

The Calendar and 1964 Military Takeover: temporality, history writing and hagiography

O Calendário e o golpe de 1964: temporalidade, escrita da história e hagiografia

Francisco Régis Lopes Ramos*

RESUMO

O artigo analisa como os regimes autoritários da América Latina no final do século XX foram tomados como motivo para um desvio em face da tradição cristã dos calendários que orientavam o fiel a lembrar, em cada dia, a vida de um santo. Seguirei, como fio condutor, um caso específico: a vida e a morte de frei Tito de Alencar Lima, dominicano preso e torturado entre os anos de 1969 e 1970. A partir desse recorte, farei uma avaliação a respeito das possibilidades de mapeamento dos sentidos do tempo que estão em jogo nesse “novo” martirologio, procurando entender em que sentido a hagiografia vai tentando se legitimar como “escrita da história”. Pretendo, então, fazer uma abordagem historiográfica, entendendo a historiografia como um campo de discussões a respeito das maneiras pelas quais o passado é dado a ler pelo presente.

Palavras-chave: temporalidade; escrita da história; hagiografia.

ABSTRACT

The article aims to analyze how authoritarian regimes in Latin America in the late twentieth century were taken as a reason for a deviation facing the Christian tradition of calendars guiding the faithful to remember, every day, a saint's life. I will follow, as a guideline, a specific case: the life and death of Frei Tito de Alencar Lima, Dominican imprisoned and tortured between 1969 and 1970. From this cut, I will make an assessment of the possibilities of mapping the senses of time at work in this “new” martyrology, trying to understand in what sense will hagiography try to legitimize itself as “history writing”. Then, I want to make a historiographical approach, understanding the historiography as a field of discussions about the ways in which the past is given to read at present time. Keywords: temporality; writing of history; hagiography.

* Department and Graduate Program in History, Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC). regislopesufc@hotmail.com

“In the extremity of historiography, like its temptation and betrayal, lies another discourse.” This is how Michel de Certeau (1982, p.266) begins his essay “A Variant: Hagio-Graphical Edification”, posing the fundamental question of his work: how writing about the past articulates a sense of time in so far as it talks about the “other”. This “other” emerges in two senses: to be domesticated by institutional places and self-legitimised procedures, and to be a temporal dimension generated outside established doctrines or recognised methods. While the first meaning includes modern writings of history, the second is open to cases labelled by the author as “mystic fables” (Certeau, 2010).

Considering the enormous variety of tensions and mixtures in these two senses, the historian must overcome a challenge: recognise that the “historiographical operation”, originating from and supported by modern knowledge, is itself part of a method that, depending on the circumstances, has detached the fact from the fable. Thus, the task is to study not only the “historiographical operations”, but also the ways in which these operations fabricate the “other”, placing knowledge outside the bounds of legitimacy, so that it is no longer true, as in religion and fiction. This means that the choice to appropriate the past assumes a negation of other possibilities and, at the same time, turns the negation into the “other” figure – controllable, domesticable, but never in fact dominated or domesticated. In short, this is the game by Michel de Certeau poses his *niche* of questions about appropriations of the past.

Given that the “hagio-graphical edification” emerges as a “betrayal and temptation” of the writing of history throughout modernity, the following text questions how a change in posture occurred at the end of the twentieth century: modern history as the “betrayal and temptation” of hagiography produced under the veracity effect of the so-called “liberation theology”, or more precisely, by the various martyrologies about tortured political prisoners.

Historia magistra vitae – it could be said that this expression is the basis of the hagiography. A basis, it must be clear, which was not employed identically over the course of time. The so-called *exemplary history* is a wide field both outside and within the sphere of Catholicism. I will try to trace exactly one of the aspects of these nuances or differences: how the authoritarian regimes in Latin America at the end of the twentieth century were used as a motive for a deviation from the Christian tradition of calendars, which orientated the faithful to remember the life of a saint every day.

I will use a specific case as the central thread of this study: the life and death of Tito de Alencar Lima, a Dominican monk imprisoned and tortured by the Department of Political and Social Order (DOPS, acronym in

Portuguese) in São Paulo between 1969 and 1970. Using this example, I will evaluate the possibility of mapping the sense of time at stake in this “new” martyrology, as an attempt to understand how hagiography tries to legitimise itself as “writing of history”, while it distances itself from oral tradition. I then intend to take a historiographic approach where historiography is understood as a field of discussion of how the past is understood by the present and configures the passage of time and commemorations established as part of a duty to remember. The purpose of this work is to examine how the past is transformed into the needs of specific groups that dispute historically situated positions. I believe that this procedure “helps us to comprehend writing of history as part of a wider effort in the social construction of human life” (Guimarães, 2007, p.97).

THE FAITH OF EACH DAY

In the twentieth century, one of the main indications of the reordering of the Catholic calendar, creator and creature of *Legenda Áurea* [The Golden Legend], was the *Novo Martirologio da América Latina* [New Martyrology of Latin America], initially published in Madrid at the end of 1980. A revised and extended edition was launched in Brazil in 1984 by the publisher *Vozes*, coordinated by the Instituto Histórico Centro-Americano de Manágua, with the slightly modified title, *Sangue pelo povo: martirologio latino-americano* [Blood for the People: Latin American Martyrology]. One of its first pages explains the reasons and circumstances of its publication:

The *New Martyrology of Latin America* published in the magazine *Vida Nova* (Madrid, edition N° 1252, 15 November 1980) reached the whole length of South America in its original form, or has been reproduced in other magazines, brochures and calendars, or has been simply mimeographed. It has already reached the hands of its authentic recipients: grass roots communities, simple people and believers, with who martyrs grew in faith and learned to give their lives.

Almost immediately, we also received a new request: more information about the life and testimony of these men and women that discovered the charisma that each one placed at the service of their brothers, for love and justice. Consequently, this book is a response to this request. We have taken the opportunity to include the names of new martyrs, verify and correct certain information and extend the list of bishops and missionaries which, in the early years of the conquest of these lands, raised their voices in defence of indians or black slaves.

Our imprisoned and missing brothers deserve a special mention. We do not know if they live the solitude and terror of a concentration camp or if they paid for their bravery with their life. We are certain that their disappearance is a more sophisticated and cruel form of their martyrdom and of all those who were not able to mourn their deaths and doubt that they will be found alive. In some cases, their memory is a breath of fresh air to their brothers, as is the memory of the martyrs. (Instituto Histórico..., 1984)

10th August did not show the trajectory of Saint Lawrence, as in the traditional calendars, but the life of frei Tito:

Brazilian Dominican monk. Persecuted for his commitment to the oppressed. Incarcerated with other devotees and barbarously tortured during *Operação Bandeirante* in the army torture centre in São Paulo. Tito cut his wrists fearing that he would denounce his fellow devotees: He did not want them to suffer the same fate as he did. However, he intended to denounce what happened in the jails in his country to the general public and the church. His torturers asked doctors to save his life so they could begin psychological torture. He was then accused of offences against the National Security Law and of betraying the church. He was also accused of suicide. And Tito always carry the wounds of psychological torture and with them the image of deputy Fleury – his principal torturer – that accused him, gave him orders, threatened him and followed him like a shadow in his exile in Chile and France. He would only be permanently free from him after hanging himself in a tree at the age of 28, on an August afternoon in the French countryside. On that day Tito came back to Life, proceeding his brothers that died during torture (1974). (Instituto Histórico..., 1984, p.126)

Frei Tito was also included in the book *Os santos de cada dia* [The Daily Saints] edited by José Benedito Alves in 1990. Another indication of the conflict between the old calendars and the new demands of a faith committed to social struggles (Alves, 2000, p.454), thus producing a new use of the past. The replacement of a traditional Saint by frei Tito not only brought other memories, but created new time curvatures. Clearly, the new listings brought the saints' lives closer to the lives of the new faithful, both in time and space: they left Europe for the so-called "third world", the early centuries for the present day. However, it would be an oversimplification to conclude that everything came down to a change from the distant to the close. Strictly speaking, it was not only secular time, arranged in a line with decimal measurements, which

was operating. There was also a present made from eternity, involved in a ritualised updating of the founding past.

If we were to use a chronological measuring stick (one year after another, the before that precedes the after, the after that follows the before), the distant time of the traditional calendar would become closer to the Latin American calendar. However, if the sacred is not submitted only to this numerically calculated regime of temporality the lived experience becomes another. When the eternal is a quality of time, the plane is filled with folds and curvatures. The catholic memory not only comes closer, it also makes the past become present and gives the present greater density within the rites that update the past, as happens during mass, or more specifically, during the holy communion service.

It is worth noting that traditional compendiums of the lives of the saints continue to be printed and distributed, showing that the commemoration of the new martyrs is far from a consensus. Some books have almost identical titles, such as *O santo do dia* [Today's Saint] and *Um santo para cada dia* [A Saint for Each Day]. When compared, others appear to make a play on words, such as *Os santos do calendário romano* [Saints of the Roman Calendar], *Santos do atual calendário litúrgico* [Saints of the Current Liturgical Calendar] and *A vida dos santos na liturgia* [The Lives of Saints in Catholic Liturgy] (Conti, 1999; Sgarbossa; Giovannini, 2005; Lodi, 2007; Palacín, 1979; Silveira, 1980). In one way or another, the past. The need to make the past part of the present. Or rather: the present with the presence of time. Time which made itself present on paper, to be read on a daily basis.

CHANGE, BUT ALSO PERMANENCE

It is not an exaggeration to say that *the Golden Legend* became a major reference among hagiographic works. Between 1470 and 1500, for example, it was printed in more editions than the Bible (Franco Júnior, 2003, p.22). The *Legend* followed the same model as previous compilations (forming a sequence of lives of saints and commemorative dates), and benefitted from unprecedented advances in printing and binding techniques.

In his analysis of these works, Bakhtin concluded that, in general, anything characteristic “of a given social condition, of a given age, anything concrete in an image, in a life, in all its minutiae, precise indications of time and of setting for action” was excluded (Bakhtin, 2010, p.170). No need to stick to more specific features, since historical specificity was an attribute

of the biography and not of the hagiography. Bakhtin's characterisation is a generalization and is more of a variably practiced principal rather than a strictly abided rule. Nothing was done in peace. Tension was not generated only by official prohibition. There was no consensus about the legitimacy of the records of who lost their life in the name of faith (and therefore was included on the list of martyred saints). Various groups began to dispute the quantity of saints that each would have. Later, mainly from the sixteenth century, a dispute would arise between the Catholic religious orders and also in relation to the circumstances involving the recognition of martyrs in the Christianization of Portuguese America (Cymbalista, 2010).

As ground for agreements and disputes about the past as a way of legitimising the present, the writers of hagiographies began to distance themselves from the exemplary standard identified by Bakhtin, with greater or lesser degrees of intensity. This detachment appeared to become more systemised exactly with the hagiographies of martyrs from Latin America: a less Roman and more "local" Catholic church was desired. Apart from being a new chapter in history, new frontiers required another way to write history. One which could account for the most recent past, that made the faithful more committed and reassured them that the history of Christianity continued into the present.

Aside from simply replacing saints that were worthy of remembrance, there was an assimilation of the new based on tradition. The best expression of this sentiment seems to have been given by Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns. Instead of replacing, he added. His *Legenda Áurea* [Golden Legend], entitled *Santos e heróis do povo* [Saints and Heroes of the People], was published in 1985. The page representing 10th August reads:

10th August

"You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16, 20c).

The Brazilian Frei Tito de Alencar Lima died in Paris on this date in 1974.

A Dominican Monk, he was imprisoned and horribly tortured in São Paulo. In jail, where I myself visited him on a number of occasions, he comforted the prisoners and bore witness to the gospel.

After being sent to France he continued to feel persecuted by the notorious torturer deputy Fleury, and imagined that he was receiving orders from him, such was his obsession.

One day he was found dead. His mortal remains returned to São Paulo nine years later, when they were received in the cathedral by a huge crowd and numerous bishops and priests headed by the cardinal of São Paulo.

His entrance into heaven must have been even more triumphant.

Today, we also celebrate the life of Deacon Saint Lorenzo, in Rome. He is venerated as one of the last Deacons from who Emperor Valerian wanted to grab the treasure, destined to the poor.

Burnt alive on a gridiron, he became a spokesman for the courage of martyrs. They had to silence him with a sword.

We also turn to the much talked about Santa Filomena. Serious researchers claim that she may never have existed, but the fact is that the Curé of Ars venerated her with confidence.

Finally, let us remember Saint Hugh de Montaigu in France. A Benedictine bishop, he was a gracious and charitable man in the smallest and grandest of gestures. He died around 1136.

These Christians' suffering is united with Jesus' suffering, may they be a source of hope for us all. (Arns, 1996, p.308)

In his autobiography, published in 2001, cardinal Arns reproduced a letter sent from Paris by frei Tito in May 1973: "I was pleased to hear about your nomination as cardinal of São Paulo. Believe me, I trust you enormously; above all I trust your Franciscan soul". Next, he wrote that he held warm memories of Dom Paulo's inaugural sermon: "It is profoundly historic and full of the lifeblood of the Kingdom of God; I hope that the persecution purifies the church, above all when it wishes to wholly live the gospel values: peace, truth, justice, fraternity and love among all people" (Arns, 2001, p.306).

The emphasis on "profoundly historic" would come to have a number of ramifications, including the making of new calendars that frei Tito would never see. However, his death is consonant with that of many others and he will be part of this "profundity", not as a reader, but as a figure. All this happened within a decade. Torture in 1970, exile in 1971, death in 1974, and martyrology four or five years later.

But, what did he mean after all by his compliment of Dom Paulo's speech? Why history? Because of the present. Present as presence of time, thus assuming combinations between past and future, descendants and ascendants, as Dom Paulo tried to explain in his text. "I come from the past... that is turned into the present and the future by the forever living Word of Jesus. It is the Lord that sends me. I do not appeal to the imagination, but to faith and history". Later on, he confirms: "I come from the past. From a long lived experience with the emergence of Christianity, with weak men and women who confronted persecutions from the biggest and most organised giant in history

– the Roman Empire”. How? Declaring myself “a scholar of the early history of the catholic church”. Thus, he says he is a descendant of men like Saint Francis: “I bring from him the eternal mission of peace and goodness”. Therefore, from the past, but also from the present: “I come from the cathedras of universities and from the hills of poverty around my city Petrópolis, hills that rivalled those same cathedras with their teachings and demonstration of the smallness of man before the tasks that await him”. In his closing words, after outlining his mission in various time dimensions, he leaves no doubt: “Let the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that we begin together unite us with the poor, afflicted and starving that struggle and hope, and, dying will be resurrected” (Arns, 2001, pp.466-468).

THE POWER OF THE WORD

After all, what can a book do? This question is implicit in the text written by the editors of the first volume of the collection “Memórias do Exílio: Brasil, 1964-19??” [Memoirs of an exile: Brazil, 1964-19??], a compilation of testimonies published in 1976. The answer begins like this: “the conviction that the future can be different demands support from the memory that the past was different, that present trends are not taken for granted”. But, given the lack of records, why the need for a justification? Because there is no smoke without fire: “The *memoirs* project was criticised for not being political enough (it was even said that ‘this book is not going to bring down the dictatorship!’)”. In this case, time is not material proof of the meaning that makes time exist, but the material that everything is made of. It does not possess the imponderable unit of an ancestral flow, as in the Christian memory. What works is not the denouncement as announcement, but belief in the evaluation, carried out continually, assuming that the present will always be that which is situated between the past and the future. Thus, the past does not have anything to show, but rather to teach. And the future comes exactly from this pedagogical anguish updated by the demands of the present. Therefore, the mission of the present cannot give way to the pressures of the past that refuse to be past: “we must not recognise the ‘right’ of the dictatorship to silence us. Yes there are risks, and we carefully seek to eliminate them. But silence will never be the solution” (Cavalcante; Ramos, 1978, p.16).

In the middle of the tensions, seen or foreseen, the book attempts to defend itself from the accusation of being authoritarian or exclusionary: “We prefer not to define beforehand what the *Memoirs* should say ... our objective

in this case is to see that the existing trends, within diverse fields, are expressed". This said, it was still necessary to explain more, much more, than could be assumed. Furthermore, the organisers argued that care was taken to not confuse those people who were against the dictatorship with those who were exiled. The reason was simple: many "opponents" were not exiled (meaning not being exiled, either voluntary or compulsory, did not deserve demerit). Above all, it was an effort to avoid "martyrology". If, on one hand, it rejects the defence of martyrdom, on the other it does not eliminate the possibility of the religious posture: "we found very different ideological perspectives, not only between the authors, but also between the editors". A methodology "bereft of censorship" was therefore opted for: "a minimal ideological principle, that is, the right to freedom of expression of thought" (Cavalcante; Ramos, 1978, p.17).

In any event, the promise made by the editors not to censor prevailed: a text written by frei Xavier Plassat, taken from the *Bulletin de Liaison de La Province Dominicaine de Lyon*, published in September 1974, was reproduced. The last paragraph emerges to insert an isolated memory in the *greater time* which is punctuated by the experiences of martyrdom. Frei Xavier records that during the 12th August mass a *prayer of revolt* was said: "...we have known this brother for 20 centuries" – he said before the burial. The following extract from the bible was read during the funeral mass (Cavalcante; Ramos, 1978, p.361). Isaiah, verses 52-53: "...and by his wounds we are healed". The rite, then and always, was a lived and shared mystery: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter; and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent". Apart from this, "He was jailed, judged unjustly; but who was concerned for His life? He was torn away from the land of the living and struck dead".

A new history was at stake, counterposing official history, as can be seen in frei Betto's memoirs published in 1982 in the book *Baptism of Blood*. He was arrested together with frei Tito, frei Ivo and other Dominican monks accused of participating in a group of guerrillas that supported Carlos Marighella. His book seemed to put the recent past to rest: he explained that the Dominican monks did not "hand over" information that led to the ambush organised by deputy Fleury that killed Marighella– thus counterposing the version spread by the dictatorship and a number of accusations that came from many elements of the left, that also propagated the idea of betrayal by the monks, particularly Fernando and Ivo. As would be expected, this autobiographical work is typically catholic and sometimes hagiographic, especially in the last chapter,

poignantly named “Tito, a paixão” [Tito, the passion]. Various quotes from the account of frei Tito’s torture add drama to the text which ends with an hagiographic and historiographic manifesto, merging different writing forms, also apparent in his work “the Left-wing Church”:

In exemplary fashion, frei Tito embodied the horrors of Brazil’s military regime. That is, a body that is never laid to rest. His testimony will survive the night that beats us down, the times that make us dream and official historiography that insists on ignoring him. He remains a symbol of the boundless atrocities of limitless, arrogant and arbitrary power. Above all, he remains an example for all those that resist oppression, struggle for justice and freedom and learn at the difficult school of hope that it is preferable ‘to die rather than lose your life’. (Betto, 1992, p.225)

IN THE NAME OF MEMORY

It is said that the first persecution of the Christians occurred in 64 when Nero was emperor of Rome and continued up to 313 when the Edict of Milan was signed. There we have it, the so-called “Early Catholic Church”, far away in space and time. A distance that ended up turning itself into proximity and, moreover, intimacy. But not for all Christians; above all, for those that also felt persecuted. The sequence of arrests of priests beginning in 1964 led to the emergence of another chapter in the history of the “Church of Prisons” in Latin America.

It was as creator and creature of this memory that frei Ivo Lesbaupin published the book *A bem-aventurança da perseguição: a vida dos cristãos no império romano* [Blessed are the Persecuted: Christian Life in the Roman Empire] in 1975. In an advertisement of the publisher Vozes on the inside of the front cover, it is apparent that the author was not alone: “FROM THE SAME PUBLISHER: *Christ and Political Contestation*, O. L. Gonçalves; *Jesus Christ, the Liberator*, L. Boff; *Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution*, A. Trocmé; *Jesus Christ and the Revolutionists of his Time*; *A Theology of Liberation*, G. Gutiérrez”.

Frei Ivo wrote: “We concern ourselves with the cause of the persecutions, the repercussions in the life of the Catholic Church, Christian resistance and the theology created by the Christians to respond concrete problems raised by the events”. On first glimpse, one would certainly conclude that the reference to the Roman Empire is a way of criticising and confronting the 1964 dictatorship: the past is posed to reach the present. However, the Catholic writing style

embodied by frei Ivo is not merely a procedure which uses the memory to provide circumstantial interests with fighting tools. Beyond the denunciation, or underlying it, is the annunciation. That is why frei Ivo warns in his introduction: “the objective of this text is non other than to seek to penetrate the mystery of this tiny grain of wheat that Jesus said must die in order to grow and bear a harvest” (Lesbaupin, 1975, p.9). On the page before the summary, there is an excerpt from the Apocalypse and dedication: “to the memory of our brother frei Tito de Alencar Lima, martyr (+ 8 August 1974)”. And the quote comes with a special indication: “Tito underlined this phrase in his bible”:

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of Waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Rev. 7,14-17)

Frei Ivo's book is not a hagiography, but is not without hagiographic sentiment. The lives of the new martyrs started to circulate in ambiguous publications with mixed orientations. Two cases are worth mentioning: *Martírio: memória perigosa na América Latina hoje* [Martyrdom: dangerous memories in Latin America Today] and *A práxis do martírio: ontem e hoje* [The Praxis of Martyrdom: now and yesterday] (Marins; Trevisan; Chanona, 1984; Diversos, 1980). To a certain extent, these works are hagiographies, but they also contain explanatory texts about liturgy and spirituality. It is in the thoughts about spirituality that evidence arises as to how the new saints were construed. The authors caution readers in two senses. First: that it is necessary to aid the martyrs (that is, the maltreated prisoners) and make every effort to denounce the situation, speaking to the priest, writing letters to figures and organisations in other countries and gathering evidence. Second: that the doctrinal definition of martyr should not be forgotten: a person that stands as witness to Christ. According to observations systematised by Saint Augustine, it is clear that: a martyr is not someone who surrenders himself to the executioner, or someone who lets himself be arrested by the police wishing to be martyred, but someone who is picked¹ to discover the mystery of life through death. The caution sets a restriction (saints are not simply examples to be followed) and thus recommends precaution so readers do not to get carried away: martyrdom should

not be desired. The example of saints is not exactly an example to be followed, but rather proof of the mystery.

COUNTED TIME

For Michel de Certeau, the central characteristic of modern history (from the eighteenth century onwards) is the ever-clearer division between past and present, leading to the emergence of the “other” as an unknown object that is domesticated by writing (Certeau, 1982, p.14). The affirmation of the “other” assumes it is strange in some way to the present, the generator of the future. The wider the demarcation of the past, the larger the delimitation of the present and the future. With regard to the three temporal dimensions, the valorisation of one dimension leads to an increase in the value of the other two.

Ancient history, the history of science, romantic history, and historicism: all are part of the writing of modern history in its search for the distribution of time into different dimensions that communicate, and communicate exactly because they are distinct. In this broader sense, the writing of history is exactly the protocol that, in certain places within institutional power, is supported by ways of distributing time into before, now and after. In hagiographic writing, for example, the grammar is another. It is not only a case of giving decisive weight to the past, detaching it from the present and providing it the model, or comparing the plasticity between “mundane” time and the eternity of the “Beyond”.

For Michel de Certeau, there is another question because the organisation of the lives of saints does not belong to modern historiography, governed by a time that is not based on a constant search for separations between the past, present and future. It is not the past or the future that is valued by “modern history”, but rather “modern temporality”; tripartite, interdependent time.

Hagiographic writing, in Certeau’s understanding, does not occur within modern temporality, and thus cannot be read with an ever-greater desire to make time comprehensible by the distribution of borders that characterise tripartite time. From a modern standpoint, imitation is repetition. In another grammar, imitation may be the actual experience of certain dimensions of eternity that in Christian terms has nothing to do with notions of evolution, accumulation or progress. In fact, that is why hagiography’s notion of exemplary history is different from the exemplary history of the nation. Whilst the first inhabits secular time that pays tribute to eternity, the latter adopts a time whose example is a model which is *in debt* to progress.

On the other hand, Certeau suggests that the ecclesiastical institution bound the narrative to dogma, making it lacking in orality and closer to historic research that assumes the transformation of the past into an object of investigation controlled by the method. Thus, the power of the clergy cast versions of some of the lives of saints into the plane of fables, counterposing their real lives, duly authorised by the legitimacy of official writing.

In many cases, the nonofficial version of the hagiography was not exemplary, but rather more of an example of the power of God than an example to be followed by the people. Neither did they attempt to create imitations, nor were they educational as they would become during the nineteenth century (Certeau, 1982, p.270).

In hagiography, repressed by the clerical discipline, there is no “other”, circumscribed by the past, creator and created of protocols for domesticating the dead. In the tripartite time of modernity, the first step is to identify them. The second is to name them. Each step is made possible by writing. The unidentified departed is like a tomb without a tombstone. Never before was there such a strong concern with the separation of the dead and living, creating rites which, from a psychoanalytical perspective, could be called “mourning”. The “other”, possible due to the institutionalised setting of the subject in relation to the object, is first and foremost “dead”. Thus, the title of Certeau’s essay “*The Beauty of the Dead*” about the “other” called “popular culture” (Certeau, 1995, pp.55-86). Closer reading shows that the “other” takes on various meanings, from a witch before the Catholic Church, to a woman before a man, or a negro before a white. The essential “other” for historians however is the past. It is about and under this absence that the “historiographical operation” shows results.

The conception of history present here is the same as that found in Dom Paulo’s inaugural speech mentioned above; historicity, which is also the foundation of the new writings about the history of the Catholic Church, which began to emerge after the creation of the Commission for Historical Studies of the Church in Latin America and Caribbean (CEHILA, acronym in Portuguese) in 1973. If it was possible to summarise the proposals conceived from then on, it could be said that it was a question of critical reflection on the past “from the point of view of the oppressed”, paying special attention to the dangers of the “popular use” of this perspective (Dussel, 1986, p.55). In Brazil, the first results emerged the following year, with the publication of a book by the priest and professor of history Eduardo Hoornaert, which tells the story of

the catholic church with emphasis “popular Catholicism as the most valuable expression of the gospel in Brazilian reality” (Hoornaert, 1974, p.5).

The renovation of the Latin American Catholic calendar therefore occurred during an effervescent period of rewriting of history, not only of the Catholic Church in Brazil, but also the Latin American Catholic Church and early church, as frei Ivo’s book mentioned above shows, *A bem-aventurança da perseguição: a vida dos cristãos no império romano* [Blessed are the Persecuted: Christian Life in the Roman Empire].

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

“Dans l’epistemologienée avec les Lumières, la différence entre le sujet du savoir et son objet fonde celle qui separe du présent le passé” (Certeau, 2002, p.76). Given this, it would not be so absurd to claim that official hagiography distanced itself from oral traditions and was nourished by illuminist epistemology, bringing the lives of the saints closer to modern history; an ambiguous proximity given that the time of eternity was not (and never could be) excluded. With regard to the hagiographies of Latin American martyrs, was there a resumption of this oral tradition? Are these unofficial martyrologists in search of popular religiousness and a “Church of the Poor”, that bring those killed by the dictatorships back to life within the bounds of the lost voices of orality? So is it, in summary, a retake of the so-called early Catholic Church? Everything indicates that the answer is yes, given that “liberation theology” is, in principle, anti-European and, above all, anti-Rome, demanding decentralisation in various senses, be it the Catholic clergy, canon law, or lettered culture. Furthermore, as Dom Paulo’s above-cited inaugural speech shows, history is placed as a condition of faith, whereas before it was a contradiction.

The temporality of hagiography embracing Latin American martyrs to a certain extent lent continuity to the disciplinary processes by writing and the demand for truth in the narrative by using reliable documents. Concern for the veracity of documents varied. An author that underlines this sentiment is Santo Agostinho who lamented during a sermon, the “scarceness of older writings, written using archives or from eye witnesses” (Magalhães de Oliveira, 2010, p.58).

Strictly speaking, the life of frei Tito, together with other martyrs, is much more committed to “illuminist epistemology” than it initially appears. Bringing the catholic church closer to “the common people”, despite its interactional intentions, did not reach the “the common people” it expected to reach. The

martyrologies cited here had a significant influence in the building of *grass roots ecclesiastical communities*, that ramified into union movements in rural as well as urban areas. However, the so-called “popular tradition” did not assimilate these new saints. Frei Tito became a saint within certain circumstances conducted by the “Left-wing Catholic Church”, whose announcement also had to do with denouncement.²

Those chosen to create sacred spaces and pilgrimages were other martyrs, as is apparent in various cemeteries spread around Brazil, where graves become a space for devotion.³ Examples include, the *cangaceiro* Jararaca in Mossoró in the State of Rio Grande do Norte and the thief João das Pedras in São Benedito in the State of Ceará, both of which were buried alive and won acclaim through unwritten hagiography. Numerous word of mouth narratives exist, not only about their lives, but also about how they died and how they carry out miracles (Maia, 2010; Falcão, 2013).

The frei Tito case is different. Circumscribed by certain announcement/denouncement liturgies, his suffering did not have the expected resonance, since the reason for his suffering did not reverberate within “popular traditions” – or to be more precise, in the fable tradition lived by devotees, in experiences either spurned as fanaticism, or considered folklore. “Political prisoner” is not part of the vocabulary of these oral traditions. The non-official Catholic Church calendar, made to denounce the murder of devotees that died for their people, did not reach the people (as envisaged by those that wrote the new martyrologies or diffused it in liturgies and meetings of the Catholic Church most affected by the orientations of the Second Vatican Council). While frei Tito’s grave, in the São João Batista Cemetery in Fortaleza, receives visitors that are apparently devotees, the graves of Jararaca and João das Pedras welcome a large flux of devotees that do not hide their faith: making promises and always bringing candles, plastic flowers, offerings or written notes.

With regard to the calendar, there is another difference: martyrs outside official and non official hagiography are more commemorated on only one day of the year, often because some murders do not have specific dates, since the body is often found a number of days after the event. This day is All Souls’ Day on 2nd November. However, since this field of faith does not have well delimited boundaries, it is worth highlighting that frei Tito’s grave is most visited exactly on this day, but this is not characterised as a “pilgrimage” as are the graves of “Miracle-performing Souls” (according to observations made by the author between 2007 and 2011).

The martyrologies of political prisoners are part of the memories of the 1964 dictatorship, effectively limited to certain groups, integrating a kaleidoscope of claims of the right to remember, with the creation of monuments, art manifestos and valorisation of “secret files”, as well as reopening the debate about the (im)possibilities of a “history of present time”. Here we have a significant *niche* of recollections, in agreements and conflicts with many other groupings that seize the memory as a duty and seek to imbue this duty as a responsibility of history. Thus, it is hard to imagine homogeneity of memories against the dictatorship since, apart from the conflicts between ways of thinking, historical research has created significant tension as regards the supposed truth that the witness is capable of providing.⁴

If there were divergences in strategies used to combat the dictatorship, today it appears that there are even greater divergences regarding who fought, how they fought and, moreover, how some were “strong” or “weak”, shifting allegiance or giving names (in or outside the torture room). All this seems to have removed the clarity that there appeared to be in the dividing line between the official past and the forbidden past, creating new challenges for historians as the officialisation of a new writing of history necessarily brings implications regarding not only the legitimacy of the discipline, but also its fundamental ethics.

Yet to be studied within the sphere of historiographic studies, the calendar is another indication of the use of the past generated by the 1964 dictatorship, articulated within the political context of Latin America and, moreover, involved in models of Christianity that, based on certain demands, change and adapt the telling of history. A memory whose entwinements with official hagiographic writing (although placed outside officiality) create an image of figures such as frei Tito that likens him a representation from the writing of history.

The martyrologies of frei Tito were influenced by a hagiography disciplined by research that the catholic church itself came to demand in order to discipline its schedule of commemorations and list of saints, adopting empirical and interpretative procedures which were compatible with the imaginary belonging to the scientific world. On the other hand, they were part of a specificity common to all frei Tito’s fellow Latin American martyrs: research demanded by “a right to memory” based, at least in part, on procedures of historical knowledge academically legitimised by “peers” (obviously not only in the name of science, but also of justice founded on the notion of human rights). It is in this respect that there is a relationship between frei Tito and

devotees that distinguish him from the rest of the martyrs who were also turned into sacred places in cemeteries.

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NOTES

¹ The word used by the author in Portuguese in the original text is *escolhido*, and appeared in the original text in Portuguese in the following form: *(es)colhido*, which is a play on words with *escolhido* (chosen) and *colhido* (pick or harvest). (T.N.)

² I avoid making a strict separation between the left-wing Church (innovative) and right-wing Church (conservative), since recent studies show that this division was more circumstantial and isolated, and therefore cannot be strictly applied. Such malleability for negotiations was shown by SERBIN, 2008 without dealing with problems more connected to the historicity of the liturgies or experiences of the sacred. With respect to those aspects more related to lived religiousness, see, for example: PORTO, 2014.

³ See, for example: ANDRADE, 2008.

⁴ This paragraph was inspired in a current debate between the following authors: KNAUSS, 2012; FICO, 2012; PATTO, 2011; REIS, 2013.