

From saint to patroness:

The popular imagination of the patron saint of Brazil in the biography of Aparecida

De santa a padroeira:

O imaginário popular da Padroeira do Brasil na biografia Aparecida

José Carlos Fernandes

Journalism and Communication Professor / UFPR

Universidade Federal do Paraná, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Curitiba (PR), Brasil.

Guilherme de Paula Pires

PhD Student in Communication / UFPR.

Universidade Federal do Paraná, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Curitiba (PR), Brasil.

Felipe Adam

PhD Student in Communication / PUC-RS

PUC-RS, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Porto Alegre (RS), Brasil.

Introduction

Since 2014, the publishing house *Globo Livros* has been offering to the readers a series of biographies with characters from Catholic hagiography. The series was launched with *Aparecida* (2014), followed by *Maria* (2015) and *Milagres* (2017), all written by the journalist Rodrigo Alvarez, known as a correspondent for *Rede Globo de Televisão* in Israel. Then, *Jesus* (2017), by the American theologian Marcus Borg. The fifth

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work, *Francisco* (2018), by the journalist Guilherme Samora, alludes to the Italian saint of Assisi, founder of the 13th century mendicant order, identified as Franciscan, whose ramifications are countless. In April 2019, *Globo* brought to the market the book *Fátima*, written by the devoted couple Berthaldo Soares and Kenya Camerotte Soares, about the story of the apparition of Our Lady to the three Portuguese shepherds in 1917. For the purpose of this article, we will guide ourselves by means of a floating reading (BARDIN, 2016) of the first work, a text that alludes to the image of Our Lady of Aparecida, officially the Patroness of Brazil (ALVAREZ, 2014).

In order to illustrate the representativeness that the series caused in the publishing market, we brought quantified data on the sales of the five works in the respective year of release: *Aparecida* was among the ten best-selling books in the non-fiction category in 2014. According to the *Publishnews* website, 60,909 copies were sold, taking sixth place on the list¹. In 2015, *Maria* had 80,925 copies and appeared in seventh position. Two years later, *Milagres* emerged as the 19th best-selling title, with 14,681. In a month with the product for sale on the shelves, *Fátima* had 4,300 copies sold, being the eighth best-selling book in May 2019. What is surprising is the fact that *Francisco* did not emerge among the 20 best-selling books of the year in 2018, since the saint is known in the Catholic middle and much worshipped in Brazil.

In Brazil, according to the last IBGE census (2010), 64.6% of people declared themselves Catholic. Due to the rise of evangelical churches, the Vatican has focused on the cult of the Virgin Mary as a pastoral element capable of preventing the evasion of the flock. In addition to the Marian tradition, whose roots date back to the beginnings of the Church, the apparitions of the Virgin Mary - even though dealt with parsimony by the Vatican, occurred in multiple ways, in different places around the world, and they are an attraction for the faithful, having a strong influence on the religious tourism.

The phenomenon of the apparition of the saint that occurred in the city of Aparecida do Norte, Vale do Paraíba, in the state of São Paulo, is equivalent in popularity to the apparitions of Our Lady in other cities, but with other names: Caravaggio (1432, in Italy), Guadalupe (1531, in Mexico), Lourdes (1858, in France), Fátima (1917, in Portugal), among others. These events help to reinforce the image of Mary as a mediator between God and man. "She is considered responsible for the relationships between men and the celestial hierarchy, that is why they ask her for mercy, as she will be in charge of establishing contact with the divine

¹ Available in: <https://www.publishnews.com.br/ranking/anual/13/2014/0/0>. Accessed on June 15, 2019.

world²” (SALES, 2008, p. 128, our translation). Furthermore, “it is important to highlight that the conception of Mary as a mediator and as a Mother of Mercy is central to contemporary apparitions, being an important part of Marian symbology in these events³” (SALES, 2008, p. 129, our translation).

It should be noted that the authors understand that the relationships between faith, religiosity and imagination are an ocean of possibilities, and that they imply specific theological knowledge, whose premises are impossible to be addressed in this article. The aim here is, above all, to highlight elements that allow – albeit at an essay level – to understand an editorial phenomenon and how it is now nourished by evidence and nuances of an element of culture, expressed in the figure of the Virgin of Aparecida. The success of Rodrigo Alvarez's book – under analysis – can fuel discussions about the relationship between popular culture and nationalism, for example. Besides, it can provoke the need to investigate the interfaces of religious sociology and theories of the imaginary, as well as it can bring elements of religiosity to the scientific debate.

Methodology

In order to observe how Aparecida's biography contributes to the maintenance of a social imaginary in relation to the Virgin of Aparecida, we created two thematic categories: Product of faith and consumer culture; and Marian Theology and discourse of national unity. Both emerged after conducting a floating reading of the work (2016), where we sought to analyze and to know the text, to cross impressions and to be guided by other cultural works, like the verses “*Sou caipira, pira, porá/Nossa Senhora de Aparecida/Ilumina a mina escura/E funda o trem da minha vida*”⁴, belonging to the chorus of *Romaria*, composed by Renato Teixeira.

This work was organized by means of Content Analysis, which according to Bardin (2016) is a set of investigation techniques that, through an objective and systematic description of the content, aims to interpret these same materials. We thought it was prudent to focus on the work's meaning units, that is, what emerges from the analyzed text, respecting the criteria related to the theory used during the investigation.

² Original text: “Ela é considerada responsável pelas relações entre os homens e a hierarquia celeste, por isso lhe pedem clemência, pois ela se encarregará de estabelecer o contato com o mundo divino”.

³ Original text: “importa destacar que a concepção de Maria como mediadora e como Mãe de Misericórdia é central nas aparições contemporâneas, sendo parte importante da simbologia mariana nestes eventos”.

⁴ It is the original song, which we let in the original language, Portuguese, so that we would not lose the verses, rhymes, and authorial intentions.

Thus, the thematic Content Analysis consists of discovering the core meanings that make up the object of investigation, whose presence means something to elucidate the proposed analytical objective. In the specific case of the investigation of the Virgin as a product of faith, or more specifically when faith becomes a product; and Marian theology and the discourse of national unity – whether in the Vargas Era or in the dictatorial period.

The floating term, which Bardin (2016) calls a pre-analysis stage, is an analogy to the psychoanalyst's attitude, as reading after reading his understanding of the work becomes more consistent. This allows, according to the author, an ever-greater refinement of the hypotheses and theories that support the material. "At this stage, the use of a less adherent reading promotes a better assimilation of the material and mental elaborations that provide initial signs on the way to a more systematic presentation of data⁵" (CAMPOS, 2004, p. 613, our translation).

In this way, we emphasize that what we are proposing here is to think, or to propose, possibilities of analysis for and about the work *Aparecida* for future and longer-lasting investigations.

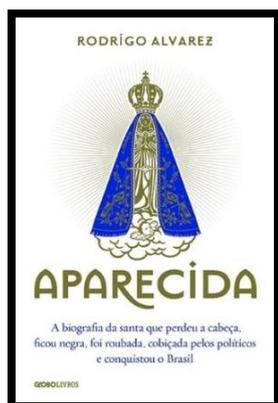
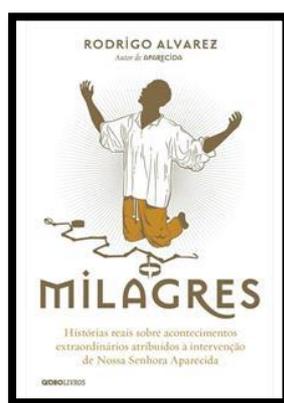
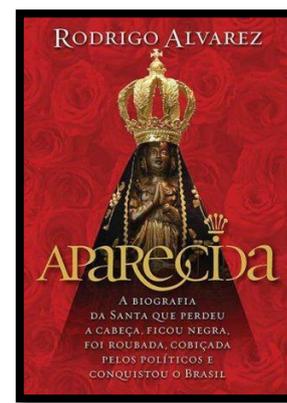
Investigative approaches

Although he is a television reporter, Rodrigo Alvarez from Rio de Janeiro joined the literary vein with some works that portray contexts experienced in the routine of TV Globo's international correspondent. So, for example, *No país de Obama* (2009) and *Haiti, after inferno* (2012). In addition to *Aparecida* (FIG. 1), the journalist also ventured into the historical reconstruction of *Maria* (2015), in the biography of Father Fábio de Melo, in *Humano demais* (2016), and this year launched the work *Redentor* (2021), a respect for the monument erected on Corcovado Mountain, in Rio de Janeiro.

Alluding to the ephemeris of the 300th anniversary⁶ of the appearance of the image, completed in 2017, *Globo Livros* launched *Milagres* (ALVAREZ, 2017) (FIG. 2), in which the journalist reports cases of devotees who claim to have been cured through the intercession of Our Lady of Aparecida. In the same year, in an updated and colored version, publisher Leya brought to the market an enlarged edition of *Aparecida* (FIG. 3).

⁵ Original text: "Nesta fase a utilização de uma leitura menos aderente, promove uma melhor assimilação do material e elaborações mentais que fornecem indícios iniciais no caminho a uma apresentação mais sistematizada dos dados"

⁶ According to the tradition of the Catholic Church, the image of Our Lady was found in two different fisheries by three men – Domingos Martins Garcia, Felipe Pedroso and João Alves – in the Paraíba do Sul river, in 1717, in the interior of São Paulo. As reported, the reason for the fishing was the visit of Governor Dom Pedro de Almeida Portugal. "The fishery of João Alves and companions is very similar to that of Simão Pedro and companions, both because of the nature of the miracle and because of the inaccuracies in the reports" (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 106, our translation).

FIG. 1⁷FIG. 2⁸FIG. 3⁹

Aparecida has 35 chapters, and it is divided into four parts: Attempt and Mysteries: The Renaissance; Identity: Aparecida; Darkness and Redemption; The Queen, Popes and Presidents. It is noteworthy that the book does not correspond to a devotion or a hagiography. This type of text, as Dosse (2015, p. 137, our translation) explains, “privileges human incarnations of the sacred and aims to make them exemplary for the rest of humanity¹⁰”, a fact not observed in the work of Alvarez (2014); on the contrary, it points to an alternative for reporting religious phenomena. Below, the analysis of the object from the contribution of authors of the sociology of the imaginary in two categories: Product of faith and consumer culture; and Marian Theology and discourse of national unity.

Results

Faith product and consumer culture

The whole aura of cultural domination permeates the fourth chapter of work *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, written by the Germans Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1995). By creating the expression “cultural industry”, referring to the entire process of large-scale production and commercialization of culture, the philosophers of the so-called Frankfurt School touched on specific issues regarding reception by the public. The acquisition of a cultural asset itself, named here as a book, fits into this category. For Frankfurt scholars, society would buy a book not to reflect on the content contained in it, but to entertain. “Having fun means being in agreement. (...) Having fun always means: not having to think

⁷ Cover of *Aparecida*'s biography, 1st edition (ALVAREZ, 2014).

⁸ Cover of the book *Milagres* (ALVAREZ, 2017).

⁹ Cover of updated biography of *Aparecida* (ALVAREZ, 2017).

¹⁰ Original text: “privilegia as encarnações humanas do sagrado e ambiciona torná-las exemplares para o resto da humanidade”.

about it, forgetting the suffering even where it is shown¹¹ (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1995, p. 118, our translation). After all, "(...) what you want is to gain prestige and not to become a connoisseur¹²" (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1995, p. 129, our translation).

Allied to this, another social research movement – also originated in the 1930s – would investigate the individual life and the structures that, motivated by the triad power/sacred/myths, would influence the collective imagination. For the members of the College of Sociology, churches would be one of the most solid components of social life. For them, religion "imposes itself as a force of aggregation and communion, an expression in an act of the sacred, unnamable, since it touches the limits of what is humanly conceivable, and, in this way, operative, because it dominates the factors of social dispersion and makes the collectivity indissoluble¹³" (LEGROS et al, 2007, p. 89, our translation).

Therefore, the relationship between the religious imagination and the collective imagination is perceived. This approaches the religious dimension when three pillars are manifested: messianism, possession and utopia (LEGROS et al, 2007). In popular religion, the imagination is activated when "the popular canonizations in the Middle Ages, the 'miraculous inventions' (discovery of relics or statues) took place, and then the Marian apparitions in the modern century¹⁴" (LEGROS et al, 2007, p. 221, our translation).

Thus,

[the] historical moments in which the 'fantastic' flourishes most intensely are always periods of profound change, of putting the dominant culture into question: for example, the Renaissance, with its wonders and its monsters, or, more recently, the fall of Communism, accompanied by religious apparitions (Medjugorje, Yugoslavia) (...) The persecuted religious minorities, such as the Ana-Baptists of the 16th century, the Protestant Camisard or the Jansenist convulsionaries of the 18th century, the messianic movements of colonized peoples of the nineteenth century, developed miraculous mystical phenomena as an ideological weapon of contestation.. (LEGROS et al, 2007, p. 221, our translation)¹⁵.

¹¹ Original text: "Divertir-se significa estar de acordo. (...) Divertir significa sempre: não ter que pensar nisso, esquecer o sofrimento até mesmo onde ele é mostrado".

¹² Original text: "(...) o que se quer é conquistar prestígio e não se tornar um conhecedor"

¹³ Original text: "se impõe como uma força de agregação e de comunhão, expressão em ato do sagrado, inominável, uma vez que ele toca nos limites do que é humanamente concebível, e, desta forma, operativo, porque domina os fatores de dispersão social e torna indissolúvel a coletividade"

¹⁴ Original text: "as canonizações populares na Idade Média, as 'invenções miraculosas' (descoberta de relíquias ou de estátuas) e, depois, as aparições marianas no século moderno"

¹⁵ Original text: [os] momentos históricos em que o "fantástico" floresce mais intensamente são sempre os períodos de profundas mudanças, de recolocar em causa a cultura dominante: por exemplo, a Renascença, com seus prodígios e seus monstros, ou, mais recentemente, a queda do comunismo, acompanhada de aparições religiosas (Medjugorje, na Iugoslávia) (...) As minorias religiosas perseguidas, tais como os ana-batistas do século XVI, os camisard protestantes ou os convulsionários jansenistas do século XVIII, os movimentos messiânicos dos povos colonizados do século XIX, desenvolveram fenômenos místicos miraculosos como arma ideológica de contestação.

Alvarez (2014) proposes a similar reflection in the introduction of the work. “Could it be that the fact that the image became dark, to the point of being called a black saint by some priests contributed? Did this give Aparecida the mestizo coloration that separated us from Portugal and, after all, would it end up becoming part of the identity of the Brazilian people?¹⁶” (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 10, our translation). *Aparecida* was published in 2014; however, *Milagres* was launched in 2017, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the appearance of the image of the Virgin. Linked to this work, other activities were encouraged by this commemoration, such as the *Turma da Mônica* (Monica’s Gang), which is a comic book signed by cartoonist Mauricio de Sousa (FIG. 4), and the drawing by artist Romero Britto (FIG. 5)

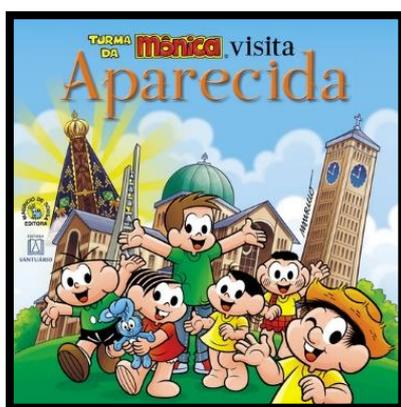


FIG. 4

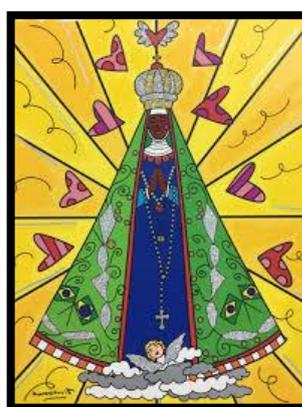


FIG. 5

Before this anniversary, the context of Catholic culture always favored the media process. Two examples of how this type of industry acts directly in the mass were the soap opera *A padroeira*¹⁷ and the movie *Aparecida: the miracle*¹⁸, both based on the story of Our Lady of Aparecida. We are also reminded here of works by Patriota (2009) where she identifies that a “religious revival”¹⁹, (2009, p.183, our translation) that occurred mainly from the 1990s onwards, was constructed by means of a media that

¹⁶ Original text: “Será que contribuiu o fato de a imagem ter ficado escura, a ponto de ser chamada por alguns padres de santinha negra? Será que isso deu a Aparecida a coloração mestiça que nos separava de Portugal e, afinal, acabaria se tornando parte da identidade do povo brasileiro?”

¹⁷ Written by Walcyr Carrasco, the soap opera with 215 chapters was shown on TV Globo at 6 pm between June 18, 2001, and February 23, 2002. Available in: <http://memoriaglobo.globo.com/programas/entretenimento/novelas/a-padroeira.htm>. Accessed on June 15, 2019.

¹⁸ Directed by Tizuka Yamasaki, the feature premiered on December 17, 2010, and it was starred by actor Murilo Rosa in the role of businessman Marcos, whose story is crossed by a miracle achieved by the intercession of Our Lady of Aparecida. Available in: <https://globofilmes.globo.com/filme/aparecidaomilagre/>. Accessed on June 15, 2019.

¹⁹ Original text: “revitalização religiosa”.

produced “fantasies and dreams, modeling thought, behavior, identities and religiosity itself²⁰” (Ibid, 2009, p. 183, our translation). Therefore, cultural products such as soap operas, films, magazines, and books have become a significant part of the religious world, whose aim is to attract consumption, but it is also seen as a business opportunity for broadcasters, publishers and for religion itself.

Fonseca and Vieira (2011, p. 106, our translation), for example, already identified that biography could be transfigured at different times by the appropriation of the media. “Subjects of their time, these characters, having their existence rescued by biographers, are presented with a new meaning, not as a reinvention of their existence, but with another possibility of understanding and recording the memory and value of their trajectory²¹”.

Adorno and Horkheimer (1995) defined culture as a paradoxical good. A two-way street, since the values assigned to the product are confused with its own need. Culture “is so completely subject to the law of exchange that it is no longer exchanged. It gets so blindly confused with the use that you can no longer use it²²” (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1995, p. 132, our translation). In other words, society does not buy the commodity, but the symbolic capital. As for the process of valuing forms, Thompson (1999, p. 203, our translation) differentiates into two main types. The first concerns symbolic valuation, that is, “it is the process through which symbolic forms are given a certain 'symbolic value' by the individuals who produce and receive them²³”. Economic valuation, on the other hand, can be defined as the relationship “through which symbolic forms are assigned a certain 'economic value', that is, a value for which they could be exchanged in a market²⁴” (THOMPSON, 1999, p. 203, our translation).

To sell, it is necessary to add value, and Canclini (1999, p. 78, our translation) clarifies that “to consume is to participate in a scenario of disputes for what society produces and the ways to use it²⁵”. As a result of this research, the representation of Aparecida is an image of the social context, present in everyday life and popular imagination, not restricted to Catholic culture. Thus, “consumption is seen not as the mere

²⁰ Original text: “fantasias e sonhos, modelando o pensamento, o comportamento, as identidades e a própria religiosidade”.

²¹ Original text: “Sujeitos do seu tempo, esses personagens, ao terem suas existências resgatadas pelos biógrafos, são apresentados com um novo significado, não como uma reinvenção da sua existência, mas com outra possibilidade de entendimento e registro de memória e de valor da sua trajetória”.

²² Original text: “está tão completamente submetida à lei da troca que não é mais trocada. Ela se confunde tão cegamente com o uso que não se pode mais usá-la”.

²³ Original text: “é o processo através do qual é atribuído às formas simbólicas um determinado ‘valor simbólico’ pelos indivíduos que as produzem e recebem”.

²⁴ Original text: “através do qual é atribuído às formas simbólicas um determinado ‘valor econômico’, isto é, um valor pelo qual elas poderiam ser trocadas em um mercado”

²⁵ Original text: “consumir é participar de um cenário de disputas por aquilo que a sociedade produz e pelos modos de usá-lo”.

individual possession of isolated objects, but as the collective appropriation, (...) of goods that provide biological and symbolic satisfactions²⁶ (CANCLINI, 1999, p. 90, our translation).

The city of Aparecida do Norte, 165 kilometers from the capital São Paulo, thrives on religious tourism. The Marian universe includes utensils that reinforce the Catholic faith, such as the scapular of Our Lady of Carmo, the miraculous medal of Our Lady of Graças or the blue mantle of Our Lady of Aparecida. Along with objects related to the saints, religious tourism alludes to the pilgrimage ritual, as well as remembering Dosse (2015, p. 140, our translation): “The narrative of the saint's life gains breadth and increases the prestige of places of worship, as well as of religious orders. The saint brings the community together in the same prayer and invocation²⁷”.

According to the largest Catholic church in the world, after St. Peter's Basilica, located in the Vatican, and the largest church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Basilica of Our Lady of Aparecida impresses with its numbers²⁸: built on land equivalent to 180 football fields, the basilica receives 12 million visitors a year. To take care of this structure, 2,130 direct employees are employed in parking, cleaning, conservation, green areas, and internal maintenance. Based on studies on heritage and memory (CHOAY, 2006; HUYSEN, 2000), it is inferred that the Basilica of Aparecida resembles a museum, as well as the Sanctuary of Fátima, in Portugal (SOUZA; MORAES, 2019), since religious spaces impose themselves in the geographical space in a natural way and reinforce aspects of affection, at the same time that they fill gaps left along the course of life.

The alliance of the fantastic and the marvelous results from an effective and primordial relationship between spaces and men; it encourages us to distinguish, imaginatively, real places from their oneiric extensions. The spatial imagination will be born from the perceptible and sensitive variations that a concrete and irreducible, but quite general experience inscribes in our daily practice. A sentimental geography of streets and buildings, parks, cafes, a block then superimposes that of calculated uses and obligations²⁹ (LEGROS et al, 2007, p. 88, our translation).

²⁶ Original text: “o consumo é visto não como a mera posse individual de objetos isolados, mas como a apropriação coletiva, (...) de bens que proporcionam satisfações biológicas e simbólicas”.

²⁷ Original text: “A narrativa da vida do santo ganha amplitude e aumenta o prestígio dos lugares de culto, bem como das ordens religiosas. O santo reúne a comunidade numa mesma prece e invocação”.

²⁸ Data obtained from the *Globo Repórter* program, aired by TV Globo on October 6, 2017. Available in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aV-bpeNu4qg&t=2113s>. Accessed on Nov. 16, 2019.

²⁹ Original text: “A aliança do fantástico e do maravilhoso resulta de uma relação efetiva e primordial entre os espaços e os homens; ela incita a distinguir, imaginariamente, os lugares reais a partir de seus prolongamentos oníricos. O imaginário espacial vai nascer das variações perceptíveis e sensíveis que uma experiência concreta e irreduzível, mas bastante geral, inscreve na nossa prática cotidiana. Uma geografia sentimental das ruas e das edificações, dos parques, dos cafés, de um quarteirão vem, então, se sobrepor àquela dos usos calculados e das obrigações.”

The history of construction of the current temple was surrounded by donations from both the faithful and the government at the time, as such work was considered “of national interest and granted the Archdiocese of Aparecida exemption from taxes and other legal favors, such as the right to expropriate land when necessary³⁰” (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 210, our translation). In the work, Alvarez makes it clear that several politicians used the image of the Virgin as a way to also get closer to the people – a fact observed in the next section. However, the author indicates that it was during the period of the military dictatorship that the work on the basilica would be completed. “In that strange time, people lived there, much more concerned with the work and with the pilgrims who arrived in increasing numbers than with the atrocities of the generals³¹” (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 206, our translation).

Marian Theology and discourse of national Unity

The tributes and praise to Aparecida began in a shy and very modest way. The first pilgrimage of faith after the appearance of the image took place in the house of one of the fishermen who found it: Felipe Pedroso. “It was he who took the two pieces of clay that João Alves might have thrown away and began to transform them into the greatest symbol of the Brazilian Catholic faith³²” (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 111, our translation). In a domestic way, Felipe worshiped the image for 15 years, when he delivered the little picture to his son Atanásio. This one improvised a wooden altar and a handcrafted oratory. “There she was exposed, on the side of the road, began to attract visitors and gained the nickname that would make her famous. The image that had appeared in the waters of the river was...appeared. Our Lady of Conceição Aparecida³³” (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 112, our translation). Later, Athanásio would build a chapel, a bigger shelter to receive the number of faithful who visited the image.

Even while reading *Aparecida*, Alvarez (2014) mentions that the Prince Regent Dom Pedro I would have gone to the chapel to visit the clay image on his way to São Paulo. “Information about this visit to Aparecida can be found in several texts about the time, but there is no source that allows us to categorically

³⁰ Original text: “como sendo de interesse nacional e concedia à Arquidiocese de Aparecida isenção de impostos e outros favores legais, como o direito de desapropriar terras quando fosse necessário”

³¹ Original text: “Naquele tempo estranho, viveu-se, ali muito mais preocupado com a obra e com os romeiros que chegavam em números cada vez maiores do que com as atrocidades dos generais”

³² Original text: “Foi ele quem pegou os dois pedaços de barro que João Alves talvez tivesse jogado fora e começou a transformá-los no maior símbolo da fé católica brasileira”

³³ Original text: “Ali ela ficou exposta, na beira da estrada, começou a atrair visitantes e ganhou o apelido que lhe faria famosa. A imagem que tinha aparecido nas águas do rio era...aparecida. Nossa Senhora da Conceição Aparecida”.

state that Dom Pedro was face to face with the saint. It is not possible to confirm this information³⁴ (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 137, our translation).

Father Vilela would be responsible for leading the construction of a larger chapel. Built by the slaves of Captain Antônio Raposo Leme, the church was completed in 1745; however, it was simple, without gold or silver. “The chapel's greatest luxuries were carved wood ornaments, the so-called altarpieces, partly painted in gold, serving as a background for the main altar. There, the future queen of Brazil would be in a niche that would be suggestively called the throne³⁵” (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 118, our translation). Dom Carmelo would be another character in the chapter about spaces in the image of Aparecida. He wanted to dedicate all the best to the little saint that was already moving adoration in the interior of São Paulo, more precisely in the coffee region of Vale do Paraíba, a granary of wealth and slaves.

The new church, which we know today as the old basilica, was a relatively simple but beautiful work. It didn't match the impressive sums of money and the jewels left daily by the faithful of the saint, it wasn't a palace of faith, it had none of the gold and silver of the churches in Rio de Janeiro or Minas Gerais, but it was to the extent that the corruption allowed: nineteen meters wide and forty deep, solid, with bricks, stones, good wood and, as Dom Caramelo insisted, lots of marble ³⁶(ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 153, our translation).

In this respect, it is worth reflecting on how much the movement of a miraculous image had an impact on a Brazil with a still rural territory. A reflection of a colonial country, rooted in a slavery regime that hampered more than it included, the kick in the use of Aparecida's image for purposes of national cohesion began during the construction of the monuments to the Virgin, and it was perpetuated over the following centuries, always in touch for political aspects.

Starting with the future princess Isabel. According to what is told in the biography, the daughter of Dom Pedro II was very Catholic and in 1868, on the day of the holiday dedicated to Aparecida, she and her husband, Count d'Eu, attended a mass in the city.

There, the then princess acted in a curious and symbolic way when she “handed a crown with three hundred grams of gold and forty diamonds to the little saint who, just coincidentally, was ugly, full and very

³⁴ Original text: “A informação sobre essa visita a Aparecida está em diversos textos sobre a época, mas não há nenhuma fonte que nos permita afirmar categoricamente que dom Pedro esteve frente a frente com a santinha. Não é possível confirmar essa informação”.

³⁵ Original text: “Os maiores luxos da capela eram ornamentos de madeira talhada, os chamados retábulos, em parte pintados de dourado, servindo de fundo para o altar principal. Ali, a futura rainha do Brasil ficaria num nicho que seria sugestivamente chamado de trono”.

³⁶ Original text: “A igreja nova, que hoje conhecemos como basílica velha, era uma obra relativamente simples, mas bonita. Não condizia com as somas impressionantes em dinheiro e as joias deixadas diariamente pelos fieis da santinha, não era nenhum palácio de fé, não tinha nada do ouro e da prata das igrejas do Rio de Janeiro ou de Minas Gerais, mas era na medida que a corrupção permitira: dezenove metros de largura por quarenta de profundidade, sólida, com tijolos, pedras, madeira boa e, como dom Caramelo fazia questão, muito mármore”.

Brazilian. It was as if Princess Isabel said, 'I give you what I will never use'³⁷ (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 178, our translation). After a period with difficulties in having children, the Gastão de Orleans and Isabel couple were pregnant. In this way, the Virgin would have repaid the princess's gift.

The coronation would only take place in 1904, when the crown was replaced on the head of the saint. "It stopped being a luxurious ornament (...) to become a symbol of power. (...) It was a decisive step towards consolidating a national image that would be completed a few decades later with her proclamation as the patron saint of Brazil³⁸" (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 182). Before inaugurating the statue of Christ the Redeemer, on October 12, 1931, on top of Corcovado, then President Getúlio Vargas would kiss the image of the Virgin. This gesture would be reproduced by the other presidents. It would be the first time that the saint had left the interior of São Paulo.

Still at the patron saint's party, after making the traditional gesture of lifting and kissing Aparecida, Cardinal Leme offered the image to the president so that he could do the same. When he stood in front of the little saint, even though he had asked for that opportunity, which would give him a good time with the photographers, Getúlio didn't know what to do. He wasn't religious. He hesitated. And he ended up holding the hem of the blue cloak, without anyone understanding why. Then a bishop saved Getúlio by saying, "Mr. President, it's for kissing!" And the President kissed the feet of the patroness³⁹ (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 193, our translation).

Getúlio knew how to take advantage of the power he had at his disposal, mainly for the benefit of his own image. In fact, the "father of the poor" was a reflection of the totalitarian wave that affected Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, with the rise of Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, Franco in Spain, Salazar in Portugal. This phase "demonstrated that the symbols and rites, the collective effervescence, the appeal to the supernatural or the emissaries of providence do not only concern foreign societies with regard to scientific rationalization, technological development and economic expansion⁴⁰" (LEGROS et al, 2007, p. 91-92, our translation).

³⁷ Original text: "entregou uma coroa com trezentos gramas de ouro e quarenta diamantes para a santinha que, só por coincidência, era feia, cheinha e brasileiríssima. Era como se a princesa Isabel dissesse: 'Dou-lhe aquilo que jamais usarei!'"

³⁸ Original text: "'Deixou de ser um ornamento luxuoso (...) para se transformar num símbolo de poder. (...) Era um passo decisivo para a consolidação de uma imagem nacional que se completaria algumas décadas depois com sua proclamação como padroeira do Brasil'"

³⁹ Original text: "Ainda na festa da padroeira, depois de fazer o tradicional gesto de erguer e beijar Aparecida, o cardeal Leme ofereceu a imagem ao presidente para que ele fizesse o mesmo. Quando ficou diante da santinha, embora tivesse pedido par ter aquela oportunidade, que lhe renderia um bom momento com os fotógrafos, Getúlio não soube o que fazer. Não era religioso. Hesitou. E acabou segurando a barra do manto azul, sem que ninguém entendesse por quê. Então, um bispo salvou Getúlio ao dizer: "Senhor presidente, é para beijar!". E o senhor presidente beijou os pés da padroeira."

⁴⁰ Original text: "demonstrou que os símbolos e os ritos, as efervescências coletivas, o apelo ao sobrenatural ou aos emissários da providência não dizem respeito apenas às sociedades estrangeiras no que tange à racionalização científica, ao desenvolvimento tecnológico e à expansão econômica"

In another Brazilian dictatorial period, this time during the military regime, the image of Aparecida would also be used for purposes of national unity. Marshal Castello Branco had asked the basilica's priests that the image would pilgrimage to the country's capitals, with all expenses paid by the government. However, the order was interpreted in a dichotomous way: on the one hand, it could travel across the nation in greeting the new government; on the other, it could harm the city's commerce with its temporary absence. "While back and forth, from 1966 to 1968, the clay image would travel 45 thousand kilometers and spend 508 days on the journey. The following year, 1969, he traveled a few more days and, in the end, traveled to more than 1,300 locations across the five regions of Brazil⁴¹" (ALVAREZ, 2014, p. 205, our translation).

After all, if France had Lourdes and Mexico had Guadeloupe, the largest Catholic country in the world also needed a patroness. In this way, the Pilgrim Virgin functioned as an equipment of nationalism. This strategy converges with the values and attitudes promoted by the State's militarization projects, focused on entertainment; however, it was masked by a social control of information. "The increase in sports programs on television, games and soap operas produced locally and imported from other Latin American countries (...) is an index in which the need to respond to the challenge was felt" (MATTELART, 2017, p. 729)⁴². In this case, in particular, the military state knew how to take advantage of a religious issue to promote a Brazilian identity in favor of a discourse of national cohesion.

Final considerations

In this work, we propose to assess whether the publication of the biography Aparecida (ALVAREZ, 2014) contributes to the maintenance of a social imaginary in relation to the Virgin of Aparecida. For this, the object was analyzed using the Content Analysis methodology (BARDIN, 2016) from two categories: Faith product and consumer culture; and Marian Theology and discourse of national unity.

In the first category of analysis, one can extend the idea that the cultural industry takes over the book product and reifies it in other platforms, such as painting, cinema, television (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1995). Meanwhile, Thompson (1999) introduced us to the processes of valuation, a fact related to the biographed characters, which raises the thought that they are salable because they bring together both symbolic and economic values. This reflects the thought of Canclini (1999), who approaches consumption as a collective

⁴¹ Original text: "Entre idas e vindas, de 1966 a 1968, a imagem de barro percorreria 45 mil quilômetros e passaria 508 dias em viagem. No ano seguinte, 1969, viajou ainda mais alguns dias e, no fim, percorreu mais de 1.300 localidades pelas cinco regiões do Brasil"

⁴² Original version: "El aumento de los programas deportivos en la televisión, de los de juegos y telenovelas producidas localmente e importadas de otros países latinoamericanos (...) es un índice de que se ha sentido la necesidad de responder al reto".

appropriation, a fact observed in religious tourism. After all, the places also provide memories associated with reception, a fact that is still recorded in other sanctuaries, such as the case of Fátima, in Portugal.

In the second topic, a retrospective of the relationship between Aparecida and Brazilian identity is drawn up and how representatives of the nation in different periods of history took advantage of Maria's maternal image. Highlight to the "affection" of Getúlio Vargas as well as the pilgrimage offered by the military during the dictatorial regime.

Finally, it is inferred that, although it is a work of a scientific nature, the authors did not seek to question the faith or veracity of the Marian apparitions. According to Catholic tradition, the figure of Mary has a very strong symbology, associated with tenderness and gratitude. Faith in Our Lady becomes unquestionable by the faithful as different phenomena occur in different places. However, it cannot be denied that the institutions and the cultural industry itself seize the faith of others as a driver of culture, tourism, and consumption, expanding even more power through the religious imagination.

And it is precisely from this intricate relationship between religiosity, politics, and consumption that the investigated object takes on countless contours for research. We suggest only one path, among many, from these proposed analysis categories. Therefore, we also believe that this article can be useful for more extensive research on the work in question that problematizes the entire relationship that arises around the devotion to the saint.

José Carlos Fernandes

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8629-2301>

Universidade Federal do Paraná, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Curitiba (PR), Brasil.

Doutor em Língua e Literatura pela Universidade Federal do Paraná

E-mail: zeca@ufpr.br

Guilherme de Paula Pires

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7530-7061>

Universidade Federal do Paraná, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Curitiba (PR), Brasil.

Mestre em Jornalismo pela Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa

E-mail: guilhermedepaulapires@gmail.com

Felipe Adam

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3086-178X>

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PUC-RS, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Porto Alegre (RS), Brasil.

Mestre em Jornalismo pela Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa

E-mail: felipeadam91@gmail.com

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Abstract

Books belonging to the biographical genre not only seek to recount the life of an individual, but they also reconstitute the context within it. Thus, this article aims to analyze the journalistic biography *Aparecida* (ALVAREZ, 2014) by means of Content Analysis (BARDIN, 2016). At the same time, the work explores cultural explanations in the theoretical perspectives of Adorno and Horkheimer (1995), Thompson (1999) and Canclini (1999), with support also from the sociology of the imaginary defended by Legros et al (2007). Finally, it is clear that the work under analysis reinforces the

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maintenance of a social imaginary in relation to the Virgin of Aparecida based on two observations: Faith product and consumer culture; and Marian Theology and Discourse of National Unity.

Keywords: Aparecida. Biography. Imaginary. Religious phenomenon.

Resumo

Os livros pertencentes ao gênero biográfico não apenas buscam recontar a vida de um indivíduo, mas também reconstituem o contexto que nela está inserido. Dessa forma, o presente artigo busca analisar a biografia jornalística *Aparecida* (ALVAREZ, 2014) por meio da Análise de Conteúdo (BARDIN, 2016). Paralelo, o trabalho explora explicações culturais nas vertentes teóricas de Adorno e Horkheimer (1995), Thompson (1999) e Canclini (1999), com apoio, ainda, da sociologia do imaginário defendida por Legros et al (2007). Por fim, percebe-se que a obra em análise reforça a manutenção de um imaginário social em relação à Virgem de Aparecida a partir de duas observações: Produto da fé e cultura de consumo; e Teologia mariana e discurso de unidade nacional.

Palavras-chave: Aparecida. Biografia. Imaginário. Fenômeno religioso.

Resumen

Los libros pertenecientes al género biográfico no solo buscan relatar la vida de un individuo, sino que también reconstituyen el contexto dentro de él. Así, este artículo busca analizar la biografía periodística de Aparecida (ALVAREZ, 2014) a través del Análisis de Contenido (BARDIN, 2016). Al mismo tiempo, el trabajo explora explicaciones culturales en las perspectivas teóricas de Adorno y Horkheimer (1995), Thompson (1999) y Canclini (1999), con apoyo también de la sociología del imaginario defendida por Legros et al (2007). Finalmente, es claro que el trabajo bajo análisis refuerza el mantenimiento de un imaginario social en relación a la Virgen de Aparecida a partir de dos observaciones: Producto de la fe y cultura de consumo; y Teología Mariana y Discurso de Unidad Nacional.

Palabras clave: Aparecida. Biografía. Imaginario. Fenómeno religioso.

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