7. ‘Written by the Devil’. Suspicious Consumption of Television

During my conversations with evangélicos in the morro, I always asked them what their thoughts were about television. To my initial surprise, many of them started to accuse all kinds of programs of having a devastating effect on Brazilian people and the society at large, instead of enlightening me about the evangelical programs they watched and listened to. Especially telegenovelas, the Brazilian version of what we generally know as soap-series, were often immediately brought to the forefront. The people claimed telegenovelas and other popular television programs demonstrated the miserable state of the world and in their opinions contributed absolutely nothing good to the viewers. While generally we would also talk about the evangelical programs people watched, it surprised me that most people did not mention one specific evangelical television station or program right away, as was the case with radio (see previous chapter). It was only after a while that I understood that, if I wanted to understand the relationship between Pentecostalism and media, my inquiries into this relationship should not to be focused on evangelical media alone. All kinds of programs were very important to the people of the two churches in my research, albeit in ways different to what I had imagined beforehand.

The negative stance adopted towards some mass media among the evangélicos in the morro resembled Quentin Schultze’s description of evangelicals in the United States. In his study on televangelism in the United States, Schultze argues that among evangelicals there are basically two views on mass media. One is the optimistic view that mass media can be used for the purpose of spreading the gospel effectively and changing the American culture for the better; the other is the pessimistic view that the mass media threaten the values and beliefs of the evangelical community (Schultze 1996: 61-73). What struck me when looking over the opinions of evangélicos in Brazil was not only that Brazilian evangélicos generally expressed the same two opinions, but also that evangélicos, academics and journalists seemed to be concerned with the same question: What are the effects of certain programs on the audience? While such a question seems to me very legitimate, all parties suspect that the effects occur immediately. In Brazil, for example, journalists are especially concerned with the effect of Pentecostal media on the behavior of potential voters. The idea that Pentecostal churches and politicians are trying to build a media empire for the ulterior motive of political gain is widespread and so is
the idea that their mass media influence ‘believers’ to vote for them (see introduction). While mass media and political power are of course intricately linked, in the introduction I discussed the limits of the models that suppose straightforward effects of mass media on the audience. I argued that instead of holding on to these models, we should try to understand and describe what the mass media mean to people who live in the favelas.

In the previous chapters I have tried to sketch the life-world of the people who live in the morro in order to give the reader an insight into the ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams 1961: 48) that Pentecostal mass media enforce. I have described several examples of evangelical radio and television programs which people in the favela watch and listen to. I have tried to show that radio specifically is considered a very intimate, emotional medium on the one hand and a powerful tool to express identity and presence on the other. In Chapter Four I have described several news-programs people watch regularly in relation to the evangelical newspapers, so as to demonstrate that the anxieties of everyday life are reproduced by the mass media at large. Churches both magnify and resolve these anxieties without being able to escape truly the tensions they themselves reproduce.

In the preceding chapter, which focused on sound and radio, I have described one important program of the Igreja Universal; *O Ponto de Luz* and I have shown that people of both churches often tune in to music programs on television, but I have said little about the reception of television programs or the behavior of people concerning television. Therefore, in this last chapter I will turn my focus specifically to television. To understand how mass media are related to religious doctrines and practices, I have followed Derrida’s insights into the elective affinities between Christianity and mass media. Derrida’s argumentation for such an affinity was based mostly upon examples of Christian television, which offer a ‘real presence’ of the divine through images and miracles. Pertinently it could be argued that the Protestant aversion to idolatry obstructs the appropriation of images and objects that are visible in Catholic media in Brazil (see for example d’Abreu 2002). Given this fear of idolatry Protestantism is often represented as an iconoclastic religious tradition. It may indeed seem so but this is not an accurate picture. As we will see, images (including television) form an important part of the sensual experience of Pentecostalism in the morro, particularly when it comes to images that are potentially diabolical. Here I would also like to emphasize that television programs are part of a wider web of representations. Besides asking only if and how religious television programs affect people, we should also ask how religious ideas and
practices shape television viewing practices and interpretations. In particular: what is the relationship between Pentecostalism and vision and how do Brazilian Pentecostal practices influence the viewing of television programs? Taking into account the prohibition on the veneration of saints, for example, one wonders what kind of instructions the Pentecostal institutions lay down for television watching. What power is granted to images in Pentecostal churches?

In this chapter several important threads of this dissertation come together. I will argue that the opposition of evangélicos to certain television programs is related to religious practices such as Candomblé and Umbanda. From the perspective of many evangélicos, the supposed involvement of Globo with Afro-Brazilian religious practices, leads to self-disciplining acts regarding television viewing. For many people, conversion to Pentecostalism implies a different way of looking at the world because they become aware that the spiritual battle between God and the devil also takes places in the domain of television. At this juncture, I will show some of the ways in which evangélicos position themselves in relation to the medium television and its content and in what ways television forms part of the daily life of the people in Cantagalo/ Pavão-Pavãozinho. In particular, I will briefly discuss the rise of Protestant television in Brazil after which I will turn to several discussions on the relationship between vision and Pentecostalism. By showing some of the different spectator-positions Pentecostals may take when watching telenovelas, I will argue that television viewing involves a dynamic of attraction and rejection, which for the evangélicos in the morro is related to Pentecostal bodily disciplines and practices. Attraction and rejection cannot be categorized simply into Godly programs that attract and diabolical programs that repel. People are attracted to watching diabolical programs to identify the work of the devil. This also means that Pentecostalism and mass media should not be defined only by that which Pentecostals say they (want to) watch, but also by that which they say they do not (want to) watch. Telenovelas are part of the popular cultural representations that can be considered common knowledge. They represent features of contemporary Brazilian society, which many Pentecostals perceive as sinful and diabolical and therefore criticize even when they often do watch them. Then I will argue that the attraction and rejection of certain images and narratives in telenovelas are not only related to the ‘reading’ of the message, but also to the physical and spiritual experiences of Pentecostals when viewing these telenovelas and that these experiences of watching are directly related to the presence of the devil and the Holy Spirit. Lastly I will argue that these ideas and experiences of watching
telenovelas are related to the prevailing popular mythology that TV Globo, the main producer of telenovelas, has links with the devil. This popular myth current among Pentecostals in Cantagalo/Pavão-Pavãozinho is related to the position that TV Globo has maintained in relation to the expansion of the media empire of the Igreja Universal and the consequent demonization of *Rede Globo* by the Igreja Universal.

### 7.1 Television in the *Morro*

When looking out over the morro from my window, I could see many dishes on top of the brick buildings (fig. 41). At first, I mistakenly saw them for satellite dishes, until I understood that they were dish-shaped antennas. The many dishes highlight the importance of television in the lives of the people in the morro. Although the inhabitants of the morro might be considered poor in relation to the surrounding neighborhoods, every household had at least one television and one radio, often placed in the center of the living-room (fig. 42 and fig. 43). Since the houses are built very near to each other and doors and windows stay open most of the daytime, a mixture of sounds can be heard pouring from the televisions and radios of the neighbors. Certainly this does not mean everybody is watching television all the time. Nevertheless, many television sets are left turned on, while people are walking in and out, cleaning their houses or arriving from or going to work. During my stay in the morro, I noticed that people would often be talking to one another (or with me) while the television was turned on, only to interrupt the conversation when something noteworthy appeared on the screen.

Here it needs to be emphasized that, when I refer to television I am mostly talking about the *canais abertas*, the ‘open (free) channels’ that are publicly available for all those who have a television and an antenna. Most people in the morro could not afford the kind of cable or satellite television, which the more affluent people in Ipanema could. The cable company NET, affiliated to Rede Globo, cost at least 50 reais per month and that particular connection did not even provide the North American channels such as Sony Television, ESPN or HBO. In terms of television, the people in the morro were dependent on what was offered by the open channels.\(^275\)

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274 *Rede Globo*, is the company of which TV Globo is part.

275 In total there are eight. In order of general popularity *Globo, SBT, Record, TV Band (Bandeirantes), CNT, Rede TV*, Cultura, TVF Brasil.
Fig. 41. The dishes on top of the houses
Fig. 42. Television in the wooden house of Bernardo

Fig. 43. Watching the 2002 world cup games at Maria’s
The association of inhabitants did offer a cable connection for 8 reais a month. This transmitted a somewhat stronger signal of the same open channels. Some people who lived in the houses on the lower sides were having trouble receiving the signal with their antennas and for them the cable was a solution. By and large, however, many people felt it was too expensive and unnecessary, despite the illegal service that provided HBO in addition.

Of the eight open channels, TV Globo was certainly the most popular among the inhabitants of the morro. TV Globo is known worldwide for its telenovelas, which it produces itself and which are watched by millions of people every day. The first telenovela of the day generally starts between five and six in the evening and the last ends between ten and eleven in the night. Beginning the three to four novels that run every day during the week, TV Globo offers news-programs and occasionally a football match or some other event. Reality programs such as Big Brother Brasil were also quite popular during the time of my research. The other television stations largely followed Globo's lead in terms of innovation and audience ratings. In general, the three most popular television stations of Rio de Janeiro are: 1) TV Globo, 2) SBT of Silvio Santos and 3) TV Record, of the Igreja Universal.

These three TV stations broadcast largely the same type of programs during the day, with certain similarities and differences between the three. They all offered mostly Brazilian-made programs and movies from the US. Besides this, all of them featured telenovelas in the evening. SBT featured the very popular program Ratinho (Little Rat), a 'talk-show', which revolved primarily around people who accused each other of all sorts of things, including dramatized fights over lawful fatherhood. In these programs the DNA of men and babies was compared to decide if alimony had to be paid or not. Record and Globo both featured news programs, but only Record featured the spectacular Cidade Alerta (Watchful City) in which, for example, police patrols that entered favelas were followed from close by (see also Chapter Four). SBT and Globo both offered a reality show, Casa dos Artistas (SBT) and Big Brother Brasil (Globo). Record and Globo both offered football matches. The rest of the television stations offered similar programs.

While SBT and Globo were the two most popular television stations of Rio de Janeiro, among evangélicos they did not often receive a positive mention. The television

276 For discussions on the history of the telenovelas see for example Vink (1988), Hamburger (1998) or
277 According to the free access data of the IBOPE, which I accessed regularly during 2003-2005
stations mostly cropped up in relation to the programs they said they did not watch on account of their Pentecostal identity. On the whole, the programs that evangélicos liked to watch appeared on other channels. CNT, Rede TV and Bandeirantes all offered evangelical programs in the morning and some of them during the day. It was remarkable that among the people of the Assembléia de Deus whom I interviewed, there were hardly any consistent answers to the question which evangelical programs they watched. Some people watched the program Vitória em Cristo of Silas Malafaia, broadcast on Rede TV on Saturday morning, and others watched the gospel music program Conexão Gospel. The only program that was mentioned by almost all adherents of the Assembléia de Deus was the program of Pastor Soares.

Pastor Romildo Ribeiro Soares originally started the Igreja Universal with Edir Macedo but had founded his own (neo)Pentecostal church, the Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus thereafter (1980). Maria had briefly attended Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus situated opposite to the Igreja Universal in Copacabana. R.R. Soares was probably the best-known media pastor among the people who attended all kinds of Pentecostal churches in the morro. He was on television daily, often multiple times a day. Most people watched the program R.R. Soares on CNT (Channel 9), which featured Soares as he preached and ministered in his church. He changed the name of his program to Show da Fé (Show of Faith) during my stay in Brazil and he began broadcasting on TV BAND (Channel 7). The Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus resembles the Igreja Universal in its theological component. They two focus on deliverance and divine healing and they two revolve around a charismatic leader. Despite this, they have much fewer churches and much fewer political candidates elected. They are much more focused on remaining on air to practice televangelism than the Igreja Universal (Fonseca 2003; Mariano 1999). The church has been broadcasting since the 1980s and remains able to do so by means of the donations of audience. Fonseca says the format of the program and the emphasis on donations that can be sent to the church during the program mark its difference from the programs of the Igreja Universal. In the programs of the latter, the audience is always persuaded to go to a culto near their home after watching the program. Deliverance happens in the churches and cathedrals, not in front of the television.

During my research, I frequently noticed that people of the Assembléia de Deus watched the show of R.R. Soares. From my observations and conversations in the morro I concluded that people of the Assembléia de Deus liked to watch his program primarily.

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278 See Chapter Six for a description of the style of preaching of Pastor Silas Malafaia.
because it was one of the few Pentecostal programs which offered a regularly televised culto. During the broadcast Soares delivered a sermon which taught people something about the Bible. The reasons for its success among adherents of the Assembléia de Deus seemed to be the informative nature of the program. Since the show was not exclusively aimed at drawing people to the churches, they had much more space to simply enjoy this evangelical program and continue to congregate at an Assembléia de Deus, as many of them did.

Most adherents of the Igreja Universal watched the Pentecostal programs of their own church broadcast on TV Record. TV Record has been quite successful in attracting popular TV hosts and professionals which has elevated the standards of the network rapidly. The network is continually improving its infrastructure and it seems that they are well on the way to becoming one of the leading networks in Brazil. TV Record broadcast a mix of programs. In the afternoon it broadcast movies and, at the beginning of the evening, it broadcast the national news program, followed by episodes of two telenovelas. In the early morning and the afternoon they broadcast a program called Ponto de Luz, which I described in the preceding chapter. Interestingly there were not many people who said they watched these programs regularly. As I also explained in the preceding chapter, programs such as Ponto de Luz seemed to be aimed primarily at those people who did not yet attend the Igreja Universal. This would seem to confirm the work of both Kramer (2005) and Fonseca (2003), who conclude that the main object of the Igreja Universal is to attract people to its churches for revenue.

Although Edir Macedo’s voice is broadcast on Radio Aleluia every day, it appears surprisingly little on television. Several adherents of the Igreja Universal did show me one particular videotape which featured Bispo Macedo and some of them even offered it to me freely to take home and study. There were plenty of families who had a VCR at home and people of both churches watched Pentecostal videos occasionally. The video, entitled: ‘Mensagens de Fé’ (Messages of Faith) contains a recording of a culto led by Edir Macedo. The culto that was held in the Catedral Mundial da Fé, the headquarters of the church in Rio de Janeiro, was attended by as many people as could fit into the enormous amphitheatre. Half of the images on the video show the large crowd of people listening attentively to Macedo. Similar to the role ascribed to its television programs, people seemed to regard this video as a means to draw people to the church. Not only

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279 As Fonseca (2003) also confirms, the programs Fala que Eu te Escuto (Speak and I Will Listen), broadcast in the afternoon and Despertar da Fé (The Awakening of Faith) broadcast in the early morning were both replaced by the program Ponto de Luz in 2001.
did people give it to me freely, during one of my interviews a man put on the video in the background to support his own testimony and his argument that the Igreja Universal was the only effective Pentecostal church around (see Chapters Three and Five).

7.2 Selective Iconoclasm

If one examines Pentecostal discourse on television and radio, one will find recurring accusations of the putative idolatry of other religious institutions in Brazil. The Igreja Universal is especially known for its fierce opposition to the veneration of Catholic saints. The best example of such opposition is the infamous ‘chute na santis’ – the televised vilipending of a statue of the Brazilian Patron Saint, Nossa Senhora de Aparecida. During a nation-wide television broadcast from the studios of Rede Record, Bispo Sérgio Von Helde of the Igreja Universal, desecrated a plaster statue of the Catholic Patron Saint. In his attempt to demonstrate that it was merely a plaster image and not a saint, he assaulted the statue, which resulted in a lawsuit in which he was accused and found guilty of vilipending religious symbols and of inciting religious prejudice and discrimination (Kramer 2001). The broadcast on TV Record was not the immediate cause of the scandal. Only after edited clips of the incident were broadcast on the nightly news of TV Globo, did the potentially disturbing images cause an outrage (ibid: 45).

Eric Kramer has written a wonderfully detailed article about the court case, in which lawyers and judges had to argue over the status of the statue as either a religious or profane object for the Bispo who kicked, it in relation to the status it held for a large part of the Brazilian society. A simplification of the argument by the defense ran as follows: since it was an expression of his religious freedom to show that the saint was merely made of plaster and since for him it was not a religious object, how could he be judged? The court ruled that the statue should be considered a public religious symbol and that: ‘The symbolic quality of this national religious icon transcended the notion of bounded individual and corporate property rights. In this sense, the state’s position makes religious signs the symbolic property of social collectivities (Kramer 2001: 56).’

One should be careful not to misread the accusations of idolatry on the part of the Pentecostals with a total ban on the use of images in religious doctrine or practice. While the Bispo of the Igreja Universal might be thought of as an iconoclast, the Igreja

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280 For further reading see: Montes 1998; Birman & Lehmann 1999; Kramer 2001
Universal is certainly not against all images displayed in any Christian Church. On the contrary, it constantly mass produces all kinds of images and objects that function as religious artifacts. Furthermore, as I have argued in Chapter Three, the Bishops and pastors themselves have become important celebrities whose images are often idolized. The church regularly broadcasts programs and publishes visual material, which feature all kinds of images on display to strengthen the authority of the Igreja Universal in the religious-political arena. Most notable are: the images of their leaders (Macedo, Crivella), people who practice(d) Candomblé and images of crowds of people gathered in their churches around the world. Yet, it also mass produces small objects and paraphernalia such as a small (empty) cross, a replica of the cave tomb of Jesus and innumerable types of folders and colorful envelops.

The use of images in the Igreja Universal is not an exception amongst Protestant churches in Brazil or in the world. David Morgan, for example, has argued that many Protestant groups in the United States use all kinds of images, including representations of Jesus, to create emotional and affective bonds with the divine or what Morgan describes as: 'The embodiment of belief in response to the image as a real presence (Morgan 1998: 58)'. In his work on interpretations and experiences of popular religious artworks in the United States, Morgan argues that such popular imagery forms an integral part of Protestant faith and that the act of looking at such images 'constitutes a powerful practice of belief (ibid: 3)'. Several other scholars have also argued for a closer look to be taken at the forms in which religious knowledge and experience are being communicated. Laurence Moore and Colleen McDannell have both placed emphasis on form and style in North American Christian movements in relation to the commodification of Christianity. Laurence Moore demonstrates that from the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the present, Christian authorities had been searching for ways to incorporate popular practices and forms to make the Christian message more appealing. In a similar vein, Colleen McDannell writes about contemporary Christian movements in the US: 'The stress that is placed on critically thinking about religion in liberal traditions holds less importance in conservative Christianity than doing religious activities and identifying oneself as a Christian... The visual, sensual and tactile form of the object offers an immediacy that ideas do not always have (McDannell 1995: 223).'

Not only in the United States is such an intricate relationship between vision and Protestantism encountered. Based on her research on Pentecostalism in Ghana, Birgit Meyer also argues that we should pay attention to the ways in which Pentecostal imagery
constitutes belief (Meyer 2003). In her description of the Pentecostal forms of representations in Ghana, she argues that while Protestantism is centered on the word, it would be mistaken to disregard the importance that images have in the creation of Pentecostal meaning. In Pentecostalism in Ghana, the relation between the Bible and the image is one of mutual dependence: images and objects are interpreted with reference to the Bible but at the same time, these images visualized the written word and ‘affirm the power of the Bible to explain’ (Meyer 2003: 13). In other words, Pentecostal doctrines and practices involve a Pentecostal visual culture, in which looking is informed by Pentecostal notions of reality and this reality is confirmed by what is seen.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will demonstrate that the relationship between Pentecostalism and mass media in the morro cannot and should not be defined according to categorizations that define Pentecostalism as a religious practice that centers on the Word instead of the image, or that we should privilege one sensuous experience over the other in the constitution of belief. In the words of Colleen McDannell:

> What is needed is a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between body and mind; word and image. As “multimedia events,” religious practices are areas where speech, vision and gesture, touch and sound combine. The assumption that Protestantism broke the Word/words away from visual or tactile perception is not correct. A radical division may have been intended but not entirely achieved. Through religious practice rather than through theological or contemplative reflection, various sensory modes come together (McDannell: 1995: 14).

Despite similar developments in Brazil, where there is also a large marketplace of Christian goods, the Igreja Universal does not sell goods and images merely for people to wear or to take home. It also uses images and objects in its services. In a Sunday morning service at the Igreja Universal in Ipanema, for example, all people received a sealed cup of mineral water. A green sticker covered the brand but otherwise it was no different from the water one could buy at every kiosk or bar in the street. During the service we were told to put the cup on our heads and pray for the Holy Spirit to come down to sanctify the water. At the end of the service, we were told to take the water home and place it into our refrigerator from where it would help to protect the home and have a positive effect on our family life. We were not allowed to drink it until next week’s service when we had to bring cup back. Such use of objects was not at all uncommon. In my introduction I have pointed to Kramer’s description of these objects as ‘faith artifacts’(Kramer 2002: 23) that link the people to Biblical narratives and symbols.
Besides the use of these objects and images, there were several occasions on which we watched films in the church as part of the church service. For example, in the first week of December 2003 one of my friends who was part of the *grupo jovem* of the Igreja Universal, gave me an invitation to a movie presentation in the Igreja Universal in Copacabana. The invitation read: 'Watch the film *Meggido!*' the final Battle between the Good and the Bad. Free Entry.' The young man who gave me the invitation strongly advised me to go to see the film since he thought it was 'very good material'. That Friday when I arrived in the Igreja Universal in Copacabana, I saw it was packed with approximately 600 to 700 people, many of whom I recognized as inhabitants of the morro. It was very likely that most of them had come to see the movie because there were many people I had never seen before in the Igreja Universal.

The movie was preceded by a deliverance service – a culto de descarreg o – in which many people were exorcized. When the last people were delivered and the collective singing was over, the pastor announced the movie. For the occasion they had put up a large film screen, much like in a cinema. However, unlike in most cinemas at the beginning of the movie, the pastor addressed the audience and said: 'The images are really intense but this movie is based on facts.' The movie Megiddo is a Hollywood production that tells the story of a young boy who embodies the devil. During the course of his life, he strives for world domination utilizing his satanic powers. On the back of the Brazilian version of the videotape it says: 'The best film about the Apocalypse so far,

- the movie reporter', the description of the film says:

The world is on the verge of the Apocalypse. The final battle between the Good and the Bad is taking place in the valley of Megiddo, the Hebraic word for the place known as Armageddon. Forces of Evil bring together a powerful army for a war that throws continent against continent, nation against nation and brother against brother. Stone Alexander (Michael York), a powerful man has an evil plan to eradicate all humanity. The only man who can stop him is his brother David (Michael Biehn), the President of the United States. But David will need the power of God to lead him to war, keep his strong spirit and help him reveal the true nature of this battle.

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281 The card says 'Meggido' while the film, and the valley after which it was called are spelled 'Megiddo'. The valley of Megiddo (Armageddon), now known as the valley of Jezreel, is the site where, in Biblical prophecy, at the end of the age, an immense army will gather to fight against the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His supernatural army (Revelation 1:10; 16:12-16; 19:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Joel 1:15; 2:11, 2:31). The movie Megiddo was produced by the Trinity Broadcasting Network, founded in 1973 in the United States. As it says itself on its website, the birth of the network was based upon the dream: "To build a Christian television network that spans the whole world!"
In the film, the man who is manipulated by the devil accumulates wealth and political power until he finally dominates almost all the nations of the world. The only opposition to this man comes from the United States. When the battle against him is almost lost, God appears and it is revealed that the devil is behind it all. Nevertheless, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the devil loses the 'final battle', after which he is thrown back into hell. At that moment the whole church-audience started clapping and the pastor came on stage and told the audience that it was good. He confirmed: 'It was the right thing to do, to clap your hands when God wins from the devil'. At that moment I remembered the words of the pastor just before the movie started – 'the images are intense but the movie is based on facts.' – and I understood that many people felt the movie indeed represented the Biblical prophecy of the final battle, or at least did so for that moment. Taking into account that the movie was shown during a culto de descarrego, where people witness the spectacular exorcism of demons, one can imagine the appeal of the Igreja Universal.

In general its use of imagery offers an innovation in the field of Protestant churches in Brazil. An outstanding example of this is a Bible it published on its 25th anniversary, which featured images of Edir Macedo and a pictorial chronology of the growth of the church. The rest of the Bible was filled with pictures of its cathedrals (see introduction). The cathedrals were pictured from the outside and the inside so that on one side of the page one sees the typical architecture of their churches and their logo above the door and juxtaposed on the other, one sees the images of the throngs of believers inside. One can only assume that such pictorial display in the Bible is meant to visualize the authority of the Igreja Universal. It is an effort to represent itself as the church *par excellence* that operates under and with Biblical authority.

Powerful though this may be, one can also imagine that such use of images and objects stirs up heated debates among Pentecostal groups in Brazil, particularly because the Igreja Universal has become so prominent in the Brazilian public sphere by dint of its aggressive attitude towards many other religious traditions. Nevertheless, while it accuses all others of idolatry, it argues that its position remains Biblical. As Kramer has noted:

Macedo proposes in essence a sensuous faith in which the symbolic, visible and tactile qualities of material objects as part of the message motivate people to move toward God actively, intentionally, and confidently. This proposition would seem to go against the grain of Protestant thinking about the place of symbols in the church, particularly the potential for idolatry inherent in material representations. This tension is borne out in
the criticism directed at the IURD's use of objects by theologically conservative Pentecostals and evangelical Christians. Macedo does takes care to point out that the symbols used in the Universal Church are taken from the Bible and that the practice of manipulating these material representations is not "anti-biblical" but "extra-biblical" —not explicitly condemned by the Bible and thus licit. He is not at all worried about the different meanings such representations have in the religious field, but rather that they serve the cause of bringing people into the Kingdom of God, a concern for ends over means (Kramer 2001: 118).

Among the evangélicos in the morro, the tensions caused by the broadcasting of 'extra-Biblical' images, were most evident when these concerned the images of people who practise Umbanda, Candomblé, or any other religious observances that concern non-Biblical possession of spiritual entities. In the television program Ponto de Luz broadcast on TV Record, the hosts invited people to testify on television that they had been possessed by demons and therefore lived in misery and pain until they started attending the Igreja Universal. Frequently the hosts — mostly pastors — would ask details about the actual practices that people had to perform when they belonged to such a possession cult and the guests would explain in vivid detail what they had done. On some occasions, they would also show representations of the kind of practices and offerings that people had made. In one broadcast, for example, a pastor ventured out to a cemetery in the city of Rio de Janeiro with an ex-mãe de Santo to show how the beheaded body of a goat was used for a powerful ritual. The camera zoomed in on the bloody carcass of the goat surrounded by candles and other objects, while the woman and the pastor explained how and why the goat was slaughtered. Until then I had not seen any images of rituals of Candomblé on television on any channel, or in other words the Igreja Universal itself reproduced a remarkable paradox. While it performed the most aggressive campaign against Afro-Brazilian religious practices in Brazil, it also publicized knowledge and images of such practices far beyond the usual scope, bringing it 'out in the open' in a way that was unprecedented in Brazil.282

Such a paradox did not pass unnoticed among many of the people in the morro. During my fieldwork, I encountered several members of a congregation of the Assembléia de Deus or another evangelical church who severely criticized the Igreja Universal for its representation of Candomblé. Not because they felt it was harming the constitutional right of religious freedom but because they were showing more evil than

282 See van de Port (2005) for a detailed discussion of the ways in which the Afro-Brazilian religious practices are being publicized.
they thought was good for an audience whose religious conviction was fragile. There was an example of a young woman of the Assembléia de Deus who worked in a panaderia (bakery) in the morro:

You know what I don't agree with in the Igreja Universal, it shows how to do harm to people. For example, they show how to put sal grosso (unrefined salt) in the mouth of a frog and write on it the name of the person you want to harm. They show that on television in the afternoon! People who have a weak mind may think: "I am going to do that!"

Such accusations about the content of the message of the Igreja Universal in its churches and its media were related to the accusations that, while it claimed to be an evangelical church it was actually talking more about the devil than God. Patricia, the mother of Dora (Chapter Four), frequently visited a pai de Santo, but also went to different evangelical churches in the vicinity of the morro. She said: "They are always invoking that other [the devil]. I am not going to church to talk about him, I am going for the things of God (coisas de Deus). At least in my church they talk about God."

Not surprisingly the Assembléia de Deus does not use such images of slaughtered goats in its programs. As I have already described in this and the previous chapter, programs of pastors of the Assembléia de Deus normally consist of a recorded sermon or culto. While many objected to the representation of evil in the programs of the Igreja Universal, many of them were also fascinated by it, albeit in a slightly different way. Among my friends of the Assembléia de Deus, watching films such as Meggido were also accepted and encouraged, but what struck me more was that when I asked people about their television behavior, most of them started to talk about the evil things they could not see rather than about the things they could and would. Telenovelas and Big Brother Brasil207 were often especially mentioned as evil. Telenovelas are soap-series with a strong emphasis on particular socio-cultural phenomena in Brazilian society. They are about love and conflict, and they 'treat a series of characteristic conflicts and problems, most often about status reversals –especially upward mobility- and usually with urban settings (Kottak 1990: 39).’ In contrast to the American soaps, the telenovelas only last six to seven months and they are shown between 6 and 9 p.m., that is ‘prime time’ instead of in the afternoon (Vink 1988; Kottak 1990). We will return to telenovelas shortly, first let me describe what is special about Big Brother Brasil.

207 The title of the program is a direct reference to George Orwell’s novel “1984” in which citizens are victims of continuous television surveillance by the State, whose governor goes under the name ‘Big Brother’.
7.3 Flooded with Banality

My arrival in Rio de Janeiro in February 2002 coincided with the beginning of the first episode of Big Brother Brasil (or simply BBB). BBB is the Brazilian version of one of Holland’s ‘finest’ export products in the entertainment industry. It is a reality-soap that consists of the constant camera registration of a group of selected people who voluntarily live together in a secluded house. All participants must try to survive a hundred days of enclosure (in the Brazilian version sixty-four days). The program is not just a reality-soap, but has an added element of a contest. Every two weeks, the inhabitants must nominate two co-inhabitants who must leave the house. After this initial nomination, the judgement of the television audience is sought. Spectators may phone in and vote which one of the nominated inhabitants must leave the house. When there are only three members left, the spectators may phone and choose the winner of the program, who then leaves the house with a substantial amount of prize money.

While Big Brother can be seen as part of a trend of producing ‘reality’ television that started in the 1990s, the 24-hour-a-day surveillance in the form of an interactive game show presented quite an innovation. Wherever the show was broadcast, fierce debates followed suit. As in other countries, the introduction of Big Brother Brasil, and the rising popularity of the program in the weeks thereafter, was followed by a variety of reactions. Newspapers and magazines started writing about the program and people started talking about it in the streets. In the Brazilian print-media BBB became the focus point of discussions about television and society. After the first couple of episodes, various journalists and representatives of Brazilian organizations, both religious and non-

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284 The television program Big Brother, ‘created’ by the Dutch media corporation John de Mol Productions and first broadcast in the Netherlands in 1999, has been sold to various broadcast companies around the world after the enormous success of the program in the Netherlands. The program appeared in other European countries in the same product form as in the Netherlands, which meant that logo, tune and format of the program remained the same with some minor ‘national’ alterations. The creation of Big Brother Spain and Big Brother Germany meant that each country received its own ‘national’ version of the program. The product achieved world-wide popularity when it was sold in other countries such as in the USA and in Brazil.

285 When Big Brother was introduced to Brazil, it was very clear that in both the first and the second series of the program, the group of contestants consisted of a carefully selected variety of ‘Brazilians’, people from different Brazilian states and cities with different regional accents, different backgrounds and different ‘spiritual’ or religious affiliations. The program thus gathered people from different regions of Brazil in one ‘national’ program, creating an image of unity in diversity and giving spectators from different regions and backgrounds the possibility to identify with the contestants. In other words, although often considered to be an example of the globalization of television products, the television program Big Brother was ‘Brazilianized’ from the very beginning and by putting these ‘typical Brazilians’ together, the show automatically presented recognizable behavior to a wide Brazilian audience.

286 According to the newspaper O Globo, Big Brother Brasil 1 had an average of 41.5 million viewers per minute, which is 57 percent of possible viewers. O Globo 4/04/02
religious, used the popularity of the program to criticize Brazilian television and Brazilian society as a whole.

The core of the criticism was aimed at the display of intimacy, nudity and sex on public television, which, according to many journalists, was to be understood as the effect of the search for sheer profit shorn of any moral considerations. In the journal *O Pasquim 21*, for example, several journalists argued that the search for an ever-larger audience had caused a commodification of sex and had led to the downfall of quality television. One reporter even ended his arguments against programs such as BBB by stating: 'Marshall McLuhan was right: the medium is the message. Global village, universal degradation.'\(^{287}\) In *Carta Capital*, a well-read weekly magazine, the article in a special television edition opened with the header: 'Programs from bad to worse. The commercial success of Big Brother and Casa dos Artistas\(^{288}\) indicates that quality programs are losing space.'\(^{289}\) The article argued the loss of quality was the result of the liberal government and the market, which tried to include the classes 'D' and 'E'\(^{290}\) in the consumer market by making 'low-quality' programs. Many of the critics portrayed television as a mass medium that is 'misused' for entertainment instead of supporting 'high culture' and they presumed a direct relationship between the content of television programs and the knowledge and behavior of the viewers.

We cannot allow TV to become yet another domestic device in the home of a semi-literate Brazilian, who keeps watching Ratinho, Big Brother, Luciana Gimenez, Show do Milhão, João Kleber, Sergio Malandro, the bathroom of Guga and a lot of other nonsense. This means degradation, selling the soul to the devil. And in this case the devil is the easy audience.\(^{291}\)

The journalist seemed to misunderstand the dynamic of watching television when his vision that BBB as 'low quality television' leads him to conclude that the spectators were an easy audience who did not make any moral evaluations. Certainly, the popularity of BBB is very much an effect of the voyeuristic perspective the program provides on the

\(^{287}\) Pedro Paulo Patto, *O Pasquim 21*, 26/03/02. Translation mine.

\(^{288}\) Before *Globe* introduced Big Brother Brasil the format of the program had already been 'copied' by the broadcast company SBT, which named its program *Casa dos Artistas* (House of Artists). Though not as interactive as BBB, *Casa dos Artistas* also shows a group of people enclosed in a house under constant camera surveillance. Contrary to BBB, half of the people in *Casa dos Artistas* are established artists and were already 'famous' before they enter.

\(^{289}\) *Carta Capital* 6/3/03: 12

\(^{290}\) Brazilian research on income and consumption categorizes five income classes, A to F in which F is the lowest. These categorizations have become part of the common discourse in journals and magazines.

‘private’ behavior of the inhabitants. However, ‘low quality’ programs like BBB are popular precisely because they offer the spectator a possibility to ‘judge’ the behavior of the players/actors involved. If we stick to the metaphor of the devil and, the audience takes up the part of God, watching and evaluating the behavior of the people on screen, who are driven by the devil. The possibility for the spectator to act upon his or her moral feelings, to call the network and vote of those people whom he or she dislikes, is what makes BBB so interesting. When I talked about the program with a Brazilian friend, she said that the people in the Big Brother house could be seen as a kind of ‘television neighbors.’ From this point of view, the contestants are seen as the typical ‘family next door’ about which one gossips and complains, only this family is known by viewers nation-wide. In other words, part of the success of the program seems to be that it provokes people to discuss and evaluate the behavior of the contestants of the program without engaging with them directly.

An example of how BBB has become part of the imagination of the people in the morro comes from a family whose members consequently started calling the house of their neighbors ‘Casa de Big Brother’. When I asked why they referred to it in that way, the mother explained that they called it ‘Casa de Big Brother’ since the house, which was constructed largely of wood, was occupied by a group of friends and relatives from Minas Gerais, instead of a regular family. She explained the inhabitants traveled from Minas Gerais to Rio de Janeiro to work there and so they lived in the house temporarily until they were ‘voted out’, just like the inhabitants in the television program. Another example comes from a woman who understood my efforts to gain a Brazilian visa primarily through her knowledge of one of the contestants of the first BBB series. It was the amazing story of the blond Angolan named Serginho, whose work permit had expired and so officially he had to leave the country, which was bad news for the network Globo because Serginho was still in the running for the 500,000 reais of prize money. This meant that, although Serginho was ‘locked up’ and under ‘surveillance’ in the Big Brother house, which he normally would leave only if voted of by inhabitants and spectators, the Brazilian state was performing its own ‘surveillance’ and tried to ‘vote’ Serginho ‘out’ of the country altogether. The woman said that if the battle between Globo and the state would come to the crunch, Globo would probably win because, in her view, Globo was far more powerful than the state. Two series later, Serginho was a Brazilian celebrity and still in the country.

292 Minas Gerais is the state, which lies north of the state of Rio de Janeiro.
Among most of the people I knew in the morro, telenovelas were most popular, but 'reality' programs such as BBB were very popular as well. Yet, BBB could not win the hearts of all. The general discussions about BBB in the Brazilian press were also to be found among the evangélicos in the morro. To understand the different positions evangélicos took in relation to the program, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at some of the reactions to BBB in the evangelical print-media and describe some of their general evaluations of Brazilian mass media and mass culture. As we will see, the introduction of this new program provoked Pentecostal authorities to make an effort to (re)instil a particular moral viewing-code in their followers.

In the weeks after the introduction several reactions to BBB appeared in the evangelical print-media. The evangelical magazine Enfoque, for example, reacted to the 'reality' programs Big Brother and Casa dos Artistas with a large article about the tendency to show 'private' behavior on television and the question of how evangélicos should react to the these kinds of programs:

The new wave (exposing intimacy) is causing an enormous headache for Pastors and Protestant leaders. Could it be that this exposure, motivated by exhibitionism, need, narcissism, marketing, or all of them together, are an obstacle to the Christian faith? To which point does this gossip-mania hurt Biblical principles. The polemic is in the air.

The fact that the polemic about Big Brother was literally in the air, was brought home to me when I visited my evangelical neighbor in Cantagalo. When I asked him if he watched BBB, he said: 'No, I don't watch that kind of program, I always listen to radio El Shaddai and it had a discussion about Big Brother and Casa dos Artistas. It recounted about the things they show on these programs. Big Brother has scenes which don't accord well with a Christian life. I'd rather read the Bible.' Not surprisingly BBB was received as the kind of program which could not bring much good in the eyes of many evangélicos. Though considered suspect from the start, especially because it was introduced as a 'juicy' program, with a 'voyeuristic' side to it, it was condemned outright in the evangelical media after the first signs of nudity, some 'kisses' and a bit of swearing. An example of the evangelical reactions to the programs came from Bispo Carlos Rodrigues of the Igreja Universal. In the Folha Universal Bispo Rodrigues wrote:

294 Jose the landlord of my house is a member of the Pentecostal church Assembleia de Deus in Pavão-Pavãozinho, see also Chapter Five.
295 El Shaddai, 93.3 FM, see also Chapter Five.
Big Brother and Casa dos Artistas, everyone is naked.

Dear brothers, the lack of shame is apparent on national television in the country. The infancy has become common and public. It is enough to turn on our television and be given a lesson in coarse behavior, swearing and cursing, obscene gestures, intrigues, and weaponry, all in the name of money. ...In both cases, in Big Brother and Casa dos Artistas, we observe scant clothing in the house and no clothing outside it. We are watching the stimulation of pornography, the fight at any cost to make money and obtain fleeting fame. ...No one worries about education. Programs which present culture, information and healthy leisure are rare on our television. Sex has become banal and very vulgar. We have to fight against this. We cannot permit our families to be inundated by so much banality. The result of all that is shown on our television is reflected immediately in our society.

It is sad to witness such a decline of morality and ethics.295

Although several evangélicos in the morro did react to BBB this way, not all evangélicos banned the program. The fact that the television programs are evaluated in evangelical print-media and discussed among evangélicos does not mean that evangélicos are a homogenous group or that people who identify themselves as such, all repudiate the same programs. Since the program shows intimate, 'private' behavior, many evangélicos were confronted with the question of how these images might effect their life as Christians. Among the evangélicos many people said they would rather not watch the program. Nevertheless, there were also many who did watch BBB. The fact that people say they condemn certain media does not mean they do not watch or listen to them. On the contrary, in order to condemn they must be minimally aware of what the program consists of and mostly that means that they have watched or listened. How this works in practice will become clear in the next section.

7.4 Evangélicos and Big Brother Brasil

We do not know who told the truth and who lied. What the people need is a vision of God, but in this case God is you, the spectator.296

This is how the host of the reality-soap Big Brother Brasil invited the audience to cast their vote for one or the other participant, who then had to leave the palm-fringed gardens of the Big Brother house. In other words, with the courtesy of the omnipresent

295 Bispo Carlos Rodrigues Folha Universal 10/03/02, 4A. Translation and emphasis mine.
296 Pedro Bial, journalist and host of Big Brother Brasil, Globo 26/02/02, translation mine.
and omniscient directors of Big Brother Brasil, the nationwide audience was allowed to experience some of their divine powers. They were presented with some recorded ‘scenes’ from the Big Brother house, so that they, spectators, could see and judge who was right and who was wrong.

I became interested in the reactions to Big Brother Brasil of evangélicos when on an evening in March I was watching television with a young girl who attended the Igreja Universal. While watching BBB, she grabbed the phone to call the network to vote out one of the inhabitants of the Big Brother house. When I asked her why she wanted that particular person to leave the house, she replied that the girl in question had a tendency to swear and curse too much and should therefore leave the Big Brother house. What struck me was the fact that the girl did not reject the program as a whole on moral or religious grounds – a reaction I had also witnessed. Unlike some other members of the same church, who told me not to watch the program because they deemed its content non-Christian, she admitted to liking the program. From my observation, I concluded that she was attracted above all because BBB offers its spectators the possibility to interact with the program. This allowed her to condemn the immoral behavior of the players, to act upon her own judgments and vote out the person who showed explicit, public, immoral behavior.

During my research among the evangélicos in the morro, I realized that while BBB was one of the few programs that actually provided such an interactive possibility, people actively engaged with telenovelas in a similar fashion. I understood that navigating between the opposite poles of attraction and rejection are part and parcel of the dynamic of watching television. Almost each and every program put the evangelical spectators in the position where they had to make a moral evaluation of the images presented: was this program ‘Christian’ or not? Those programs that presented a possible ‘contamination’ of Christian life-style and conduct, for example, television programs that showed nudity, intimacy or sex, were considered especially problematic. Nevertheless, deciding which programs should not be watched is not always a simple task. Brazilian television, like television in many other places, presents contradicting images and narratives, dreams and desires. While very strong opinions about particular kinds of images circulated among the evangélicos, none could provide for clear cut ‘rules’ what to watch and what not to watch. When asked, many people reproduced the adage ‘The Bible says: All things are lawful for me – but not everything is beneficial.’ The nub is that what is beneficial and what is not seems to be matter of debate. Many people watched the programs they
condemned, with different explanations, as we will see. Such viewing behavior points to several important facts that are sometimes overlooked in discussions on religion and media.

In highly mediatic societies like Brazil, people are bombarded with sounds and images that scream for their attention. Every bar in Rio de Janeiro has a television that is turned on twenty-four hours a day, every shop has a radio that transmits programs to customers or passers-by. Even the poorest people in the favela had a television and a \textit{som} (sound system) that was turned on most of the day. Much research on religion and media assumes that people who define themselves as evangélicos are commonly affected by the evangelical media of their own denomination. Interestingly, Liesbeth van Zoonen and Jan Wieten have written a beautiful article on the arrival of television in Dutch family life (1994), in which they question such a presupposition. In the 1950 Holland was still characterized by what is mostly referred to as ‘pillarization’. Following Lijphart, the writers define such pillarization as the ‘vertical ordering of society along ideological or religious lines, traversing class boundaries (Lijphart, 1968). The main established pillars were those of the Catholics and the orthodox Protestants...(van Zoonen and Wieten 1994: 624).’ Since people bought products at shops belonging to members of their ‘own’ pillar and married someone belonging to the same faith, the majority of people of the two religious pillars were living quite segregated lives. Van Zoonen and Wieten argue that while broadcasting (radio and television) was organized along the very same pillars, the possibility to watch the programs of the ‘others’ at home undermined the very segregation which motivated the production of such ‘pillarized’ television programs. People started to watch ‘because of quality, not out of conviction (ibid: 654)’, as one respondent said.

Such media behavior has not single-handedly ended the pillarization in Holland. However, what it does show is that for people who lived in quite segregated circumstances television gave an opportunity to ‘become familiar with people from other religious and political denominations (ibid).’ Besides, the example affirms that we should be mindful not to assume that people who attend one denomination only look at and listen to media of their church. During my fieldwork there were many people who claimed they only watched evangelical programs but were perfectly aware of what Big Brother Brasil or the latest telenovela were about. Even when people are told that such and such program is bad for evangélicos, how tempting is it to satisfy your curiosity when the ‘other’ is only a button away on your remote control?
What follows is that the Pentecostal church (or any church) is but one among the many institutions that co-constructs an image of a ‘world out-there’. To understand how such a world view is generated I follow David Morgan's insights. He says:

Language and vision, word and image, text and picture are in fact deeply enmeshed and collaborate powerfully in assembling our sense of the real. A world is a social and a historical construction of things and other beings bearing a certain order with pretenses to objectivity and universality. Images, songs and objects evoke the worlds that make them and seductively suggest to those whose world they share a totality and uniformity that is as reassuring as it is tendentious (Morgan 1998: 9).

This does not imply Morgan is convinced that there is a stable definition of ‘the world’ or that there is one institution that has the ability to frame the world totally on its terms: ‘Worlds collide with one another as well as contain within themselves the contradictions and disjunctures that must be mediated or concealed for the sake of a world’s endurance. Material culture, such as imagery tends to appear at these sites of disjuncture and contradiction (ibid).’ Yet, where Morgan focuses mostly on the ability of popular imagery to mend the holes that appear at the collisions, ‘to police the boundaries of the familiar (ibid: 10),’ here I am interested in their ability to both mend and destroy at the same time.

The fact that Pentecostal churches are but one among many types of institutions that represent the world in practice implies that people are often perfectly aware of the programs that are offered on the other channels - which ‘other’ people supposedly like to watch. While these Pentecostal churches often compete with other institutions for attention and claim a monopoly on the validity of knowledge based on their interpretations of the Bible, in fact even these churches rely on the other media to collaborate in the social construction of reality, as I have demonstrated in Chapter Three. In that chapter I focused on the intertextual representation of the city as a place of evil. Here I wish to focus on the popular television programs. Many programs may be condemned or criticized, yet to many, if not all, the people in the morro, these programs still remain part of the imagery that tends to collaborate in the construction of the real.

This brings us to the question of how electronic media can alter religious practice and experience. The junction between mass media and religion does not occur only at the moment ‘religious’ television is broadcast and watched, but also when entertainment is perceived within a religious framework of meaning. The images and narratives become ‘religious’ as a result of the act of looking, instead of the other way around. Consequently my argument here is that Pentecostalism literally involves a way of looking, as Birgit
Meyer also argues in relation to Pentecostalism in Ghana (Meyer 2003). Meyer claims that in Pentecostalism in Ghana the relation between the Bible and the image is one of mutual dependence: images and objects are interpreted with reference to the Bible, but at the same time these images visualize the written word and 'affirm the power of the Bible to explain (ibid).' Pentecostal doctrines and practices involve a Pentecostal visual culture, in which looking is informed by Pentecostal notions of reality and this reality is confirmed by what is seen.

Visual confirmation of reality is not limited to evangelical television programs. On the contrary, other television programs and images also attain a religious meaning or experience as a result of a visual culture that is informed by Pentecostalism. My point here is not only that television is polysemic or that the actual social circumstances of television-watching have an influence on the perceived meaning of these programs. Audiences can offer alternative readings to the dominant or hegemonic understanding of popular television programs such as telenovelas. What I would like to address here is that the relationship between the Word and the image does not necessarily have to be defined in terms of the junction of the Word and the image _a priori_, it may very well be, as I will argue here, that the religious experience of watching television repositions the image according to the religious doctrines and practices of the viewers. Images, which are not produced in the context of a specific religious institution, or are not religious _per se_, might very well attain a religious meaning or experience in the process of their perception.

Such a process questions rigid distinctions between different categories of television programs. Lyn Schofield-Clark describes how all kinds of evangelical groups in the United States have reacted with alarm to the widespread popularity of the stories of the child-sorcerer Harry Potter or the hype around the films of Lord of the Rings, originally written by J.R.R Tolkien. Yet, very few of them were aware - or acknowledged - that historically Protestantism had been very influential in 'providing some of the "publicly available stock of symbols and narratives" that are incorporated into the entertainment media (Schofield-Clark 2003: 25). Schofield-Clark says it is this 'dark side of evangelicalism' which has lent much credibility to the popular entertainment media centered on supernatural phenomena. 'Evangelicalism has not provided for the cause for our concerns with evil but due to the often unacknowledged connections between culture and the religious heritage of the United States, evangelicalism has inadvertently provided a framework for thinking about and representing evil in popular culture (ibid: 26).' Especially stories about the end of Time (the Apocalypse) have been popular among
filmmakers, as we have also seen in the case of the film Meggido, I described above. Similarly, among Protestants the use of the horror genre was considered a legitimate strategy to convince the unconverted that a battle between good and evil is taking place (ibid: 32). Schofield-Clark links present-day popular teen television series such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer to the writings of early American Puritans who invoked all kinds of supernatural phenomena such as witchcraft and magic to educate and entertain the church audience.

While Schofield-Clark's ethnographic accounts are based upon research among a variety of North American teens who define themselves by categories ranging from 'non-religious' to 'traditional evangelical', I think her work touches upon dynamics similar to those I have encountered in Brazil. In her accounts, people react differently to the entertainment television programs, while they also incorporate knowledge of these programs in their accounts of the world and that which is beyond. The reactions of the 'traditionalist' teens that Schofield-Clark described especially resemble the reactions of the evangélico I noted down in the morro. Both display a strong emphasis on individual moral responsibility to avoid those programs, which might possibly contaminate a Christian life-style. To explain in what ways my informants engaged with non-evangelical television programs to give meaning to Pentecostal interpretations of the Bible and to reconfirm its power to explain the world, I will focus on telenovelas.

### 7.5 Telenovelas and Pentecostalism

Studies of audiences of telenovelas are usually done with those people who identify themselves as 'telenovela-viewers' and during my research, Pentecostals did not exactly present themselves to be fervent fans of telenovelas or as regular viewers. In their discussion of the history of telenovela-audience studies in Latin America, McAnany and La Pastina conclude that there is little published material on the telenovela audience. They also criticize the telenovela-audience studies in Latin America for being severely flawed in their methodology, although it is such an important genre of popular culture (McAnany & La Pastina 1994). My fieldwork on the reception of mass media among evangélicos was not aimed specifically at telenovela reception and I will therefore not provide the expected extensive telenovela audience analysis. Instead, I will argue that telenovela 'audience' should not only be defined in terms of 'those who watch'.
During my fieldwork time and time again I was surprised how much telenovelas were mentioned in my interviews and talks with evangélicos and how many times these telenovelas were used as an example to criticize society, the non-Pentecostal content of television programs and the bad influence television (a mídia) supposedly has on individuals and society in general. So what do you do when people do not categorize themselves as viewers, but still reflect upon society, their lives or their immediate social surroundings with the help of these telenovelas? I think we certainly do not have to limit ourselves by stating that telenovela audiences are composed of people who identify themselves as such. We might be severely misled if we were to start with the premise that we can only say something about the relation between telenovela and audience. And if we start with a specific telenovela and then ask how exactly does the telenovela influence behavior of the self-identified viewer as if only the self-identified viewer is ‘really’ influenced by the narratives and images of telenovelas.

During the year I lived in the morro, I witnessed the pervasive presence of telenovelas in the lives of people. Regular viewer or not, televisions were always turned on. Evangélico or not, telenovelas seemed to be there in the social setting from childhood to maturity. Telenovelas were often watched intensely, but sometimes they were a mere background noise and image. Watched mostly by women, but certainly also by men. My point is: there is no one who knows nothing about telenovelas at all, they form part of the day-to-day reality of images and narratives that influence people and to which people relate to in very different ways. As Esther Hamburger (1998) also shows, people constantly discuss telenovelas. In the house, on the street, in other television programs, in journals and on the radio, everywhere telenovelas are the topic of conversation between people of all social layers. Hamburger goes beyond a telenovela approach that highlights the distinctiveness in interpretation according to each region, class or gender and argues that the telenovela must be considered as a ‘shared repertoire’.

In a footnote Hamburger crystallizes her argument and suggests that:

Given the proto-interactive character of the novelas, the ways in which the public appropriates these programs and interprets them in their every day life can be better understood if the reception was approached as part of a dynamic which during the years has consolidated the formal conventions of the narratives which are mastered by the public. This chapter also suggests that the different readings and interpretations are possible because everyone watches the novela (Hamburger 1998: 483).
People know how to watch telenovelas and even when in their discussions about them they differ in interpretation or judgement, they share the common repertoire which makes these discussions possible. Indubitably telenovelas are part of the everyday life of people - people copy the language, the clothes, the styles. In it they see a mirror image (although often distorted) of Brazilian society and of themselves. As such telenovelas mobilize 'a network of communication and polemics of exceptional reach (ibid: 482)', which transgresses the borders between telenovelas and everyday life and show a remarkable potential to connect spaces that are otherwise treated as separate.

In the morro this potential is certainly strengthened by the socio-geographical characteristics of the favela. As in other favelas in zona sul of Rio de Janeiro, the houses in this favela are small, built close to or on top of each other with very little space between the houses of each family. Over and above this, many people have to share a small space with many relatives, who do not always adhere to the same faith. Contrary to what is sometimes thought of the 'poor' people living in favelas, most families in the morro have a television. However, there is often only one television per family, which means that many people watch or at least take notice of the programs that are on the television at a particular moment. Since, from what I have seen, telenovelas certainly belong to the most popular types of television programs, it is very hard not to take notice of them even when you do not like them as much. Furthermore, the choice of which programs are watched on the television is often made by one particular person, for example the head of the household, which implies that people cannot always control that what is offered to them on the screen.

In my contacts with young men and women who had recently been converted to Pentecostalism, the act of watching telenovelas was often mentioned as something they started to regard differently during their 'learning' process. That is, when asking how their faith and knowledge of God affected their choice of watching certain television programs, telenovelas were often mentioned as examples of a program that they now perceived as a presentation and an example of a reality which should not be taken as natural, but should be evaluated in the light of God's laws on Earth as written in the Holy Bible. Certain relationships between men and women, sex, intimacy, marriage, and so forth, that were shown in the telenovelas, were defined as sinful after their acceptance of Jesus as their Savior. This shows that the 'new perspective' on life, the new 'way of looking' at the world, which is the result of the conversion to Pentecostalism, is not
confined to the social surrounding. Television programs and especially telenovelas also become the object of the new perspective.

This does not necessarily imply that they all stopped watching telenovelas; many evangélicos criticized telenovelas for their content and message but watched them nevertheless. The point is that telenovelas are assigned a different place in the spectrum of mass media. They have to be watched ‘with caution’, as it were. This means that there is often a hovering ambivalence concerning the viewing of telenovelas. In the next section I will show some of the ways in which people positioned themselves in relation to the programs on television.

7.6 Televisual Temptation and the Devil

The correct thing to do is, as with a horror movie, close your eyes. That is the most correct thing to do, understand, a strong crente closes his eyes or turns off the television.

This was the response of Renato when I asked him: ‘What do you do when you are watching television and suddenly scenes appear with, for example, sex in them?’ The answer of the young man who attended the Assembléia de Deus tells us what a crente should do when images, which he feels are in conflict with Pentecostal doctrine, appear on television. The interesting fact is that in his view, a crente does not necessarily have to stop watching the television program, he can also close his eyes momentarily - in the interview he showed how he put his hands in front of his eyes as to protect himself from the ‘shocking’ images - after which he may watch the rest of the television program. As long as he protects himself from the ‘dangerous’ aspects of the television, no harm is done. Closing his eyes is the ‘correct’ thing to do; but it is not always what happens. Sometimes he is not strong enough and does not close his eyes.

For many evangélicos in the morro, television is a medium that has to be handled with care. Although people often watched the news, entertainment or religious programs, some programs on the same channels ‘are not in accordance with a Christian life’ or are considered to be the work of the devil. The selection of programs considered to be bad influence depends very much on the Pentecostal interpretation of the Bible and Pentecostal doctrines and practices. While the same logic applies to television and radio, the general attitude towards television and radio is not entirely the same. By and large, a clear distinction was made between evangelical radio channels and ‘mundane’ channels.
Obviously, the former are preferred, whereas the latter are considered suspect. However, among the 'open channels' on television there were no exclusive evangelical television channels. TV Record, owned by the Igreja Universal, did show many evangelical programs, but it also screened Hollywood films and telenovelas. Watching television therefore often presented the spectators with the question of whether the programs caused a possible 'contamination' of the Christian life-style and conduct. Not unexpectedly those that showed nudity, intimacy or sex, were considered problematic from a Christian point of view.

Many evangélicos who attended Pentecostal churches told me that such images and narratives are the work of demons trying to lure people away from the straight and narrow way by offering them pleasures that might be attractive but eventually lead to death and destruction. What becomes visible here is that in the eyes of many evangélicos the Bible is not only the holy text from which all other truths are derived, but it guides their interpretation of other media as well. In the Pentecostal doctrine and practice, the reception of the Holy Ghost and the fight against the devil both occupy an important place. The personal fight against the temptation of illicit pleasures is therefore often portrayed as the fight against the devil, in which victory can only be achieved with the help of God. The devil works cunningly in various ways, however, and he is always and everywhere busy trying to 'steal, kill and destroy', as many of the Pentecostals told me. In other words, just as God may work through television - in evangelical programs mostly - the devil also works through television, especially by seducing men and women with images of carnal pleasures. Those demonized television programs, which show nudity and sex are often believed to teach women to prostitute themselves and men to commit adultery. The television spectator should therefore be very careful not to be caught in the trap, for the flesh is weak. Especially for men, watching television programs with naked women might lead to impure thoughts and feelings, which then cause the Holy Ghost to abandon them.

On the other hand, deciding which programs should not be watched is not always a simple task. As mentioned above, people do not always have control over what is turned on or off, but more importantly here, Brazilian television, like television in many other places, presents contradictory images and narratives, dreams and desires. Programs, like telenovelas, put the evangelical spectator in the position where he or she has to make a religious/moral evaluation of the images presented: Is this program 'Christian' or not? Although it might seem that the decision 'to watch or not to watch' is
simple, the evaluation of television programs is based not only on the ideas of what can be shown on television and the supposed effects of that which is shown. It also depends on how the images and narratives are being seen. People are often caught between the possibilities to judge the program, the narrative or the characters involved.

Almost all the evangélicos I interviewed in the morro criticized telenovelas. Their reading and type of judgements differed, which consequently affected their position on the telenovela. Some judged the program as a whole, on the basis of the images shown in the program; others judged the narrative of the telenovela and the supposed example it set for the viewers. Again others judged the behavior of the separate characters in the program. Many of those who judged the behavior of the characters commented on and discussed the behavior of the people in the telenovela as if they were living in a parallel world, which, although transmitted by television, was equally real. In all cases images, behavior and narrative were evaluated on the basis of the Pentecostal interpretation of the Holy Bible, but in all cases contradictions emerged. For example, one telenovela, which showed the life of a family of which the elder daughter had a drug habit was interpreted by some as 'good' because it showed the dangers of drug abuse, while others interpreted it as 'bad' because the program showed drug abuse. Another example comes from a woman who attended the Igreja Universal. She said:

I am going to tell you that today the government is doing something very wrong because before there was much more censure, you can see so much today, even on the television. The television is garbage. You don't see anything that pleases you. Sometimes this may be more or less and because you like that actor, you end up watching a bit, but in itself the novela has nothing more to offer you. This is because the novela presents only the destruction of the family the only thing it passes on is the destruction of the family. For example, when the husband has a problem with the family, with the wife, he is already looking at his sister-in-law, or the other way around, the mother leaves the husband and arranges a boyfriend. You know it is prostitution in the novela itself it really is. There is a moment in which the people... it does not give.

This woman rejected all telenovelas because she was convinced they only showed prostitution (prostituição) and that leads to the destruction of the nuclear family. Many married women who attended Pentecostal churches stressed the importance of God's protection of the family against the devil, who will try to break up the conjugal family, primarily as a result of the sin of adultery. The fact that this 'immoral' behavior may be part of the narrative of the telenovela is not taken in consideration by this woman. Telenovelas should be discarded if they present images of adultery. Despite the deep-
rooted objections, the woman admitted to being tempted to watch because she liked a particular actor/actress, which clearly shows the ambivalence, the attraction and repugnance of that which is seen. A young woman in her early twenties gave a similar response. Although she did not feel that telenovelas literally support prostitution (prostituição), she explained:

In the Globo novelas the next thing happens: as I told you, it stereotypes persons a lot and, for example, in the Globo novelas the men have their mistresses and their wives at home are always the ugly ones, the fat and the bad tempered and the mistresses are always beautiful, independent, nice. The Globo novelas excuse so much. We end up supporting (hoping) that the guy stays with his mistress and not with his...that he leaves his family.

When I asked her why she watched, even when she criticized the telenovelas, she said:

I also think there is no problem in watching television because I don't want to be alienated. I don't want to stay closed only in my world, but really there are things I could avoid watching and which I don't keep away, I can't do it.

Here again it is clear that attraction and rejection are part and parcel of the dynamic of watching television. Unquestionably, the young woman felt there were things it could be better she did not watch, but her problem was she did not want to stay 'closed' (tampada) in her own world and television offers a different, interesting world.

Most of the evangélicos I met in the morro responded to BBB the same way as they did to the telenovelas. A young man who worked in the Igreja Universal as an obreiro, with whom I had just watched a 'Jackie Chan' Hollywood action film on video with fighting sequences, replied to my answer whether he watched BBB: 'I have seen a part of it, but I didn’t like it, I was put off because, you know, it is media. Media is a fight between broadcasters. I think it is nonsense and I think that, like telenovelas, it only teaches people to rob and lie and adolescents to prostitute themselves.' Both young men classified the American movies in a different category to BBB, and these categories do not have to be judged the same way. Then there are also different reactions to the supposed effects of BBB on the spectators. When I asked a group of four women who attend different Protestant churches what their thoughts were about BBB, they all agreed it was absolute nonsense and replete with gossip, intrigues and sex. Interestingly, three of them did not let their children watch it, while the fourth had no problem with it. Another
man, who did watch the program, condemned the broadcaster Globo because children were still awake at the hour and could see semi-naked people.

While telenovelas are sometimes discarded, for example for the reasons given by the women above, they also often seduce the spectator to ‘watch and judge’ the behavior of the separate characters. The moment the evangelical spectator becomes involved in the telenovela, he or she can still judge the behavior of the characters on the basis of Pentecostal doctrines. Since the characters are mostly either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in the perspective of a very common Christian discourse on moral behavior, people are invited to judge them. As the television critic Eugênio Bucci wrote:

The telespectator is the voyeur of evilness. If everything ends well, everything is all right. And there are the novelas with their almost happy endings. Nobody makes a novela to show philanthropy. Novelas are written with the worst intentions and that is why they are fun. It is that way, filled with rottenness, that they can reinforce the idea that good will triumph over evil. Novelas are written by the Devil and finished by God (Bucci 1997: 136).

BBB ineluctably belongs of a different genre of television programs. Contrary to the novelas, ‘real’ people are involved and the opposition between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ is not always clear. The lure is that, putting six men and women together in one house and promising them prize-money, will eventually lead to some kind ‘immoral’ behavior. The fun lies exactly in the fact that spectators can disagree about who was ‘right’ and who was ‘wrong’. This meant that many people commented on the gossip, treason and sexual behavior of the contestants. Who was siding with whom at the hour of the votes? Who was trying to flirt with whom and how far do they go, and so on and so forth? Herein lay the spice of this program. People do not watch the program because they have no moral values. They are not an audience possessed by the devil - as the journalist said above. The position of the omniscient spectator somewhat resembles the position of God. Through the constant camera registration, people finally have the chance to see if the person practises what he preaches, if he lies or cheats. The spectators of BBB do nothing but judge the behavior of people in the program. In other words, the possibility to reject certain images, behavior and narratives while watching the program is incorporated in its format and in the voyeuristic position the spectator occupies. It offers the spectator the possibility to ‘watch and judge’ from the perspective of a variety of moral frameworks, whether religious or not.
Seen from this perspective, BBB and telenovelas can be united under the Pentecostal prescriptions about television for the same reasons. Evangélicos can watch the programs because they provide a microcosmos of lamentable behavior. They confirm the idea that the world is filled with seduction and sin. Clearly, immoral behavior can become attractive because it shows ‘evil’ at work and it provides the religious spectator with the possibility to judge this behavior. For one moment he or she can be like God looking down on humanity. The possibility to take this spectator position seems to be even better in evangelical television programs which show images of the work of the devil and his demons. Champions among them are the nightly broadcasts of the Igreja Universal on TV Record, which show images of the work of the devil and his demons. During and after the program Ponto de Luz, small clips are shown in which the audience can see the demons at work. In these clips the work of the devil is visualized by showing ‘real’ images of the lives of ‘real’ people who testify on television that they have been possessed by demons and therefore lived in misery and pain until they started attending the Igreja Universal and participated in a deliverance service. During these ‘testimonies’, the program shows ‘flashbacks’ of unhappy people in miserable conditions. The clips, filmed in black and white or with vague and blurred camerawork, represent the ‘dark’ period, when the people were still under the spell of the demons. These images are then followed by colorful images of the lives of people ‘illuminated’ by the presence of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Igreja Universal has developed a specific visual technique by which to present the work of the devil and the work of God. Through this visualization it can even be made attractive to watch the work of the devil, as long as it is clear that there is an end to his evil: Jesus Christ.

In much the same way immoral behavior in telenovelas and BBB can become attractive because it shows ‘evil’ at work and it provides the religious spectator with the possibility to judge this behavior as a form of entertainment. The process in which images of ‘evil’ are offered to the spectator in order to be judged from a Pentecostal perspective has also been described by Birgit Meyer. She argues that many popular Ghanaian films portray the demonic in order to reinforce Pentecostal morals:

What appears to be at work here is a combination of morality and prurience: for the sake of morality, the films offer audiences the possibility to engage with the powers of darkness as voyeurs. In this sense, the assertion of morality requires transgression - very much in the same way

that, in Pentecostal churches, belief in God allows for an obsessive, voyeuristic interest in the machinations of the Devil (Meyer 2003: 9).

Brazilian evangelical television programs enhance the possibility to take this spectator position in quite similar ways. BBB can be watched and enjoyed by faithful evangélicos as long as they do not fear the sight of evil and know they will not be tempted by it. For example, a young man, a leader of the grupo jovem of the Igreja Universal in Copacabana, who had just explained to me that his behavior should be impeccable because he served as an example to others, was quite disappointed with the program BBB: ‘I was hoping for a turbulent show, you know, but it was a bit boring. In the other program they showed fighting and all that, and there was a married woman who got involved with someone else in the house. I was expecting more scandals like that.’ When I asked him if he did not think watching BBB was not dangerous since the unwary could be exposed to certain seductive images, he said: ‘You have to know when it is time to stop watching.’ This last message points exactly to the problems some evangélicos experience with this kind of television programs. Although the dynamic of attraction and rejection seems to be the most important reason people, including evangélicos, watch BBB and the like, the relationship between attraction and rejection is often quite ambivalent and therefore has a ‘dangerous’ side to it. Not everything can be shown on television for the sake of confirming that certain behavior is immoral. Not everything can be watched for the sake of confirming that it is not congruent with ‘a Christian life’. The question is ‘When to stop watching?’ In one interview when I asked a man of the Assembléia de Deus if he watched BBB, he said:

I watched it, it was a mistake but I watched it. It was a mistake because it is a kind of program, which teaches you nothing, sitting in front of the television, prying on people...when I watched it I forgot God and so I had to stop watching.

When I asked why he watched it and if he could describe the attraction, he said:

The attraction, it embraces you like a lion. It swallows you up. You even ignore the people who talk to you. How can you remember God that way? So I stopped watching Big Brother and I asked God to forgive me. Only God can forgive our sins, Gloria Deus.

How easy it is to be tempted to watch something seemingly harmless, which is unequivocal about the moral position which should be taken, to be caught up in it afterwards? Many evangélicos decided not to watch BBB in order not to tempt the flesh.
However, those who did knew they entered dangerous terrain. Television can be a difficult medium to judge. BBB is exactly the kind of program which even tempts evangélicos to adopt a ‘Holy’ spectator position. This position comes with a price though, because people risk the danger of getting more than they bargained for. The same man told me that he was watching the program Noite afora presented by Monique Evans on Rede TV. The program was about the lives of two lesbians:

You see scenes. It also has a reports. It is even interesting. About lesbians. God forbids this kind of practice. God wants a man and a woman. Its one thing only, a man and a woman. There is no other, not even that with multiple persons cannot be. What they call bacchanalia. It is all evil. They were talking about the subject of how she got to like women. I said Lord... but then there was the sensual part of the program and the flesh already... I put it in my head that I would do a test to see if I could resist these images, but it didn’t help, I had to turn the television off and ask the Lord for forgiveness and He forgave me because I am human. If you see a beautiful woman what happens...ha ha, that is why you should not tempt the flesh, because you are flesh.

The experience of the man who watched the images of a ‘forbidden’ sexual relation between two women, knowing that it must be condemned, was changed the moment he is aroused by the images he wants to condemn. Although he knows it was wrong, his flesh was weak. Consequently he felt guilty and asked the Lord for forgiveness. This example demonstrates that the man uses a Christian distinction between the flesh and the soul to explain that he only wants to watch-to-judge. Resolute though he may be, while watching he was aroused and disciplined himself by turning off the television and asking for forgiveness. In addition, this example shows that the reception of television images have bodily consequences that are ‘felt’ and ‘interpreted’ in a Pentecostal cosmology. This link between images and corporal effects leads us to question the relationship between Pentecostalism, watching television, desire and the body more closely.

7.7 The Image, the Body and the Holy Spirit

In order to obtain a better understanding of the relationship between religion and media, and especially the way in which electronic media have altered religious experience I think the ideas of Machado and Fernandes provide an insightful point. They argue the combination of Pentecostalism and television causes ‘The junction of the Word and the
image and consequently the transformation of the religious experience into an intensely emotional and participatory experience (Machado & Fernandes 1998: 22) Certainly I do not mean to argue that religion was not participatory and emotional before television. I would like to argue that watching television requires and creates a different physical/emotional engagement with the image and therefore alters the relationship between religion, and the body. The example of the aroused young man clearly illustrates that images can create both desire and repulsion. This type of physical engagement with television is usually associated with male sexuality. However, other examples and other works suggest that emotional engagement with the image is certainly not confined to the male gaze. In his article ‘Haptic Screens’ and our ‘Corporeal Eye’, Jojada Verrips criticizes the cultural bias on the eyes and on vision when thinking about the interaction between screens and humans. By restating the importance of McLuhan’s observations on the sensuous effects of watching television, Verrips sets out ‘to show there is a lot more involved than sheer vision when watching screens or that it is not only our eyes which are touched by what we see on film, TV and PC screens, but our whole body (Verrips 2002: 22).’ Scholars of film studies have put forward similar arguments about the physical sensuality of the film experience. Most interesting in this respect are Laura Marks’ theories of ‘haptic visuality’ and ‘tactile memory’ (2000) and Vivian Sobchack’s work on ‘carnal thoughts’ (2004). Both authors analyze the multisensory experience of the image and both argue that looking at an image triggers embodied memories of touch, taste and smell. Sobchack’s emphasis on embodied memories in sensual perception especially demonstrates that sensual perception is pre-structured by acquired, cultural dispositions. Sobchack says: ‘We do not experience any movie only through our eyes. We see and comprehend and feel films with our entire bodily being, informed by the full history and carnal knowledge of our acculturated sensorium (2004: 63)’.

The engagement of evangélicos with television and the dynamic of attraction and rejection point to the sensuous relationship that evangélicos maintain with the images.299 If we return once again to the quote of the young man at the beginning of this chapter, who says we have to ‘close our eyes as in a horror movie’, it is abundantly clear that televised images have the ability to ‘shock’ the evangelical viewer as does a scary movie. The way he put his hands in front of his eyes so as to protect himself from the images

299 In her paper: “The Holy Spirit on Air: Charismatic Spirituality and the Ghanaian Broadcast Media” presented at the ASSR seminar ‘Religious Technologies’ May 31 2005, Marleen de Witte has taken these insights as a starting point to argue that the sensual experience of Pentecostal mass media is related to the embodied knowledge of the ‘touch’ of the Holy Spirit.
tells us of the forces that emanate from the screen, which enter the body if left unprotected and, on the other hand, of the typical desire to keep watching. We come to a more perceptive realization of the importance to protect the body from certain images in relation to Pentecostalism, if we look at the ways in which telenovela-watching is experienced. In studies of telenovelas there seems to be plenty of ‘reading’ of the meaning of telenovelas. Take, for example, the study ‘A Leitura Social da Novela das Oito’ (The Social Reading of the Eight O’ Clock Novela) by Ondina Fachel Leal. The accounts of evangélicos watching telenovelas support the idea that watching telenovelas is also a very physical experience. Uncontrovertibly, our analysis of watching television must also take into account the body instead of focusing on the ‘reading’ of telenovelas only, especially because the specific position of the body in Pentecostalism has its particular effects on the meaning and experience of watching television.

In general, in the process of conversion to Pentecostalism the body is the locus of attention. There is a wide range of bodily techniques, postures and disciplines that must be learned according to the Bible and subsequently, according to the religious community, if one wants to achieve the right inward disposition to be blessed by God. Of central importance in the relationship between the individual and God is the Holy Spirit. Since the body is regarded as a vessel for the Holy Spirit, the body becomes the carrier of the inward and outward signs of the individual relationship with God, both in the church-community as in the community of inhabitants in general. As Marleen de Witte has so eloquently written in relation to Pentecostal groups in Ghana: ‘Becoming a born-again Christian, then, involves two modes of learning, two kinds of knowledge: a symbolic mode of gaining representational knowledge and a mimetic mode of gaining embodied knowledge (De Witte 2005: 6).’ For example in the morro, modes of dress, consumption habits and (religious) posture and in church, singing, (louvor), kneeling, praying and talking with God in oração (praying) are all signs of the spiritual state of being. If this spiritual state of being is good, baptism in the Holy Spirit may follow.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit was always explained to me as something inexplicable; something I had to feel to know what it meant. Despite such strictures, happiness, levitation and a positive ‘burning’ sensation, were often mentioned. There is a quite circular logic to the possibility of baptism in the Holy Spirit in relation to the outward signs of spiritual being. According to the common conception among most of the

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100 This may be both the observed ‘viewer’ who does the ‘reading’ of the telenovela (Vink 1988) or the social scientist who does the ‘reading’ of the observed ‘viewer’.
Pentecostals, not everyone can be baptized in the Holy Spirit and the body should remain 'clean' for the Holy Spirit to reside in it. For example, if a person drinks alcohol, uses drugs or performs illicit sexual acts while he or she claims that he or she has accepted Jesus and has been baptized in water, the Holy Spirit cannot reside in that person and it is very unlikely that they will be baptized. However, in the case of members of the Assembléia de Deus, for example, anyone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit and starts speaking in tongues, not only experiences direct contact with God through the Holy Spirit, he or she also shows others that his/her body is clean and worthy of reception and that he/she lives according to the Word of God.

Although reactions to television programs are partly related to the differences in doctrines and practices of the Pentecostal churches, the moment that images are undoubtedly sinful from the Pentecostal perspective, for example, in the case of images of illicit sex or macumba, people show similar reactions. These reactions are often directly related to the body. Men, watching television programs which show, for example naked women might be tempted to impure thoughts and feelings, which then might cause the Holy Spirit to abandon their body. A good examples of this is the talk I had with a young man who attended the Assembléia de Deus and who was a great fan of the telenovelas Malhação and Esperança. When I asked him about which programs he would not watch, he named the example of the television program A presença de Anita (Anita’s Presence) in which an adolescent girl is involved in a sexual relationship with an older man. He did like to watch a novela called Malhação.

What is the difference between a presença de Anita e Malhação?

In malhação you don't see a woman exposed for the people to see naked. Malhação does not show that, so it is very different to what you see in presença de Anita. In malhação you may hear certain things that grate, but you hear only, you don’t see it happening, so it is very different.

Did you watch a presença de Anita?

I have seen it once, I have seen it once and I know that this will not bring me any further. It does not bring me anything edifying, you know. It edifies me in nothing. It will only drive the Holy Spirit out of my life because the Holy Spirit cannot reside in a filthy temple. From the moment I put grief and resentment in my heart, the Holy Spirit cannot stay in my life, me, hurt in this way, the Holy Spirit cannot stay in my life because I am in sin. He will leave me understand, if I watch presença de Anita. The Holy Spirit will certainly remove himself from my life. He will go, if it has
become a place of our enemy, the devil. I can’t stay because the Bible says we cannot worship two Gods. I cannot worship God and the devil it is God or the devil.

This example is an unequivocal demonstration that the reception of the Holy Spirit and the fight against the devil both occupy an important place in the Pentecostal doctrine and practice. The personal fight against the temptations of illicit pleasures or sinful behavior is often portrayed as the fight against the devil, in which victory can only be achieved with the help of God. Although especially present in the services and television programs of the Igreja Universal, many of the evangélicos I interviewed believe that television programs that seduce the spectator with illicit images and narratives are the work of demons trying to lure people away from the ‘straight path’ by offering them gifts and pleasures that might seem attractive, but eventually lead to death and destruction. The devil mostly works through television, by seducing men and women with images of carnal pleasures. As said a little earlier, these demonized television programs which show nudity and sex are often believed to teach women to prostitute themselves and men to commit adultery. The television spectator should therefore be very careful not to be caught by the devil, for the flesh is weak.

In the examples above, the corporal effects of television watching are primarily related to male sexuality and the fear that the spectator will become ‘impure’ and therefore will lose his contact with the Holy Spirit. In the next cases we will see that the relationship between watching television, the devil and the Holy Spirit and the body is not confined to male sexuality alone. In my one of my interviews a 26-year-old woman, who had recently been converted and attended the Assembléia de Deus, told of the time that she was watching the debate with the contestants of Big Brother Brasil. One contestant was telling about her adoration of Saint George, two others were cursing and swearing and the directors of the debate were showing what the contestants did behind each other’s backs while staying in the Big Brother house, when suddenly she felt something poking in her side and in her stomach. At first she did not understand where this poking came from but then she understood that it was the Holy Spirit who was poking her to let her know that she should not be watching those television programs:

I cannot watch everything, the Holy Spirit he goes, he disturbs me, not everything, also for you to know, for you to have this intimacy with Him for you to know really it is His, you need to have communion with God.
When I asked her if there were other programs she could not watch, she criticized telenovelas in general, though one in particular: O Beijo de Vampiro. This Globo telenovela is about a vampire lord and his family and liberally features the ‘dark powers’ vampires possess. ‘Powers’, which many Pentecostals do not dismiss to the realm of the ‘fantastic’, but are instead associated with the very real presence of feticha and macumba and are therefore interpreted as a direct reference to the devil:

Now let me put on this vampire thing, my God in Heaven, I certainly cannot watch that. If I have to watch something like that, my eyes don’t have...No. I say no. It has to be changed because I know it will disturb me. It will mess with me. I watch the news, but novelas no, I don’t stay watching novelas...now I cannot see this vampire novela as well. It is worse than Big Brother because it has things I have to avoid as well because if I stop to look, I already feel that it will disturb me as it messes a lot with witchcraft, it talks about...what they talk about supernatural powers, that disturbs me. When I keep watching, I know if I do this I will be so disturbed I will go away from the television, so I cannot watch.

What becomes clear is that evangélicos not only see the Bible as the holy text from which all other truths are to be derived, but the internalization of Pentecostal doctrines, also leads to a transformation of media practices and experiences. What becomes ‘visible’, or rather ‘tangible’, is that conversion to Pentecostalism implies a new way of looking at the world for those converts and, with those new perspectives, the relationship between television and viewer is profoundly changed. Because television watching is a multi-sensational experience that provides a physical engagement with the screen, this Pentecostal visual culture is always related to the body. For many evangélicos, watching television provides physical experiences that are interpreted in a Pentecostal framework and can have spiritual/material consequences. This reminds us that we should alter the common notion that reception of television has to be focused primarily on the ‘seeing’ and ‘reading’ of television programs as if they were texts only. Especially in the case of Pentecostalism, in which doctrines and practices are so much centered on the body, the Holy Spirit and corporal experiences, we should be aware of not describing the relationship between Pentecostals and television simply in terms of the ‘reading’ of the proselytic messages or narratives of telenovelas.
7.8 Globo, Telenovelas and the Devil

Speaking of telenovelas with evangélicos was speaking of Globo, that became clear during my research in the morro. First: most people watched and commented on telenovelas produced and presented by TV Globo. Second: speaking about the sinfulness of watching telenovelas often, if not always, led to their views on the ‘evil empire’, TV Globo. Any network which enters the competitive arena of television in Brazil has to deal with the biggest network of Brazil: Rede Globo. Globo has had a hegemonic position in the Brazilian public sphere for almost thirty years. According to Birman and Lehmann, Globo has been criticized for presenting a false image of Brazilian society through its telenovelas. It neutralizes the differences between rich and poor people by presenting a: ‘fantasy world of rich but unhappy people (Birman and Lehmann 1999: 151)’. The evangélicos generally disliked Globo for a different reason. Broadly speaking they thought that Globo’s power was directly related to its connection with the devil. This demonization of Globo has a particular history.

When the Igreja Universal bought the TV network of Rede Record for 47 million dollars in 1990, it not only entered the arena of competitive television networks, it also commenced what Birman and Lehmann have described as the ‘Battle for Ideological Hegemony’ (Birman & Lehmann 1999). In their analysis of the occurrences after the purchase, Birman and Lehmann show that the purchase of TV Record by the Igreja Universal was also an attempt to oppose the Catholic imaginary of Brazilian society, as it was represented by TV Globo. The political battle for ideological hegemony that followed was visible in a series of disputes in which Globo and a Igreja Universal played the leading roles. First, the purchase itself was questioned. In 1991 articles appeared in the press in which Edir Macedo was accused of having funded the purchase with drugs money. The Brazilian Federal Police pursued an investigation and even arrested Macedo (on other charges though). They released him shortly after heavy protests by the followers of the church. The accusations against Macedo in the press marked the beginning of a series of counter-accusations and conflicts played out in the media. ‘It was noted - not least by the followers of the church themselves - that Leopoldo Collor, brother of then President Fernando Collor, was a director of TV Globo, and they linked this to the mysterious leaks and smears, believing that Globo was trying to undermine the competition represented by TV Record in the mass media market (Birman & Lehmann 1999).’
In 1995 Globo launched a miniseries called *Decadência* in which it mimicked Macedo and his Igreja Universal and presented a charlatan Bispo who was enriching himself. 'TV Record had responded to the *Decadência* mini-series with attacks on the violence and adultery featured in the telenovelas screened by Globo and watched daily by millions of Brazilians (ibid: 150). The fights culminated in the infamous ‘róbute na santa’. After this followed an incident involving Bispo Gonçalves of the Igreja Universal who appeared on a tape broadcast by Globo. Gonçalves himself claims Globo tried to show: 'That I might have homosexual tendencies; that the leaders of the Igreja meet in Israel to have orgies. Presenting me as if I were a bad person who exploits people, linking my name to financial problems...Globo and its followers went against IURD and Record, with all the strength it could muster. It was a very powerful marketing strategy, a genial diabolical play, that we admit (Gonçalves 1996: 40). The mediated fight against the 'diabolical' Globo continued when TV Record attempted to use Globo's own weapons against it. TV Record launched its own telenovela, *A Filha do Demônio* in 1996, in an attempt to use the popular genre not only for proselytic purposes but also to unmask Globo (Fonseca 1997). Bispo Carlos Rodrigues said:

> Seeing those actors who are not evangelicals collaborating to reveal the work of the devil made me think how marvelous the hand of God is. Globo has been using these actors for decades to teach perversion and the degradation of the Brazilian family. TV Record is now using the same vehicle to glorify the name of the Lord Jesus, to unmask the demons that demonstrate how to destroy the family and to show how evangelicals are present in the hour of despair.301

During my research in the morro, I did not encounter anyone who referred to these evangelical telenovelas. However, what became clear during my research is that this popular mythology around Globo, which is usually associated with the Igreja Universal, had drawn a response from evangélicos of other denominations as well. Various adherents of the Assembléia de Deus and the Igreja Universal used it as an argument against watching telenovelas. They not only blamed Globo for making non-Christian programs, they also mistrusted TV Globo's real intentions in making these programs, the conditions under which they were made and how they became popular. When I asked a young man of 23 who attends the Assembléia de Deus if there were any programs on television he did not watch, he referred to the same telenovela as the girl above:

301 Bispo Carlos Rodrigues, Folha Universal, s/d, in Fonseca 1997: 202
What I don't watch no way? The seven o'clock novela, for example. *Beijo de Vampiro* (The Kiss of the Vampire), no way. Programs of Globo I hardly watch. Why not Globo? Because Globo is always giving an opportunity to...Roberto Marinho, president of Globo is *pai-de-santo* and in Globo he has a temple, a chair, he sits there on the day of worship of the devil. I know because working in publicity I have access to TV Globo. I am there sometimes and I have learned this, but today after a long fight there is also a room for meetings of evangélicos as well, for the evangelical actors. It (Globo) has, that is what they say, that it has a pact with the devil to make a program every year especially to worship him, the media itself, and this year it is *Beijo de Vampiro*.

This young man perceived this telenovela not only as an adoration of the devil, he also saw it as the direct intent of Globo's president, Roberto Marinho, to make these telenovelas in exchange for the devil's help in ensuring the success of Globo's television programs. This points to a juxtaposition many evangélicos see between wealth and social position in relation to public fame and star status and the battle against the devil. In the eyes of many evangélicos in the morro, fame and wealth, especially related to the mass media, are considered suspicious. In a very simplified version of the applied logic: to become rich, famous or powerful, hard work is not enough, one needs to be 'blessed' or in any case some extra-physical power is needed. Since certain television stars do not identify themselves as evangélicos, they can be suspected of having made a pact with the devil to ensure their success and wealth. When I asked a young man who attends a *Assembléia de Deus* why he thought of Globo as *macumbaria*, he said:

Because of him, of Roberto Marinho, you understand, he has to have made some sort of pact with the devil or something, because he does all sorts of things with macumba. He was macumbeira you understand. In the same way Xuxa made a pact with the devil. Today the people who want to be famous make a pact with the devil, to become famous. Xuxa has made a pact, when she had her program. She has had to do it because of him, being the boss of Globo. Persons who get in there also end up involved. The owner is their boss, they have to be involved. Unquestionably, he has made a law in there, you know for his employees.

*Xuxa*, the host of very popular children programs and certainly one of Globo's biggest television stars, becomes the center of a similar dynamic of the attraction and rejection of television as described above: no one would deny she is the beautiful example of a highly favored Brazilian TV personality, blond, blue-eyed and loved and adored by Brazilian children. Nevertheless this star-status or rather 'fame-without-faith' makes her suspect of having made a pact with the devil. This suspicion of Xuxa becomes 'knowledge' the
moment at which people are actually affected negatively as a result of watching her programs. As another young man of 19 who attends the Assembléia de Deus, explained to me when I asked him how he knows that Xuxa has a pact with the devil:

She has. It was on television once because, look, my little nephew was watching the tape of Xuxa. He watched the tape so much that he became disturbed. The boy could not sleep. He stayed up all day, all night. My aunt she went to Sister Edineia, Missionária Edineia, Preacher Edineia, servant of God. She went there, prayed for him and said that it was a demon that did not let him sleep, a demon. My aunt said that he had been watching the Xuxa tape and she said that he should not watch that tape anymore. It was disturbing. And she did not let him see it and up to today he hasn't seen it again and he sleeps quietly at home.

7.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, several of the threads in this dissertation have come together. Especially in the last reactions to the Globo programs it becomes obvious that the opposition of evangélicos to this television station is related to the deep social divide between the rich and famous who appear on television and the people who live in the morro. Interestingly, from a Pentecostal perspective this social divide is coupled to the local knowledge of religious practices such as Candomblé and Umbanda. From the perspective of the evangélicos, the supposed involvement of Globo in Afro-Brazilian religious practices leads to different media practices and experiences. For many people conversion to Pentecostalism implies a different way of looking at life and the world because they have become aware that the spiritual battle between God and the devil also takes places in the domain of television. When we regard television from such a Pentecostal perspective, the general evangelical opinions about the mass media described by Schultz (1996) acquire a deeper meaning in the case of the Brazilian situation. It not just that mass media can be used either for the purpose of effectively spreading the gospel and changing the culture for the better or that the mass media threaten the values and beliefs of the evangelical community. Those programs that supposedly threaten the evangelical community are an integral part of the visualizations of the spiritual battle and as such form an essential part of the constitution of what Pentecostalism means to people. Diabolical programs such as telenovelas, Big Brother or erotic shows should be seen as important programs that allow the viewer to imagine and feel how the devil operates. Those who are tempted to watch
the programs that are dangerous experience first hand the power of the devil to attract people and lead them astray.