

On modernity in the streets of São Paulo c. 1900: what can postcards express?*

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Abstract: This article aims at "writing the Latin American city" from a particular temporal-spatial perspective. By concentrating on everyday life in the streets of São Paulo at the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it makes use of contemporary photographic view cards in order to draw attention to specific sociocultural aspects of the Brazilian city overwhelmed by 19th-century urbanisation and modernisation amidst the abolition of slavery. What do photographic postcards especially from the turn of the 20th century express about modernity in the (officially post-slaveholding) streets of São Paulo at that time? The ways the images and written messages address circulations and interactions of passers-by contain clues to streets strongly marked by an anthropologically very meaningful coexistence of modern ways of circulating and old ways of staying.

Resumo: Este artigo visa "escrever a cidade brasileira" a partir de uma perspectiva temporal e espacial particular. Concentrando-se na vida cotidiana nas ruas da cidade de São Paulo entre finais do século XIX e o início do XX, trata-se de utilizar cartões postais fotográficos de vistas urbanas para chamar a atenção para aspectos socioculturais específicos da cidade brasileira engolfada pela urbanização e modernização oitocentistas em meio à abolição da escravidão. O que cartões postais fotográficos especialmente da virada do século XX expressam sobre a modernidade nas ruas (oficialmente pós-escravistas) de São Paulo naquele momento? A maneira como as imagens e mensagens escritas tematizam as circulações e interações dos transeuntes, carrega indícios de que o circular moderno e o ficar escravista coexistem de forma antropologicamente significativa, na cidade de então.

Keywords: São Paulo (city). Modernity. Street. Passer-by. Postcard.

Palavras-chave: São Paulo (cidade). Modernidade. Rua. Transeunte. Cartão postal.

THIS ARTICLE AIMS AT "writing the Latin American city" from a particular temporal-spatial perspective. By concentrating on everyday life in the streets of São Paulo at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, I intend to draw attention to specific sociocultural aspects of the Brazilian city overwhelmed by 19th-century urbanisation and modernisation.

Of course the issue of modernisation and simultaneous urbanisation in a mainly rural country at that period is a long-standing issue in the Brazilian social sciences¹. In the long run the many historical dilemmas it left as its legacy to social life cannot be separated from the effects of the economic and technological capitalist expansion which has its origins in the 18th-century Industrial Revolution (Montero, 1991). It is a process with different overcomes wherever it occurred, given the enormous regional and local varia-

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tions in a country as big and with inequalities as huge as Brazil, particularly in its state capitals. Thus, for instance, in Rio de Janeiro, the political and administrative capital of the country since 1763, but also in Recife and Salvador, the urbanising and modernising transformations took place over several decades – consequently under much more stable conditions from the perspective of the major values of Luso-Brazilian culture (Fernandes, [1961] 1979:34). In São Paulo changes occurred in a more concentrated form during the second half of the 19th century. And it is this urban experience I wish to focus on here.

In 1854 the São Paulo was an urban settlement of rural socioeconomic dynamics and modest demographic dimensions (its population then estimated at 31,824 included that of its large rural area – Almeida, 1856). From the 1850s, however, the city underwent intense socioeconomic, demographic, physical and urban-design changes against a background of economic prosperity based on coffee exports from its northwestern hinterlands, and the final crisis of slavery in Brazil. As a railway crossroad for the transport of coffee to the port of the city of Santos, from 1867, São Paulo started to attract new commercial and financial activities, but also new inhabitants of national and foreign origin: poor slaves, freedmen and European immigrants; wealthy farmers and businessmen. Various cultural heritages flowed together into the day-to-day life of people in the streets, heritages more or less distanced from the rural references predominant in the city until then (Fernandes, [1961] 1979:33-34). The anthropological approach I have been working on and in which this text inserts itself attempts to reflect on the rhythm of this more comprehensive process assuming the ways *passers-by* circulate and interact in the São Paulo streets as a major methodological reference. If the larger dynamics has to do with the historical constitution of modern metropolises in Brazil, what are the sociocultural characteristics of the modern street created amidst this historical process?

The period my work focuses on is generally regarded as a turning point in Brazil's modernisation and urbanisation: the one beginning with the official abolition of slavery (1888) and, later, the establishment of the republican regime (1889). Growing rationalization, the programming of daily times and spaces become effective historical possibilities, giving sociological meaning everyday life as a category strongly linked to a way of living and an ethics based on rationality, and to the social experience known as "modernity"². And this is true even though everyday life still is a time in which different historical temporalities coexist (Lefebvre, [1949, 1951] 1981). From the inauguration of São Paulo's first mayor, the rich farmer, businessman and politician Antônio da Silva Prado in 1899, urban space is overwhelmed by many policies in favour of rationalizing the streets' social uses amidst remarkable demographic growth (from 64,934 to 239,820 inhabitants between 1890 and 1900 – IBGE, 1971:42). These policies follow patterns common in European big cities at least since the mid-18th century³.

Thus the peculiarities of São Paulo's experience of modernisation must be sought for in other dimensions, sociocultural, historical ones⁴. In the wake of centuries of slaveholding and patriarchal relationships, hierarchies reassert themselves through mere gestures and postures, and through the (non)-use of words or artifacts in the streets (Fernandes, 1955:104-05). In the few 19th-century existing urban settlements, mainly slaves and poor freedmen walked on the streets. And to walk in these spaces was an index of lack of distinction. This applied to all those who were not supposed to simply pass through –

normally carried (by slaves, horses, mules or wheeled cars), except on occasions such as religious processions or public feasts. The contemporary doctor Lima Santos sums up this worldview in his "Hygienic Advices" [Conselhos Higiênicos], published in a major Recife newspaper in 1855: "The truth is that the major luxury of the land – one of the signs of nobility, magnanimity and of great distinction – is going out to the street as little as possible, be as little seen as possible and mingle to the least possible degree with that part of the population the *great ones* [*grandes*] call people, and whom they hate so much" (Freyre, [1936] 2000:70; given emphasis).

For a social universe moulded on these representations, modernisation challenges, on one hand, everyone to circulate together in the streets: whether its old *habitués* or its new users (men and, increasingly, women of the better-off social sectors who until then had rarely circulated). On the other hand, there is the challenge of internalizing specific ways of circulating and interacting in the streets. As space mediates social relations, the changes in it imply peculiar spatial practices, which, on their turn, produce this space. Hence specific human bodies, products of definite perceptions of the street and social relations in this space: a precise use of the hands, limbs, of the sensorial organs; certain gestures for work and for extra-work activities (Lefebvre, [1974] 2000:50). In my case, this body is the *passer-by*, the character corresponding to the spatial practices implicit to modernity in the streets (Lefebvre, 1970:99-100). It is the sign of a social relationship based mainly on individuals' transient circulation on the streets, as from a historical moment at which this space becomes a major reference for everyone's day-to-day life.

This is a fundamental step for my discovering the sociocultural specificities of São Paulo's modernising streets of the 1900s. It is amidst diachronic interaction between the contingency of action and the constancy of convention ongoing in a definite cultural universe that the local meanings of (modernizing) actions and ideas are socially defined (Sahlins, [1985] 1990:7). Thus, addressing the specificities of the circulations and interactions of passers-by is a major way of distinguishing originalities which emerge from inside a process which forces street life to irreversibly homogenizing changes.

In order to reflect upon which modern streets "are written" in passers-by day-to-day in São Paulo, let us first of all understand how passers-by and streets have been addressed by a whole tradition of studies on the city amidst 19th-century urban transformations. This will make it possible to approach photographic postcards from the turn of the 20th century and ask what they express about modernity in the streets of São Paulo at that time.

PASSERS-BY AND STREETS OF SÃO PAULO HISTORIOGRAPHY

Without claiming to consider all the reflections on the theme, I refer to academic work as from the 1930s, which addresses, to a greater or lesser extent, social relations in the 19th-century city streets by means of the theoretical and methodological tools of the social sciences⁵. Two types of approaches stand out within this context, approaches which have succeeded each other chronologically over the last sixty years.

Inspired by the intriguing acceleration of the socioeconomic, demographic, physical and urban-design changes in São Paulo as from the late 19th century, the earliest discussions on the causes and features of this urban phenomenon took place in the mid-1930s (Prado Jr., 1935; Paula, 1936). Attention to the movements of people in the streets in the 1800s appears only rarely and, even then, evasively addressed. Academic work on São Paulo

written as from the 1950s reflects far greater sensitivity to social relations in the streets, especially as to what regards the late 19th century. Although these studies, like the previous ones, focus on the causality networks that explain the transformations under way in the city as from the 1870s, they nevertheless take a less hasty view of what might have been “the life of law students”, carnival, “evolution of the prostitute”, “night burials of the blacks”, the alleged threat to the safety of houses (Morse, 1950); or even motions of the “coffee traders” in downtown cafés, as well as the “engineers and municipal personages in gala attire” conducting the first electric tram through the city in May 1900 (Monbeig, 1953). This multifaceted view of the streets is also encouraged by the characterisations of the city’s past en vogue upon the occasion of the city’s 400th anniversary official festivities (Bruno, 1953; Morse, [1954] 1970; Mattos, 1954).

Still, in the earliest pieces of sociological research on the city carried out at the University of São Paulo, a second series of themes on people’s movements in the streets begins to emerge. This will have a long life in the city’s historiography. Now, to address the interactions in the streets by definite institutions or social groups targets mainly the understanding of social life and of the economic survival of these groups and institutions in the city, and not, as the preceding analyses, a historical characterisation of ongoing modernisation and urbanisation. Although this continues to be important, it is so largely as background historical data. In an entirely pioneering fashion, children’s socialisation in São Paulo’s streets in the 1940s is analysed in the light of folk traditions typical of the rural context the city actually had been in previous centuries (Fernandes, [1947] 1961). But studies of the 1950s and 1960s on race relations between whites and blacks in São Paulo (Bastide & Fernandes, 1955; Fernandes, 1965) were, in a certain way, what consolidated the trend to focus on the life experience of groups socially and/or economically marginalised in the city during the 1800s. These studies show that talking about “blacks” in the São Paulo society at that time automatically leads the analysis, even if not exclusively, to the streets and to the interactions occurring there. The same applies to the early works, from the 1960s, on immigration and the universe of work in São Paulo in the 1800s (Simão, 1964; Beiguelman, [1968] 1977; Carone, 1970; Martins, [1973] 1986).

As from the 1970s, a new research objective gains ground: the working class and the contesting, strike-oriented movements taking place mainly in factories and unions (Fausto, 1976; Pinheiro & Hall, 1979; Hartmann, 1983; Paoli, 1991; Lopreato, 2000). As from the 1980s, reflecting Brazilian translations of the contemporary trends of American and European historiography, studies about these same groups become frequent, but from the point of view of theoretical parameters inspired by E.P. Thompson and Michel Foucault (Rolnik, 1981; Rago, 1985). As from that time there also appear studies whose methodological outlook is geared toward the “everyday” of groups that, up to this point in time, were not really addressed: underprivileged women (Dias, 1984), elite women (Maluf, 1995; Besse, 1996; Schpun, 1997); children (Azevedo, 1995; Birolli, 2000). Furthermore, classical themes were embraced once again, from the standpoint of other sources and theoretical orientations: prostitution (Rago, 1995); underprivileged men, women and children, both local and foreign (Pinto, 1998), or only local (Santos, 1998); slaves and freedmen (Schwarcz, 1987; Machado, 1994; Wissenbach, 1998a e 1998b; Koguruma, 1998); “blacks” (Silva, 1990; Andrews, 1991); the many immigrant groups (Fausto, 1991).

Human movement in the streets of the 1800s was not addressed only from the point of view of specific groups; institutions also played a role in this area. In parallel with early studies on everyday life in the several social sectors, carnival revelries as from the mid 19th century become a sociological issue (Simson, 1984); not to mention criminality (Fausto, 1984), and the police (Fernandes, 1974; Souza, 1992; Munhoz, 1997). More recently, institutions less conventional in São Paulo historiography have entered the scene, often paired with the issue of people's circulations in the streets: city-planning legislation (Rolnik, 1997); music (Moraes, 1997); *rótulas*, wooden trellis windows that for centuries were the mark of São Paulo housing (Marins, 1999); architecture (Campos, 1998).

Last but not least I should point out two studies in which the São Paulo street interactions are addressed from the viewpoint of the "crowd" – as a subject historically constituted amidst 19th-century worldwide modernization (Sevcenko, 1992; Schpun, 1997). Actually the authors' major subjects are not the street: the former focuses on the urban changes underpinning literary modernism in the 1920s, the second the changing gender relations in public spaces in the same period. Both of them nevertheless know that considering the 1920s implies dwelling on crowds and the collective forms of sociability they brings on.

Taken jointly, all of the analyses, even if not dedicated exclusively to the social relations in the city streets at the turn of the century, offer a multifaceted picture of the matter. Indeed each social institution and group faces its own dilemmas, be they economic, political or sociocultural, amidst a process each one is, as it were, both a product and a producer of.

However, we know little about the sociocultural singularities involved in a dimension overlapping the dilemmas each group mentioned above experiences separately in its everyday life. We know little about being a passer-by in the modernizing city, i.e. about ways of circulating and interacting while one is in transit between places, and this traffic is in itself fundamental. If the approaches on the crowds of the 1920s address the theoretical relevance of social interactions in public spaces, the sociocultural dynamics implicit to other rather than crowd interactions in the streets remains to be analysed.

In this sense it is worth mentioning an American work on the patterns and principles of interaction and relation between "strangers" in "public spaces" in the "modern city" (particularly in the United States and Northern Europe) (Lofland, [1973] 1985 and 1998). In the wake of Goffman's phenomenological studies on individuals' interactions in everyday life (1959 [1975], [1963] 1966, 1971), Lofland finds out interesting aspects on the social psychological dynamics present in spaces of legally open access in largely modern social contexts. Nevertheless it is difficult to figure out why the "stranger" – as a character typical of public spaces in cities, and whose knowledge about the others (also "strangers") in these spaces is only based on information on their roles and status, not on their biography (Lofland, [1973] 1985:16-17) – could be considered the major character of *every* city with more than 8 000 inhabitants (*ibidem*:11). This assumption makes it difficult to address local, sociocultural peculiarities of circulations and interactions in a context in which the existing passers-by are a result of modernisation amidst slavery decadence.

What does this type of social relation reveal about the pace of historical change under way in the streets? I should here point out two Brazilian anthropological studies which, even if not concentrated specifically on this issue and on São Paulo, dwell on the street as a social space (Freyre, [1936]

2000; DaMatta, 1978 and [1985] 1997). The former aims at understanding the decadence of “rural patriarchy” and simultaneous “urban development” in 19th-century Brazil, the second, Brazilian society “as something totaled” [totalizado]. Irrespective of the very different approaches, for both authors an important issue is the social dynamics which the pair of sociological categories “house-street” stands for in Brazil. Amidst increasing urbanisation during the 1800s, the street becomes for Freyre a “zone of confraternity” [confraternização] between the “social extremes” represented by the sociologically fundamental relations in and between the “mansions” and the “shanties”. These are relations more and more polarized amidst the decadence of rural patriarchy and simultaneous historical constitution of the country’s major cities (Freyre, [1936] 2000:12-13). For the structuralist DaMatta the street refers – beyond time and spatial variations – to a code “based on universal laws, on a bureaucracy antique and deeply rooted among us, and on a juridical-legal formalism which to a certain extent is absurd”. It is thus a code opposed to the one existing in the house and “founded on the family, on friendship, loyalty, on the person and patronage” (DaMatta, [1985] 1995:24). By arguing in these terms both authors link social relations in the streets to a definite historical development (and be it to implicitly deny historical changes, as it occurs in DaMatta’s analysis, which indistinctly depicts examples from the mid-19th century and the 1970s). In this sense both approaches characterise the Brazilian modernizing streets in ways which should be considered here.

Taking into account the existence of the investigative slants above, I, on another occasion, looked into the sociocultural peculiarities in the way São Paulo’s early kind of “public opinion” toward the end of the monarchy perceived the then ongoing historical process from the point of view of its daily experiencing of the social activities in the streets (Frehse, 1999). However, certain elements remain unanswered, namely how São Paulo society inevitably adjusted itself in its everyday life to the new standards of street life implicit to modernization amidst the demise of slavery.

Let us turn to the clues a precise set of São Paulo photographic postcards from the turn of the century contains. It indicates that the postcards’ authors had *common sense knowledge* about the street in mind for producing them, i.e. knowledge of meanings socially shared amongst subjects in everyday life. These meanings are negotiated, interpreted and deciphered continuously in the course of interaction through simulation and dramatization, and governed by a complex method of meaning production (Martins, [1998] 2000:59-61). As commonsensical knowledge indeed makes everyday life possible (*ibidem*:62), there arises analytical room for reflecting upon the rhythm of the history passers-by involved in the postcards’ production and consumption (re)make daily on the streets.

IN SEARCH FOR COMMON SENSE, POSTCARDS

Photographic postcards have a characteristic which of major importance to the analysis of commonsensical knowledge about the passers-by in São Paulo’s streets. They are intrinsically “expressive” due to the fleeting nature of the production mechanisms of the image. The way time and space come together in the still inside the photograph’s frame lead us to the multiple histories it contains. It expresses very specific experiences of the past through the way it expresses these histories (Edwards, 2002:125-26 and 1999). Expressivity leads us to dramatization such as it is addressed by phe-

nomenology towards this very common sense: in other words, the realm of interaction mediated by the exercise of the subject experiencing himself as another one (Martins, [1998] 2000:60). In the case of the documents to be analysed herein, the social meaning of images and message rest upon the fact that both publicly, due to the material's nature, dramatize circulations and interactions of passers-by: the postcard photos intend public consumption; the written messages presuppose their being offered to the post office, to the postman and ultimately to the postcard's addressee.

This all takes place despite the photographer's and the sender's intention, and regardless of existing technical restrictions. Thereby the postcards eventually suggest how the parties (photographer, photographed subjects, and sender) were inserted, as passers-by (since this is ultimately what they are), into the social production of highly specific interactions and circulations – in the production of uniquely modern São Paulo streets. And this even though photographer and sender share, as common sense regarding the postcards, the idea that the relation between the image and its source is analogical and that, by extension, having the photograph (the postcard) authentically represents a supposedly objective experience: "it happened there, I was there" (Sontag, 1979:9 *apud* Edwards, 1996:200).

The work on postcards that I was able to find to date focuses just on their images (not on the senders' messages), either to dwell on the history of this means of communication and collection object (Staff, [1966] 1979; Klamkin, 1974; Miller, 1976; Ripert, 1983; Woody, 1998); to demonstrate how it documents urban history (Evans & Richards, 1980; Berger, 1983; Schapochnik, 1998; Gerodetti & Cornejo, 1999); to problematise the ideological purposes of their urban representations (Deegan, 1989; Kossoy, [1992] 1999); or yet to dissect the sociocultural peculiarities of the context of their production. In this case, postcards of "natives" of the (former) colonies of the European West are focused on (Edwards, 1996; Geary, 1998); I myself concentrated on São Paulo postcard images (Frehse, 1997 and 2000). However, my purpose here is specifically to decode these sources based on how, in the photographed spaces, indexical elements concerning the physical setting and the passers-by relate to each other and to the postcard's messages. These relations express circulations and interactions that contain clues on specific ways passers-by circulated and interacted in São Paulo in 1900⁶. Indeed there inevitably is a certain "anthropological intuition of the non-anthropologist photographer, i.e. of the author of the artistic or documental photograph, who incorporates into his photography aspects the social scientist can read and interpret as decoders, as revealing elements of the ethnography found in unintentionally ethnographic photography" (Martins, 2002:248).

Given the limits of this paper, the fronts of nine postcards used for personal reasons by Raul Pacheco e Chaves, a member of the city's economic and political elite, in São Paulo between March and September 1901 stand out inside a more comprehensive set⁷:

In the first eight postcards Chaves corresponds with his cousin Sophia da Silva Prado, who is in Paris by that time. She is another privileged scion of the São Paulo elite and a relative of the city's mayor. As to the ninth postcard, its back reveals that Chaves sent it to an unknown "*Monsieur*" in Montevideo.

What interests me is that in the messages to Sophia the sender almost always touches upon circulations and interactions in the city's streets. Thereby he attests to his own role as a passer-by in this space. The postcards are based on photographs taken by the Swiss immigrant Guilherme Gaensly



Postcard 1 (front): “Mercado Velho” [Old Market] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: “5-3-01 Dear Sophia. Here goes a view of the market. Do you remember when we have been standing near the fish market in order to wait for the train to the Ypiranga [district]? A thousand greetings from cousin Raul”



Postcard 2 (front): “Viaduto do Chá” [Tea Viaduct] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: “5-3-01. Dear Sophia. Here goes a view from the viaduct, or station of the other-world express. Greetings from Raul”



Postcard 3 (front): "Largo do Palácio " [Palace Square] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: "11 March 1901 here go the views of the Government Palace, Central Police, Palace of Agriculture and Palace of Treasury. Greetings. Luar"



Postcard 4 (front): "Ponte Grande" [Big Bridge] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: "11-3-01. From this bridge a man threw himself, and died. At the background of the view you can see the observatory of S. Paulo. Greetings. R. C."



Postcard 5 (front): "Rua Direita" [Straight Street] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: "11-3-01-01. This street is called Direita [Straight] because it is distorted (it is not a tart to eat). Miss you, R.C."



Postcard 6 (front): "Rua João Alfredo" [João Alfredo Street] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: "11-3-01. Dear Sophia. Here goes a view of the João Alfredo Street, which is not very nice, is it? What do you think? Greetings Raul"



Postcard 7 (front): "Largo de São Bento" [São Bento Square] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: "São Paulo, March 21 1901. Dear Sophia. Here goes a view of the São Bento Square. Greetings and miss you, R P C"



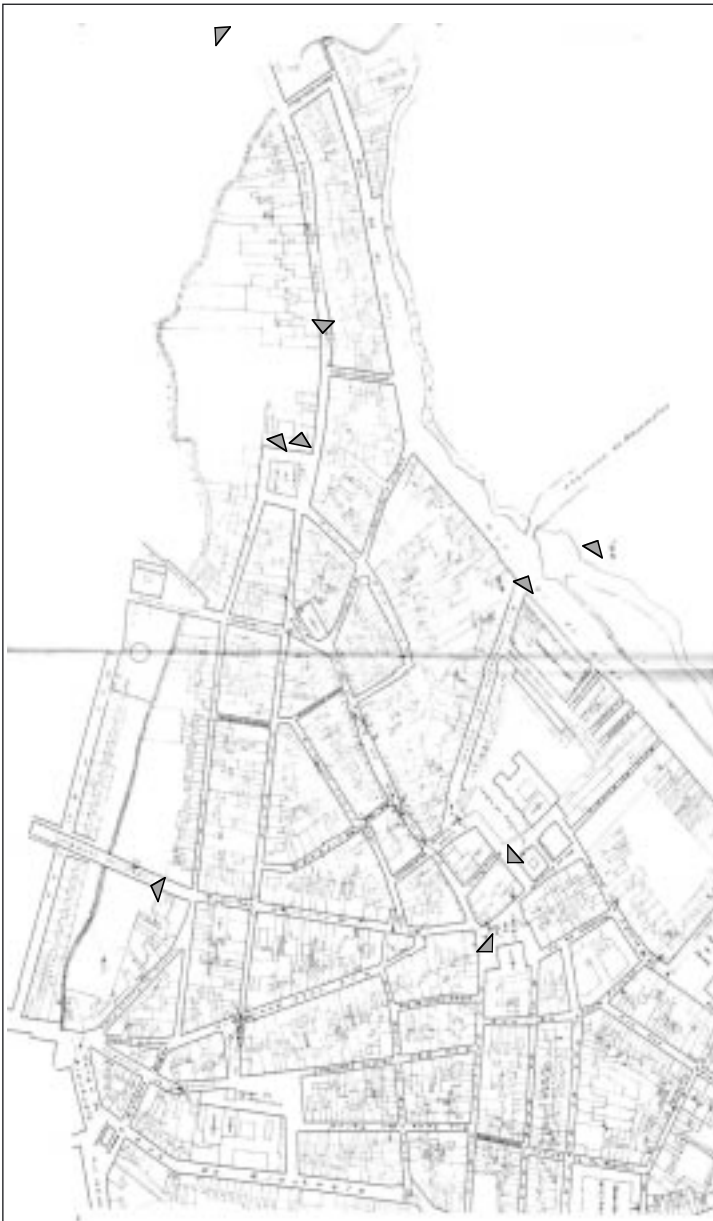
Postcard 8 (front): "Rua Florêncio de Abreu" [Florêncio de Abreu Street] (Collection Aparecido Salatini) – Message: "21-5-01. Dear Sophia. I have received your cards, for which I thank you a lot. Longing, Raul"



Postcard 9 (front): "Largo da Sé" [Sé Square] (Collection Jamil Nassif Abib) – Message: "2 September 1901. Gentleman, It would be an enormous pleasure exchanging this card with you. When responding please stamp the card on the seen side. Raul Chaves. Raul Pacheco e Chaves – 47, Alameda Bambús –São Paulo – Brésil"

(Wellhausen, 1843 – São Paulo, 1928) when postcards as such were a novelty in São Paulo (the first ones, by the German Victor Steidel, were traded in 1898). The material analysed herein joins the first series of unnumbered photogravures (the collector Jamil Abib knows 26 of them) produced in Switzerland and traded by Gaensly in the first years he lived and worked in São Paulo as a photographer, from 1894. Then he still was a partner of his former assistant, the Parisian Rodolpho Lindemann, was in charge of the company's main atelier, in Salvador (Mendes, 2001:49, 59).

In this environment Gaensly's São Paulo views quickly started to be reproduced in albums, travel guides and almanacs, so much so that the photographer came to be regarded as the person chiefly responsible for the image one currently has of São Paulo around 1900 (Kossov, 1988:18). After producing urban landscapes from 1894 to 1897, he introduced successive series of images, interspersed by continuous updates, as albums and postcards (Mendes, 2001:53, 66). As from 1899, he was also in charge of photographing for the Canadian concern São Paulo Tramway, Light & Power Company Ltd. installation and maintenance of trams and electrical lighting in the city. The postcards I am interested in were probably produced when Gaensly started working for Light: the angles and themes dealt with over time are very similar (Burgi & Dietrich, 2001:70). This turns postcard photographer Gaensly into yet one more passer-by, albeit a very special one, as he bore a rather bulky camera (the pictures' original glass negatives were 18 cm X 23 cm and 24 cm X 30 cm large⁸) with which he focused on São Paulo's central hill and its borders:



Map of the city's downtown area in 1893 by the Engineer V. Huet de Bacelar (Toledo, 1997:66), highlighting what I estimate to be the nine angles from which Gaensly took the photographs analysed herein

In line with a practice common throughout the world in the early days of the picture postcard, in the 1890s (Staff, [1966] 1979:56), Gaensly's set includes the caption "Greetings of São Paulo" and a caption indicating the name of the photographed site. And, following general postal regulations of that time, the photograph only takes up part of the front of the postcard: the other half is for the sender's message, whereas all of the back is dedicated to the recipient's address and the stamp:



Postcard 1 (back): "Mercado Velho" [Old Market] (Collection Aparecido Salatini)

The sender's age, the personal circumstances under which the messages were produced? Until now it has been impossible to obtain any information on this in studies on the Silva Prado and Pacheco e Chaves families (Levy, 1977; Catelli, 1997; Barata & Bueno, 1999:1685), although it certainly would be fascinating to find this out, so as to understand the subjectivity that these postcards end up by mediating – and help to develop (Schapochnik, 1998:426). To go into these issues in greater depth here, however, would drive me too far away from regarding how image and text interrelate in the representation of ways passers-by circulate and interact in São Paulo's streets at the turn of the century.

PASSERS-BY IN THE IMAGES' STREETS

In order to analyse Gaensly's pictures one has to take into account the importance in them of the streets' physical setting and, within this, of elements related with modernisation: urban furnishings just installed or being installed, the newly-built public buildings, the first viaduct (respectively postcards 9, 4, 2). This element is stressed in three studies specifically on the photographer's work in São Paulo (Kossoy, 1988; Cavenaghi, 2000; Mendes 2001a and 2001b), and one that Gaensly's very biography suggests: as a view photographer at a time of abounding urban-design transformations he, mainly after hired by *Light*, probably was not immune to the changes in the city's physical layout.

These aspects help to characterise the "informational context" that involves the photographs studied herein, the "who, what, why and when" linked to the effect of reality implicit to photography (Edwards, 2002:8). Given that an important indicator of the rhythm of the historical process consists of technological and urban-design changes, the images vigorously announce temporalities connected with modernisation. Thus, Gaensly inserts himself in a tradition of photographic representations under way at least since Rio de Janeiro photographer Militão Augusto de Azevedo pub-

lished, in a pioneering undertaking, his *Comparative Album of the City of São Paulo, 1862-1887*. By using comparative pairs of photographs, taken from similar angles first in 1862 and then in 1887, he highlighted physical changes of the city's buildings, streets, public squares and parks⁹.

However, it is important not to limit oneself to the "informational context", which implies contemplating Gaensly's images as merely documental visual representations of how speedily the streets were physically transformed – and for different ideological purposes (Kossov, 1988; Cavenaghi, 2000). The expressive nature of the photographs allow them not just "to replicate the power relations of their production, but also to inscribe and present multiple spaces and multiple histories that have the potential to contest or subvert the ideological discourses of the image's creation" (Edwards, 2001:108).

In order to acknowledge this second context, it is fitting to consider how space and time manifest themselves in the photographs (*ibidem*:109); in Gaensly's case, spaces and times other than those physically present in the street that is becoming modern. As the photograph spatialises time through the stilling of experience in the frame (*ibidem*:116), analysing the spatialities suggested by the passers-by presence in the photographed streets will make it possible to depict the different temporalities the images encompass (*ibidem*:116), thus the histories on São Paulo's passers-by they express.

Gaensly's work for *Light* is associated with "little interest in the human element, in the casual factors, in the recording of the interaction of the inhabitant and the city" (Mendes, 2001b:94), except for the images of the turn of the century (Kossov, 1988). Indeed, if on one occasion (postcard 2) the street is seen from afar, in the other cases one recognizes the presence of people in the streets – and in the rivers (postcards 1 and 4).

But who are these passers-by? Given the images' genre (i.e. "street photographs" because intentionally or not they focus on passers-by in this space – Westerbeck & Meyerowitz, 1994:34-35), the technical limitations of the substratum (photogravures over a century old of photographs taken even longer ago), and the present technical limitations of the observer (a magnifier with a magnifying factor of three), one can only *discern* in the images, by the general features of garb, size, and occasional gestures and postures, whether the photographed subjects are men, women or children; and, more rarely, whether they are black or white (within a social context in which skin colour contains clues on specific sociocultural dynamics in the street). Notwithstanding these difficulties, which stand in the way of any categorical statement as to the photographic composition as a whole (one can always discern other elements and specify the elements already discerned), we shall see the material's ethnographic richness as to my questioning.

Therefore, a good starting point is the social activities respectively focused on. Individuals' recurring occupations in the São Paulo's streets suggest specific sociocultural conceptions about space – and about historical time (Frehse, 1999). Thus, they enable one to think in a privileged fashion about how different temporalities, the old and the modern, meet in the social relations under way in the streets, crystallizing a certain modernity in these spaces. Within this context, a curious finding: in the photographs analysed here, social activities that São Paulo historiography thematises as historically old (in relation to the modernising present of the late 19th century) are focused in areas geographically situated on the borders of the central area. The washing of horse-driven two-wheeled cabs, for instance, has its space assured in the Tamanduateí river, right next to the "Mercado Velho" (postcard 1), on an unspecified

morning – as the lights and shadows at play on the city's geography allow one to surmise. With its arched entryways and extending over the ground floor on the right-hand half of the image, the so-called *mercado caipira*, peasant market, is the site to which, at least since its inauguration (1870), peasants from the adjoining rural areas flow, to sell their agricultural, medicinal and handcrafted goods, and wood (Santos, 1999:101). In Gaensly's representation, the "Mercado Velho" is paired with the newly-built fish market, whose walls alternate dark and pale horizontal stripes. And it is also paired with another recently built public urinal, in the midpoint of the upper right hand corner of the image. All of these buildings tell us of the modernising diligence of the government in its intricate relations with private initiative (Silva, 1984; Rolnik, 1997:chapter 3): it spatially tries to segregate socioeconomic activities as well as the physical waste, in a world in which the street becomes a place where one spends increasingly more time.

This physical scenario frames, in the image, activities usual in other, past times. The river still is a place for washing horses and cars. And this even if the cars become more modern: one of the main sites of the mule-driven trams' company lies fairly close to both markets.

Moreover, despite plentiful and old legislation forbidding it, the Tamanduateí keeps on being a spot for youth and adult's bathing. This is what the presence of two individuals in the water, very close to each other and holding a pale piece of cloth, suggests. Of course, they might also be a pair of equally historical washerwomen, who used to engage in their daily labor, since colonial times, precisely in this place, under the depreciative and curious glances of men of the widest range of social backgrounds.

If one is not swimming and is not washing, why not merely stand by the riverside, looking at the photographer, as do the two silhouettes in the lower left-hand side of the picture? Washerwoman and boy? Old and young boys? The photograph's silence is harsh...

On another occasion Gaensly comes even closer to the market, which is now on his left (postcard 6). On this morning, with the sun fairly high up in the sky, many people go to-and-fro the steep street connecting the bank of the Tamanduateí to the city's most central historical, political and administrative point, then called *Largo do Palácio*, Government Palace Place, on the hill. A man next to a stand holding a tray looks at the photographer from the left-hand side as he holds, with his right hand, one of the goods he appears to be peddling. Behind him, another two simply dressed people also look at the photographer in working garb. This is to be supposed as they are not wearing neckties, within a context in which the presence of a mere shirt without a jacket, and particularly of a shirt outside trousers, indicate its owner's poor and rural social condition (Freyre, [1936] 2000:415).

Not to speak of shoes, in this society in which historically the asymmetries between those who are served and those serve is expressed, among other elements, by the ownership of shoes (Bastide, 1946:92-93). In the left corner one person conveys the idea that he may be a shoeshine boy, given his posture and the rectangular box between his thighs. This was a recent profession in the city at that time, having appeared in the streets with the first waves of Italian immigration in the 1870s (Martins, 1912:124). If this individual was indeed a shoeshine boy, these were barefoot, in "Rua João Alfredo"...

Among the countless human beings and activities occupying this setting, I would like to highlight the rare presence of a woman who, with her long

skirt and a bundle (or might it be a tray of sweets or fruit?) on her head, seems to walk up the city's central hill in the background. If this is indeed the indexical element, then it is a washerwoman insinuating herself, or a fruit seller, two professions whereby women since colonial times earned their livelihood, and whose haphazard presence in the streets was under the scrutiny of the government at least as from the early 19th century (Dias, 1984:51ss, 176).

Another historically old activity in the city, another geographic fringe around the centre: the photographer now transports us to the banks of the Tietê river on an unspecified afternoon (postcard 4). Thus he reedit from a new angle a scene already taken by Militão de Azevedo thirty years before. Differently from the latter, however, Gaensly does not focus on the bridge, bringing instead to the forefront another social activity historically rooted in the city: the boatman in charge of transporting people and merchandise between one and the other side of the river; in this case, two women, discernable as such, three men and another two silhouettes that might be male or female.

The boatman, with his thick mustache, reminds one of other lands, Mediterranean. His posture as he leans over the oars, and his jacket, whose sleeves are too short to cover his pale shirt, suggest a modest socio-economic position; in this, he does not seem to differ much from the woman who, at the opposite end of the boat, shields herself from the sun with an open parasol (or an umbrella?), despite the boat's covering. The fact that this person does not wear a hat, if contrasted with the plumed headgear of the woman in the centre of the boat, lets one intuit a passenger of modest financial situation. And this even though the woman carries the parasol, a "lord-like habit colored people also sought to imitate", by 1860 (Freyre, [1936] 2000:332)...

Very different is the appearance of two of the three male passengers. Leaning his left arm on the boat's cover, the individual reveals, through his bowler hat, coat and tie, that he is a member of the better-off segments of society; in front of him, yet another individual, sporting an eminently urban fashion at that time, a Panama hat (*ibidem*:415).

The photographed old social activity, with its rich ethnographic details, is in the foreground of a physical setting characterized by other, modernising times. The background of the scene contains icons of ongoing modernisation: the bridge built in the 1850s, where two silhouettes appear to be strolling, and the newly created observatory.

Certainly there would be more details to explore, especially with more advanced technical means of observation. Anyway these faint indexical elements contribute to characterising the photographed borders of the central hill as sites where historically old social activities abound amidst a changing physical setting.

But how are passers-by represented in the city's downtown area, the main focus of modernisation? The six remaining images address the city's central hill (postcards 2, 3, 5, 7-9). Now other passers-by circulations, less commonly addressed in the historiography, are heightened. There prevails modern passer-by circulation in the streets. An icon of this is the moving of people and vehicles on the Chá viaduct, even afar (postcard 2).

However, the photographed central hill of which the viaduct is a part cannot be thought of as a space for modern (big) crowds. In this sense, it is emblematic that the street adjoining the city's most central point, where the settlement historically arose, should be shown almost devoid of people (postcard 3). A male figure can be seen in the middle of the street, holding

his arm up, perhaps waving at someone (possibly standing in front of the mansion located toward the horizon of the scene), or perhaps because he carried something on his head. He is being encircled by recently constructed public buildings, all of them designed in a modern neo-classical style to politically symbolise the power of the new republican regime: on the right hand side, the Bureau of Agriculture and of the Treasury; on the left hand side in the back, the central police station; on the left corner, the Government Palace.

The apparently solitary passer-by becomes less solitary when one considers that he is being joined by a donkey-cart (a firewood vendor? – *Americano*, 1957:115) parked at the crossroad on the right hand side, and by the silhouette of a man on the left. This one is resting his right elbow on the railing of the Palace's sidewall and appears to be interacting with someone standing diagonally to his left, whereas in the pavement plunged into the shade of a little house by the sidewall other silhouettes (of people?) can be discerned.

If there was a larger number of people coming and going who were not recorded on the negative, it would have been due to technical limitations, which caused animated beings to be rendered only as blurs or traces. One will also never know whether it was a Sunday or a holiday, with little social movement in this area. What matters is that, among the many modern ways of moving about downtown São Paulo around 1900, there are also these two: to stay in the middle of the street or to walk there very slowly (thereby being photographed by Gaensly); and to lean even on the railings of the city's most important political building. These types of movements reappear in all the other downtown pictures.

This is the case, for instance, of "Rua Direita" (postcard 5), taken in one of the socially and economically most prestigious points of the city at that time due to its stores, teahouses and luxury hotels, as well as elite houses (Bruno, 1953b: *passim*). In Gaensly's image the street's modern liveliness and turbulence take on specific standards. The universe framed by the discernible buildings with their neo-classical façades is eminently masculine. Two men are leaning fully on lamppost's base, at the end of the Chá viaduct, on the left; a third one leans on a flag post, indicating by his unassuming posture that he is a younger man. Next to these three individuals, another man wearing a dark coat is in the actual street, standing near the gutter of the pavement in front of a (telephone?) post. He looks at the street, as does a boy (to judge from his smaller size), who might be interacting (talking?) either with this man or with a stouter gentleman also standing in the street, wearing pale trousers and looking in the photographer's direction. On the other side of the same street, other individuals appear to be standing in the middle of the street, as they look precisely toward the left hand side of the image, from where come the gazes of other passers-by: a shoeshine boy apparently unaware that he is standing on the tram's rail, as he holds his shoeshine box on his left shoulder; diagonally across from this boy and comparatively closer to the photographer, another man (or boy, to judge by his size) who, with his left hand apparently in his trouser pocket and his right arm raised, is also turned toward the opposite side of the street. Everyone's attention appears to have been drawn by some event occurring in that spot, an event we will never learn about. And all of this as other people stroll on the pavement, as trams go past in the background, with cars or carts parked next to the pavement: the to-and-fro of a big city.

The image allows one to heighten one more pattern of human movement in the photographed central streets: the infrequent appearance of women. Only a few could be discerned, and on the opposite side of the hill: an apparently poor one in the lower side of “Rua João Alfredo”, where primarily less affluent groups went about their business; and in the “Ponte Grande” boat two women, but surrounded by well-dressed men, thus, as it were, duly protected from the external world of the river, the bridge, the riverbank. Although one cannot know whether Gaensly’s deliberately excluded women from his pictures, in fact they do not stand out in this set. In a certain way this is not surprising, in this society of strongly patriarchal roots, in which the higher the social status, the greater the distance from alien gaze – thus from the street (Dias, 1984:chapter 3).

Given the material’s nature, I am certainly not trying to achieve an exhaustive analysis of the patterns of human circulation in São Paulo’s streets. Nevertheless, one does perceive ways of circulating and interacting constant throughout the photos of the central hill: they reappear when, again in the middle of the street of crowded “Largo de São Bento” (postcard 7), one stares, next to a companion, at a cart for transporting merchandise (or a public cleaning truck?) which escapes from the scene at the back, or when one observes, hands in pockets, the photographer in the busy “Rua Florêncio de Abreu” (postcard 8).

Thus, in the streets that São Paulo historiography highlights as the most thoroughly modern ones due to their political, administrative, socio-economic and urban-design transformations, the passers-by movements express streets of other, past, times. The street itself (as opposed to the pavements) is not merely a place to be crossed speedily and hastily; it is a place for *staying* at: where one arranges oneself to pose for the photographer or to wave to another pedestrian; where one stands, astounded by some passing occurrence, where one chats as a cart disappears in the distance. In this sense, it is a street in which patterns of interactions whose temporality (of the past) is usual in the borders of the hill reappear. And this even though the physical space is another one, the social status, high, and the social activities, diverse.

But the streets also encompass pavements that, far from being privileged places for passers-by to pass through, are the stage for *non-circulation*. The whole body adapts vertically to urban furnishings on the pavements (iron railings; lamp, flag or telephone posts) in order to turn them into places of *staying*. Taking into consideration postures like these at the then ongoing (republican) times of ostensible repression of vagrancy, one is reminded of the issue of work, so very fundamental to a society in which, for centuries, manual work was associated with servitude and the symbol of non-distinguished status. And by the way it makes sense to inquire which of the passers-by standing in the images, sometimes with hands in their pockets, a contemporary sign of indolence (Casudo, [1973] 1976:217), would have been regarded as vagrants at their time. If we may never learn the answer for obvious reasons, we should not overlook the fact that in this social context, in which hierarchies re-establish themselves through indicators as prosaic as apparel, a more precise analysis of fashion would bring instigating elements to the issue at hand.

This element leads us to a last point concerning the slaveholding past that Gaensly’s passers-by end up by incorporating into their to-and-fro in these images. The hill and its borders merge into each other and are con-founded in spatial terms when the issue is standards of dress. In “Rua João

Alfredo" the barefoot people on the left hand corner of the picture coexist with the elegantly attired gentleman attiring a jacket, a necktie and a tall hat, standing by a cart of highly rustic appearance. In the Tietê-boat, the coexistence in the same space of different social strata finds its chief icon in the way in which the woman with an umbrella shares the boat's narrow space with another ornate feminine figure, complete with plumed headgear. It is inevitable that one should recall the complex patterns of segregation in force in Brazil's slaveholding society for centuries, when the asymmetry of social standing coexisted with peculiar physical and affective symmetries, relegating to scholars the complex debate on the "democratic" character of the Brazilian slavery model.

We are thus conducted to yet another space: the patriarchal home. A controversial space, a realm in which personal individuality and servitude are reiterated subtly every day, dramatized as pure affectivity. Gaensly's street is also this, in particular in one of the most symbolically and historically important places in the city: the "Largo da Sé" (postcard 9), where since colonial times the cathedral was situated, a mandatory point for all religious processions and, as from the 1870s, a stop for donkey trams and cabs, in addition to being the place chosen as the starting point for the installation of almost all technical modernising innovations in the late 1800s. The cars and carts parked in front of the recent neoclassical façades in the superior half of the picture surround a group of rather small barefoot boys who gather around the newly-installed electric lamp post at the square at noon. Nearby, another little news-vendor boy, black; a very short man with a goatee sporting a jacket and bow-tie; and another black person, possibly far taller, leaning on the lamp post's base. Meanwhile yet another man, who appears to be older (to judge from his erect posture), hands resting on his waistcoat, complete with jacket, tie and hat (indications of a higher social standing), is looking toward the photographer, fairly close to the gathering; not to mention, for instance, the young black man who, dressing jacket, waistcoat and hat, leans on his umbrella and poses, and the waiter (or a cook or butcher?) in a pale apron who approaches the square from the midpoint of the scene's back.

Beyond the people who can be discerned, what one sees here are the different social levels that meet in this square and pose for Gaensly. And metaphorically this square could well be another space, a farmyard, a sugar-mill yard, a backyard: sites of this curious segregation that allows those who are different to congregate, making it clear, through what it hides, that they are all unequal.

MODERNITY IN THE POSTCARDS' STREETS

Which histories do the human to-and-fros in the photographs tell about modernity of São Paulo's streets? By including times past, and thus as it were the house, these spaces actually complement it, are a part of it. But a minor part, an arena that enables dramatization of equality at a moment and in a site where, notwithstanding the ongoing macro-historical processes, each person (still) has a defined place in the social structure, even though he/she may be unaware of what this place actually is.

Is it a "zone of confraternity", as Freyre pointed out? Only if one fraternizes inequality there. And what to say of DaMatta's conception, of the street as opposed to the house? The "dense context" involving Gaensly's streets abolishes dichotomies, dissolves oppositions, and difference, in favour of congregated inequality, of non-polarized hierarchy.

Now it is indeed possible to grasp all of the richness of common sense knowledge of the messages by the rich Raul Pacheco e Chaves. They follow three different patterns. Once Chaves inserts himself and his cousin into the photographed site (postcard 1), but apart from that he alludes to commonsensical knowledge on the street (postcards 2-6) or, further on in 1901, does not refer to the street at all (postcards 7-9).

Thus, the narration dramatizes various times: the time of Chaves' and his cousin's relationship (in the postcards it appears to be more intimate on 5 March than on 21 May), but also the time of a certain relationship between Chaves and the streets (he makes jokes on the Rua Direita which seem to have been usual at that time – Moura, [1932] 1980; he comments on the Rua João Alfredo in a way which cannot be separated from the space's ongoing social uses; he heightens the Largo do Palácio through captions which supplement the own postcard's ones and suggest a personal attachment to that monumental site; he addresses tragic uses of the Viaduto do Chá and the Ponte Grande which frequently appear in contemporary newspaper *faits divers*). There is, last but not least, the time of Chaves' relation with the postcard as a means of communication and as a collection object.

As I am focusing on the passers-by to-and-fros on the streets, the first two patterns are of special interest. On two specific days (5 and 11 March) the sender ironically – and perhaps in love with the addressee - dramatizes ways of being in the streets based on his very own experience of this space. While addressing the “Mercado Velho” Chaves suggests a certain estrangement towards this space. He refers to a casual waiting for a “train to the Ypiranga” conjugating the verb in the present perfect tense: “we have been”. Was it because Sophia had already left São Paulo? Or was it because people like them were not used to go to the fish market surroundings? While it is not the case to address such questions here, the moment seems to have been special and unique, an issue to be remembered – what implies being estranged in a certain way.

This estrangement coexists with other moments (postcards 2-5) in which the rich sender addresses the street from the perspective of a common sense that renews itself daily through, amongst others, newspapers, chronicles, memories. This is indeed a way of approaching the day-to-day of this space; of going out to the street in imaginary terms. At the same time, the estrangement keeps on being enormous: Chaves' account suggests this space is worth of mentioning because it is extraordinary, non-everyday-life.

Given the eminently casual feature of postal messages, these considerations are inevitably bound to be of a digressive nature. However that may be, they bring about clues on more comprehensive social processes. Chaves' texts express the controversial approaching and distancing *vis-à-vis* the streets manifest by all the people who, due to their social condition, have historically been afar from this space and who now slowly incorporate the street into their imaginary through the mediation of a commonsensical knowledge they may express, for instance, in postcard messages.

In the midst of these dynamics, Gaensly, Chaves and the photographed passers-by, to the extent that they construct specific streets, also contribute, regardless of whether they wish it or not, to the production of certain types of modern São Paulo streets at the turn of the century. It is a space whose original modernity is revealed mainly in the social setting, rather than in the physical one. Transformations of the streets' physical setting in favour of modern aesthetics and functionality are an integral part of 19th-century modernisation wherever it took place. But not a dynamics of sociability such

as the one depicted in the postcards' images and messages. This is where original aspects emerge: modern ways of circulating and old ways of staying coexist. All of this constitutes the street which began to be "written" in São Paulo in the early Republican years.

NOTES

- 1 The first academic studies appear in the 1930s, like for instance Freyre ([1936] 2000), Holanda ([1936] 1984), Simonsen (1939) and Prado Jr. (1942).
- 2 In conceptual terms "modernity cannot be confounded with the objects and signs of the modern, because it does not limit itself to them. It can neither be separated from the rationality which created the ethics of multiplying capital; which introduced, even in ordinary man's social life and morality, calculation, the social action calculated through a relation between means and ends, the daily reconstitution and comprehension of the sense of action as mediations of sociability" (Martins, [2000] 2002:18).
- 3 Cf., amongst others, for London, Olsen (1979), Ogborn (1998); for Paris, Farge ([1979] 1992), Agulhon (1998); for Berlin, Matzerath (1985), Lindenberger (1995). For a general overview on the processes in different cities cf. Sutcliffe (1984), Girouard (1985), Zimmermann (1996).
- 4 Following Marshall Sahlins, I believe that "what anthropologists call 'structure' – the symbolic relations of cultural order – is an historical object" (Sahlins, [1985] 1990:8-9).
- 5 São Paulo becomes an issue for the social sciences mainly as from the foundation of the Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política (1934) and of the Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras of the University of São Paulo (1935) (Magnani, 1992:47-48).
- 6 One has to point out Carlo Ginzburg's inspiring evidential method (Ginzburg, [1986] 1991).
- 7 While selecting the postcards in the private collections I found many copies of the same views; but in these cases there were, in general, no comments on São Paulo's streets.
- 8 This can be inferred from a study on the authorship of Gaensly's photographs for Light (Burgi & Dietrich, 2001:77).
- 9 There are many studies on Azevedo, and they pursue different objectives (Frehse, 2001).

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