

Witchcraft, territories and marginal resistances in Rio de Janeiro¹

Feitiçarias, territórios e resistências marginais

Patricia Birman

ABSTRACT

Through their everyday references to witchcraft, allegedly emanating from Afro-Brazilian cults, Evangelical pastors denounce heinous crimes and acts of barbarity that provoke horror and terror in their listeners in church and on radio and television. I describe two allegations of witchcraft by Pentecostal groups, which connect marginality, crime and the presence of diabolical evil in two communities. Witchcraft provides an entry point to examine some of the problems faced by those living in 'communities:' the 'demonization' of peripheral territories provoked by the state's identification of their populations with criminality, on one hand, and the Evangelical battle against diabolical evil, on the other. I look to show that in the community of believers and the favela alike the Evangelicals' battle with the devil is a response to the State's interpellations associated with its modalities of identifying peripheral spaces. In the process, I analyze the meaning assumed by witchcraft within the wider Evangelical project of salvation and the social future it aims to build.

Key words: Witchcraft, Pentecostalism, Territories, Favelas, Communities

RESUMO

Os evangélicos, cotidianamente, através de menções à feitiçaria, cuja origem estaria nos cultos afro-brasileiros, denunciam crimes nefandos e atos de barbárie provocando horror e estarrecimento nos seus ouvintes em igrejas, rádios e televisão. Descrevo dois casos de feitiçaria, objeto de atenção pentecostal, que articulam marginalidade, crime e presença do mal diabólico em duas comunidades. A feitiçaria é a chave com a qual examino alguns problemas relativos à vida em "comunidades": a "diabolização" de territórios periféricos provocada pelas identificações criminalizadoras das suas populações pelo Estado, por um lado, e o combate evangélico ao mal diabólico, por outro. Busco demonstrar que, tanto na comunidade de crentes quanto na favela, os evangélicos respondem por meio do seu combate ao diabo às interpelações do Estado associadas às suas modalidades de identificação de espaços periféricos. Analiso, assim, o sentido assumido pela feitiçaria em relação ao projeto de salvação evangélico e o horizonte social que este busca construir.

Palavras-chave: Feitiçaria, Pentecostalismo, Territórios, Favelas, Comunidades

¹ Translated from Portuguese by David Rodgers.

Introduction

How is witchcraft being used in these Pentecostal times? Over recent years, the Pentecostal word on acts of witchcraft seems to have spoken louder and more vigorously than any other. In Rio de Janeiro at least, witchcraft accusations have circulated primarily – and with a particular intensity – in places where the Pentecostal war against diabolical evil has been especially concentrated: favelas and other peripheral areas, usually referred to as *communities*. Citing cases of witchcraft supposedly originating in Afro-Brazilian cults, Evangelical preachers denounce heinous crimes and acts of barbarity that elicit feelings of horror and fear in their audience at church or on the radio and television stations. In this chapter I describe two cases of witchcraft accusation that interconnect marginality, crime and the presence of diabolical evil in two *communities*. To understand these witchcraft accusations better, we need to take into account that residents from both the *community of believers* and the *favela* where I conducted fieldwork² face a series of problems derived from their administration as territories subject to specific forms of identification imposed by the State. The latter questions their inhabitants through categories that produce effects of exclusion and inclusion that interact with the social and political values associated with religions and witchcraft. Although witchcraft is not “a product of the State and a mode of appropriation of the latter,”³ it is intimately linked to the procedures through which the State defines and relates to the populations located on its margins.⁴

From the outset, I wish to highlight the gradual evolution of a close affinity in the Brazilian media and public space between Evangelical and lay discourses in terms of their treatment of the theme of evil and violence. By connecting witchcraft accusations with criminal practices and ‘banditry,’ Evangelicals are, in effect, emphasizing what the lay media never tires of drumming into the public

² I conducted various periods of fieldwork between 1993 and 1997 in a small favela, an enclave situated in the wealthy zone of Rio de Janeiro city, where I accompanied a group of people recently converted to Pentecostalism. The collaboration of Patricia Guimarães was fundamental to this work. I began my research on the ‘community of believers’ described in this article in 2004: this project lasted until 2008 and involved the intense participation of students, who I thank, and resulted in four monographs and a master’s dissertation (cf. Bakker 2008, Cretton 2007, Lopes 2009 and Mendonça 2009). My thanks also to Roger Sansi for his comments on the first version of this text, which was sent to him as a draft for the colloquium “Witchcraft in the Black Atlantic” in 2006, which I was unfortunately unable to attend. I also thank the careful readings of Márcia Leite and Marc Piaux. I presented the paper at the CEAF (Centre d’Études Africaines) Seminar coordinated by Michel Agier and at UFJF, at the invitation of Marcelo Camurça. The critical comments received on these occasions proved extremely helpful when it came to finishing this article.

³ Bayart, Geshiere & Nyamnjoh (2001:180). Also see Noiriel (2005 and 2007) and the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics vis-à-vis processes of identification and identity and their relation to the State.

⁴ I refer to these ‘margins’ as the ‘periphery,’ frequently associated with places containing those yet to be ‘civilized.’ Veena Das & Deborah Poole (2003), who elaborated this notion, also expound on the idea that the State, far from being absent from the margins, is a fundamental actor in the configuration of these areas, as well as itself being shaped by local dynamics. They therefore argue forcefully against the idea that there is a ‘lack’ of the State on the ‘margins.’ This idea of a lack has indeed allowed authors to ignore the extent to which the State participates in the political and social configurations of the peripheries.

conscience: the presence of a powerful internal enemy, the ‘bandit’ or ‘dealer,’ who lives in the ‘communities,’ thereby reinforcing the negative image of these areas as cultural totalities that comprise sources of danger and violence for society as a whole.⁵ Bearing in mind the importance of these negative perceptions for the policies implemented in these urban peripheries, we can observe that the discourses *demonizing* these territories comprise a form of political-religious action that simultaneously responds to the questions of the State and appropriates its categories, combining them with religious conceptions.

A distance of more than ten years separates the situations described in this text, both encountered during research with Evangelical groups in urban communities. The first took place in a favela located in the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro and the second in a territory designated as a *community of believers*, four hours away from Rio de Janeiro city. Comparing these two research experiences has allowed me to comprehend the meanings acquired by witchcraft accusations in precise ethnographic contexts: these meanings are invariably associated with Afro-Brazilian devils and the social spaces hegemonically known as territories held to contain homogenous communities, as though these were cultural totalities. In pursuing this comparison, I wish to show how the Evangelical war against evil in the favela territories is designed to achieve what is already supposedly in force in the community of believers, namely, a village where God’s law configures public space in a form guaranteed by the State. The community of believers is seen to realize, at least ideally, the imagined order that Pentecostalism strives to instil in all the social spaces where it has an active presence.

Since the years separating the two research experiences saw the consolidation of Evangelism in Brazil, the situations that I recount – in all their specificities – also illustrate the passage of time and the growing accumulation of power and influence on the part of Evangelical groups, principally in Rio de Janeiro. Indeed, time is far from a negligible factor in terms of the Evangelical presence in Brazil and still less in relation to the problems faced by the social groups to which these religious figures belong. As we know, conversion to these churches mainly takes place among subaltern social groups. Individuals from these groups have been simultaneously the witnesses, victims and agents of the reconfigurations of the margins continually associated with violence and criminality and to their religious pairs, magic and witchcraft. These reconfigurations form part of the elaboration of the peripheries as spaces of exception that are revealed here as upside-down mirrors:

⁵ For a rich discussion of the concept of culture and its essentialist tendencies in Brazil, as well as its socially discriminatory developments, see Andreas Hofbauer 2006 and Jean-François V éran 2003. For a critical commentary concerning the use of the notion of community in relation to favelas, see note 6 where I explain L ícia Valadares’s argument. See too Duarte 1991 and Leite 2001 and 2007 on the relations between citizenship and community, and Birman 2008 for a discussion on the uses of the category of community related to favelas.

in the favela crime and disorder rule supreme and the Evangelicals crave to be the social actors politically and religiously responsible for expelling evil from the community. In the community of believers, this goal has, in their view, already been partially achieved through the power wielded by the local Pentecostal church. The latter conducts and encourages the struggle of its followers to keep evil outside its borders by effectively controlling public space.

In Brazilian society where imagery of disorder is continually associated with its peripheries, the last fifteen years, perhaps longer, has witnessed a process heavily shaping the definition of its spaces and boundaries. I refer to the emergence of 'violence' as a *social question* in Rio de Janeiro city and as an 'obvious' product of these peripheries, encapsulated in *the favela*. The designation of some social dwelling spaces as *favelas* has a long history, associated with various modalities of constructing alterities, including those associated with marginality, the lack of civilization and poverty. To the latter category, poverty, was added criminality through the identification of their residents with drug trafficking and violence. Over the years this identification was gradually naturalized, contributing to a growing feeling of insecurity among residents, increasingly threatened by violent death in their residential territories (Leite 2007, Machado da Silva 2007 and Farias 2007).⁶

I therefore initially look to explore how favela residents are exposed to the State's interpellations as individuals associated with crime and violence, and to the interpellations of the drug dealers who control the same territory through armed force. I focus on a situation in which these two forms of interpellation are connected to the transformation in the economy of religious exchanges in this space caused by the Evangelical presence. In so doing, I turn to the testimony of a former *candomblé* religious specialist who experienced a number of life-threatening situations in which the danger was attributed a magical causality.

⁶ Lícia Valadares has rightly called attention to the essentialist form in which social scientists construct favelas. In these territorial, cultural and class units, the researchers found it easy to 'search' for the form in which poor people behave in relation to sexuality, religion, politics and so on. A wide range of analyses describe favela residents via social, cultural and moral attributes that are supposedly homogenous and derived from the shared condition of residents. As Valadares critically points out: "*In the favela, the poor are at home. Insofar as they form a city within a city, the illegal city within the legal city, the residents demarcate their territory, a de facto enclave where the identificatory mark is omnipresent. Perceived in this way, the favela is imputed with its own economy, internal laws and private codes, developed in spaces left to their own luck and abandoned by public authorities.*" (Valadares 2005:151). Though we need to discard the perception criticized by Valadares for its essentialism and for the abusive totalization that it thereby constructed, we cannot, however, ignore the extent to which these totalizing images are necessarily taking into account by the inhabitants of these places in the strategies that they build for their lives and in the power relations that inescapably concern them.

After this account, I turn to the Pentecostal practices among a *community of believers* where the mode of intervention of the Assembly of God has yet to be rivalled.⁷ Predominantly inhabited by families belonging to the only local church,⁸ its territory is perceived to possess distinctive religious qualities. In effect, a holy place. Here I explore the meaning of a witchcraft accusation in this locality where the State's interpellations recognize the morally positive difference presented by the community in question to society.

From this blessed village, its residents watch on television the incessant spectacle of evil in the world, reassuring themselves about the special nature of the place where they live.⁹ Among this community of believers, diabolical evil, though omnipresent and threatening, is supposedly situated on its margins since the community's territory possesses a sacredness that distinguishes it from other areas, such the cited *favela community*, whose predominant image associates it with crime and violence. The relations established by the Evangelicals with and through these territories are predicated on the perception that the dynamic of the world is structured by the forces of evil. These forces, however, form part of specific clashes and act in different ways on their spaces due to the intervention of the *men of God* and of those others under the sway of demons. The *spiritual battle* explains events in this public sphere and reveals the presence of the devil to the eyes of different religious figures, as we shall now see.¹⁰

Territories, People and Relations

It is worth stressing from the outset that the contrast between these two communities would be somewhat less striking had their histories not been shaped by the new value attributed to Evangelism in public space. As recent figures in the city's religious economy, the so-called 'believers' (*crentes*) or 'Evangelicals' gained public recognition during the same period in which 'violence' became a 'social issue.'¹¹ In fact, new themes appeared in the press and television media during the 1990s: on one hand, scandals provoked by the emergence of the UCKG (Universal

⁷ The fieldwork conducted in this Evangelical community involved the participation of various students who I thank enormously for their collaboration: André Bakker, Eduardo Pereira and Vicente Cretton during the first phase and more recently Angélica Ferrarez, Helena Guilayn, Natânia Lopes and Mariana Mendonça.

⁸ I presume that most families have at least one member in the church. Furthermore I believe that this local demographic criterion, whose religious premises I discuss later, allows the church to claim that the 'majority' of people from this village are Evangelical.

⁹ Cf. Patricia Birman 2006 and 2008 for the local conception of the community of believers and its relation to the territory. For a discussion of the space within the village, see Vicente Cretton 2007, and on the perception of religious figures concerning the presence of God and the Devil, see André Bakker 2008.

¹⁰ Cf. Cecília Mariz (1999) for a discussion and bibliographic review of the *Spiritual Battle*. André Bakker (2008) provides an excellent ethnographic description of the reading Evangelicals make of the lay media. From an Evangelical viewpoint, the television news reports with their rosary of crimes and violence, prove the validity of the Bible verses on a daily basis and above all the prophecies of the Apocalypse.

¹¹ Patricia Birman and Márcia Leite 2000.

Church of the Kingdom of God) and the subsequent media attention given to these new religious actors in public space; and, on the other, daily and ever more sensationalist reports on organized crime and its supposed control of increasingly broader sections of the population. A disturbing aspect of social life, increasingly sensationalized by the media, this brutality has provoked constant appeals for the forces of order to combat the evil of violence and its perpetrators. However, though generic, the violence became attributed to a particular region of the city: the State has switched to searching for its highest incidences among the poor and the areas where they live.

Although the claim that peripheral areas are a haven of negative moral qualities, linked to poverty and criminality, is far from new, it is only fairly recently that this constructed set of factors has been associated with certain religious practices, such as exorcism and combating witchcraft. The demonization pursued by the religious media – whose power took hold in the 1990s – echoes and complements the theme dominating the Rio de Janeiro mainstream media over the last ten years or so. Each in its own way has intensified a negative perception of people living in the peripheral areas of the city and indeed has helped reinforce the moral boundaries supposedly separating these localities from other urban areas.¹²

Martijn Oosterban (2006) provides a particularly cogent argument concerning the intertextuality between Pentecostal discourses on Evil and media descriptions of the violence associated with drug trafficking in Rio's favelas. Thus the same imagery of evil, whose absurdity challenges the moral conscience of readers and television viewers, 'confirms' the criminal susceptibility of the lower classes and isolates their world as the most susceptible to immoral acts and witchcraft.¹³

However, the continuity between lay and religious discourses is also relative. Indeed, the possibility of conversion transforms the relation that these supposed criminals have to evil and the deadly fate that society predominantly reserves for them. The Evangelicals work ceaselessly to transform this

¹² See Marcia Leite and Luis Antônio Machado 2006.

¹³ Witchcraft is the term used by Edir Macedo in his description of the procedures supposedly employed by Afro-Brazilian cults. Twelve years have passed since the first edition of *Orixás, Caboclos e Guias, Deuses ou Demônios?*, the most well-known work by Macedo, leader of the UCKG. At the time of its release, the UCKG's 'Spiritual Battle' against the diabolical manifestations of Afro-Brazilians and Catholic idolatry had already provoked much debate and controversy, though the latter failed to hinder the church's growth and the expansion of its doctrine. We can recall the relations established in this text between the practices of the candomblé *terreiros* (ritual spaces) and criminal activities: "a father-of-saint told me how on one occasion he cast a spell for a young man to go mad. He entered a cemetery at midnight and, after opening a grave in which someone had been buried just five hours earlier, removed the corpse (that of a young man in his early twenties), cut off the head and replaced it with another made of wax, engraved with the name of his enemy... Is there any way a sect that pursues such practices can be considered religious? We see stories like this being published almost daily in our newspapers and, given that our society is unable to take any measures against this, we are obliged, in the name of Jesus, to raise our voices! An ex-mother-of-saint also confided to me that she had performed rites in a terreiro in Recife, where they bought newborn children to be sacrificed in cemeteries or at crossroads. In 1979 we had a case in which the police discovered a farm where the orishas [divinities], caboclos [indigenous spirits] and guias [spiritual guides] requested something similar." (Bishop Macedo 2000:108)

link with diabolical evil into a temporary state that can be overcome. The potential fate of criminals and drug dealers is to become converts whose condition will assure them a new 'right' to life. Hence the incessant work of prayers and exorcism also aims to avoid the abolition of the future of those who participate in this logic of warfare. So while Pentecostal churches contribute to demonizing young drug dealers and the residents of these peripheral spaces, they look to save their lives through religious activities, separating them from the terrestrial world which the condition of favela dweller continually threatens to undermine.

Innumerable witnesses in the Evangelical churches testify that the devil's ceaseless intention is to *steal, kill and destroy*. From the pulpit the converts recount their evil deeds before accepting Jesus into their lives. Yet it is from this degraded condition of someone subject to the forces of evil that a new person emerges, an individual saved by the Gospel. The outcome of this specular process is that there is no one closer to a *bandit* than a *believer*.¹⁴ According to the testimonies ritualized in the church services, Evangelicals (especially men) are past sinners who had been virtual 'bandits.' A liminal time is therefore involved in the process of forming these men who can nonetheless obtain salvation in the Evangelical churches. The path from *bandits to believers* is not only desirable but today comprises the clearest future for those living in the urban peripheries who find themselves in constant contact with criminal factions and the forces employed by the State to combat them.

Hence the two communities I examine here are very often defined through these antagonisms. Both reveal the importance of this religious axis, which emphasizes the complete incompatibility between Good and Evil. Indeed the two cases of witchcraft analyzed below make sense to their protagonists as people who participate in the dynamics of their neighbourhoods. They are also

¹⁴ "In every corner of the city there's a favela,
In every corner of the favela there's a drug dealer
And every dealer has a mother who's a believer
Who prays for her son in despair
Tired of crying, fighting, suffering
She believes one day he will repent
And recall everything she taught him,
Return to his roots or to whatever is left
Of a poor life, I know,
Not much can be expected.
But a mother's love and affection are always there.
What life is this?
People always asked.
What God is this?
Who seems to do nothing.
It's true little changed between now and then
But love and faith in God will never be lacking.
A difficult life, yes,
Far too unfair
Going through life in search of peace."
(DJ Alpiste cited by Oosterban 2006:6)

informed by the discourses that seek to define them and delimit their behaviour and conflicts by containing these within this dualist scheme, particularly developed by Pentecostalism, as well as the lay discourses that stigmatize the peripheral territories inhabited by the poor.

Let us present the protagonists involved in the two cases. While Alice's background is in *candomblé* and she interacts with her Afro-Brazilian entities in the context of a 'war' between drug gangs in a Rio favela, an area frequently linked to Evil and witchcraft, Bruno and Carlos interact with the devil and *macumba* entities on the margins of a public space with an Evangelical church at its centre.¹⁵ In the favela, "all the cats look grey," as the Brazilian saying goes, when the police attempt to pursue and kill supposed criminals in the middle of a densely populated area. It should be stressed, of course, that the difficulties faced by police forces in identifying and hitting the right targets, and nobody else, when they shoot quadruples as a problem for the favela inhabitants themselves: evading being targeted by police, their aim fed by social stigma, involves 'identifying' oneself or being 'identified' as moral exceptions.

Alice and the Wink of the Exu

Part of the experience of Alice and other residents of this favela involves living day-to-day with the Pentecostal discourses that project themselves as an alternative to the secular and violent power wielded by the State and the drug gangs. Caught in the social and political dynamics that traverse the favela, Alice needs to act in recognition of the power of the guns wielded by the gang members, as well as the fact that the latter have proven their own political importance by controlling the territory effectively in the form of a sovereign power.¹⁶ She has also seen her neighbours gradually adopt different life strategies to her own, following their decision to convert and join local Pentecostal churches. These women, aged between 40 and 50, former frequenters of Afro-Brazilian cult houses, seemed to have recognized the emergence of a new local mediatory power, accompanied by the decline experienced by the *umbanda* father-of-saint. In contrast to herself, still linked to *candomblé*, another older woman – also her neighbour and the owner of a small store – was living testimony to what the Pentecostal churches could offer: she radiated satisfaction and made no attempt to hide her pride in her son, who had become a pastor for the Universal Church. Meanwhile, Alice's own daughter was at the time going out with the biological son of this father-

¹⁵ While the term *candomblé* is positively valued by members of this cult, the term *macumba* has a pejorative association, its practices being frequently associated with malefic rituals.

¹⁶ During this period, the drug gangs effectively controlled the borders of the small favela, but did not intervene openly in the free transit of inhabitants and outsiders. This control gradually increased with the growth in drug trafficking and the war that took hold in the city.

of-saint in decline, who still provided consultations in his home to a reduced clientele. To Alice's dismay, since she disapproved of her daughter's love affair, the young man was also linked to drug trafficking and furthermore his brother had been killed the previous year.

At the end of the 1990s, at the height of the attacks by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God on Afro-Brazilian cults, Alice told me why she had abandoned candomblé after thirty years of devotion to the orixás. At the time I was studying the conversion of followers of Afro-Brazilians religions to Pentecostalism and, as a working hypothesis, proposed the importance of a continuity between the practices of the former religions and those of Pentecostalism. Today I believe that by emphasizing the continuities between the two religions, I failed to give sufficient value to the project of breaking with the former that informed the desire to change and that also comprised a way of working through the transformations in their living conditions (Birman 1996).¹⁷ Thus I return now to Alice's account with this new preoccupation. At the time of our conversation, she must have been around forty and was employed as a cleaner for upper middle class households in Rio.

Her biggest worry at the time was the risk faced by her daughter. Among the people who I knew there, in this small favela, the two women were an exception: they were among the few people who made no attempt to hide their connection to candomblé and made this religious belonging an eternal topic of conversation: they could talk for hours on end of the beauty of the 'saint festivals' and the pleasure they derived from these.¹⁸

Let us return to the circumstances surrounding Alice's abandonment of candomblé. This was a story that she herself connected to a conflict between two gangs vying for control of drug sales points in the favela. Alice provided an emotional account, cast in religious terms, of the fight between the drug gangs and the impact of these events on her own life. Against her will, she found herself partly responsible for killings occurring between the two gangs and which almost killed her daughter too.

¹⁷ We should note that by transforming Afro-Brazilian entities and spirits into devils, Pentecostalism demands that converts make a complete break with the former, uprooting themselves from them, rather than maintaining them as part of their locally constructed identities. The Pentecostal transcendence of evil (cf. Robbins 2008) enables the coexistence with the latter to be conceived through another relation with time: no longer the time in which religious practices are rooted in the person and places through the cultivation of a 'tradition,' guaranteed by the circularity of religious exchanges, but a time whose evolution depends on this rupture with a sinful past. For Evangelicals, the control of evil requires a rupture with life 'in the world' and for those individuals who desire salvation will always have a provisional sense indicating its gradual elimination. This other relation with time cannot be separated from what Appadurai describes as a movement of constructing identities that does not take belonging to a place as a condition for its realization (cf. Birman 2006 and 2009).

¹⁸ Here I have drawn on my own direct experience with Alice and on an interview conducted by Patricia Guimarães.

Returning from work one day, she recounted, she found her house had been transformed into a hiding place for the guns held by her daughter's boyfriend. Indignant, she lost her temper and shouted at the youth, expelling him from the house along with his arsenal. However, her daughter continued to see him and the situation merely worsened, intensifying her fears. At the peak of her anger and indignation over the risk the young man was introducing into her life, Alice one day voiced aloud an appeal – overheard by her curious neighbours – to her Exu to intervene. Her request was for the latter to avenge her by causing the youth to disappear from her daughter's life.

Unfortunately, a short time later the favela was invaded by a rival drug gang and the young man was killed in the shoot out, dying in the arms of her daughter who herself was lucky to escape injury. Alice heard the shots, ran out into the street and encountered the killer, gun in hand, who was coming down the hill where she lives, having left the body of his enemy strewn on the ground. As she passed the killer – who, she pointed out, was not from the area – he made a gesture of complicity, winking and letting Alice understand that he was her Exu, the same one to whom she had appealed for revenge and with whom she had a special relationship in *candomblé*. As though this were not enough, the youth became the new *dono do morro*, 'owner of the hill,'¹⁹ and began a love affair with her daughter, offering her all the wealth that drug trafficking could buy. Alice, aware that the new gang leader was 'her' Exu, 'embodied' in a young drug dealer, could not dare to ask him to leave through fear of him exacting even greater revenge on herself. Finally, it was the turn of the police to invade the favela. The young man tried to flee but was caught in a stream of bullets. His body fell over a precipice, striking an iron railing which pierced and killed him. She saw him die. In his final moments, he still had enough life force to appear to her for a brief second in the traditional image of her Exu, dressed as *Zé Pilintra*,²⁰ assuming the same form in which he appeared to her in the *candomblé* festivals.

The drama contained in this narrative made her abandonment of *candomblé* both morally and socially inevitable: it would have been virtually impossible to continue in a religion which, aside from never having brought her prosperity (as she emphasized: she had never been rich and had never known a mother-of-saint who was), had thrown her into the middle of a violent factional war that transformed her thoughtless gesture into a bloody tragedy she had never wanted. But not only this. Alice's appeal to the entity is perceived as the cause of the deaths for which she came to see herself as at least partly responsible – or, perhaps more importantly, as a motive for incrimination

¹⁹ TN: Many of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro are built on the surrounding hillsides, meaning that 'morro,' hill, functions as a synonym for favela.

²⁰ 'Zé Pilintra' is the name of an entity typically portrayed as a trickster, a figure that developed in the 1950s as an emblem of the popular classes, inhabitants of Rio's favelas: a samba lover, an enemy of work and capable of surviving through small con tricks.

by one of the groups taking part in this conflict. The comments of neighbours, for example, could give this spiritual relation another dimension and thus give an even more realist cast to the image she already possessed as a candomblé adept.

Now Alice said she was 'religionless' because, although rejecting her former relations with the candomblé saints, she saw no need to join a Pentecostal church. Nonetheless, Alice did think it would be a good idea to at least attend the Evangelical church services. She went with her daughter to the Renewed Baptist Church, the Assembly of God and the Universal Church, but had no wish to give up smoking or beer, much less abandon her love affairs. She decided not to convert. But, in a way, she was faced by a demand to transform her person that would be difficult for us to conceive without taking into account all the elements involved in the situation she described to us.

Her new perception of the Afro-Brazilian religious entities taught her their potential to respond violently in a world marked by irreparable antagonisms, resolved mainly through the use of physical force. Beings who were always prone, like herself, to join forces, take sides and become involved in the causes of those who protect them were now thought of as agents of an absolute evil that can assume factional forms, due to this identifying trait, they may be persecuted by others in the name of the common Good. Moreover, the presence of evil in the favelas could facilitate the incrimination of their residents by the State and wider society. But this fact fails to explain Alice's abandonment of candomblé. The accusation of being an accomplice becomes more complex insofar as it involves conceptions of exchange in the Afro-Brazilian cults and the war waged on them by Pentecostals.

In fact, the accusations of the State and the media concerning the collaborationism of favela residents with drug gangs makes use of various arguments, including the fact that these residents have kinship and affinal ties with drug dealers. This fact supposedly leads them to protect the latter against the State's attempts to identify gang members and distinguish them from their networks of relations. Another interpretation, however, shows us that it is the State that incriminates individuals, transforming their affective and kinship relations into relations of complicity with crime. Denouncing supposed criminals to the State's forces is seen as the only real way of showing a lack of complicity, as the mayor of Rio de Janeiro and the secretary of public security have stated a number of times over recent years. Silence, in turn, is demanded from residents by drug dealers as a means of ensuring their non-complicity with the police. Gossip among neighbours is a key source of information for the drug gangs, allowing them to identify potential informers and sometimes inflict punishment in the form of death or mutilation (cf. Machado Silva & Leite 2007, Vital 2009).

In other words, an appeal for spiritual intervention within the context of Alice's family relations acquired a public and political dimension related to the drug gang war: as a result, the violence entered her own house and also became Alice's responsibility. Alice did not narrate her story as a change that took place in the way she perceived the world around her, but as a change in the real relationship with her Exu, transformed by the violent relations in the favela where she lived. In becoming autonomous, the entity behaved like a Pentecostal devil, destroying the lives of the people closest to her. The familiar figure, like the daughter's boyfriend, was the victim of a magical act that targeted him not as a member of a circuit of exchanges with Alice as a mediator, but as one of the many faces of a universal evil.²¹ Losing her mediating role meant being unable to control the magical attacks and counter-attacks that formed her everyday religious experience.

Her Exu, now a devil, therefore acted as the conduit of an absolute evil that took Alice as his accomplice. By becoming autonomous from Alice, he revealed a *transcendent nature*, that is, submission to a principle that simultaneously transcends and determines the localities in which he acts. The devil, under any circumstance, is a devil: his behaviour is defined by being an enemy of God. And it is through the cosmic battle with the divine principles of Good since the origin of the world that we can apprehend the malefic nature of his actions. Had his behaviour been guided by his ties with Alice, he would have been unlikely to have caused the death of two people close to her. Far from helping her as an entity that participates in her life and lies within her power (albeit relatively), he caused an evil that can only be comprehended through its absolute and universal form, recognizably the same anywhere and under any circumstance. The Exu/devil destroyed the circuit of exchanges in which Alice exerted her power of mediation through her entities in order to meet the demands of her family and friends.²² As a result, he indirectly convinces those who seek protection from his actions to revoke their local religious roots and redefine themselves through ties that transcend the terrestrial world, particularly those with the place where they live.

²¹ For an analysis on the importance of the circuit of exchanges among religious figures and their clientele in the constitution of cult houses and their leaders, see the classic text by Peter Fry (1983). See too José Renato Baptista 2007. Joel Robbins (2008) calls attention to a common trait of Pentecostalism that contrasts with 'traditional' cults: as a religion that separates and distantiates the transcendental and the mundane in a radical form, Pentecostalism enables individuals to recognize their own lack of control and power over their conditions of existence. This interpretation seems to fit perfectly with the experience described in Alice's account. I would merely observe that, in the latter case, the transcendent dimension that is foreground is that of Evil. Alice did not experience divine grace but the impersonal and malefic power of the Devil.

²² Kelly Hayes (2004) provides an excellent ethnographic analysis of the social and family resources possessed by a mother-of-saint in Rio de Janeiro through her entities. The author highlights the importance of the agency attributed to the entities and their forms of participating in the circuits of exchange of their 'owner.' On this point also see the pioneering analysis by Véronique Boyer (1993) on the ties between the women and their invisible entities.

The relativity of evil, dominant in the magic of candomblé and highlighted in academic works on the religion, was therefore unmasked under the severe gaze of the Pentecostals and continually reaffirmed through the stigmatizing identification with the favela promoted by the State. Rather than obtaining a favour from her Exu, in this case, the separation of the boyfriend from her daughter, she received a refutation of the beneficial (or at least ambivalent) nature of candomblé's magical interventions for herself. The entity himself unexpectedly confirmed the extent to which his action in the present exceeded Alice's control. In conclusion, Alice's experience primarily taught her that she had lost some of her capacities for intervening in the world in which she lives. This experience seems to be readily translatable into Pentecostal religious terms: after all, who if not God can challenge the violence of the countless demons who control life in this world? And, in the case of the community where she lives, perhaps it would be better, like so many others, to consider divine action as the only intervention capable of guaranteeing its residents the possibility of transcending the evil that tirelessly pervades and defines their territory.

The Laughter of the Pomba-Gira²³

As mentioned earlier, in the territory where Carlos and Bruno live the pastor has the State's approval to run the community's public services, as well as to ensure social and moral order. However, we would be doing an injustice to the importance of his church were we to imply that this control was simply juridical-political in nature and ignore the religious construction of its territory. What makes the control exerted by this church fascinating is the way in which the political universe is embedded in Evangelical conceptions and practices. The forms of controlling its territory, as well as the church's implementation of its authority, submit the secular conceptions – which theoretically, at least, provide the basis for the State's actions – to the principles that make this community a collective especially blessed by God. Up to now, the community's identification as an Evangelical territory has been presented as the only source of legitimacy recognized by the State for exercising power.

However, to comprehend the church's procedures more clearly we need to examine the form in which it conceives divine interventions among its members and over the territory where they live. Since our very first trips to the village, we learned about its foundation myth. We heard the story of an Evangelical individual who, returning to the place where he had been born, a small fishing village, begins to preach the Gospel and gradually convert its inhabitants. On converting, the residents became witnesses to a miracle that affected them personally and also redefined the

²³ Pomba-gira is the name of a female exu.

territory as a whole. God intervened by changing the natural conditions of the locality as well as the social, political and moral order prevailing in what then became His territory. The three generations succeeding this first one – the immediate target of conversion and the eye witness of its miraculous effects – are identified as the beneficiaries of the transformations made by God during this founding moment.

Here I cite the narrative of this reconversion of the territory, as I have previously quoted elsewhere (Birman 2006:41-62): “Some geographical features are therefore recognized as signs of this divine election. Close to the entry to the bay, from the fishing boat that transports us, it is possible to see on the coastline an enormous boulder balanced on top of another. This strange rocky sculpture is frequently mentioned as proof of God’s choice. In a fairly unorthodox appropriation of the recognition that *the Indians*, the country’s first inhabitants, made of the Catholicity of the Terra de Santa Cruz, we find that these testimonies – which, in earlier times, guaranteed the inaugural act of the foundation of Brazil – supplied the community’s population with Biblical proof of God’s action. Its meaning in the *language of the Indians* refers to a geographical feature whose divine meaning is inscribed in the Gospels: “*I shall found my church on rock and the doors of hell shall not prevail over it.*” “*The rock is Christ,*” says the pastor.”

In sum, the *community*’ is ideally imagined as a territory whose frontiers were established through this primordial rupture, only after which did it truly begin to exist. The rupture with the past, in contrast to most of the stories we know concerning the foundation of Pentecostal churches, was achieved through an overriding territorial principle, which gave rise to an apparent religious ‘isolate,’ the *community of believers*, whose foundation seems to have afforded it a specific political status: in this ‘place,’ the law of men is duplicated by the law of God, a fact recognized by everyone, ‘outsiders’ and ‘insiders’ alike. In day-to-day life, the pastor reaffirms and looks to exert (fairly successfully, in fact) his authority over the village as a whole.

However, the pastor’s administration of the territory as a whole also provokes a certain discomfort in another group – namely, the *deviants* (*desviados*) from the church who sometimes perceive themselves to be treated with excessive rigour. The category *deviants*, frequently used in Pentecostal churches to indicate their lapsed and particularly sinful members, here designates a group whose main defining condition is that of being *youths*, young men from the Pentecostal families who behave as though they were ‘in the world,’ enjoying its pleasures and sins (see Birman 2008, Bakker 2008 and Cretton 2007).

In fact, the divine appropriation of this territory has been accompanied by the development of a form of entry into adult life for youths involving what we could call a *ritual exercise of sins*. Young men, condemned at the pulpit for partying, drug-use and drinking, are absolved in the conversations among their families and even encouraged by narratives recounted in hushed tones in which the pastor himself is described as a former member of this ‘brotherhood.’ In sum, these ‘deviants’ are attributed a special – if ambivalent – condition of liminality, whose meaning centres on this transition from adolescence to the world of adult men. In enjoying this condition, young men rely on the reluctant approval of their parents. They drink, use drugs, play football, dance and practice ‘fornication,’ prompting loud condemnation from the pastors. In sum, they do precisely ‘everything’ that a certain ‘youth culture’ encourages them to do, but on the margins of a territory which they themselves consider holy. This connection, particularly interesting here, makes the transition from youth to adulthood a religious deviation, related to a position of liminality in both social and territorial terms.²⁴

Far from the church, but not oblivious to its admonitions, the *deviants* seem to embody an Evangelical compass that forces them to locate themselves preferentially on the margins of the village’s central places and events. They respectfully accede to the divine appropriation of the territory. Hence *deviants, lapsed members and non-Evangelicals* – all the degrees of distance from the church and proximity to diabolical evil recognized in the village – form part of a resistance, sometimes deaf, sometimes strident and even guilty, to the limits imposed on them for the Evangelical utopia to be realized there.

It was in one of these marginal places and at night that Carlos and Bruno became involved in a form of behaviour judged by their peers and the church alike as witchcraft.

It was a rainy day in the village..., and they and their group of friends were in the ‘Canto Brabo’... drinking and taking drugs (such as cannabis and cocaine, especially the latter, which is the drug of choice for many youngsters...) when they decided to roast a chicken. Bruno went to his house and fetched a rooster, came back and handed it to Carlos who immediately wrung its neck and began to pluck it. They took the bird to an abandoned house nearby and tried to make a fire, but the firewood was damp, which ruined their plans. Then Carlos said: “you know what, I’m going to eat it raw.” He described what happened:

²⁴ The category of ‘deviants’ applies only to men. And, indeed, the women of the village avoid taking part in these sinful events. These usually occur with the participation of ‘outside’ women, such as the occasional tourist or, more frequently, among men.

“I began to take a few bites, chewed and chewed and chewed, and swallowed. Then I threw it across to Bruno and he took a few bites too. Our faces became covered in blood, like vampires, when I bit the skin, it stretched and then burst, splattering blood over my face. Then I flung the chicken over my back and we walked through the middle of the village with our bloodied faces, laughing loudly and with the headless chicken bleeding down our backs (...) I expelled people from the two bars; I arrived in that bar next to Negão’s house and I threw the bird, bleeding everywhere, on top of the bar and asked him to cook it for me; there it splattered blood on other people, covering the whole bar in blood... I even said I was going to become a macumbeiro [macumba specialist].”²⁵

The account provided by the two protagonists of this enactment of a macumba ritual initially describes their gestures as the result of practical aims, cooking the chicken to eat. However it acquires an increasingly provocative meaning: while at first they were messing about and simply wanted to improvise the means to a roast a chicken over a fire, their lack of tools and skills meant that they ended up using their own teeth to chew the raw and bloody meat. The bites on the raw chicken apparently provoked a shift in the direction and intentionality of their gestures. With their *“faces covered in blood, like vampires,”* one of them said, borrowing from film imagery of the mythical devourer of human blood, they deliberately looked to startle and strike fear in people. In other words, they turned their gestures imitating diabolical possession into a parody, a carnival act, through which they mocked, ridiculed and distanced themselves critically from the threats posed by the diabolical evil they themselves were embodying.²⁶ And indeed, according to them, people reacted to their behaviour by translating it – for anyone who had not yet understood its significance – as evidence that the two had *“turned into macumbeiros.”* The improvised and clumsy way of killing the chicken reveals the initial absence of any intention to perform a ritual, or at least in the form that a macumba ritual would assume in the Pentecostal imagination. However, the chance events that enabled their gestures to be redirected made the presence of the devil guiding their actions even more unquestionable for themselves and for those witnessing the scene. Embodied in this way, the devil transforms into a being who laughs uproariously at the church’s attempts to confine him to the margins of its territory.

Bruno and Carlos recognize that their gestures appear like those the pastors identify as actions of a diabolical entity without ever having this subjective experience as members of candomblé. There

²⁵ The account cited here is included in the research report by Eduardo Pereira, a research assistant for this project in 2006.

²⁶ Here I am referring, of course, to carnivalization as a disruptive and inventive action, as described by Bakhtin.

are no divergences in interpretation, therefore. In fact, the religious experiences of the protagonists of these two cases is very different. The two young ‘deviants’ were accused of being possessed by a devil identified by Pastor Pedro from the community. The latter concluded that the author of the macumba performed there was a *Pomba-Gira* – in other words, a female entity identified as the spirit of a prostitute. Although these manifestations were likened to diabolical practices, they differed, at least in degree, from a ‘presentification’ of the Devil in the village’s central square, during the day and in front of the church. Most people from this age group, I would point out, did not challenge the church so openly as Carlos and Bruno did by bringing the Devil ‘in person’ to public space, parodying/performing a scene of witchcraft.

Becoming an adult implies making moral choices that allow the person to abandon diabolical practices after experimenting them. This, at least, is the project found there. What parents crave for their children, therefore, is the recognition of the centrality of the church values in the constitution of their selves.²⁷ Consequently, the fate of the ‘deviants’ depends on what they will make of the family inheritance they carry, whose relative importance in the local hierarchies helps to establish certain expectations for the young men concerning their future. Thought to be slightly crazy, frequently drunk and a habitual drug user, Bruno’s behaviour exacerbated his marginality and brought him perilously close to the limits of criminality. Although he still believes in his future salvation, he proves hesitant when it comes to the advantages offered by the path of redemption. The latter involves much more significant problems for himself than for many of his companions, more clearly linked to the families favoured by the church’s hierarchy. Carlos, for his part, also carries a heavy burden in terms of family inheritance. Neither of their fathers – fishing workers, known for their difficulties with drink – had ever enjoyed a good standing, despite being heirs of the Evangelical tradition through family ties, and for a long time had been considered as lapsed members by the church. It was through their mothers that the two young men preserved, despite everything, some ties with the church, however slight, and through their fathers that they seemed to share a certain scepticism concerning the promised redemption. After the scene involving the *Pomba-Gira*, one of the youths returned to the church’s fold, stopped drinking and got married. The other, on the contrary, intensified his identification with deviancy and its margins beyond what we could call be a ritually controlled liminality. Despite his increasing stigmatization, Bruno continues to display confrontational and mocking behaviour which marks his distance from the church. Even so, this behaviour has not so far led to his association with criminality – something that would probably occur very quickly in other social margins.

²⁷ I call attention to the absence of young ‘deviant’ women in the context under study. Even when women move away from the church, the division of gender roles prevents them from exercising a ‘floating’ sexuality, accompanied by free circulation in space.

As anticipated, the pastor is guided in his leadership of the village by Evangelical criteria, which includes permanent guidelines for the different services offered by the State that look to intensify the boundaries of the community with the forces emanating from the Holy Spirit. Jurisdiction over the deviants is the most apparent, since this contrasts with the State's tendency towards criminalization, implemented elsewhere by its police forces. The police station, also located on the beach, indicates that this liminal space is also permanently observed by the police. However, these forces of order seem to pay little real attention to the transactions that occur there. Contradicting my own expectations, a certain distancing and even degree of avoidance prevails when it comes to identifying and pursuing the trafficking of drugs in the village and criminalizing the drug users. The relative freedom enjoyed by the latter there, though always accompanied by the threats of eternal damnation, contrasts strongly with what happens in other neighbourhoods where the police take violent action against drug sellers and users. The association of the deviance into criminality on the margins of the village is conscientiously avoided by the church for those who belong to community and whose foreseen future is to join the church, at some point, perhaps not too distant, when they will fully share the Evangelical heritage that blessed their territory.

The avoidance of reducing *deviant* individuals to the status of *criminals* firstly derives from the possibility of conversion, which anticipates their full incorporation into the community of believers. Secondly, in this specific case, the belonging to a holy place in which the State recognizes its own configuration and control by Evangelical values, makes sin a more clearly temporary part of existence. Within its sanctified space, we can suggest, the Evangelical community sees the return of the deviants to the church as an anticipation of God's victory over those who would seek to destroy it from its margins and alleyways. As one young man looking to return to the church explained: he did not want to miss the day of *ecstasy* when his church rose to the sky, that is, the Day, perhaps imminent, of the Final Judgment.

The somewhat distracted monitoring of the youths by the police seems to be based on a respect of the local authorities, but also on sharing the Evangelical view that attempts to persuade 'outsiders' of the positivity and effectiveness of divine agency in defining their territory and the community's moral unity. Under the community's control, young people are rarely interpellated by the State through its abstractly determined rules. The relation with the latter involves the mediation of the pastor and the values defined by his church.

I said that sectors of the State help maintain public order within the *Evangelical community* through behaviour that expresses an affinity with the church's criteria for governing the village. Were this not the case, most of the teachers would not be Evangelical, nor would other employees of the State have been appointed by the church. Though not isolated, the Evangelical community is protected in part from social fragmentation and the presence of other institutions and churches by the protective net surrounding the community, constructing it as a kind of Pentecostal 'enclave.' This takes the form of more or less covertly barring the presence of other religious and secular groups in the locality. The church's filter is part of the lines of force that traverse the municipality's political dynamics. The teachers are instructed to avoid controversial themes, while the school year is planned in accordance with the church calendar. The police, when called upon, know which suspects to choose. Street cleaners recognize the political importance of keeping the square where the church and pastor's house are located clean, while aware of the places where rubbish can be freely left to accumulate. The supply of electricity to the village also accompanied the definition of the territory, respecting the religious borders and conferring them with social and legal legitimacy through administrative decrees that ensured better living conditions for those residents included in the Evangelical community. Hence the State's presence in the village complies with the values and demands of the local religious elite, controlling the flux of services and the exchange relations with supra-local institutions. It would not be unreasonable to say that the State became 'Pentecostalized' in the village and, in this way, by corroborating the church's orientations, it looks to set the limits for those living there.

Final notes

Evangelical efforts to 'Pentecostalize' the sectors of the State with which they relate have not been entirely innocuous. The drama faced by Alice can also be seen in this light. Conversion to a Pentecostal church quickly appeared to her as a means of transcending her moral failings and her imbrication in local conflicts through the identificatory interpellations imposed by the State. Her response to these multiple interpellations was not conversion. Only the latter would have allowed a permanent form of purification and an effective rupture with local devils. However, many like Alice cultivate a relative distance from the trenches of the Spiritual Battle, following the ambivalent path of partial adherence to the Evangelical word. Alice recognized the precariousness of her magical resources in those circumstances without adopting, as an outcome of this realization, the Spiritual Battle as a guide to her existence. The resigned coexistence with diabolical evil therefore presents itself as one possible form of marginal resistance to the State's suspicion and to the community imperatives proposed by Evangelicals.

The Pentecostal actor in the favela appears as an other positively differentiated from the contaminated moral environment of the place where he or she lives. Evangelical religious affiliation consequently alters the forms through which the Pentecostal individual participates in the circuits of exchange among those occupying the margins. Distant from macumba, they offer conversion to those who find themselves on the margins of the margins and, as we can read in the account below, assure even drug dealers protection from the Afro-Brazilian entities. They even raise the possibility of altering the malign nature of the community in the future:

“The strong Evangelical presence in Chatô is not only visible in the small churches that sprout up in the little streets, or in the men and women with their bibles under their arms, but also, unexpectedly, in a monument erected by the drug dealers in a highly visible area of the favela. The bible sculpted in stone and protected under a glass dome represents a homage from the movement²⁸ to the faith of their relatives and friends. “Deep, deep down, their desire too is to find Jesus,” one of the missionaries of the Youths with a Mission (Jocum) explained to us. Many attribute the drop in violence in Chatô to a ‘quasi-conversion’ of the dealers, an explanation that also reveals the strong prejudice faced by Afro-Brazilian religions: “at least they don’t practice macumba any longer, they don’t need to kill to mollify the saints,” one of the interviewees commented.” (Felipina Chinelli et al. 2005:137)²⁹

The social, physical and symbolic death of the person held under the sway of the devil that the drug gangs encapsulate is contrasted, in this article, to the redemption provided by the church whose effects can be felt even before conversion. After drug dealers had commissioned a sculpture of a bible, people spoke of their ‘quasi-conversion.’ For one pastor from the favela in question, these were clear signs that the church had succeeded in reducing barbarity. And in this way the pastor described himself as a mediator between the peripheries and those from the ‘other side’ of the city.

²⁸ Movement is the name given to themselves by some dealers who consider their activities to possess a political sense.

²⁹ Generally speaking the literature suggests that Pentecostal missionary action is directed towards the conversion of individuals rather than territories. However, we can see here in relation to the favela and to the case of the community of believers, that the discourse of conversion possesses strong territorial dimensions: “expel the demons” acquires a sense of conquest and purification in relation to a world marked by barbarity. The work of Philippe Gonzales (2008:50) provides a valuable description of the potential of Evangelical action. As he writes: “Evangelization is an incursion into enemy territory and an overturning of the order reigning there. The Evangelicals are conscious of working at the intersection between two worlds, their action is designed to free those captured by the demon and to introduce them to the divine reality” “...Missionary action appears therefore as a raid into enemy terrain and aims to install a new spiritual division of the territory.”

It is not for nothing that Evangelicals claim to be the main architects of a future moral reconfiguration of these marginal spaces.³⁰

The accusation of witchcraft in both cases is associated with the Pentecostal universe and its relation with territories/communities. More precisely, I have examined how certain enunciations involving witchcraft ‘affected’ the protagonists of these histories.³¹ I looked to broaden our comprehension of these situations by showing how the force of the claims of witchcraft is also associated with processes of demonization related to the criminalization of certain social figures and territories located on the margins.³² I suggested that the identifications promoted by the State favour Pentecostal universalism and its calls for transcendence and the uprooting from local religious traditions. As a result, I have pointed out the religious and political mutation occurring within these territories where the Evangelical message grows along with its political goal, which identifies them as the people responsible for the future moral reconfiguration of these territories. I also highlight, as a result of these situations, the participation, resistance and discomfort of my protagonists as objects and subjects of magic and witchcraft. Although they are convinced and concerned by the accusing and redemptive word of Pentecostalism, I describe, through their attitudes, a mitigated response to these political-religious imperatives, a relative distancing that engenders a precarious, resistant and frequently provisional adherence to the social and moral order offered to them.

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³⁰ The “entry into enemy terrain” from the Evangelical viewpoint has been helped by the police forces operating in the favelas. Cristina Vital da Cunha (2009) draws attention to the fact that in the ‘war’ fought by the police against the ‘traffickers’ and ‘bandits,’ invasions of the favela territories were frequently accompanied by the destruction of the objects of Afro-Brazilian cults (‘despachos’). Here I recall the work of Yvonne Maggie in this book and also her text in the “Museu da Polícia” (1993) in which the belief in witchcraft acquires a positive value through the participation of the police.

³¹ I use the verb ‘affect’ in the sense proposed by Favret Saada (1976 and 2009), in other words without opposing and separating the emotional experience of the actors from their social and symbolic relations – much the opposite: I consider affectations as essential to comprehending the meanings of witchcraft. Favret Saada (2009:146) claims a point of view that distances her from anthropological works that remain bound “to cultural productions of understanding.”

³² Here it is interesting to note the approach opened up by a number of works by removing witchcraft from the spaces allocated to it by the ‘Great Divide:’ it is always associated with popular groups, preferably from the ‘south,’ and absent from intellectual elites and the societies of the ‘north’ (Cf. Favret-Saada 2009, Pels 2003 and Geschiere 2003).

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