph there used to be some anticipation. Now we do not think twice before taking a picture. And the more spontaneous the photographic gesture becomes, the more it resembles speech. An oral quality rises in the photographic gesture of today: it is executed with an 'other' in mind, it occurs repeatedly, it expects and triggers an almost simultaneous reaction. Lastly, it generates a similar sense of *auditory space* by situating one another "in the middle of actuality and in simultaneity" specific to the oral condition (Ong 1967, p. 128). Taking and sharing a picture, which will probably be considered one and the same action in the near future, offers the possibility of engaging in asynchronous communication—one that does not require the presence of another person—while still procuring the immediate gratification of oral connection via the expectation of generating a reaction from whoever is viewing the picture. With the smartphone, taking a picture becomes a body movement that channels a codified meaning instantly. In other words, the gesture of photographing presents itself as nothing but a symbolic movement.

This great new vigour and practicality of photography comes with tricky implications. On the one hand, the ready availability of images together with the fact that one event is photographed many times over, makes it seem as though technical images were always unfolding in a circular manner, in an eternal repetition of the same (Flusser 2011 [1985], p. 58). It is no wonder that all pictures summoned by the call of a hashtag look eerily similar to one another, in a twist twice as forceful as any of Walter Benjamin's postauratic scenarios.

On the other hand, the smartphone, a device both ubiquitous and multimedial, made photography's 'time-filling' quality stronger. Just as smoking gave us something to do with our hands when we are not using them, and time gave us something to do with our minds when we are not thinking (Dwight McDonald qted inWeisberg 2016, 1st prgph), the smartphone gives us something to do with our hands, our time, and our minds, fulfilling the need for constant stimuli. This dynamic of the smartphone together with the dependence it fosters—which has resulted in many books urging readers to tackle the issue of this addictive technology[152]—are in clear evidence today, when any pause is an invitation to pick up the phone and any moment is worth a picture.

That photography is subsumed in this device has impacts that go beyond having an ever-available camera as a practical expressive tool. Flicking one's finger through the glass surface of the smartphone makes evident that photographs are ubiquitous, as they appear solicitously the moment the smartphone is on, having become a fundamental element in every single online page, at the heart of e-commerce, journalism, social media, and so on. These photographs, their materiality only tied to some screen, seem to be immune to the passing of time, their content the only indicator of their age, infusing the feeling of holding a time-worn stained print with a nostalgic sentiment in the context of mass digitization. This in part explains why photo-related apps insistently mimic the passage of time, inflicting signs of

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[152] Many popular books pick up this issue falling into the vocabulary of addiction. For instance: *Always on* (Baron 2010), *Sleeping with Your Smartphone: How to Break the 24/7 Habit and Change the Way You Work* (Perlow 2012), *How to Break up with Your Phone (Price 2018)*, *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and The Business of Keeping us Hooked* (Alter 2018). Although less common, similar titles are to be found in Spanish and Portuguese: *La gran adicción: cómo sobrevivir sin internet y no aislarse del mundo* (Puig Punyet, Enric 2019). "*Celular, doce lar*" (Hermann 2018).

decay on images as a way to imbue them with aesthetic age-value.[153] What was before a consequence of the encounter of the materiality of the print with time and the environment, is now directly applied to digital pictures by simply applying a filter that accentuates the yellow tones, or by attaching scratches or a dog ear to the image so as to add an old and worn out effect. In appearance, the picture has gone through a lot. In reality, the image reflects the present, plus it has never left the cellphone and probably never will.

As much as the images on the screen might draw you in, the act of photographing draws you out of experience, pulling the photographer apart from the depicted moment, divorcing the subject from direct experience. That taking pictures detaches oneself from lived experience is nothing new to photography, yet the current profusion of photography as a smartphone function comes with a newfound compulsion for taking pictures in detriment of just being in full presence of mind. The same medium that operates in the present drags the subject out of it. Timewise, it also means that photography has become a near 'real-time' technology, "extending the older temporal logic of the snapshot to a general informational mode of relating to others" (McQuire 2012, p. 125). Real time technology, understood as "modes of engagement, interaction and the speed at which responses to one's own actions are being shown" (Weltevrede, Helmond & Gerlitz 2014, p. 129), imposes a set of assumptions altering the texture of everyday life, pushing the ordinary photographic act to operate in the now, resulting in a distinct dominant understanding of time, marking "the return to the

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[153] According to Austrian art historian Aloïs Riegl, who wrote a foundational theory of age-value in "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and its Origin" (1982 [1903]),visible signs of age produce an "immediate affective reaction" in the viewer that is characteristically modern (p.24).

present under the sign of its mechanical reproduction, amended by automatic distribution"
(Simanowski 2018, p. 56).

IV.III. Show and Tell: Photography as an Utterance

As a result of this peculiar temporal anchorage that elevates the present-tense as the locus of enunciation, now the photographic practice demands an added specific media competence, the development of a certain skill (techné), in order to perform its intended job of "codifying experience and of moving information" (McLuhan 1960, p. x).[154] For instance, in order to see the possibility of photographing a check or a bank deposit and read it as a document and interpret it as a reference of significance, one has to be immersed and well-versed in this "new organization of memory" (Stiegler 1998 [1994], p. 169). The same goes for translating a scene or an object into visual form and sending it out to be read as a brief statement (Gunthert 2014, p. 6). "Anyone who writes has to master the rule of spelling and grammar", and anyone who takes pictures and distribute them also has to "adhere to the instructions for use" (Flusser 2012 [1983], p. 59).

This media literacy has to do with conceiving the act of taking and sending pictures as an utterance, which means that, in return, the recipient will not only read the image in a heightened present but will also be expected to react upon it as one would when talked to. All

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[154] There is an interdisciplinary academic research project centered on teenagers from Australia, Colombia, Finland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the UK, and Uruguay, which explores their media literacy around the consumption, creation, and distribution of digital content. For more, check out: https://transmedialiteracy.org/

survey respondents said that they receive photos on their phone, and two thirds (67%) admitted that they expected the pictures they in turn send to another person to be seen and reacted upon instantly or within the first hour of being sent or at least during the course of the day.

Any picture integrated in an online chat or shared in social media, whether accompanied with a caption or not, reproduces the oral structure of turn-taking. The term *conversational* has indeed been used to describe this dynamic that photography absorbed as a result of being a central part of online culture (for instance, in: Brea 2010, p. 118; López & Ciuffoli 2012, p. 78; Gunthert 2014, p.1; Expósito 2020, p.88; referring to selfies: Mirzoeff 2015, p. 63-8; Frosh 2015, p. 1609; Katz & Thomas Crocker 2015, p. 1871; Gunthert 2018, p. 135).[155] However, this not only not exclusive to photography but it is also a trend that can be identified throughout the twentieth century, when "media became increasingly conversational," integrating turns of oral speech into their own vocabularies, so as to create a sense of intimacy in the audience (Peters 2006, p. 117).[156] In spite of this, this *modèle conversationnel* (Flichy 2010, p. 38) that the Internet follows is usually described as a 'comeback', as if verbal communication has gone out of use and is only now enjoying a revival.[157]

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[155] Incidentally, as a metaphor, conversation also illustrates how computational interfaces work, and was a pivotal idea in the early stages of artificial intelligence in the 1950s (Scolari 2018, p. 24).

[156] Even letter writing emulates turn-taking, albeit in a sort of slow-motion manner.

[157] This narrative that frames online media's oral features as if they had reawakened from ancient pre-literate times might be lodged in larger epistemological issues, one of them being that vision has traditionally been charted as 'the' sense through which the change into a modern sensibility and subjectivity can be explained (Sterne 2003a, p. 3). In parallel, and regardless of the degree of alienation that media technologies might have fostered, people kept on using the oral form as the main and most

Although there are marked differences between the two modes of communication embedded in smartphone technology, photography does seem to mimic the temporal ongoingness and spontaneity of the spoken word. It is photography's stillness, however, which contrasts with sound's invisible and ethereal mobility, what makes it a malleable communication medium and what mark photographs as portable and practical units of enunciation. The iconic object seems to eclipse video in that regard, as the latter is still constrained by file weight and by the lingering attention it requires from the viewer, which is the reason why some online platforms limit their video's lengths.[158] Motion might provide a

primal way of communicating with one another. The apotheosis-of-vision narrative, which has long held sway in making sense of modernity, is first and foremost based on a conceptual separation of the senses and in the, sometimes tacit and some others explicit, superiority of the eye. Far from being overcome, the superiority of the sight versus the other senses is still either implied or, in other cases, elaborated explicitly. For example, according to Daniel Bougnoux "we know that the superiority of the eye is due to its separating power. The gaze is a scalpel, it detaches its object and keeps it at a greater distance than the eye, and *a fortiori* than the three other senses, which wear out their objects. The photographic prosthesis, in particular in the form of the reflex camera, wonderfully increases this virtue of rigidity (precision, rigor): the wink of the metal eyelid, slices the abundant diversity, like a critical knife, a spear of sagacity" (2019 [2006], p. 63). This approach has occluded the ways in which hearing and touching may have been affected by current modes of seeing, and vice versa, simply because, in reality, the senses always coexist in a flow of orchestrated partnership. For instance, Jonathan Crary shows how much sight was conceived through tactile notions (1990, p.59). Focusing on hearing and the ear, Jonathan Sterne offers, in *The Audible Past* (2003), an instructive account on the intellectual separation of the senses in the section entitled "Otology, Physiology and Social Otology" (p. 51-70).

The other reason that would explain why oral elements that become apparent in digitally-mediated interaction are presented as 'comeback' points to the romantic nostalgia about the honesty, flexibility, and straightforwardness of the spoken word that runs through McLuhan's and Ong's formulations (Havelock 1986, p. 33). If so, some narratives in our field might have indeed turned into an unquestioned 'aging fable' (Sterne 2011b, p. 1). In any case, presenting the oral side of online communication as a reawakening seems largely false on empirical grounds, as hardly any single moment in history has seen oral speech decline *per se.*

[158] GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format), can be static or a two to five seconds looping video sequence. They were created in 1987, gained resonance in the 2000s when people started to have their personal webpages. By 2012, they gained prominence in everyday use as 'stickers' in chat platforms, so much so that "to GIF" was claimed as a verb by the Oxford University Press US dictionary (Ash 2015, p.119-20).

closer '*impression de realité*" (Metz 1965, p. 74), but the snapshots seem to be better suited for rapid appropriation. Then, the smartphone's linkages to channels of distribution imbue the photograph with "its decisive significance for its reception" (Flusser 2012 [1983], p. 54). It is a dynamic of constant update that resembles oral speech in its temporariness and that moves away from the concept of the 'Kodak moment', which was special precisely because it did not happen all that often (Sturken 2016, p. 104).

Bearing a mixture of opposed qualities—the fleeting of the oral, the fixity of the icon— photographs are transmitted almost instantaneously, favoring the present-time the same way an utterance does. Jocelyn Lachance identifies this 'presentist' prevalence in photographic practice with a *nostalgie du présent* (2011, p.101-03; 2016), an attempt to hold on to a precious moment that seems to be already running like sand through an hourglass. That sentiment, although perhaps amplified, is the same that animated family photography. Rather, smartphone technology pushes photography into uncharted territory when it tasks it with communicating on the go, usually deployed as an addendum to a text message.

Previous generations who produced photographs only as family memorabilia would be lost when looking at the kinds of pictures we take and share today via text, on a chat, or on social media. In everyday communication, particularly in text-speak, photography often sees its weighty legacy of being a *memento mori* statement lifting off its shoulders, the prickling *punctum* nowhere to be found in such ordinary exchanges.[159]

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[159] By making an analogy with generative grammar that defines a unary transformation as generated by a base, like the passive, negative, interrogative forms, Barthes called unary pictures (*photographie unaire*), those banal images that, lacking punctum, would provoke "no duality, no indirection, no disturbance"

IV. IV. Pics or it didn't happen

Part of the current intelligibility of photography as part of today's presentism rests on a premise that is as old as the medium itself; that it provides a realistic rendition of whatever it captures. "Photographic literacy is learned," wrote Allan Sekula back in the 1980s, "and yet, in the real world, the image appears itself 'natural" and independent of its conditions of readability (1987 [1982], p. 86). Outside of academia, this was always the case for photography and it is still true today. In spite of the postmodernist critique that revealed photography's constructedness and of many "prophets of the apocalypse" who predicted its complete dissociation with factualness (Machado 1993, p. 15), photography did not shake off the epistemic foundation that had shaped its uses. Joan Fontcuberta, in *La furia de las imágenes* (2016), concocted a somewhat opposite argument: "If photography has been tautologically linked to truth and memory, post-photography breaks off with those links: ontologically, it discredits the naturalistic representation of the camera; sociologically, it displaces the traditional territories of photographic uses" (Fontcuberta 2016, p. 17). In practice, however, the links to truth and memory still seem to continue shaping some of the medium's most prevalent uses.

The logic that informs photography's current status is not one of rupture with its long history as an 'objective' medium. Instead, even though the digital introduces a doubt about the cemented principle of photography's referentiality, most of the time people still take pictures of things that are in front of them (Dubois 2018, p. 181, 83). Truth and memory are

(1981 [1980], p. 41). Paul Frosh, goes back to this notion to argue that stock images are generated through a matrix that determines the production of new images that match a 'unary base'(2003, p.60).

still primary vectors to understand how photographs circulate and are given meaning to, to the point that by reaching for our close-at-hand phone, we now have the habit of creating a document of our visual testimony that feeds into an ongoing ethos of by-standing culture and media-enabled social intervention (Rentschler 2016, p. 17).[160] In a melting together of the journalistic and police gaze, there is a sense of attentiveness when it comes to registering stuff as it is happening in the contemporary sociotechnical landscape (Bruno 2013, p. 87; 108) that lies, again, in the acceptance of recording technologies as truthful.

The "pics or it didn't happen" axiom, which is used in online text parlance to demand images to back up a statement, also indicates that photographs are still a trusted source. As an agreed convention, photography's inbuilt "credentials of objectivity" (Sontag 2002) informs the main register in which photographs circulate in society in general, and in an evolving style of interpersonal communication in particular, as a message that adds information, spares wording, and resolves ambiguities. Survey respondents said that they send pictures in chat-like platforms for different purposes, but two themes were mentioned multiple times: saving time by not having to type answers, and communicating specific messages that are either best conveyed or that can only be communicated through images. Some respondents also mentioned replying to images they received with images in order to "speak the same language" as their interlocutor.

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[160] What chiefly interests Carrie Renstchler in her article "Technologies of By-Standing: Learning to See Like a By-stander" (2016) is the phenomenon by which passers-by feel the need to stop and record an event that they are witnessing. She unpacks the notion of by-stander and redefines it by taking away the negative passive connotations and developing the notion in terms of agency instead (p. 20-1). In contrast to by-stander photography, she suggests that through movement and sound, by-stander videos more readily convey the situation in which by-standing takes place (p. 27).

One picture, as Confucius' worn-out adage says, is worth a thousand words. Sending a photograph in an online chat or as a text message is, in other words, a way of outsmarting time and cutting to the chase. It serves as a document or proof, a memory-aid, and as a way to describe something in an efficient manner, be it 'visible' like an object, or intangible, like our mood. Sometimes writing does not cut it, recording an audio message requires more 'work' on every end, while sharing a quick photograph conveys the desired information adequately. In a context of multimodal communication enabled by the smartphone, adding a picture clarifies an idea. In these interchanges, the mission of the photograph remains tied to a rational imperative: "to clarify the object" (Mumford 1934, p.339). Details are made available in a fraction of a second. Evan Spiegel, the owner of Snapchat, an app that focuses on image-driven conversations, once said in an interview: "People wonder why their daughter is taking 10,000 photos a day (…) What they don't realize is that she isn't preserving images. She's talking" (interviewed by Stevenson 2016). The apparently benign communicative need that pictures serve, leaves an open question about whether this is all a product of a compulsion "in its most cynical form, the capitalist's need to consume the moment, to own it?" (McKeon 2018).

To say that photographic realism is at its peak in everyday ordinary use is not the same as to assert that photographs are mistaken with reality itself (virtual reality and fake news being usual red flags of image synthesis). Rather, such an assertion highlights that the objectivity factor is still an accepted precondition to interpret the photographic message in everyday communications. Nobody would think that observing a flat picture equals the experience of seeing something or someone in person, as it was feared in the early prospects

of digitization. And yet, once it is accepted that a photograph does not provide a complete or self-sufficient closed-upon-itself information, linear perspective and by transitive property photography offers a two-dimensional representation that still functions as a "good enough approximation" of what something would look like as seen "by an individual observer in reality" (Perez 1982, p. 272). In sum, to photograph is to conjure up a message in iconic form. Prior to the smartphone, amateurs did not really articulate pictures in realistic terms because photography was not helpful for ordinary everyday communication. It lacked speed. The prevalent register was that of a dramatization. The value in the use of pictures was not to be found in photography's verisimilitude as much as in its ability to feed a *familial gaze* and maintain an "imaginary cohesion" (Hirsch 1997, p. 7).

The prevalent 'instrumental' use of photographs that we observe (and probably engage with) in daily interchanges, with no greater aspiration than to put forward a clear and concise message, and whose reading lies upon photography's veracity, points to how photographs have become easily digestible units of information traveling across interlocutors. Existentially, they signal an underlying and larger 'hyper-empiricism' that seeks to transform reality into data (Scott 2019), which runs alongside peoples' cravings to articulate many of their behaviours and habits in numbers. Phenomena associated with the quantification of daily life such as tracking daily activities (sleep patterns, number of steps, calories burnt and so on), speak of a general instrumentality regime of which photography—in its empirical pragmatic use—is a representative example.

Although debates on photography's documentary power tend to gravitate towards the poles (photography as objective or as politically deceptive), photography's radical consumer-

level penetration through mobile technology makes evident that realistic representations for everyday communication coexist with the creation of semi-fictional productions that result from an increased experimentation with the medium. There is no such thing as a straightforward consequence. Positing that "(t)he more the image serves a fiction, the more it loses its authority as a symbol" (Belting 2011 [2001], p. 14) might be accurate at a logical, theoretical level, but it does not stand the experience on the ground, showing a dissonance between academic analysis and actual expressive practices. Everyday photographic communication is a messy territory, where the possibility of making up a world of simulacra does not necessarily stand in the way of rampant realism. Increasingly so, people have learned to express themselves in a photographic manner because it meets a need. So much so that now snapping screenshots by pressing the 'home' and 'restart' button of the smartphone at the same time, turns whatever has popped into the screen into a photograph.[161] That screenshot may come in handy later on, for example, to prove that someone has erased a post on Twitter, or to send to someone an extract of a chat exchange, to prove you have made a donation and encourage others do the same by posting it on social media, or it may even be useful as proof in court.[162] In short, pictures supply the means to express something, and we can expect them to be as incomplete in their own specific way as any other medium we use to describe the world.

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[161] In Brazil, taking a screenshot is called "*dar print*" as in "hit print".

[162] For instance, in Colombia a screenshot of a conversation held in WhatsApp was accepted as evidence that a teacher was fired for being pregnant (Castañeda 2020).

IV. V. Incessant Mirror: The Selfie[163]

As the realistic tune to everyday life photographs intensifies, we also see an increasingly easy access to photography and a growing knack for digitally manipulating them. Photography's contradictory status as a 'magical machine' comes to the fore: a dyad of coexisting opposites.

Editing and embellishing pictures by way of adding filters, stickers, captions, writing over them, and even adding music, is increasingly simple to do and has become a tool of pleasure evocative of a play with photographs that once was fulfilled by the postcard, and later on by the Polaroid camera as Peter Buse argues (2016, p. 7).[164] The selfie, which has certainly become a sort of emblem of current photographic practice, is representative of this ludic turn that comprises taking the photo, inspecting it right away, enhancing it by way of filters and/or other accessories, in order to then share it on social media or another interface made available by the smartphone. "Gamification," a process by which playful elements are designed to foster participation, engagement, and amusement (Santeaella 2018, p. 199), a process by which putting in work is reframed as fun (Glas 2015, p. 132-4), is the order of the day, perhaps nowhere more so than in selfies. Whereas Kodak's lingo asked for no more than

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[163] The expression "incessant mirror" is one that appears in at least three of Jorge Luis Borges' poems: *Elegía de un parque (Elegy for a Park)*, *El hacedor (The Maker)* (1999 [1989], p.436-7 and 68-9; respectively), and *Al espejo (To the Mirror)*. The latter starts with this verse: *"¿por qué persistes, incesante espejo?* (why is it you persist, incessant mirror?) (1989, p. 110).
[164] Although Polaroid had a plant in Mexico, it was never an object of mass consumption in Latin American countries as it was in North America. Photography expert and historian Clara von Sanden made reference, in an e-mail exchange where I consulted her about this, that in Uruguay private collections sometimes hosted Polaroid prints that were bought to a 'photographer of the public space.' She agrees that at a domestic level, the technology did not have a significant repercussion (von Sanden 2020).

"pushing the button," now that catch-phrase no longer captures the spirit of the photographic practice, which rather follows more of a "do-it-your-self" approach (da Silva Junior 2014, p. 119). So much so, that visible amateurish imperfections in the framing have largely become the defining features of the genre.

Up to present times, the most popular social media outlets in Latin America are the ones owned by Facebook Inc. (Navarro 2020b). Among the photo-centered apps, the most used is Instagram. Yet overall, Whatsapp, which was also swallowed up by Facebook, is the most used one. In some Asian countries, for instance, other applications are used to snap, edit, and share pictures. In China, an application called Meitu, which means 'beautiful picture' is said to be the most popular to touch up selfies, and according to a *New Yorker* reporter, it takes around 40 minutes for her Chinese friends to doctor their selfies (Fan 2017). In Japan, the *purikura*—photo-booths that were a boom in the 1990s—took the post-production work of sticker-print pictures to a whole new level and are sometimes branded as predecessors of the selfie or as a 'sister genre' (Sandbye 2018, p. 308). 'Western' photobooths, in turn, which manufactured instant portraits for fun, remind us of the selfies taken in elevators or bathrooms. But even though these booths were common in Europe, Canada, and the US, and part of the urban landscape (found in metro stations, shopping malls, arcades), in Latin America they did not set foot. They were, instead, something one would see in the movies.[165]

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[165] Nowadays they can be rented out for private events such as weddings. Photobooths are an overlooked chapter in the history of photography so the bibliography available is extremely scarce. For a history of the photobooth, see: in the United States, Goranin (2008); in Spain, Pérez Vega (2014).

Starting around the year 2010, selfies seemed to catch relentless attention from seemingly different corners: media commentators, magazines, political scientists, art historians, communication and psychology scholars, among many others. The National Selfie day was proclaimed by the UN in 2014, *Time* Magazine released a report on the 'selfiest cities' –by which, apparently, San José de Costa Rica and Monterrey, Mexico ranked high up in terms of number of selfies taken (Wilson 2014). Selfies also came to be objects of desire that would push people to risk their lives in the process of making them. The term 'selfie' certainly invokes mind-blowing stories, one crazier than the other.[166] In 2014, Mexican Javier Otero Aguilar accidentally shot himself while taking a gun selfie; in 2020 Elena Freire Lepez died trying to take a selfie on the edge of a waterfall in Colombia. In between that time span, hundreds of individuals have tested their luck. One study calculated that between October 2011 and November 2017, 250 people passed away while selfie-seeking (Bansal et al. 2018, p. 829).

These numbers reveal not only the lengths that many would go for the perfect shot but also that the setting in which a selfie takes place is an integral part of the genre, so much so that for selfie-takers their faces are not necessarily more important than the backdrop to which they place themselves against. In contrast to the traditional portrait, whose theme is "the figuration of a singularity," the selfie usually establishes a *situated singularity*, as Mariano Zelcer defined it (2017, p. 147; 2021, p. 114). The backdrop of choice could go

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[166] Some are funny and scary at the same time: Gwendoline Christie, a Game of Throne's actress, told on a tv show how she was asked for a selfie at a restaurant's toilet: "I went to lower myself (…) and then under the door slipped a hand with a phone and a female voice said: selfie? I just said 'no, thank you' and the hand slipped away.' The video is available at the BBC's webpage: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05r801p

from showing a celebrity, a touristic attraction, to something that shows risk and audacity.

Some places are very conducive to selfies, like elevators, the bathroom, or a parked car,

which offer a window where people have some dead time on their hands, and are often alone.

Figure 19. Chauffer of the 'popemobile' goes viral after sharing a selfie showing pope
Francis during his 2015 visit to Paraguay.

The selfie is regarded, in short, as the "vernacular visual form of the 21st century"

(Tifentale & Manovich 2015, p. 120),[167] one that embodies the paradigm shift pushed by the

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[167] A group of analysts and researchers directed by Lev Manovich launched a visualization project by
which they crossed data out of hundreds of thousands Instagram selfies taken in 5 different cities
Bangkok, Berlin, Moscow, New York, and São Paulo (selfiecity.net). Conclusions were instructive in
terms of certain patterns that inform the selfie phenomenon: people take less selfies than one would have
thought (depending on the city, 3% to 5% were selfies); most people were young (the average age being

smartphone and a "fifth moment of photography," where one device makes it possible to control the whole photographic process (Gómez Cruz & Meyer 2012, p. 215-7). Taking, doctoring, sharing, and looking at photographs are all mediated by this small computer that allows for all of these actions to be carried out instantly. Pre-smartphone, social photography was about creating a souvenir of a preceding event. Enter the smartphone and now "the selfie creates the event" (Murolo 2015, p. 696).

Selfies are pulled taut by two conflicting dynamics. To an already individualistic practice, selfies add another layer of introspection by reversing the camera. When travelling, tourists used to ask a passer-by to take a picture for them. That minimal socialization allowed by the difficulty of including oneself in the picture is now pointless. The selfie-stick, which grants a more inclusive angle than one's arm's length, took it a step further. But just as photographic practice—and by extension the selfie—signal alienation, they also point to the generation of new spaces of sociability, as "objects with a social vocation" (Coelho dos Santos 2016, p. 5). Dictionaries all seem to agree that selfies are made to be shared on social media.[168] So, in spite of their name, selfies are about socialization and communication within a group (Mirzoeff 2015, p. 63). In fact, selfies are turning previously low-profile and solitary activities into social ones. As an example, surfing is one of those sports where the selfie

23.7). While Muscovites seem to smile the least, *paulistas*, especially women, tend to crack a smile and tilt their heads a lot (Tifentale & Manovich 2015, p. 115-6).

[168] The Oxford dictionary defined the selfie as a "photo of yourself that you take, typically with a smartphone or webcam, and usually put on social media". Usually conservative when it comes to including neologisms, more so if they are anglicisms, the RAE (Real academia española) dictionary included the term 'selfi' only in 2018 and defined it as "autofoto", a "photograph of one or more people, taken by one of them, generally with a smartphone, and with the purpose of sharing it." The Portuguese dictionary Michaelis also defines it as "photograph that a person takes of one-self, usually with a cellular, to be published on social networks."

effect is most palpable: the surfer's style, once valued for its spontaneity, is now dictated by the self-consciousness of posing (Brisick 2019).

As a product of a networked camera, the selfie is inherently public but delivers a sense of casual intimacy that points to the increasing blurring of a previously established wall between images that were meant to circulate in a small circle, and those produced to be seen by a larger audience. That distinction proved to be key through the history of the photographic medium, where transforming the private into public took on a new value, particularly noticeable in celebrity culture (Barthes 1981 [1980], p. 98). Formerly, people collected, catalogued, and shared pictures that for the most part were supposed to be seen within a rather small circle of family and friends. Bourdieu noticed in 1965 that "one is forced to distinguish between the pictures reserved for family contemplation and those that should be shown to outsiders" (1990 [1965]-a, p. 29), which further explains why an image that was meant to be seen at the heart of such an intimate sphere acquires an added poignancy if its exposure is broadened to reach the public. In the Latin American context, family pictures of the victims of military dictatorships, which resurfaced in the newspapers claiming for justice, are one example (Van Dembroucke 2010). Artists also played with the surplus of meaning conferred by moving a family picture out of its original setting.[169] Up until recently, ID pictures were the emblematic way of portraying victims in the public sphere. Now selfies, at the juncture of an intimate (because it is taken by oneself) yet public sentiment (because it is made to be shared), came to represent victims of violence. The

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[169] For instance, in his book *Sans souci* (2000 [1991]), artist Christian Bolstanki reproduces family pictures of several Nazi families that he found at a flea market.

hashtag *#niunamenos* (not one—woman—less), the slogan of the Latin American feminist movement that protests against violence and femicides, summons thousands of women portrayed in selfie mode. Perhaps paradoxically, selfies and their feel-good aesthetics have come to symbolize loss, and with them a whole new chapter in the representation of victims of violence and protest in Latin America opens up.

Although young people were born into a special 'technosocial sensibility' (Castells et al. 2007, p. 141) simply because they grew up with digital mobile technology, it is a misconception that selfies are mainly manufactured by teenagers. A cursory glance denies this presumption: the selfie arranges interactions well beyond its supposed generational 'victims.' In fact, this myth prevails even in the face of studies that challenge the notion of 'digital natives,' showing that digital savviness and the culture and practices that come with it constitute a highly complex and diverse universe that is impossible to reduce to one generation alone (Rueda Ortiz & Quintana Ramírez 2004, p. 16-7; Thomas 2011; Boyd 2014, 196-8; Scolari 2019, p. 165).

Trashing selfies is easy, as they do provide a symbol of a narcissistic, individualistic, consumerist, global society. Moreover, the selfie comes in handy as a photographic genre that exoticizes and ridicules the youth, especially young girls. But portraying selfies only from that angle is rather simplistic and misses a part of the story in a similar way to what took place in the past with the emergence of other new media that caused disruption. It happened with the postcard, initially derided for being ladylike (Silvestri 2003, p. 36). Critics of the album—a sort of scrapbook where educated Latin American women started pasting their collection of postcards, musical scores, poems, and little mementos at the turn of the

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twentieth century—were also fixated on the frivolity and exaltation of the self it symbolized

(Miseres 2019, p. 30). The technologization of the home, where electric appliances such as

the radio and the TV entered the domestic space starting in the 1940s, was also based on a

gendered model whereby women uses were discredited as tacky and superficial.[170] Concerns

also arose about women putting the telephone into use for gossipy exchanges (Sterne 2003a,

p. 197-8). Yet when controversies finally die down, young women arise, if anything, as

pioneers in engendering protocols around new media. But that recognition always comes a

little too late and in the form of an academic paper.

Nowadays it is hard to find any political leader, none of them particularly young, who

has not indulged on shooting or posing for a selfie. Taking selfies has become a key way for

politicians to interact with crowds and small groups of people. In North America, Justin

Trudeau has been criticized from day one for selfieing too much. Hillary Clinton also

recognized that a change between her campaign in 2008 and the one in 2014 was the

unstoppable force of the selfie, which would give her wrist a break from signing autographs

but "would also come at a price." "Let's talk instead!," she pleaded (2017, p. 96).[171]

Elizabeth Warren made a point to stay after her campaign rallies to concede as many selfies

with supporters as asked. In Latin America, politicians stopping to please squadrons of selfie-

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[170] An amazing article by Inés Pérez analyzes the appropriation of new technologies at the heart of the domestic space in Latin American and the contrasts between the same process, which took place decades earlier in time, in European and North-American countries (2011).

[171] To be fair, selfies rearranged interactions around itself in politics and elsewhere. After the opening of "Genesis" in 2014 in Brasília, photographer Sebastião Salgado said in an interview that selfies were a "permanent aggression". At that point he noticed that "6 months earlier I had opened an exhibit and people would come talk, ask for an autograph, exchange ideas. Now it is over. Every one grabs you and wants to take a selfie" (2014)

takers is a de rigueur ritual. Evo Morales, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Sebastián Piñera do it. José Pepe Mujica took a selfie next to Noam Chomsky. Jair Bolsonaro disregarded coronavirus distancing measures for the sake of group-selfies. Selfies are, in short, put to work across the political spectrum. Even the Pope has to oblige.

The selfie, as a genre that gained force hand in hand with the smartphone, distinguishes itself from the long line of auto-portraiture, reserved for the elites or the artists. With its own eclectic aesthetics that borrow from self-portraiture as much as from advertising, selfies brought back the close-up, previously reserved for celebrities, and almost only known to regular people in state-issued identification photos (Murolo 2019, p. 118). It is a perfunctory image, one that more than placing our face back in communications at a distance, "points to the performance of communicative action rather to an object, and is a trace of that performance" (Frosh 2015, p. 1610).

The selfie always portrays the subject doing something: for starters, capturing the image itself on their phone (Ayerbe & Cuenca 2019, p. 2). Although selfies are for others to view, fear of ridicule is faced with defiance. Silly gestural poses, like raising one eyebrow, or sticking the tongue out, the "duckface", the "fish gape," and the "kissy face" are standard. Hand signals also flourished to convey one's mood: the peace sign, the middle-finger sign, the loser sign, thumbs up, the shaka or 'hang loose' sign—a horn-shaped lifting the thumb and the pinky while keeping the other fingers curled; among others. All in all, the selfie offers a wider pool of options in terms of facial gestures than pictures for which we used to pose in the past. Selfies are great conveyers of bite-size present status or mood.
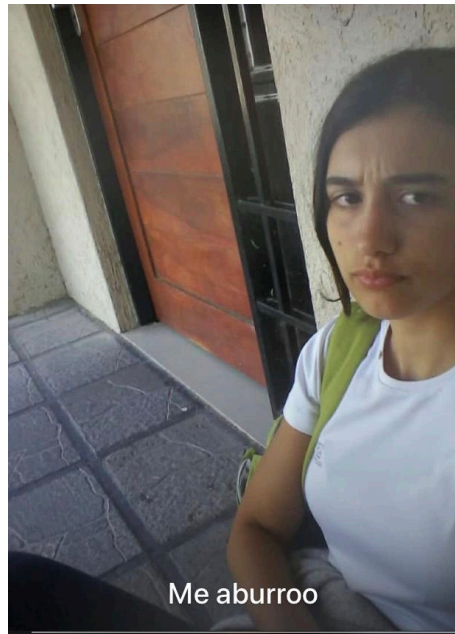
Figure 20. Selfie of a teenager illustrating a current situation.
The context: she had forgotten her keys to her house and had been waiting outside for a while, so she texted her grandmother directly with a selfie of her frowning and a caption that reads: "I'm booored."

The fact that the selfie ostentatiously flaunts with silliness does not mean that it does not conform to plain old unrealistic beauty standards. Pictures still constitute one of the main forms in which we project ourselves to the public, and the invention of our digital selves is primarily built upon photographs that we post in different social media. Amongst them, selfies occupy a central space. Selfies and traditional studio portraiture both entail the staging of one's best self. In fact, some definitions of the selfie, such as a "self-conscious staged version of the self that both viewer and maker know is only a façade" (Belden-Adams 2018, p. 85), seem fitting for social photography of any kind. Selfie-posing, executed quite quickly by those with practice, then unfolds in a way that resembles less a conscious choice than an instinctive reflex, but it is a learned exercise and getting it right requires a certain getting-

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used to. Part of that learning curve involves mastering the use of certain tricks to make your skin gloat, your eyes clear, your eyelashes curved, your lips plump, and so on and so forth. Less invasive than a surgery, it is like a wearing a costume. Like febrile romantic letters that used to inflame the sender's feelings to the point of hyperbole, and that were understood as such at the receiver's end, selfies too depend on a comic and pretended overstatement in order to become "formidably unreal" (Monsiváis 2014 [1991], p.33).

Aside from them reaching a wider audience than our ancestor's renderings and from their usually immediate consumption, as well as other features explained above, one key factor that distinguishes selfies from past portraits and auto-portraits is that their 'reading contract,' in Eliseo Verón's vocabulary (1985), is above all, less ceremonial and has looser boundaries. Perhaps selfies' already bad reputation conferred upon the genre a plasticity for welcoming irony and goofiness. Selfies are trivial and absurd, and because of that they can also be self-deprecating, whether that is intended or not. Much like memes, they are particularly apt for satire and parody (Pablo Boczkowski qted in Pérez Vizzón 2017). Showing something negative or funny, and inserting oneself in it, works as a contrast that is one of the selfie's signature traits.[172] Presentist in nature, almost like an arresting mirror, the selfie also bears the marks of what is current, so the avalanche of images of people wearing masks caused by the onset of coronavirus is not at all surprising.

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[172] A Brazilian comedy called *A modo avião* (2020), directed by César Rodrigues, caricaturizes the way an influencer navigates the language of social media removing all seriousness from the situations she finds herself in, like hitting her car, by snapping a selfie and sharing it with her followers.

The very act of striking a pose to mark oneself in a given scene is considered a frivolous act and indicative of a 'light' carefree mood, which is why self-focussed pictures are considered inappropriate in places that are expected to incite mournful decorum. A teenager from the U.S., who in 2014 posted on Twitter a picture of herself smiling at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland, unleashed a backlash from those who commented to her post. Examples along these lines are easy to find: in 2017 a Brazilian influencer posted her outfit for a friend's funeral; a young woman snapped a smiling selfie with Brazilian presidential candidate Eduardo Campos' casket as her backdrop, etc. But selfies in such circumstances are not exclusive to digital natives who have lost all sense of etiquette. Barack Obama also snapped a selfie with former prime ministers David Cameron (UK) and Helle Thorning-Schmidt (Denmark) during Nelson Mandela's memorial service. Selfies seem to transcend age, ideology, ethnicity, provenance, and social class, and they have become an integral part of the ways we have learned to imagine ourselves in the world.

Selfies, like any speech act, incur in slips of the tongue, and can reveal discrimination and inequality, especially when someone takes a picture of the scene in which a selfie is taking place, revealing information that the selfie itself does not show. An illustrative example takes us to Argentina's 2019 presidential primaries, when the at the time President Mauricio Macri posed for a celebratory selfie in his bunker, leaving his Vicepresident Gabriela Michetti, who is in a wheelchair, out of the frame.

Figure 21. Group selfie taken and shared by politician Martín Lousteau in Argentina at the 2019 presidential campaign.

Figure 22. Picture of a group selfie being taken by politician Martín Lousteau at the 2019 presidential campaign in Argentina.

Memes did not take long to follow suit and put the gaffe in the spotlight. The photograph was doctored to show the neck of the Vicepresident stretched so that she could reach the frame, captions were added, and the posers were vilified on social, print and broadcast media. Commentators and reporters manifesting political dissent, took it as a symbolic picture of a bigger ideological stance: "Macri's every-man-for-himself approach summarized in a picture. There's no best synthesis" (Lerena 2019); "Macrism is the party that you will not be invited to and the photo in which you will not be included...Graphic example" (Peñafort 2019).

Selfies absorb not only the playfulness inherent in social media, but also its role as a 'sounding board,' as they are used to spread the word on causes that go far beyond vanity and amusement. Many times, selfies serve the double function of acting as prompts to give visibility to a given issue as well as to manifest the endorsement of an individual to a certain cause. Publishing a selfie of oneself holding a sign, or adding a hashtag, a motto, or whatever distinctive feature a social media campaign uses, is like writing down one's signature. Examples abound in the Latin American context and elsewhere. They are used to protest and press politicians to make a decision (such a campaigns against the criminalization of abortion)[173], to denounce injustice (women have used it to publish domestic violence to make it public and prevent from it to happen again), to make an announcement (personal, such as getting married, or collective, such as, the passing of a law), convince (to use a face cover in public in the context of a pandemic), celebrate (again, something personal or collective). One

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[173] For instance, in Chile, the campaign #desprotegidas, launched in 2015, was articulated around the selfies of women holding banners. The goal was to protest against the criminalization abortion (Büchner 2016, p.46-9).

could go on. In a world where individual action can seem useless and powerless, selfies are a product of the need to participate in the public arena.

Critics fretting that selfies represent the pinnacle of what is wrong in this era, are nothing more than a manifestation of "a century-long conversation about the possibilities, problems and peculiarities of participation" (Barney et al. 2016, p. xix). That many consciousness-raising social-media campaigns that have to do with justice, equality and public awareness find locus in the selfie, and that they are generally criticized, only goes on to show that there are (valid) intellectual anxieties in place around losing more authentic ways of interacting with one another, a conundrum triggered around emerging media consistently throughout history. Photography, and the selfie by extension, seems to foster a certain type of engagement that has been called 'slacktivism,' a way to participate in the public sphere from the comfort of one own's couch. "Their intention is not to change the world," Vilém Flusser said referring to technical images and apparatuses, "but to change the meaning of the world. Their intention is symbolic" (2012 [1983], p. 25).

Conclusion

Curiouser and curiouser[174]

We had begun discussing photographic theory, reflected on how the field of communication studies stands in relation to the object of study and then stopped to think about photography as medium that realizes itself through the gestures of taking photographs and putting them into circulation. A brief pause on the gesture of looking at photographs brings our trajectory full circle, as gazing at the significance on their surface is the imagined endpoint in the first place.

Because each gesture is inherently tied to one another, chances are that if the act of photographing is undergoing change, the acts of showing and looking at photographs are too. This research suggests that the basic activities involving photographs (that of taking, showing, keeping, and looking at pictures) have all been transformed with the irruption of smartphone technology and the fact that it has become pervasive. In a nutshell, opportunities for taking pictures multiplied, as cellphone owners incorporated the camera function into their daily communicative comings and goings, now able to see the world in photographic categories. Flusser would say that they are consumed by the greed of their camera, caught up in a photo-maniac state (Flusser 2012 [1983], p. 58). To me, he was too drastic in seeing humans totally devoid of critical awareness. What I take from his view is that because people are developing a competence to think photographically, snaps circulate as quick significant

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[174] "Curiouser and curiouser!" is what Alice famously says before falling down the rabbit hole in *Alice in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carrol (1865).

surfaces.

Along with a desire to record and match every event, object and subject with its photographic image, a similar impulse runs parallel when it comes to sharing and looking at pictures. Showing a picture turned into posting it online or sending it to someone with the phone, which not only implies a diminished role for prints as material carriers, but also carries the assumption that once posted or sent, the picture would meet somebody's eyes at that very moment. With its ability to travel fast and reach anyone with a cellphone, photography now fosters two seemingly opposing phenomena when it comes to the delivery of the photographic message. On the one hand, the sheer number of photographs has grown too high to keep up with, leading to photographs sitting somewhere on a computer memory, most likely never to be looked at. On the other hand, a new interest about others' lives arises. Over 90% of survey respondents report looking at other people's pictures online, 75% report looking at the pictures of people they lost contact with, and 50% report looking at pictures of people whom they do not know. The reason? An overwhelming number said: "curiosity". Previously, gossip was either practiced mainly in oral interactions or satisfied visually and audio-visually by the celebrity system. Now the curiosity to access visual information transcends celebrities, can be carried out in solitude, and has made snooping so widespread as to be socially acceptable.

If one were to locate the utmost expression of a voyeuristic pleasures in society, one would certainly point to paparazzi photographers, who follow celebrities around in order to snatch them in candor. Although in Latin America it was never as pervasive as in the United States, local celebrities and public figures put up with occasional paparazzi, who mediated

between their life and the public, exposing unconsented scenes from their ordinary life that were interpreted, for that very reason, as more 'real.' Such invasive photographic scrutiny owes its name to Signore Paparazzo, the main character of Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), a photographer who was after the seamy side of Rome's nightlife. Its inaugural pic is agreed to be one series that Elio Sorci caught in 1958 of an enraged Walter Chiari at the Via Veneto, chasing after his fellow photographer Tazio Secchiaroli, who had just snapped the actor in a date with Ava Gardner (McNamara 2011, p. 214-5; 2016).[175]

Now the face and role of the paparazzi industry in the star-making business also had to adapt along with the camera phone, by incorporating informal photographer 'citizens' and, even more critically, by recognizing the fact that most celebrities are now the ones managing their own image economy via social media. Both paparazzi and celebrities who post their images online, however, operate based on the same principle: they are supposed to offer a true or more authentic depiction of the famous persona (Squiers 1999, p. 271). At its extreme, it is the same imperative of authenticity that finds its locus in the selfie made by the terrorist during an attack, who confident that their picture is going to circulate widely, records himself in an ultimate act of self-aggression and self-production (Han 2016, p. 34-5).

In the construction of their public figures online, celebrities dabble in confessional innuendo, outright showing fewer perfect moments of life than photo-ops typically. Stars without make up, a picture looking exhausted and badly coiffed as a sleep-deprived new

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[175] Photographs by Elio Sorci were published in *Paparazzo: The Elio Sorci Collection* (Roads: Dublin, Ireland, 2014). One shot of the series that officially gave birth to the paparazzi industry can be checked out in high-quality definition here:
https://www.christies.com/img/LotImages/2012/CSK/2012_CSK_04225_0148_000(elio_sorci_roma_walter_chiari_e_tazio_secchiaroli_in_via_veneto_1958).jpg

parent, a close-up of a bikini model's cellulitis, a screenshot of the struggles with mental health and drug use, and so on and so forth. By gratuitously offering pictures and videos of themselves on their personal social media accounts, celebrities actively feed the industry of gossip that gets built up around them (Sarlo 2018, p. 158),[176] making paparazzi photography pointless and edging it even deeper into the status as the disowned child of photojournalism.[177]

The confessionalism that makes stars out to be 'as anyone else' is shared with perfect selfies or professional photo productions, a dissonant mix that has extended its appeal to regular, fameless, people, who also enjoy a representational mode where personal vulnerabilities are interspersed with idyllic vistas and brochure-like auto-portraits. Photograph-sharing platforms translates life's quotidian ups and downs into a mismatched image stream. They accommodate a seaming placid image of, say, a beach, next to a picture that accompanies a raw personal disclosure or political statement. As it happens with social-media news feeds, "the opposite poles of life are dressed in identical trappings", which demands of the viewer a sort of "bifocal gaze" to sort out the whimsical from the tragic (Scott 2016). Such a dissonant mixture of big and small, personal and global, which is nothing but the central feature of social media in general, may ultimately send the viewer into a state of appeasing disassociation.

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[176] For a working definition of gossip (*chisme*), understood in its primal way (oral and dialogic) and its ties to life in community, see: Fasano et al (2005).

[177] Interestingly, nowadays, due to the high level of informality of the job, paparazzi in the United States are predominantly US-born Latino and Latin-American immigrants, and much of the public discourse around them is comprised by racist scorn about their ethnicity, or lack of papers, etc. (Díaz 2020, p.3-4).

As much as celebrities strive to prove that they are ordinary, we do not want to merely look at pictures but, more than anything, to participate (Sarlo 2018, p. 121). Instagram's grid illustrates well the push and pull between earlier and present photographic modes coming together in the creation of a *biographical space* made out of testimonial elements that were already present in public media discourse by the 2000s (remember the boom of reality shows) and is in full force today with the rise of social media (Arfuch 2002; 2018, p. 21). As reported above, most respondents from the survey admitted indulging in a certain amount of snooping: on people they had not been in contact with in a long time, on people they do not know, and also on celebrities, as over half of respondents follow one of their social media accounts. This last section of the survey, dedicated specifically to this side of photographic consumption, revealed that it was putting on the table something widely done without thinking twice. Many said that they did not in fact know the reason why they were going through others' photos. One participant even found the question absurd. In answering about a possible reason that would explain why respondents had found themselves looking at pictures of people with whom they had lost contact or had never met, the majority attributed it to curiosity, gossip, and/or nostalgia. Many said they were intrigued by the effects of time: if people have aged well, if they have changed, the way they looked after a long time, a sort of "10-year-challenge curiosity," someone said. Others could not put their finger on why they were looking at random people's pictures: "I don't know", "Who knows, I'd say curiosity and boredom", "to pass the time". One participant explained that "sometimes it is just the inertia of social media. An acquaintance appears on your newsfeed, I click on their profile and then I just keep on going."

Collaborative and voyeuristic at the same time, looking at pictures of someone else feels like a snooping endeavour that is, in turn, consented to by the mere fact that it is public and accessible. In what seems to be "playful reversibility between the anonymous and the celebrated, the public and the private" (Bruno 2013, p. 108) people who lack fame of any kind, expose their lives on social media and look at others' personal footage in return: it is part of the present digital openness where everybody operate as givers and getters of attention. Exes, estranged friends, high-school classmates, a prospective hire, anyone basically, might at some point be subjected to be looked up online or, as jargon has it in Spanish and Portuguese, be the recipient of some occasional '*stalkeo*' (from stalking); that is, the search for online trails of past posts, particularly on social media feeds, or anywhere on the Internet. In fact, an array of different studies show that stalking is used in different circumstances and that pictures play a central role in it. Just to mention a few, a study on young people's romantic lives in Guadalajara, Mexico, showed that going through someone's pictures and posts has come to be a usual first step to explore different courting possibilities prior to establishing communication with someone (Rodríguez Salazar & Rodríguez Morales 2016, p. 30). Stalking is also fundamental to contemporary forms of mourning, where a tribute to the deceased is shared online (Sissini Martínez 2018), a curiosity that used to be satisfied by the obituaries section published by print newspapers.

Spanish and Portuguese speakers adopted the anglicism to mockingly designate a widespread socially accepted cyber-snooping that does not quite translate into plain and simple harassment but that still rings slightly sick, inadvertently drawing an uneasy parallel between well-intentioned individuals and full-on creeps. Far from a deviation, the present

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conditions of existence have made snooping online totally routine. If one were to distinguish

this cyber snooping from the behaviour of a psychopath or from the subculture of a hacker,

one would point that snooping has become a gradually socially acquired habitus and

distinctive sign of absolute normality in the current moment. Understandably so, when

imagery and information are up for grabs on the Internet and part of the public domain.

Googling up someone online and looking at their pictures transitions into being an accepted

practice and starts being less frowned upon as time passes. As Yasmin Ibrahim points out,

"this invocation to gaze into private realms speaks to both our intrinsic curiosity about others

but equally about the emergence of acceptability of looking into private realms through the

screen, even though this may be deemed transgressive in an offline context" (2020, p. 45-6).

That is why the figure of the 'stalker' as the metaphor for certain online excursions is not

entirely negative. When used in this sense, browsing through other people's photo collections

suggests just a quick retrieval of information closer to a 'guilty pleasure' than a serious

offense.

Photo-shock

Time after time, societies worry about the overabundance of images and the

detrimental and unsettling effect of living in a world where images are so on the nose. That

very premise is indeed a common opening in papers and books on visual culture. Once the

statement that "we are drowning in images" is made (Lister 2014, p. 15), is not rare for

media culture in general to be framed as the main exponent of a global cultural decay, or at

least as a site where moral corruption and inauthenticity are most visible. In a now classic

communication studies book, Brazilian media thinker Arlindo Machado called out this

educated virulence against technical images and named it the *fourth iconoclasm*. Fourth,

because he traces back the mistrust of images to the mythic biblical scene of Moses

destroying the tablets with the Ten Commandments, to then walk the reader through the

wave of the shared belief that images are nothing but pernicious also within academia, with

Guy Debord[178] and Jean Baudrillard as prominent spokesmen. Machado then proceeds to

show how a branch of Latin American media scholarship[179] argued against that line of

thinking, contending that media never happens *a priori*, by virtue of an inescapable historical

doom (Machado 2000, p. 10), but rather unfold and acquire meaning through a complex

sociotechnical process that ends up defining the (symbolic) interchanges that they are put to

the service of. Borrowing from a philosophical language, one could say that media *come into*

being through their use, as they are technical apparatuses that are employed for enunciation

purposes (Deleuze & Guattari 1980 [1972], p. 626).[180]

These are no doubt exciting times for media scholars. But not because we feel we are

immersed in an "iconic polluted era" (Fontcuberta 2016, p. 26). Rather, it is because the

consequences that a change of scale poses to any medium reveal its social uses in the

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[178] Although Guy Debord was not an academic in the strict sense of the term, he was and still is certainly influential within academic thought.

[179] Machado specifically mentions: Martín-Barbero's *De los medios a las mediaciones* (Barcelona, Spain: Gili, 1993); García Canclini's *Culturas híbridas* (São Paulo, Brazil: Edusp, 1998), and Gómez Orozco's "Del acto al proceso de ver televisión" in *Recepción televisiva: Tres aproximaciones y una razón para su estudio*, (Mexico City, Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1991, p. 27–39).

[180] This is the notion of *assemblage* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari that usually comes up in communication studies works to signal the specific complexity of media (1980 [1972], p. 626).

making. And photography, which was born to please the elite and then entered into almost every family, is now in the process of bridging another frontier embedded in a ubiquitous personal device such as the mobile phone. From its modern debut, its reach has grown exponentially. Now it is becoming personal; that is, widely spread but individualistic as a practice. It is shifting its temporal focus from the past to the present, making photographic images increasingly forgetful rather than nostalgic, but sometimes keeping its former function as a relic nonetheless, leaving it up to media thinkers to describe and bring out the ongoing crevices and contradictions at stake, and suggesting that the medium is a dynamic mode of apprehension rather than just a static means of preserving the past.

In the late 1980s, scholar Richard Chalfen published *Snapshots Versions of Life*, an oft-quoted book in photographic studies less for its acute observations on the photographic practice, than because it was an undertaking with few precedents in Anglo North American scholarship and still stands out as one of the few studies on amateur photography in the course of three decades. In it he insists on photography's communicative role at a private domestic level. If mass media can be thought of as an interchange constructed by a media elite, he argues, then modern camera technology can be understood as pictorial

communication, "a new expressive form of communication of information about ourselves to ourselves and future generations" (1987, p. 4).[181]

We know that the uses of any given medium are socially shaped and as such they could not help but crystallize human needs, wishes, and frustrations that are in turn caught up in deep historical dynamics. Relational as they are, media resist categories that organize the world in black-and-white or all-or-nothing terms, because the standards that they set in practice answer to varied, and sometimes opposite, fresh urges. Inventors and programmers rarely see their own devices put into use as they had originally intended (Scolari 2008, p. 288). For this reason, it is difficult for media to fit entirely into abstract and ahistorical definitions. This is, perhaps, why the exercise of defining photography ontologically alone never really got to reap the fruits of its speculative work: in searching for its essential qualities, photography was considered as a discrete entity, virtually erasing its peculiar historical groundings, and flattening its object of study as a result. The most powerful conceptual explanations when it comes to photography are not necessarily, or at least not exclusively, those that capture a purported essence. A communication studies approach

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[181] Chalfen was thinking about film photography and what he called the "Kodak culture," a seemingly unconscious set of conventions by which people know what to do and how to act around cameras (p.10). Perhaps because photography has not at that point in time crossed paths with the Internet, which virtually amplified the circulation and opportunity for picture-taking, read from the present, his definitions seem parochial at times. While Chalfen does take the innovative plunge of defining photography from the point of view of a certain communicative need, he tones this line of thinking down by constraining the photographic practice to the domestic realm, which he called "home mode pictorial communication", and also by tying amateur photographic practice strictly to a leisure activity. In any case, Chalfen shows us two threads worth pulling at: one, that as with any widespread technology, certain uses and behaviors are considered appropriate and become normalized and commonsensical, a sense of correctness continuously operating through certain ordering rules (p.9); and two, that he refers to snapshots as messages acting as prompts for verbal telling during "exhibition events" (p.70).

illuminates, instead, a "semantic instability" and provisionality in media, subject to continuous negotiation and potential change (Scolari 2008, p. 290). Media are, like any speech act, a conjuncture (Bourdieu 1982, p. 14).[182] Their social uses, perhaps insignificant at first sight for they may have already become an accepted norm, is where one can find the value of a medium at any given moment in time. Ludwig Wittgenstein was talking about words when he wrote that "the use is the meaning", but the premise really works for any other medium (2009 [1953], p. 25), and most notably, for photography (Sontag 1990 [1973], p. 106).

This study has insisted on talking about 'photography' instead of relying on other terms such as 'post-photography' or 'digital images' as this latter option would encapsulate what we do with images today as an altogether 'new medium,' shaping our definition from a purely technological point of view. If the technology changes, we would have suggested, then the medium as we knew it does not exist anymore. A social definition of medium, one that instead of focusing primarily on the technical aspects does so on the type of connection or narratives habilitated by said medium, highlights photography's continuity rather than the start-over of a clean slate.

The history of photography is one of an increasing dematerialization, involving a change in supports (from paper to the screen) and therefore of place (from the physical object in a specific location to the photograph available somewhere online), and a relentless

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[182] In *Ce que parler veut dire*, Pierre Bourdieu makes the point that production and circulation of meaning is constitutively tied up to "conjunctural singularities', which is why linguistic analysis that strive to define discursive competences in abstract terms, only end up looking for the social relations inscribed in language that were negated in the first place (1982, p.14-5).

dissemination (photographs find their way to be seen) that creates a different ownership contract. The dynamics in which photography has been caught up have changed, going from being a special talisman that was long revered to a medium of constant chronicling that still offers that 'spark of contingency,' of accident, of the here and now that Walter Benjamin revered (1980 [1931], p. 202). The death of photography has been announced countless times; it was supposed to succumb to the hands of the cinema, later on to the digital, then to the internet (Campany 2012, p.6). Yet, even though it is true that "the camera loaded with film has met its swift and stealthy end" (Updike 2007), photography is still *en pleine forme*. As José Luis Petris and Rolando Martínez Mendoza argue in building up to a social notion of *medium of communication*, writing, for instance, was always writing regardless of the device in use. Whether on a parchment paper with a quill, or putting pen to paper, whether it is a chalk-holding hand smearing on a blackboard, or typing on a cellphone. Although neither writing nor reading have gone through time unchanged, writing continues to be writing (2011, p. 2). Paraphrasing them, we could say that the medium of photography survived photography as a technical device (the camera) and it will almost certainly still be called 'photography' in years to come (Petris & Martínez Mendoza 2011, p. 7).

In the present day, photography prompts us not only to question images critically, which was pressing in past decades, but also pushes us to reflect on another issue, one that goes beyond our sympathy or suspicion towards the medium: that we place the camera at a center stage, changing the dynamics and the ways we interact with one another, which are in turn increasingly arranged to fit photographic demands because, at least at a social level, their very existence depends on being captured by a lens. Technical images, which mediate

between us and the world are supposed to make the latter intelligible, and they do; but they also reverse their supposed function when we ourselves act to please a certain photographic imperative, becoming a function of the images we ourselves create (Flusser 2012 [1983], p. 9-10). Simultaneously, the ongoing passage of personal photography as a cherished object into a fleeting message brings attention to the fact that the value of a photograph now seems to center not so much onto the thing itself, but on the information it carries (Flusser 2012 [1983], p. 51).

Naturally, this situation brings the authenticity of the photograph back to the fore in academic discussions. But since we can now acknowledge, with the benefit of hindsight, that for all the proliferation of fake news that infects the internet where images play a central role, photography is not dead and its realistic imprint is not either, the issue should be discussed on different terms. The promises of image synthesis and the no doubt disturbing Orwellian implications of such technological developments —that, for instance, allow businesses and governments to spy on citizenry—should not obscure the fact that, perhaps paradoxically, the awaited growing skepticism around photographic representational fidelity is not actually shaping up to be a dystopian crisis after all.

As we saw in Chapters III and IV, beyond the undeniable technological differences with chemical photography, digital connected photography still encompasses a way of seeing grounded in the belief in the medium's objectivity. The truth apparatus that Allan Sekula described as part of a larger schema still holds validity in the present-day. The photograph as document is central to our cultural moment and the social uses photography is mobilized for. Doctoring a picture might be as easy as changing the channel, but photography's status as a

document is not nearly close to be discredited. Although placing pictures out of context and picture tricking in general were present from photography's earliest days, digitization and mobile cameras complicated the legitimacy of photography as a document in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, it paved the way for rapid and easy manipulation and, on the other, that same speed and accessibility impacted daily life's communicative exchanges, exalting the importance of having an image to add legitimacy to or simply illustrate the written word. In daily life, photography stands as a means of expression that takes advantage both of its recording capabilities and of its creative potential.

In turn, making use of photographic images to complete an idea bestows photographs with a utilitarian or functional purpose as an efficient communicational tool and a means to make what we mean to say more intelligible. The popularity of the camera phone that allows pictures to be taken, stored, and disseminated instantly, changes the practice of photography in contradictory ways then: as much as photography's preferred discursive register in everyday communicative practices takes for granted photography's truthiness, the plasticity of the medium in daily interchanges shows ground-breaking potential for semi-fictional undertakings. Photography needs to be understood in these two levels at once. Here we are again, in the presence of a medium that serves as a means of surveillance, entertainment and spectacle, consumption, and now, trivial instantaneous communication.

How Photographs Deliver a Message offers a reflection on photography's status as an object of study, as well as a limited arbitrary history of the photographic gesture, told through significant points that marked a difference in the relation between people's experience and photography in the Americas. The aim was to produce a contribution to the world's

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photographic culture, told from a non-standard perspective. The approach is different in a two-fold way: first, because photography is conceived, from the get-go, by a constellation of media theory notions. Since the current landscape—where almost everyone carries a Smartphone, selfies have starred in conferences, articles and books, and the traffic of photographs is in its full glory—forces our attention to photography, communication scholars need to learn to talk about the medium in a way that accounts for its communicational affordances. And second, because the study is based on amateur/personal photographic practices as they unfold in the Latin American region instead of in the Global North; and because much of the sources, examples, images, and bibliography in use are, too, of Latin American origin. As this work is written and thought of in a North American university, it was an attempt to draft a conversation on photographic and communicational issues where other interlocutors than the ones we usually discuss would join in and have a sit at the table. Even though this is not a feminist study in the most literal sense, it hopes to be one in terms of its methodologies and impulses to disrupt a certain status quo well rooted and unquestioned in the canon of photography studies. Feminist studies, the only field that has made of self-criticism its signature and propeller to move forward in thinking about its own intellectual affordances, provides a starting point through which to exercise academic research on photography, one that instead of smoothing out contradictions and opposing dynamics of the medium would try and develop a "tolerance for ambiguity" (Anzaldúa 1997 [1987], p. 766).

Back in the late 1980s, when photography studies was emerging as a field in Latin America, researching and writing about the history of photography was understood as an "act

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of decolonization" (Navarrete 2017 [2009], p. 205). One that did not negate value in the established canon but that insisted in being heard in addition to it. Almost four decades later, that very claim is still as valid.[183] While Latin American scholars, who generally lack resources, do not have access to paid online data bases, and/or updated libraries, manage to read and incorporate what is being discussed in Europe and North America, the gesture is not reciprocated up North. It is not simply a question of the politics of translation and publishing, which is itself also problematic. It is, in addition to that, an issue of plain cultural subalternity and intellectual hegemony that is very much alive in academic life, at least in all disciplines and fields across the humanities. In order to question this status quo, postcolonial feminist theory offers invaluable resources to, in Gayatri Spivak's spirit, unlearn privilege (1988, p. 287), and in Homi Babbha's, reflect on the intrinsic relation of power between locus and locution (2004 [1994], p. 360). In order for scholars to add their two cents to destabilize the current politics of quotation I appeal to a less virtuous reasoning though: photography studies is a rather small field. Why would it not benefit from other intellectual productions that would enlarge and enrich the debate?

Finally, this study is in no way meant to be exhaustive of the extent of photographic culture in the region, nor it could be. Nonetheless, it is with the conviction that history matters and that the past of how we have learned to think about the photographic medium matters to how we enact the practices related to it in the present, that this study goes back to previous discussions and histories that are anchored in place and time but also move past

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[183] For a reading on how historical research on photography changed in Latin America since Navarrete's dictum, see: Broquetas & Navarrete (2021).

those initial parameters. Having taken this modest historical run-up, the conclusion is also a humble one: our forebears learnt to speak on the phone. We are learning to speak photographically.

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Appendix

The survey was conducted online between February and March 2019, and consisted in a set of 52 questions, which included demographic questions and a set of close and open-ended questions on taking photographs, using photographs to communicate with others, showing and posting photographs, and looking at other people's photographs. The survey was administered through Google Forms, and the objective was to get respondents from an array of countries in Latin America. Therefore, the survey was carried out in Spanish and Portuguese. Respondents came from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela. Also, as the survey was shared online, some Latin Americans living elsewhere ended up responding the questionnaire. In total, there were 512 respondents to the survey, with a large majority coming from Spanish speaking countries (87%). In terms of gender self-identification, there were 73% female, 24% male, and 3% of non-binary people. As for age, there were 12% under 25 years old, 60% were between 25 and 44 years old, 21% were between 45 and 64 years old, and 7% were over 65 years old.

I relied in a snowball sampling method, sending the survey to colleagues and acquaintances in different countries in Latin America and asking them to circulate the survey. All respondents were encouraged to refer the questionnaire to other potential recruits by sharing the questionnaire link broadly or to anyone who may be interested or eligible. As a consequence, the sample of respondents was never intended to be representative of broader

trends in the region. Rather, the objective of the survey is to probe respondents to see how people think about the uses of photography in everyday life.

A consent form was included in the very first page of the survey. In order to minimize the risks of indirectly identifying participants, the project sought to gather as big a sample as possible and invited participants to access the survey themselves. Participants entered the online questionnaire voluntarily, they were able to terminate the questionnaire at any point, and they were offered no compensation. See below the survey questionnaire translated into English followed by the Spanish and Portuguese versions.

"Pic or it didn't happen: how photographs deliver a message. Amateur Photography in Latin America"

This is a program of research conducted about cellphone photography conducted by Celina Van Dembroucke of the McGill University (Montreal, Canada), under the supervision of Professor Will Straw (william.straw@mcgill.ca).

Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a study about cellphone photography, and how it has open up photography to new uses. The purpose is to learn how and when people use cellphone photography not only as a means to take pictures of meaningful moments to be remembered later on, but also as a practice that has more to do with you daily interactions with other people. For instance: taking a picture of the supermarket list and sending it to your roommate, among many other cases that you may find yourself using photography for.

Study Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you can access an anonymous online questionnaire through the link included below. Although you will be asked questions about your age, gender, nationality, no personal identifiers will be collected such as name, telephone number, etc. The questionnaire is divided into four main sections: I) *Taking pictures*, which enquires about the frequency, number, and situations in which you take pictures II)*Chatting or Communicatin*g, which asks you general questions about the practice of sending and receiving pictures on your phone, III) *Showing or Posting*, which asks you about the habit of showing or posting your own pictures online, and IV) *Peeking*, a brief section inquiring about habits as picture-viewers. None of the questions are sensitive in any respect. The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw from the questionnaire at any point, and for any reason. You may also decline to answer any question. If you choose to withdraw, you can decide whether to submit or not the information provided up until that point.

You will be asked to kindly refer this questionnaire to anyone you think might be interested in participating, as well as to share it in any social media or support you may have at your disposal.

The information provided in the questionnaire will help understand new uses of photography. Findings may be included in the main researcher's PhD dissertation as well as in future articles for academic circulation.

For any questions or clarifications about the project, please contact the principal researcher through the e-address above. Thank you!

Personal Information

Gender you identify with:_____   Age:_____
Civil Status: single____, married____, widowed____, divorced____
Number and age of children, if applicable: ____
Nationality:_____
Place of residence:_____ rural_____ urban_____
Date of arrival in place of residence:_____
Previous place of residence: _____ rural_____ urban_____
Occupation: _____
Spoken language at home:_____
Higher Education level achieved:_____
Indicate whether you own a:
Land line___SmartPhone____, TV___, computer_____car_____, motorcycle____photographic camera (other than the cellphone)_____
Mobile phone: indicate model and brand_____
How important is that a phone has a built-in camera for you?_____

I wish to not respond to this section: ____

SECTION I: Taking Pictures

.Do you regularly take pictures? Yes____ No____

. If yes, for how long have you been taking pictures regularly?
A few days_____Months_____2 years_____More than 2 years_____

. How often?
On a daily basis_____, every other day_____, twice a week_____, once a month_____, rarely_____.

.What kind of camera do you use?_____

.In which occasions?
Vacations_____, weekends_____, family reunions_____, get-togethers_____, anywhere_____, at all times_____.

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. Among the subjects/scenes named below, when do you take more pictures?
family scenes_____
people you care for_____
milestones of your children_____
special events (graduations, birthdays, etc)_____
landscapes, touristic views____
Dead nature, objects____
Street images____
food_____
yourself_____

.Please look at your own pictures and list the last three occasions in which you took them.
1_____
2_____
3_____

.Please try to estimate the numbers of photographs that you have taken during the past month:
() None at all
() Between 1 and 20
() Between 20 and 50
() Between 50 and 100
() Between 100 and 150
() More. Aprox:

. Do you retouch the pictures you take? In what way? What programs do you use?
_____

. Do you take photos with the intention of sending them or sharing them or you decide what to do with them at a later stage
_____

_____

I wish to not respond to this section: _____

SECTION II. Chatting

. How often do you communicate by sending or uploading pictures online?
Very often____
Seldom____
Rarely____
Never____

    - If never: Why don't you upload or send pictures:
    -technical complexity____
    -lack of interest____

-cost____
-poor quality____
-other____

-If yes:
-you upload pictures online____
-you prefer to send pictures to a more restricted audience____
-or you do both____

. Do you receive pictures in your phone? Yes_____-No_____
-If yes, who sends you pictures:
colleagues____,
friends____,
family-members____,
partner____,
children____.

-If yes, when are those pictures intended to be seen:
-Instantly ____
-In the next few days____
-It does not matter when____

-If yes, do you react to the sent picture?
Yes____ No____

. Do you send and/or receive pictures in order to get an answer based on the image?
Yes____ No____

. How often do you receive pictures on your phone:
Very often____
Seldom____
Rarely____
Never____

. And how often do you send pictures?
Very often____
Seldom____
Rarely____
Never____

.Do you ever reply to a photo-message with another photo-message?
Yes_____No_____

-If Yes: -In what situations do you send photo-messages?
_____

-Why would you send a photo-message instead of text?

_____

I wish to not respond to this section: ____

Section III. Showing or Posting

.Do you display or show your pictures to others? Yes____, No____

If yes, how?
    -By printing them and keeping them an album____
    -By passing along the cellphone____
    -By e-mailing pictures____
    -By uploading pictures online____. If so, where do you post them: Facebook, Instagram, other____
    -By texting pictures____. If so, what program do you use?
    Cellphone-text____ Whatsapp____, Snapchat____,Instagram____other.

. Why do you show your pictures?
-Just to spend some time____
-To show them to the people you care for_____
-To look back on shared memories____
-To show something that many don't know about you____
-Because you're proud of the pictures you take____
Other:_____

3.Do you often print and frame pictures? Yes____, No____

5. How would you explain the difference between publishing a photo online or sending a picture vía a message program?

_____

I wish to not respond to this section: ____

SECTION IV. Snooping

.Are photographs that you share at all different from the photos you choose not to share?

_____

.Do you look at someone else's pictures online? If so, in what platform?

_____

.Have you found yourself looking at photographs of people with whom you don't have contact anymore? If so, what do you think sparks your curiosity in that moment?

_____

. Do you follow celebrities photograph profiles online? If so, can you name three type of pictures you think are recurrent?

_____

. Is there anything else about how you use your phone for taking pictures that you think is relevant but that I did not ask you about?

_____

I wish to not respond to this section: _____

    Thank you so much for your cooperation in responding this questionnaire!

ENCUESTA:
"Foto o no pasó": los mensajes de las fotografías personales en Latinoamérica.

("Pic or it didn't happen: how photographs deliver a message. Personal Photography in Latin America"), by Celina Van Dembroucke, celinavandembroucke@mail.mcgill.ca

Este es un estudio sobre los usos de la fotografía desde la aparición del Smartphone, llevado a cabo por Celina Van Dembroucke de McGill University (celina.vandembroucke@mail.mcgill.ca), bajo la supervisión de Will Straw (william.straw@mcgill.ca).

Objetivo:

Te invitamos a participar en un estudio sobre fotografía digital y los nuevos usos fotográficos que han surgido a partir del Smartphone. El objetivo es saber cómo y cuándo se hace uso de la cámara fotográfica incorporada en los teléfonos celulares, no sólo en lo que se refiere a la toma de fotografías para recordar momento especiales, sino en lo que hace a las prácticas comunicacionales del día a día y la interacción con otras personas.

Procedimiento:

Si aceptás participar de este estudio, podés acceder a la encuesta anónima. Aunque se te pregunta información como edad, nacionalidad, etc, no te pedimos que dejes ningún tipo de dato que nos permita volver a contactarte o identificarte. El cuestionario se divide en cuatro secciones: 1) Sacar fotos, que indaga sobre la frecuencia y número con las que sacás fotos, 2) Chatear, que investiga sobre enviar y recibir fotos, 3) Mostrar o Postear, que cubre los nuevos usos respecto de mostrar fotografías online, y 4) Curiosear, que explora brevemente nuestros hábitos como "público" de imágenes fotográficas. Lleva aproximadamente 15 minutos completar la encuesta. Ninguna de las preguntas es delicada ni te fuerza a dar información comprometedora. Tu confidencialidad está asegurada.Tu participación es voluntaria y podés responder a las preguntas que quieras.
Te pedimos que reenvíes el link de este cuestionario a tantas personas como puedas.

La información de quienes completen este cuestionario ayudará a identificar y comprender nuevos usos de la fotografía telefónica. Los descubrimientos a los que de pie el resultado de esta encuesta pueden formar parte tanto de la tesis llevada a cabo por la investigadora principal como de artículos de circulación académica.

Por cualquier pregunta, contactate con la investigadora principal mediante la dirección de correo provista más arriba.

¡¡Gracias!!

<u>Datos personales</u>

Género con el que te identificás:_____ Edad:_____
Estado Civil: solterx____, casadx____, viudx____, divorciadx____
Número y edad de tus hijos, si aplica: ____
Nacionalidad:_____
Lugar de residencia:_____ rural_____ urbano_____
Fecha de llegada a tu lugar de residencia:_____
Lugar anterior de residencia, si aplica: _____ rural_____ urban_____
Ocupación: _____
Idioma que se habla en tu casa:_____
Nivel educativo más alto que hayas obtenido:_____
Indica más abajo si posees:
Una línea fija de teléfono___un SmartPhone____, un Televisor___, una computadora o tablet_____un auto_____,una cámara fotográfica (que no sea la del celular)_____
Teléfono celular: indica el modelo y la marca_____
Cuán importante es para vos que el teléfono tenga una cámara de fotos?_____

Prefiero saltearme esta sección: ____

<u>SECCIÓN I: Sacar fotos</u>

. ¿Sacás fotos seguido? Si____ No____

  . Si sí, ¿hace cuánto tiempo sacás fotos regularmente? Hace unos días_____Dese hace meses_____Empecé a hacerlo hace 2 años_____Hace más de 2 años_____

. ¿Cada cuánto sacás fotos? Todos los días_____, Un día sí, un día no_____, Alrededor de dos veces por semana_____, Una vez al mes_____, Casi nunca_____.

. ¿Qué cámara usás?_____

. ¿En qué momentos solés sacar fotos?
    Vacaciones_____, fines de semana_____, reunions familiares_____, salidas_____, en cualquier momento_____, todo el tiempo_____.

. ¿A qué le sacás más fotos?
A escenas de reuniones familiares_____/ a personas que querés_____/a tus hijos (si aplica) _____/ a momentos especiales (cumpleaños, graduaciones, etc) _____/ a paisajes o vistas turísticas____/ A naturaleza muerta u objetos____/ A la calle o escenas de la ciudad_____/a la comida_____/a vos mismo_____

. ¿Podrías mirar las últimas tres fotos que sacaste y listar en qué ocasiones fueron tomadas?

1_____
2_____
3_____

. ¿ Cuántas fotos sacaste en el último mes?
() Ninguna
() Entre 1 y 20
() Entre 20 y 50
() Entre 50 y 100
() Entre 100 y 150
() Más. Aproximadamente:

. ¿Solés retocar las fotos que sacás? Si sí, ¿qué les hacés? ¿Usás algún programa o app en particular?
_____

. ¿Solés sacar las fotos con la intención de enviárselas a alguien o compartirlas o después decidís qué hacer con las fotos que sacaste?
_____

_____

Prefiero saltearme esta sección: _____

SECCIÓN II. Chatear

. ¿Solés enviar fotos mientras chateás o prefer las subirlas online? Si a compartir fotos mientras chateas_____ Sí a compartir fotos online_____ Si sí a alguna de estas opciones: ¿cada cuánto?
Muy seguido_____
Seguido_____
Rara vez_____
Nunca_____

- Si nunca: ¿Por qué no enviás fotos ni las subís online?
-es muy difícil_____
-no me interesa_____
-es caro_____
-las fotos son de mala calidad_____
-otro motivo_____

. ¿Recibís fotos en tu celular? Si_____-No_____

-Si sí, ¿quién te las envía? compañerxs_____, amigxs_____, familiares_____, esposx (si aplica)_____, hijxs (si aplica)_____.

-Cuándo te envían fotos, esperan que las veas:
-Al instante _____
-En los días subsiguientes_____

-No hay ninguna expectativa respecto de cuándo tengo que ver la foto____

-¿Respondés algo cuando alguien te manda una foto? Si____   No____

. ¿Vos enviás fotos esperando recibir una respuesta en referencia a la imagen?
Si____   No____

. ¿Cada cuánto recibís fotos?:
   Varias veces al día____
   Una vez por día____
   Una vez por semana____
   Rara vez____

. ¿Y cada cuánto solés enviar fotos vos?
   Varias veces al día____
   Una vez por día___
   Una vez por semana____
   Rara vez____

¿Solés responder a una foto que recibiste con otra foto? Si_____No_____

Si sí, ¿por qué mandás una foto en vez de texto?
_____

Prefiero saltearme esta sección: ____

SECCIÓN III. Mostrar o Postear

. ¿Les mostrás tus fotos a otras personas? Si____, No____

Si sí, ¿cómo?
   -Imprimiéndolas y poniéndolas en un álbum de fotos____
   -Pasándole el celular a alguien para que las vea____
   -Adjuntándolas en un correo electrónico____
   -Subiéndolas online____. ¿En qué plataformas las posteás? Facebook___ , Instagram___,
   Snapchat___otras____
   -Si mandás fotos en un chat, ¿qué programas usás? Whatsapp____,
   Snapchat____,Instagram____otras.

. ¿Por qué mostrás las fotos que sacás?
  -Para pasar el rato____
  -Para compartirlas con la gente que quiero_____
  -Para compartir recuerdos____

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-Para compartir algo que no mucha gente conoce de mí____
-Porque te gustan las fotos que sacás____
-Para expresar cómo me siento en un momento dado___
Otros motivos por los que compartís tus
imágenes:_____

. ¿Solés imprimir fotos y luego poner fotos en un portarretrato? Si____, No____
. ¿Tenés álbumes de fotos impresas? Si____, No____

5. ¿Cómo explicarías la diferencia entre enviar una fotografía a una persona o un grupo en un programa de chat como Whatsapp y subirla online en una plataforma como facebook?

_____

Prefiero saltearme esta sección: ____

SECCIÓN IV. Curiosear

. ¿En qué se diferencian las fotos que compartís de las que preferís no mostrar?

_____

. ¿Te ponés a mirar las fotos de otras personas online? Si sí, ¿en qué plataforma?

_____

. ¿Te has encontrado a vos mismx mirando fotos de gente con la que ya no tenés contacto? Si sí, ¿qué es lo que te da curiosidad?

_____

. ¿Seguís las cuentas de algunas celebrities online? Si sí, ¿a cuántos seguís?____ ¿podrías decir tres tipos de fotos que suele sacarse y compartir la gente famosa?

_____

. ¿Hay algo más sobre el uso que vos hacés del teléfono para sacar y compartir fotos que quieras agregar?

_____

Prefiero saltearme esta sección: ____

¡Muchas gracias por responder este cuestionario!

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (in Portuguese)

"Foto ou não aconteceu": as mensagens das fotografias pessoais na América Latina
("Pic or it didn't happen: how photographs deliver a message. Personal Photography in Latin America"),
by Celina Van Dembroucke, celinavandembroucke@mail.mcgill.ca

Este é um estudo sobre os usos da fotografia desde o advento do Smartphone, conduzido por Celina Van Dembroucke da Universidade McGill (celina.vandembroucke@mail.mcgill.ca), sob a supervisão de Will Straw (william.straw@mcgill .ca).

Objetivo:

Convidamos você a participar de um estudo sobre fotografia digital e os novos usos fotográficos que surgiram a partir do Smartphone. O objetivo é saber como e quando as pessoas fazem uso da câmera embutida em telefones celulares. Não só no que se refere à tomada de fotografias para recordar momentos especiais, mas no que faz às práticas comunicacionais do dia a dia e à interação com outras pessoas.

Procedimento:

Esta enquete é anônima. As informações como idade, nacionalidade, etc., são confidenciais e você não precisa deixar nenhum tipo de dado que nos permita contatar-te novamente. O questionário está dividido em quatro seções: 1) TIRAR FOTOS, que pergunta sobre a frequência e o número com que você tira fotos, 2) BATER-PAPO, que interroga sobre o envio e o recebimento de fotos, 3) MOSTRAR OU POSTAR, que cobre os novos usos relacionados à exibição de imagens on-line, e 4) ESPREITAR, que explora brevemente nossos hábitos como público de imagens fotográficas.

Tempo aproximado 15 minutos para concluir a pesquisa. Nenhuma das perguntas é delicada ou força você a fornecer informações comprometedoras. Sua confidencialidade está garantida, sua participação é voluntária e você pode responder às perguntas que você quiser. Pedimos a sua ajuda para compartilhar o link do questionário para o maior número de pessoas possível. As informações daqueles que completem este questionário ajudarão a identificar e entender novos usos da fotografia telefónica. Os resultados podem ser parte tanto da tese realizada pela pesquisadora principal quanto de artigos de circulação

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acadêmica. Para qualquer pergunta, entre em contato com a investigadora principal através do endereço de e-mail acima.

Obrigadx!

<u>Informações pessoais</u>

Gênero com o qual você se identifica:_____
Idade: _____
Estado civil: solteirx_____, casadx_____, viúvx_____, divorciadx_, outro _____

Número e idade dxs filhxs, se aplicável: ____
Nacionalidade: _____
Município onde mora:_____rural_____urbana_____
Data de chegada à localidade: _____
Ocupação: _____
Língua falada em casa: _____
Nível de educação superior alcançado: _____

Indique se você tem:
Linha de telefone fixo____SmartPhone_____, TV____, computador_____carro_____, moto_____
câmera fotográfica (que não seja o celular) _____

Telefone celular: indicar modelo e marca_____ Quão importante é ter uma câmera no telefone? _____

Prefiro não responder a esta seção_____

<u>SEÇÃO I: Tirar fotos</u>

Com que frequência você tira fotos ?
    Diaramente, muitas vezes____
    Diariamente, alguma vez____
    A cada dois dias____
    Duas vezes por semana____
    Uma vez por mês____
    Raramente____

Se você tira fotos regularmente, há quanto tempo o faz?
  Alguns dias____ Meses____2 anos____Mais de 2 anos____

Com que frequência?

Diariamente_____, A cada dois dias_____, Duas vezes por semana_____, Uma vez por mês_____,
Raramente_____.

Que tipo de câmera você usa?

A câmera do telefone.
Uma câmera digital de mão
Uma analógica
Outra

Em que ocasiões você tira fotos?

Férias_____, fins de semana_____, reuniões familiares (aniversários, graduações, etc)__, saída
com amigos_____,em qualquer lugar e a todo momento_____.

Do que você tira mais fotos?

de cenas de jantares familiares___
de seus seres queridos_____
de seu filhxs (se aplicável)_____
de paisagens, vistas turísticas_____
de objetos_____
da rua_____
de alimentos_____
do seu mascote_____
de você mesmo_____
de coisas do seu trabalho_____
de coisas que fazem você lembrar que você tem que fazer alguma coisa (como ajuda-memória)_____

Você poderia olhar para as últimas três sequências de fotos que você tirou e descrevê-las?

1_____
2_____
3_____

Por favor, tente estimar o número de fotografias que você tirou durante o mês passado:

() Nenhuma
() Entre 1 e 20
() Entre 20 e 50
() Entre 50 e 100
() Mais

Você retoca as fotos que tira?

Sim_____Não _____

Si sim, de que maneira? Quais programas ou apps você usa?

_____

Você tira fotos com a intenção prévia de enviá-las ou compartilhá-las?

Sim_____Não _____

Prefiro não responder a esta seção_____

SEÇÃO II- Bater papo

-Voce envia fotos enquanto bate papo?
Sim_____Não _____

Se você envia fotos enquanto bate papo: quando espera que essas imagens sejam vistas?
  -Instantaneamente o em menos de uma hora de ter enviado.
  - No decorrer do dia
  -Não importa quando

Que tipo de fotos você acostuma enviar via chat?
Fotos familiares_____
Fotos de coisas ou objetos que economizam a necessidade de descrever com palavras____

Si você marcou a última opção, poderia descrever quatro dessas fotos?
_____

Você recebe fotos no seu telefone?
Sim_____Não _____

Se sim, quem lhe envia fotos:
colegas_____, amigxs____, familiares___, cônjuge_____,filhxs_____.

Se sim, você responde quando alguém lhe envia uma foto?
Sim_____Não _____

Com que frequência você envia fotos:
 Muitas vezes em um dia_
 Uma vez por dia____
 Algumas vezes por semana____
 Rara vez____

Você acostuma a responder a uma foto que você recebeu com outra foto?

Sim_____Não _____

Se sim, porque?

_____

Que programa você usa para enviar fotos em um bate-papo?

_____

Prefiro não responder a esta seção

SEÇÃO IV. Postar

Você mostra suas fotos para outras pessoas?

Sim_____Não _____

Se sim, como?
- Imprimindo e conservando as fotos em álbuns_____
- Passando o telefone____
-Por e-mail_
-Postando fotos on-line_____

Si marcou a ultima opção, onde você posta as fotos?
Facebook_____,
Instagram_____,
Snapchat_____
Outro_____

Si você posta a suas fotos online, por que o faz?

_____

Si você posta as suas fotos nas redes sociais, você percebe quem curte a suas fotos?
Sim_____, Não _____

Você acostuma imprimir e enquadrar fotos?

Sim_____Não _____

Como você explicaria a diferença entre enviar uma fotografia para uma pessoa ou um grupo em um programa de bate-papo como o WhatsApp e fazer o upload on-line em uma plataforma como o Facebook?

_____

De que maneira as fotos que você compartilha são diferentes das que você prefere não mostrar?

_____

Prefiro não responder a esta seção_____

SECTION V. Espreitando

Você olha para as fotos de outras pessoas online?

   Sim_____Não _____

   Se sim, em qual plataforma?
     Instagram_____
     Facebook_____
     Snapchat_____
     Outras_____

-Você já se encontrou olhando para fotos de pessoas com quem você não tem mais contato?

_____

-Se sim, o que lhe causa curiosidade?

_____

Você já se encontrou procurando fotos de pessoas que não conhece?

   Sim_____Não _____

Si sim, o que te leva a fazer isso?

_____

Você acompanha a página de alguma celebridade online?

   Sim_____Não _____

Se sim, quantas você está seguindo?_____Você poderia descrever três tipos de fotos que geralmente são tiradas e compartilhadas por pessoas famosas?

_____

Deseja adicionar alguma coisa sobre o seu uso do telefone para tirar e compartilhar fotos?

_____

Prefiro não responder a esta seção_____

Muito obrigadx de responder este questionário!