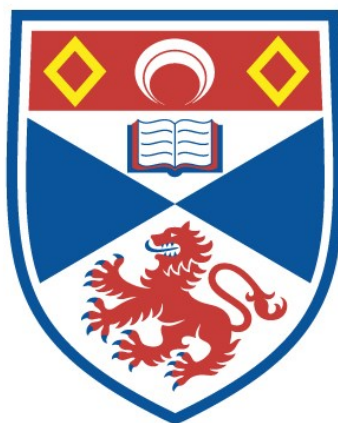


METAFREEDOM : THE CARNIVALESQUE OF FREEDOM IN A BRAZILIAN FAVELA

Moises Vieira de Andrade Lino e Silva

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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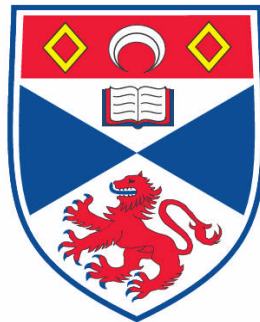
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METAFREEDOM?

THE CARNIVALESQUE OF FREEDOM IN A BRAZILIAN FAVELA.

Moises Vieira de Andrade Lino e Silva



Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Social Anthropology

School of Philosophy, Anthropology and Film Studies

University of St Andrews

18 May 2012

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I, Moises Vieira de Andrade Lino e Silva, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 90,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2008 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology in September 2009; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2008 and 2012.

Date: 18/05/2012

Signature of candidate

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Abstract

This thesis dwells on the existence of freedom in the life of people in a Brazilian *favela* (shantytown). The ethnography presents the dance of freedom with the full intensity of a carnivalesque. The exploration also ponders the existence of metafreedom (proposed as the freedom necessary for the expression of freedom) as a form of control over iterations of freedom. At the same time that it argues for a radical carnivalization of narratives of freedom, it flirts with the very limits of freedom as a concept and as a practice. One of the main contributions is in avoiding a reductive analysis of the concept of freedom, narrowing it to a simpler or alternative notion. Instead, the project presents the complex relations of five experienced objects – *livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberada* and *liberdade* – to one another and to the life situations in which they come to existence in Favela da Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro. In methodological terms, the research argues that one of the ways to approach the topic of freedom from an ethnographic perspective is through the occurrences of linguistic expressions of freedom as objects that can be empirically experienced and registered by the ethnographer. It is mainly by making the complexities of freedom visible ethnographically, by tracing freedoms in their daily existence and by connecting these different kinds of freedom to diverse lived experiences and social contexts that the thesis advances the debate on freedom. The discussion of a carnivalesque of freedom in a Brazilian favela is also a call for a reflection on what ethnography as an empirical method, and anthropology more broadly, can offer to the understanding of freedom.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	06
Chapter 1: A strong cry of freedom.....	07
The arrival trope.....	09
A myth of origin.....	10
Rocinha é o caldeirão! / Rocinha is the cauldron!	13
The cry for an anthropology of freedom.....	15
Reading for a PhD in Anthropology.....	16
My initial project.....	23
An anthropology of freedom in a favela.....	25
Empirical rationale.....	27
On nominalism, objects, identity and scepticism.....	30
The carnivalesque.....	34
Chapter 2: Metaliberdade / Metafreedom.....	39
The pre-fieldwork viva.....	39
Discussions on meaning.....	40
The iterability of freedom.....	45
The case for metafreedom.....	47
A biased speculation.....	53
Chapter 3: Liberdade I / Freedom I.....	58

Chapter 4: Livre / Free	90
Chapter 5: Livre-arbítrio / Free will	127
Chapter 6: Libertação / Liberation	138
Chapter 7: Liberada(o) / Liberated	170
Chapter 8: Liberdade II / Freedom II	183
Chapter 9: The spectacle goes on	225
The limitation of structures.....	226
The question of poverty.....	228
Different approaches to ethics.....	230
A paradox of freedom.....	233
Metafreedom of livre.....	237
Metafreedom of livre-arbítrio.....	241
Metafreedom of libertação.....	242
Metafreedom of liberada.....	244
Metafreedom of liberdade.....	245
The existence of freedom and the limits of experience.....	250
And the spectacle goes on.....	253
In Memoriam.....	255
Bibliography	258

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family for the freedom of letting me be who I am. I would like to thank my friends in Rocinha for giving me the freedom to share life with them. I would like to thank my teachers and colleagues at the University of St Andrews for their help with my intellectual liberation. I would like to thank all those at UC Berkeley who gave me the freedom to discuss my research with them during my visiting scholar period there. I would also like to thank people at Harvard University for my current fellowship and for freely believing in the potential of my work. I would finally like to thank the Centre for Amerindian, Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CAS) at the University of St Andrews and the British Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies (FURS) for allowing me to complete this thesis almost debt-free. Thank you all.

Chapter 1: A strong cry of freedom

Os Dez Mandamentos: o Samba da Paz Canta a Saga da Liberdade / The Ten Commandments: the Samba of Peace Sings the Crusade for Freedom¹

Samba school G.R.E.S. Estação Primeira de Mangueira (RJ) - 2003

Composição / Authors: Marcelo D'Aguiã; Gilson Bernini; Bizuca Clovis Pê

(...)

Moises desafia o rei / Moises challenges the king
a ira divina desaba na terra / divine ire falls on earth
libertação! e num gesto encantado / liberation! And in a magic gesture
o mar virou passarela / the sea became a crossing
descrença... ilusão / disbelief... illusion
no ouro, a falsa adoração / in gold, the false worshipping
a vontade de Deus é a lei da verdade / God's will is the law of truth
foi revelada pra humanidade / it was revealed to humanity
mostra pro mundo, Brasil (meu Brasil) / show to the world, Brazil (my Brazil)
o caminho da felicidade / the way to happiness
quem plantar a paz vai colher amor / those who will seed peace will harvest love
um grito forte de liberdade / a strong cry of freedom
na estação primeira ecoou! / in the first station resounded!

¹ All translations in the thesis are my own free translation, unless stated otherwise.

This thesis dwells on the existence of freedom. The ethnography presents the dance of freedom in the life of people in a Brazilian *favela* (shantytown) with the full intensity of a carnivalesque. The research also ponders the existence of metafreedom (proposed as the freedom necessary for the expression of freedom) as a form of control over iterations of freedom. At the same time that it argues for a radical carnivalization of narratives of freedom, it flirts with the very limits of freedom as a concept and as a practice.

The chapters to come comprise an ethnographic enquiry into the use of a certain lexicon of freedom present in the life of people living in Favela da Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro. Five kinds of freedom are foregrounded: *livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberada*; *liberdade*. Each of these will be treated as unique objects and discussed, one by one, chapter by chapter. In methodological terms, the research considers that one of the ways to approach the topic of freedom from an ethnographic perspective is to attend to the occurrences of linguistic expressions of freedom as objects that can be empirically experienced and registered by the ethnographer. These objects of freedom are argued to constitute a metaphysically concrete basis through which it becomes possible to ethnographically apprehend further intricate characteristics that different kinds of freedom both acquire and instantiate through their existence and circulation in the life of people living in Favela da Rocinha.

The circumstances under which each of these five objects proved to exist turned out to be very particular: the existence of the objects varied contextually in relation to how the lexicon of freedom was interpellated by distinct people at different times. Nonetheless, an argument could be made that in Rocinha the use of the lexicon of freedom suggests the existence of a shared indexical feature: it could be thought that expressions of freedom constitute the performers of these expressions as “standard bearers” of a particular kind of freedom: metafreedom. The discussion here of a carnivalesque of freedom in the favela is also a call for a reflection on what ethnography as an empirical method, and anthropology more broadly, can offer to a conversation on freedom.

The arrival trope

from: Moises Lino e Silva <mles@st-andrews.ac.uk>

to: babi@xxx.com.br²

date: 28 December 2008 17:24

subject: Morando na Rocinha / Living in Rocinha

mailed-by: st-andrews.ac.uk

Hi Babi,

I write by recommendation of your sister-in-law Florence, who gave me your email.

Like Florence, I am also an anthropologist. I am from Goiás State but I received a scholarship to study in Scotland. As part of my doctorate, I would like to conduct fieldwork in Rocinha, if possible. I would like to live in Rocinha for about a year in order to understand better how people live and also to try to help to break the prejudice that many people have against favelas. I arrive in Rio in early February and I would like to move to Rocinha soon after. Florence said that maybe you could introduce me to people there in Rocinha? And maybe you can help me find a place to live in? It could be a studio, single room with toilet, etc. Would you have any idea of rental prices? I would need something cheap.

To sum up, I would be extremely grateful if you could help me! I hope that we can keep in touch until I arrive in Rio in February.

Hug,

Moises

² I have used pseudonyms all over the thesis to somehow protect the freedom of those concerned.

From: Babi Menezes <babi@xxx.com.br>
to: mles@st-andrews.ac.uk
date: 29 December 2008 01:16
subject: RE: Morando na Rocinha / Living in Rocinha
mailed-by: xxx.com.br

Hi Moises,

Everything ok?

Well, I will see what I can find for you here. I hope Florence has already told you how it is to live in Rocinha. Here it is ok but there are days in which things become very difficult, but that rarely happens. In relation to accommodation, prices vary according to different locations; the monthly rent cost could go from 250 to 700 reais, without furniture. Let us get to know each other better through here and you can keep asking about the things you want to know. I will be working during this period but here in Rocinha itself.

I will wait for your contact. Big hug!

Babi

A myth of origin

Rocinha was a child of wars. Some would tell me that the first inhabitants of the hills on which Rocinha sits had come to Brazil after World War I. The Portuguese Bakery on Travessa Oliveira Street – where my friend Auro loved to

have coffee – was a living memory of the times when the Portuguese fled Europe looking for a better life in the new continent. In fact, the white-haired old man, who Auro had once pointed out to me as the owner of the bakery, still had what most speakers of Brazilian Portuguese would call a “funny” accent.

Laboriaux was the name of the highest part of Rocinha: a French word, people used to say. French immigrants had supposedly christened the place in the first half of the 1900s and by the 2000s it was still a popular spot for foreigners, albeit now for foreign tourists. Nowadays armed with cameras, they would pay a good sum to be taken all the way up to the top of the hill in order to have a favela “adventure” and to enjoy spectacular views of Rio de Janeiro: the “Marvellous City”. From one side of Laboriaux, they could take shots of São Conrado beach, which lies somewhere in between the blue strip of the Atlantic Ocean and a slightly curved line of luxurious apartment buildings; laid out underneath the feet of hundreds of favela dwellers and set against a striking background of deep green hills. At the far end of São Conrado beach there was the majestic Pedra da Gávea (Gávea Stone), 842 meters above sea level. Instead, if the foreign tourists decided to look to the opposite side of Laboriaux, they could then shoot the Lagoon (Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas), which was surrounded by the most expensive neighbourhoods in Rio de Janeiro. On a clear day, even Ipanema beach would appear on the tourist’s viewfinder.

Italian migrants in the early Twentieth Century were said to have baptized the most important commercial street in Rocinha: Via Ápia. Italian tourists now explored the place in big groups, invariably guarded by tour guides. There was also a street in Rocinha called Travessa Roma, where the infant school owned by Babi was located. The first arrivants in Rocinha were often narrated as people who worked hard on the land. Farmers and gardeners, they took their products to be sold in the wealthy neighbourhoods that have always surrounded Rocinha, such as in a big market that took place in the neighbourhood called Gávea. In fact, the agricultural use of those hills is meant to be the very origin of the name “Rocinha”,

which could be literally translated as: “Little Farm”. Over the years, former slaves were also attracted to the place and many worked in the little farms too. But it was mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, however, that a vast influx of people would turn these green fields into one of the densest urban areas of Brazil. These were once again migrants looking for opportunities, but now they came mainly from other Brazilian states such as: Minas Gerais, Bahia, Sergipe, Alagoas, Pernambuco, Ceará, and others. This new wave of incomers, historically accused of illegally occupying the land, battled daily against the threat of removal, to guarantee access to basic infrastructure (such as water and electricity) and to overcome stigmatization. In more recent decades, however, new types of wars began in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. These wars were taking place between drug-traffickers (who held control over the favela territories) and the police (who would occasionally raid these favelas). Regardless of these many skirmishes, most people in Rocinha would tell me that the favela was a great place to live. One thing was certain: multitudes have been, and continue to be, attracted to the favela; and that includes myself.

From February 2009 to April 2010, I rented a small house in Rocinha for 300 reais per month. Rocinha was by then dubbed the largest favela (or slum) in Latin America. It was one of the 516 favelas of Rio de Janeiro, according to official figures published by the Brazilian government as a result of a census in the year 2000. Of course, the official figures were of only relative value when it came to so-called informal settlements, where the presence of the State has been in many ways scarce (even for the purpose of conducting the national census). During my time in Rocinha, I heard people say that there were close to 1,000 favelas in Rio de Janeiro in 2009. However, the Brazilian government census of 2000 claimed that there were in total just over one million people living in the favelas of Rio as a whole. Favela dwellers viewed this as a massive underestimation: some thought there must be at least 200,000 people in Rocinha alone. Supposing that this were indeed the case, then official figures would be far from accurate. In any event, the formal and informal figures seem to agree on one point: Rocinha was the largest single favela in Rio de Janeiro in terms of population. We should note that

“conurbation” of different favelas has created “complex favelas” much larger than Rocinha but there is a question mark over whether these should be placed in the same category as favelas with a unified territory of the kind that Rocinha arguably had. Either way, when I come to think of it, part of my desire to do fieldwork in Rocinha probably came from its sheer size. Perhaps naively, I hoped that a study on freedom in such a big favela would be more representative than one in a small one.

Rocinha é o caldeirão! / Rocinha is the cauldron!

The lights were dazzling my eyes, the smoke in the air was taking my breath away, and the music was so loud that it could not only be heard but also felt as vibrations going through my whole body. Sweat was dripping out of hundreds of figures moving around in circles within this vast indoor party place called “Emoções” (Emotions). A shirtless torso passed me by; then a taller one; then one more muscled. The boys kept moving around the space. Bodies kept following one another, one behind the other, like a dancing train made up of toned and tanned physiques. Sweat was exchanged as they pushed their way through the crowd. I saw a glimpse of an automatic machine gun, was that an AK-47? I thought: a dancing AK-47? At the same time all the backsides in Emoções were shaking; some to the sides, others up and down. “Lower! Lower!” – the DJ ordered. Could they touch the ground? A girl slowly hit the ground with her bum and danced back up while turning her neck to look at the boys behind her. Another one danced with her right middle finger stuck into her mouth. And then the DJ played another funk track, and another one, but that last one was not the funk rhythm? What was that? “Pagode”? I turned to Ricky and asked: what’s with the slow pagode rhythm now? He replied: it is time for people to catch their breath, man! And I smiled. The main “baile funk” (funk party) took place weekly in that big former industrial-shed located by Estrada da Gávea (Gávea Road). Not far down from Emoções there was

a little square called “Largo da Macumba (Magic Square)”, a place in between Rocinha and the upper middle-class neighbourhood of São Conrado.

Rocinha had another big space dedicated to carnival and samba music. They held events there almost every weekend. Sometimes, when I was crossing over Auto Estrada Lagoa-Barra (the road that passed by Rocinha connecting the Lagoon Rodrigo de Freitas to the neighbourhoods of São Conrado and Barra da Tijuca), I would hear the strong beat of samba. People rehearsed during the whole year for the Rio de Janeiro carnival competition that took place around late February of each year. Acadêmicos da Rocinha, the local samba school, was not in the main league of samba schools of Rio, but, still, it used to do very well in competitions. My friend Carmélia loved samba and most of my friends in Rocinha loved carnival. Funk was perhaps the rhythm that teenagers had appreciated more in recent years but the power of samba was still very much present in Rocinha. Rio de Janeiro remained proud of its carnival. As people used to tell me: “This is the best carnival on Earth!”

In many ways, life in Rocinha was like a baile funk. Or like a samba performance. There was a strong beat to it, a certain rhythm that was very fast. Perhaps even faster and stronger when people were fighting their many wars. People moved around very quickly on the few wide roads and the very many narrow alleyways of Rocinha. They moved in all directions too: some went out to buy vegetables in a place called “Largo do Boiadeiro”; some decided to fight boredom at the beach, which was a short-walk from Rocinha; others moved around in order to visit friends but on their way they were stopped by yet other friends; other dwellers worked outside of Rocinha and had to take busses and vans back and forth elsewhere in Rio. There were also the bars near Via Ápia, where some of my friends enjoyed drinking and there they would flirt and get into arguments and laugh and sometimes cry too. Life was buzzing, day and night. In contrast to what I had experienced in other Brazilian cities, Rocinha was busy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Nightlife was very intense. In fact a lot of my friends

could only be seen at night: they slept during the day. Day and night, I felt that people touched each other a lot more than what I was used to: hugs, kisses, sex, fights, all forms of touching. Some of these fights were so bad that the whole of Rocinha seemed to stop for hours, holding its breath in suspense. That happened, for example, when the police made incursions into the favela looking for drugs, stolen vehicles, and criminals. That is when the AK-47s started to dance around again, in the hands of men organized into heavily armed groups to threaten their enemies. But soon that life rhythm would change again and people went back to other strong beats. “Rocinha é o caldeirão! (Rocinha is the cauldron!)”, said the lyrics of a famous funk music. Rocinha was indeed a place on fire, and in many ways.

The cry for an anthropology of freedom

I still remember walking uphill holding hands with Orácia, the lady who looked after me, cooked and cleaned while my parents were at work. This was not Rocinha hill, though. I was only about 7 years old then and still living in the small Brazilian town where I was born in Central-West Brazil. It was a long walk from my house in the downtown area to Orácia’s house in the outskirts. All the fun playing with the many kids in Orácia’s neighbourhood was worth the effort, though. For many years to come I would miss the food that they used to eat at her place, which her family called “comida simples (simple food)”. Above all, though, I would miss being surrounded by so many people whose company I deeply enjoyed. Orácia was the eldest daughter of a family of 8 people who lived together in a very modest two-bedroom house. They treated me as if I were a little brother, the 7th sibling. Years later they finally found the means to enlarge their house but by then I had already moved with my mother and my only brother to the capital city of Goiás State, Goiânia. I would rarely see my other family again. Recently I found out that in Latin, the word *liberi* could both be used to refer to children or to

freedom. As a child, I experienced freedom by playing barefoot with Orácia's family and my many friends on the dirt roads of Orácia's neighbourhood. Perhaps I still long for that. Many years later, on the hills of Scotland, I would turn freedom into my topic of anthropological interest.

Reading for a PhD in Anthropology

Certainly, freedom is more often a topic of philosophical, rather than anthropological, interest. Indeed, on different occasions while writing this thesis I found myself questioning what anthropology could offer to a topic that has already been saturated with philosophical writings. In my online searches through different library catalogues, while using the key word "freedom", the results returned overwhelmingly with more titles in philosophy than within anthropology. I also often encountered much more interest on that topic coming from my philosophy colleagues than from those in anthropology. In any case, after some initial struggle, I found the necessary support for my research coming from my supervisors at the University of St Andrews, and also funding from the Centre for Amerindian, Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CAS) based at the Department of Anthropology in St Andrews and from the British Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies (FURS).

Leach (in Bidney 1963: 76) spelled out what he thought to be a difference between an anthropologist and a philosopher by saying that: "The anthropologist as distinct from the philosopher is concerned with what is the case rather than what ought to be the case." However, when it came to freedom in anthropology, what was the case? James Laidlaw (2002) argued that the lack of research on freedom in anthropology has been mostly a consequence of the Durkheimian social determinism that had deeply influenced the discipline. He put it that: "Durkheim's

'social' is effectively Immanuel Kant's notion of the moral law, with the all-important change that the concept of human freedom, which was of course central for Kant, has been neatly excised from it" (Laidlaw 2002: 312). In "For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom", Laidlaw (2002: 311) proposes that an inquiry into the subject of freedom within anthropology is urgently necessary because: "we shall need a way of describing the possibilities of human freedom: of describing, that is, how freedom is exercised in different social contexts and cultural traditions."

There are, of course, notable exceptions to the anthropological silence when it comes to discussions about freedom. Well-known anthropologists such as Boas (in Anshen 1942), Malinowski (1947), and Leach (in Bidney 1963) have all written on the topic. Also, the works of Overing Kaplan (1975), Riesman (1977), Lee (1987), Wolf (1990), Loizos (in Barker 1995), Englund (2006) and Humphrey (2007) indicate that if the theme of freedom has never been of central importance to the discipline, neither has it disappeared from anthropological discussions for too long. In fact, after going through hundreds of pages of anthropological literature on freedom, and having held several informal dialogues with many anthropologists on the theme, it seems to me that anthropology faces an uneasy relationship with the theme of freedom.

On the one hand, the idea of freedom has been central to the formation of what some call the Western world, the world in which most anthropologists still live. On the other hand, the traditional focus of the discipline (most of all in the British version of it) has neither been on the Western world nor on the (free) individual often argued to inhabit that Western world. For example, Peter Loizos (in Barker 1995: 89) argues that for too long anthropology fell under "the spell of Durkheim and Marx, and so preoccupied with the problems of whole cultures, rather than those of individuals." It is worth mentioning here that in the British context the works of Nigel Rapport (1987, 1993, 1997, 2002) have historically constituted exceptions to this norm.

The theme of freedom, however, is not necessarily tied up to individuality. Even when writing during a time in which anthropology was almost exclusively group oriented, Leach (in Bidney 1963: 86) was nonetheless able to point out what I also see as an anthropological predicament: “since the word freedom is a powerful symbol in the ideology of the Western world – especially the American part of it – it is only natural that Western anthropologists should endeavour to demonstrate that Freedom is a value esteemed by the Noble Savage.” When I read this statement by Leach, I felt a sense of contradiction: an anthropology which endeavours to demonstrate that other people around the world esteem the same values as Americans can only be considered problematic. However, at the same time, I would also agree with Fischer and Marcus (1986) that an anthropology historically rooted in the Western world cannot ignore its own conditions of possibility, and cannot afford to ignore what impact its own powerful symbols have when it comes to studying the life of others.

It was indeed in relation to the state of freedom of people then called “savages” that Malinowski (1947) first attempted to produce what could be described as an incipient anthropology of freedom. In *Freedom and Civilization*, Malinowski (1947) argues for a broader understanding of law as a form of sanctioned custom. From that starting point, he takes a classic functionalist route to argue that the constraints of custom that are built up into a system often aim at maximizing individual freedom, in which freedom is assumed to have a positive value. “Freedom is the successful unimpeded course of the cultural process, bringing full satisfaction of all needs” (Malinowski 1947: 39). Therefore it could be concluded that this system of customs lead to a successful satisfaction of many other needs of the so-called “savages”; even freedom.

Boas (in Anshen 1942: 51), however, takes a much more relativistic stance on the topic and argues: “Freedom is a concept that has meaning only in a subjective sense. A person who is in complete harmony with his culture is free. For

this reason, the concept of freedom can develop only in those cases where there are conflicts between the individual and the culture in which he lives.” This seems a bold claim. Boas (in Anshen 1942), nevertheless, went further arguing that the concept of freedom therefore could not be said to exist in “primitive cultures”. Wolf (1990) also takes a relativistic position on this topic. In “Freedom and freedoms: an anthropological perspective”, Wolf (1990) argues that “there may be cultures in which the concept of freedom is unimaginable and unthinkable”. In his analysis, Wolf (1990) takes the reader on a round-the-world tour to examine the state of freedom in cultures as diverse as those of the Australian Aboriginal, Indian, the Imperial Chinese, and the Ottoman. In all of these worlds, he argues, the concept of individuals with freedoms is absent.

The relativistic tone set by Boas (in Anshen 1942) will also be found in many other anthropological studies of freedom and this is an important point at which anthropological and philosophical approaches to freedom tend to disagree. In philosophy, freedom is often discussed in terms of universal human phenomena, perhaps as a consequence of Kant’s (1934) influential argument that freedom is a transcendental feature of human subjectivity. In anthropology, the case has been quite different. In anthropological writings on freedom there has often been at least an implicit concern with the issue of ethnocentrism. Bidney (1953: 465) says: “cultures differ widely in the scope of freedom allowed to the individual and in the theoretical and practical sanctions they provide for the exercise of authority. We of the West must be especially careful to avoid the ethnocentric fallacy involved in setting up the individualistic standards of our capitalistic democratic society as a universal norm for all peoples.”

In “Freedom in Fulani social life”, Riesman (1977) is very straightforward in stating the importance that, ethnographically, he found freedom to have for the Fulani. However, the author is also very careful in highlighting in his book’s title that his concern in the research was with the social role of freedom. Riesman (1977: 140) states: “a quality indispensable to the model of the ideal Fulani is his

freedom. Actually, three freedoms are involved: the Pullo is free because of his birth to free parents, he is freed by domination by his needs and emotions, and he is free in his relations with his peers, who cannot order him around. It is that ideal we must keep in mind when speaking of conformity to the code *pulaaku* (Fulani-ness).” However, conforming to *pulaaku* does not deprive the Fulani of individual freedom, says Riesman (1977). In the same vein Malinowski (1947) had argued that to follow the local custom did not mean a lack of freedom. A point that also resonates with what Boas (in Anshen 1942: 51) argues: “a person who is in complete harmony with his culture is free.” That freedom could be made possible by following a set of rules may seem counter-intuitive. However, both anthropological and philosophical discussions seem to be happy to allow for the existence of such a paradox. It could be said, however, that it is the Western doctrine of liberalism itself that offers a central precedent for tolerating such a contradiction and main figures in liberal thought, such as Locke (1821), discuss this paradox at length.

In anthropology, Englund (1996: 4) also explores the issue as a paradox in “Prisoners of Freedom”. He argues that “what appears as freedom from one perspective can be mere trivia from another, but a crucial issue is whether those who occupy the public sphere are prisoners of their particular perspective. The obligation to rethink the promise of freedom is constant and riddled with moral, political and intellectual quandaries.” As an ethnographic example of the problem, Englund (2006) discusses the use of freedom made in the nationalist discourse of liberation in Africa that shifted from the liberation from colonial powers into new notions of freedom such as the human rights defence of freedom. His main concern could be said to be that “new freedoms entail new prisoners” (Englund 2006: 4).

Contradictions aside, the topic of liberalism as a form of freedom comes up in many other anthropological works. However, although it has been said that freedom is of central importance to the Western world, it was only in 1959 that anthropologist Lee published a book on the topic focusing attention on American

society. In the book, she argues that there is an idea of freedom peculiar to American society in that Americans believe that they live in “the land of the free”; Americans are born “equal and free”. However, Lee argues that she is “not concerned with the ultimate question of what freedom is. As a concept or as a recognized value, freedom is rarely if ever present in non-Western cultures; but the thing itself, freedom, is certainly often present and carefully implemented – as autonomy, or otherwise as a dimension of the self” (Lee 1987: 53). The point raised on whether so-called “non-Western” people have the concept of freedom or have what Lee (1987) calls “the thing itself” is controversial. Instead of going down that route, however, I would just like to say that from my perspective it seems unavoidable that any conversation about freedom as “the thing itself” should also lead to some degree of reflection about the “question of what freedom is”; and vice-versa.

A similar issue seems to be faced by Caroline Humphrey. In 2007, Humphrey published an essay entitled “Alternative Freedoms”, which is a more current example of anthropological writing on freedom. The fact that the American Philosophical Society awarded a prestigious prize to Humphrey for that essay is an indication of how important an anthropological approach to the theme of freedom could be for other disciplines. Interestingly, though, in her text Humphrey intentionally bracketed off discussions regarding what philosophers had to say about freedom. Instead, she emphasized how some people in Russia, with whom she had been working for years, referred to ideas similar to freedom. In Humphrey’s (2007: 1) words: ‘I want to use our word “freedom” – whose multiple meanings will be implicit and left to your imaginations – to *elicit*, as it were, a range of ideas held in Russia.’ The author does not make it very clear, however, how meanings left to imagination could elicit any ideas that the Russians could hold.

A common way out of all the problems presented by an anthropological engagement with the issue of freedom has been to reduce freedom to other topics

of interest. On that front, anthropologists have been much more confident and prolific in their efforts. Loizos (in Barker 1995) argues that the topic of freedom has been mostly present in anthropology under different headings. Anthropology “has rewritten freedom-questions under other conceptual headings. These include the study of unfree statuses as they impinge upon groups; the study of resistance to power structures and ideological pressures, both by groups, and by individuals; and the study of socialization as it limits both collective and individual autonomy” (Loizos in Barker 1995: 88-89). However, the extent to which these works can still be said to be about freedom is itself very questionable. To reduce freedom into the study of “resistance” or “agency”, for example, raises an important issue that philosophers could call “the paradox of analysis” (Moore in Schilpp 1968), namely, that to argue that freedom can be analysed in terms of resistance, agency, or even unfreedom, would be to argue a certain identity between freedom and these other concepts that does not simply follow. Unless it could be demonstrated ethnographically to be the case, freedom is not exactly the same as resistance. Freedom is not exactly the same as agency. Freedom is not exactly the same as the issue of unfreedom either because a positive definition of something is not the same as a negative definition of it. The point I want to highlight, therefore, is that to avoid the direct engagement with the theme of freedom in favour of other themes will just not do. The challenge for an anthropology of freedom is still – as Laidlaw (2002: 311) puts it so well: “we shall need a way of describing the possibilities of human freedom: of describing, that is, how freedom is exercised in different social contexts and cultural traditions.” The question seems to be not to explain freedom away in terms of other concepts but to consider freedom as existence in its own terms.

Along the lines of what Donald Davidson (1996) has already proposed in relation to the concept of “truth”, I will therefore go further to argue that one of the main predicaments that I try to overcome in my own research on the topic of freedom is the following: not to attempt to determine what freedom is (not even to determine a positive definition of it) and yet be able to experience how freedom is

lived (by people in Rocinha), and share this experience with the reader. I propose that we should not be attempting to give a reductive analysis of the concept of freedom because just narrowing freedom to a simpler or alternative notion will become problematic in at least three fronts: first, it will raise serious questions in terms of “the paradox of analysis” discussed above (Moore in Schilpp 1968); second, less prominent narratives of freedom would tend to become even more overshadowed as the outcome of reduction; third, reduction is more likely to lead us back into the paradox of freedom as determination. Instead, the project that I am committed to tries to overcome these problems primarily by deploying the strategy of making visible the complex relations of five ethnographic objects: *livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberada* and *liberdade* to one another and to the life situations in which they come to existence. It is mainly by making the complexities of freedom visible ethnographically, by tracing freedoms in their daily existence and by connecting these different kinds of freedom to diverse lived experiences and social contexts that I believe the debate about freedom can be better advanced.

My initial project

Towards the end of 2008, I had written the first draft of my pre-fieldwork research project then entitled “An Anthropology of Freedom in a Brazilian Favela”. It combined quite a few elements suggested by the works mentioned earlier and it was also riddled with certain problems and uncertainties characteristic to the anthropology of freedom. My proposal was tailored for a very different context than those of previous researchers, though.

Not much time had passed from the moment that I had started to work on my research project before I came to realize that for many people who had never lived in a favela (or shantytown) the idea that I was proposing to carry out a research on freedom in such a place was somehow ironic. The problem seemed to

go well beyond Amartya Sen's (1999) "Development as Freedom", which was but one element supporting a more widespread narrative that portrayed poverty and freedom as somehow mutually exclusive. To use an ethnographic example of how this issue would come to haunt me: I knew an old friend of my mother's who lived in the famous neighbourhood of Copacabana. I visited her in the first months of my fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro. When she heard about my research proposal, she said: "Liberdade em favela? Que liberdade? O povo oprimido pela pobreza e pelos traficantes e você interessado em liberdade? (Freedom in a *favela*? What freedom? People oppressed by poverty and traffickers and you are interested in freedom?)" Anthropologists also seemed to corroborate this familiar narrative. For example, Paul Farmer (1999: xxv) states with a confident brevity in a book called *Infections and Inequalities*: "poverty is the great limiting factor of freedom." Not everyone in anthropology seems to share Boas (in Anshen 1942) taste for relativism when it came to the issue of freedom, after all.

At a different extreme, however, the work of some authors, such as Brazilian urban anthropologists Alvito and Zaluar (1998), describes how favelas are at the same time seen as places of "unlimited freedom". In this other polarizing narrative, people in favelas are said to be doomed to freedom because they have no sense of the appropriate or the moral, so they could do whatever they wanted. As my friend Auro from Rocinha once told me: "Muito burguês vem para cá não só para comprar mas para poder usar droga. Ficam vagando por aí achando que aqui eles são livres! (A lot of bourgeois people come here not just to buy drugs but also to abuse drugs. They keep wondering around thinking that here they are free!)" Especially interesting for me is the part of the argument that claims that without morality freedom is unlimited. I remain unconvinced that favelas are absolute loci of immorality, though.

Could my research come to terms with these two opposing views? Or, perhaps, could it challenge these views? What is the potential of an ethnographic inquiry into freedom in a favela? Going back to what Leach (in Bidney 1963: 76)

argued: “the anthropologist as distinct from the philosopher is concerned with what is the case rather than what ought to be the case.” I was keen to adopt an anthropological focus for my inquiry into freedom and hence I was more than happy to go out and find out what exactly was the case concerning freedom in Rocinha. But how could I do it? I needed a research plan, I was told. But would it not be the case that a research plan always already carries with it, at least implicitly, an image of what ought to be the case? If it did not, it could hardly be called a plan. When I wrote my project proposal perhaps I did not give this question enough thought. Looking back however, I would like to pause for a while and elaborate more precisely what I see as the potential for an anthropological study of freedom in a Brazilian favela.

An anthropology of freedom in a favela

If it has been accepted that anthropology is not a neutral form of knowing: what sort of commitments does anthropology bring with itself in terms of freedom? If anthropology were to look at itself on the mirror of critical analysis, what would it see? I believe that it would certainly see mixed traces of the Enlightenment, colonialism, liberalism, empiricism, just to name a few. Peter Loizos (in Barker 1995: 87) argues that despite being a “bastard offspring of colonialism, today, the intellectual and political sympathies of the discipline are pro-underdog”. Arguably, in recent years, “pro-underdog” attitudes are less fashionable, depending on the anthropological circle in question. However, as with many other of my peers, I had been drawn to the discipline for what I had felt to be its main potential at that time: it offered a chance to know and to help the Other.

A question that emerges, however: was my vaguely anti-colonial attitude not as patronizing as the colonial one in the end (see Rahnema in Sachs 1992)? Arguably, both of these desires (to know and to help the Other) could compromise

the freedom of this Other. There seems to be an implicit superiority even in determining who the under-dogs are. Coming from a middle-class background in Brazil always made me question my role as a middle-class anthropologist who would live in a favela *by choice*. What would people in Rocinha think about that? And after my fieldwork had been completed, I thought, I could always leave again whereas *they* could not, *they* were trapped. As it turned out, it was indeed patronizing of me to think that *they* could not leave Rocinha if they wanted, in fact they could and many did so for good. It was condescending to think that to be middle-class was necessarily to have a superior status in the favela, often this was not the case. It was somehow an illusion to think that my anthropology was about helping *them* when they were the ones who ended up teaching me so many things. Perhaps the main issue in this whole discussion lies in the assumption of radical otherness that I used to have in relation to people in the favela. In many ways we were all part of the same story, people in favelas and the Brazilian middle-classes have for a long time been intricately constituted: as Orácia and I had been years ago. The ideal of preserving one group's freedom of self-determination works better within a narrative that does not recognize the existence of these prior relations; I had to rethink this issue.

As a modern discipline, however, anthropology has been strongly based on a method, ethnography, which is ultimately empiricist. This is relevant to the discussion I am presenting here because Empiricism, as an inheritance from the Enlightenment, could be said to play a double role in relation to freedom and anthropology. On the one hand, empiricism liberates anthropology from making claims about the human condition based solely on rational foundations (armchair anthropology). On the other hand, it runs the risk of trying to ground all that is human on empirical observations. As such, empiricism also comes to represent a threat to freedom in anthropology. Fenves (in Nancy 1993: XVI) highlights the role of empiricism as a kind of liberation: "The appeal to experience is at bottom a call for liberation, so much so that empiricism can claim to clear away long-held opinions, dogma, doctrines, and, at its inception, the very idea of *a priori*

justifications.” However, Nancy (1993) himself claims that the danger that empiricism presents to freedom is to think that empiricism has to necessarily be foundationalist. In fact, a central part of Nancy’s (1993) project in the “Experience of Freedom” is exactly to argue for an anti-foundationalist type of empiricism.

Empirical rationale

It seems to be the case that a research project in anthropology always contains a reasonable amount of *a priori* justifications, the point being that during fieldwork those justifications could be challenged through empirical work. I have arrived at a point where I am able to spell out the rationale of my thesis. Polarized narratives of absolute freedom versus absolute unfreedom have historically been used to account for what freedoms people living in Brazilian favelas are meant to have, or not have. An anthropology of freedom based on ethnography should serve me as a means through which I can put those narratives under the scrutiny of experience, hoping for the liberation of people subjected to the dominant power of these narratives. This is to say that as I wrote my research project I certainly had the expectation that my daily participation in the life of people in Rocinha would clear away long-held opinions regarding the state of freedom, or otherwise, in the life of favela dwellers in Brazil. The extent to which I have achieved this goal remains to be seen.

Of course, the anthropological work that has already been done on the theme of freedom serves as a reminder that to apply empiricism to the topic of freedom constitutes a challenge. How to empirically study freedom? Can freedom be captured ethnographically? If freedom could be captured through fieldwork and completely explained in causal terms, would it still be freedom, or would it become another proof that objects can be said to be empirically determined, and therefore the whole project of studying freedom empirically would be doomed from the beginning? Would the anthropologist have to know *a priori* the exact meaning of

freedom in order to know that he or she is experiencing *it* during fieldwork and therefore would empiricism not already have been pre-empted? I struggled with all of these questions in my own project and it was with those questions in mind that I attempted a contribution to the problem.

But before I move on to present what my attempt at addressing these issues has been, I would like to discuss a last point that connects anthropology and freedom. This is the issue of liberalism, which is nonetheless also related to the previously discussed issues of colonialism and empiricism. It has been widely acknowledged just how much of the rationale behind colonialism has been about bringing enlightenment to the “primitive”. Also, it has been argued that more recent forms of colonialism are in fact based on the principle that it is the duty of the United States of America and Europe to bring freedom to the people meant not to be privileged enough to live in democratic societies where their civil liberties can be guaranteed by the state. Fenves (in Nancy 1993: XV) argues: “the championing of empiricism and the defense of civil liberties lay out the points of reference for Anglo-American thought”. If we take Fenves (in Nancy 1993) seriously, as far as empiricism is concerned, much of anthropology would fall neatly under this Anglo-American way of thinking. Leach (in Bidney 1963: 86), by his turn, had already argued and I repeat: because “freedom is a powerful symbol in the ideology of the Western world – especially the American part of it – it is only natural that Western anthropologists should endeavour to [empirically] demonstrate that Freedom is a value esteemed by the Noble Savage.” A possible account of some relations established – through anthropology – between empiricism, colonialism and freedom seem to be highlighted by the citation above. I suggest that one needs to be very mindful of it.

In Rocinha, civil liberties in the Anglo-American way of thinking were mostly not present. For example, the favela had been under the control of an unelected drug-lord for a number of years. A fundamental part of the liberal state machinery, namely, its executive arm (which among other things is meant to

guarantee civil liberties) was not permanently present in most favelas. It followed that the state could not possibly guarantee the civil liberties of all favela dwellers, some of which would historically struggle for recognition as citizens of the Brazilian state (see Holston 2008). Nevertheless, the objective of my project is not to demonstrate empirically that because of this situation there is indeed an absolute lack of freedom in Rocinha and hence to champion the intervention of different states (Brazilian or foreign) in the affairs of the favela. Nor do I aim to demonstrate that Brazilian favela dwellers are actually better off (as they have more freedom from state intervention, for example) than those in the so-called “developed” world. If anything, the initial intention of my project was to show that even in the likely absence of more familiar types of freedom valued by some, there could be other kinds of freedom present in the life of people in favelas that remained vastly unknown. If the importance of the concept of “civil liberty” as freedom was central to Anglo-American thought, one of my initial objectives was to ethnographically challenge the limitations of that narrative. I hoped to somehow help liberate those constituted as “underdeveloped” from the entrapment of a global discourse of “development” in the name of a certain “must-have” type of freedom. If anything, as I have suggested, I entertained an anti-colonial (even if still patronizing) agenda that I felt responded to serious political questions of my time; questions that I had initially engaged with as a student of International Relations at the University of Brasília, Brazil.

When Fenves (in Nancy 1993: XV) argues that “the championing of empiricism and the defence of civil liberties lay out the points of reference for Anglo-American thought”, he also makes explicit one of the reasons for my insistence on holding on to empiricism as a form of enquiry into freedom. If Fenves (in Nancy 1993) is right, it follows that an epistemology based on empiricism is still one of the most effective ways to tamper with Anglo-American thought and the way that such thought tends to impact on other people around the world. However, I also feel that ethnography, as a form of empiricism, is not just any instrument of power but a necessary instrument of power on which the authority

of anthropology still currently rests (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Ethnography, then, could be taken as a necessary and powerful basis for knowledge, one that differentiates the anthropology of freedom from other forms of enquiry into the theme of freedom. What is important for me here, however, is to highlight that I do not hope to practice an anthropology that is perfect but an anthropology that is aware of itself, of its heritage, its politics, its problems and its virtues.

On nominalism, objects, identity and scepticism

I would like to delineate more precisely what sorts of relations that ethnography as an empirical method bears to my anthropological approach to freedom. For the purposes of my enquiry, to take an empirical epistemological stand is to hold that knowledge about freedom is to be achieved primarily through experience (the experience of the anthropologist during fieldwork) and that this knowledge will be more valuable when generated *a posteriori* (based on fieldwork experiences) rather than *a priori* (based on rational expectations alone).

Freedom as an *a priori* problem has commonly been the starting point for the generation of knowledge on freedom in philosophy (Nancy 1988). I argue that an anthropology of freedom should primarily focus not on freedom as a problem but on freedom as an object, or as objects, of lived experience. Anthropology as a discipline has been historically more interested in the lived experience of the Other rather than in the lived experience of the anthropologist herself. Nevertheless, the experience of the Other is not accessed straightforwardly. The link between my own fieldwork experience and the lived experience of people that I met during my research needs to be established. This is to say that it is necessary to hold a discussion regarding how the lived experiences of people in Rocinha were made known to me during fieldwork.

I will support the position that although the internal experiences lived by each person that I met in Rocinha were not directly accessible to others, they could still be communicated through language: “Ninguém sabe o que eu estou sentindo, o

que se passa aqui dentro. Ninguém nem imagina. Mas eu vou te contar. (Nobody knows what I am feeling, what is going on here inside me. Nobody even imagines it. But I am going to tell you.)”, said my friend Olga one day when she came to talk to me about how much she was suffering for love. Whatever Olga was experiencing then, she believed that it was being kept in secret inside her. However, she could also try to convey it to others through language. Fieldwork assured me that it was difficult to have access to other people’s lived experience. However, people in Rocinha still communicated experiences all the time and I hoped to explore the possibilities of knowledge offered by the link established between lived experience and language.

Derrida (1973) discusses at length how language could be seen to exist as a parallel stratum to the stratum of people’s inner experiences, the former giving form to the latter. In my research, I focused on language as a possible means to obtain access to people’s experiences of freedom. Now, if freedom is to be treated as an empirical object of study to be apprehended through language, then another clarification needs to be made. What sorts of objects can linguistic objects be? According to Lowe (1995), there are two possible answers to the question of what objects are in general. One takes a semantic turn and the other a metaphysical turn. I have already committed myself both to tracing the presence of freedom (a metaphysical commitment) and I have already defended the position that freedom as an experience in the lives of others can best be known through language. Lowe (1995: 509) argues: “according to the semantic answer, an object is to be conceived as a possible referent of a singular term”. According to this position, therefore, the signs *livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberada* and *liberdade*, would be conceived as possible referents to freedom. The objects of freedom would be whatever these signs refer to. The other (metaphysical) answer proposed by Lowe (1995: 511) would be that: “to be an object is to be an entity possessing determinate identity conditions.” Following this position, the objects of freedom would therefore be entities that possess identity conditions that would need to be established somehow.

The difficulties in taking freedom as a semantic object would be two-fold. First, it turned out during fieldwork that the referents of freedom were not just extremely varied but, also, what some people accepted to be a referent of freedom others did not accept. Further, sometimes what would be a referent of freedom for a group in Rocinha would be a referent of unfreedom for another group. For example, some of my transvestite friends were adamant that their breast silicone implants were a referent of freedom, of liberation of their inner self. Meanwhile, some of my evangelical friends could not disagree more with that position, for them those breasts were sinful, they were a manifestation of the devil, a token of unfreedom. The problem here could perhaps be attributed to the issue about whether freedom could be said to be a singular term or not. As argued by Lowe (1995), however, if the semantic definition of objects requires a previous discussion about whether certain terms are singular or not, this would suggest that a metaphysical discussion cannot be avoided in any case. A semantic definition of objects seems to already presuppose an understanding of identity conditions, in my case, the identity conditions of freedom.

What are the identity conditions that determine the linguistic object of freedom in my research? Here I will have to present another two answers. First, there are the identity conditions proposed by my research design. Second, there are the identity conditions that were ethnographically found to be the case in the life of people in Rocinha. In the research design, the objects of freedom are initially conceived by the presence of linguistic signs that I came across during fieldwork. These five signs are: *livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberada*; *liberdade*. For each one of these signs, an identity was established not based on semantics but based on the very occurrence of the sign as an object in space and time that could be experienced through the senses, including the senses of the anthropologist (my senses). Each of these signs that I encountered during fieldwork would be known either as a sound impression or as a visual impression. Among the variety of ways in which freedom was spoken (different voices, accents, tones, cadences and so on) or the variety of ways in which it was written down (by hand, printed, painted, graffiti and so on), all these signs would come to achieve an identity as they were

recorded in written form by the anthropologist, on my field notes. I rarely used a voice recorder, as I felt that it often upset people; the little that was recorded was transcribed too. In my research, the object of freedom would come to achieve an initial identity in written form then. It is worth noticing that it is also under an identity of written form that these five objects are presented to the reader. As it will be further discussed in the next chapters of the thesis, however, this identity does not preclude difference. It is exactly because this initial identity was not an absolute one that during the course of my research I believe that I came to reach a thicker understanding of the existence of these objects of freedom as they gradually acquired complexity through lived experience. This process of thickening in comprehension certainly resulted from my fieldwork and was to a great extent based on how I witnessed people in Rocinha making use of the objects of freedom as they went about living their lives.

A last point that I would like to address in this section is the issue of abstract versus concrete objects. As I previously mentioned, my method investigated the existence of freedom as concrete objects in Rocinha, objects that occurred in space and time and that could be experienced through the senses. However, a question could be raised in relation to the existence of abstract objects of freedom, objects that could occur independent of space and time. Also, questions could be raised in relation to the possible existence of freedom as a universal phenomenon, one which could be instantiated by particular occurrences of freedom but that would go beyond the concrete objects of freedom in themselves. Here I must reply that my commitment to an empirical study of freedom also carried with it a degree of a nominalist type of scepticism. By this I mean that my version of empiricism is also sceptical about the existence of abstract objects and it is sceptical about universals, unless there should be empirical motives to believe that these entities actually exist.

What are the consequences of such scepticism? Rabinow (1988) argues that nominalism could bring a new look into anthropological debates and I propose to employ a nominalist form of scepticism to search for new insights into the topic of

freedom. Prominent supporters of nominalism, Goodman and Quine (1947), argue that the “renunciation of abstract objects may leave us with a world composed of physical objects or events, or of units of sense experience” (Goodman and Quine 1947). I propose, therefore, that any further consideration about these entities should follow from fieldwork. In terms of universalisms, an important consequence of that position is that philosophical discussions of freedom as transcendental will need to be subjected to ethnographic evidence. Also, when I state that the words: *livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberada*; *liberdade* are each a kind of freedom, this goes beyond aprioristic semantic considerations alone. Ethnographic accounts are provided to show in what particular ways this can be argued to be the case. Another implication of adopting a nominalist position is felt in relation to my take on language. If Lowe (1995: 515) has a point when he argues: ‘I believe one must distinguish between a “language” conceived as a universal, which is timeless, and a “language” conceived as a social practice, which is not’, then, it is with language (and freedom) as a social practice that I should be primarily concerned with. Nominalist scepticism is therefore employed as an important heuristic device in my research work.

The carnivalesque

Certain debates within anthropology as a discipline have been historically animated (at least implicitly) by a concern with the question of freedom. These include, for example, debates about the consequences of anthropology as the act of writing about other cultures and the problems produced by the dominance of the very concept of “culture” in the discipline. In “Writing Culture”, Clifford and Marcus (1986) challenge the assumption that writing can ever be a neutral enterprise. They also raise the issue known as “the politics of representation” and call for an anthropology more aware of itself as a way of producing knowledge, as well as being more aware of the way that this knowledge is embedded in power dynamics.

These points lead me to the question: how might the way that I write about people possibly affect their freedom? And this question is raised not just as a reflection regarding the future impacts of my writing on people's lives. What I would like to raise is a more immediate concern: how, through the very process of writing, can I as an author grant the people with whom I lived in Rocinha more or less textual freedom?

The other issue is also somehow related to the question of writing but it takes the form of a critique of the concept of "culture", a concept so central to anthropology. In arguing for anthropology as a discipline that gives more attention to individual lives and to the internal differences and complexities lived by people about which we write, Abu-Lughod (1993) writes against the all too easy social typification promoted by the concept of "culture". As I take Abu-Lughod's (1993) point, in my work I would like to prevent the concept of "culture" from overemphasizing coherence at the expense of disagreement, group identity at the expense of individual expressions, social structures at the expense of deviant events, and determination at the expense of freedom. It is in the face of these points that I try to avoid a "culture of poverty" (Lewis 1959) approach to my thesis, for example. Rather than looking at Rocinha as a "culture" that shares certain characteristic traces of poverty, in the ethnography I seek to emphasize the complexities and richness presented by different lives in Rocinha. In fact, I would say that Rocinha as an ethnographic place only exists as far as it is constituted as such by the different people that I met during fieldwork. Indeed, the manifestations of freedom that I explore in the thesis also travel through different places, some far away from Rocinha even if somehow linked to it. This unboundedness, the capacity that the five objects of freedom that I trace have to come and go beyond the determination of one place, is something that I aim to show in the next chapters.

The emphasis on individual lives and complex social dynamics, however, leads me back to the problem of writing and representation raised by Clifford and Marcus (1986). In the writing of the thesis, after reading through hundreds of

pages of field notes, struggling to be faithful to my diverse encounters with many different people, I found myself spending days of reflection as I tried to find the best way to write about freedom in Rocinha. This struggle would continue for quite a long time and it often went beyond my thinking and into the realm of paper and pen, balls and balls of paper, written pages thrown into the recycling bin. In fact, I will remember the messiness of that period of experimentation more as the sound of long and chaotic typing on the computer keyboard followed by the sound of one long hit on a key: delete. I am proud to say that the suffering of this period of experimentation turned into carnival.

I do not mean carnival just as in the two big carnival parades that I had the pleasure to attend while in Rio de Janeiro, or as in the carnival (samba) lyrics so rich in references to freedom: “Liberdade, liberdade, abra as asas sobre nós! (Freedom, freedom, open wings over us!)” – is an example of a popular one. I am not talking about carnival mainly as the structural inversion of order in daily life either, as discussed by Roberto da Matta (1991). I am aware that carnival is argued to have its structural elements and, in fact, the five objects of freedom that I discuss will also be presented as five narrative nodes that will somehow structure the thesis. I believe that carnival as a political struggle is an important dimension of what I am trying to hint at; as Jackson (1987) discusses in relation to the London carnival. However, my experimentations lead me above all to a concern with carnival as a textual device, as a genre of writing that is intended to account for a concern with freedom of participation in my ethnographic narration.

Perhaps, Bakhtin (1984) is the author who has made the most important reflections on this genre of carnival so far. Bakhtin (1984) discusses the work of Dostoevsky, the Russian novelist, and presents what he takes to be the characteristics of carnival as a literary genre. Bakhtin (1984: 123) argues that in carnival “all *distance* between people is suspended, and a special carnival category goes into effect: *free and familiar contact among people*.” In my ethnography, there is an abundance of characters, which walk in and out of different narratives without notice. They do that as if they were familiar to the reader, even when they

are not. In carnival, though, strangers become familiar with each other without formal introductions. The encounters sometimes are very fast but even if only for a short moment, strangers get into intimate contact with each other. Often in carnival the kiss happens before the exchange of names. Time itself becomes fractured, out of the expected order. Some encounters last for just a glimpse, others last for a whole thesis.

The distance and difference between different characters that I met at distinct moments in time and at different places in Rocinha are intentionally suppressed too. The voice of an evangelical pastor could appear next to the voice of sex workers. The voice of a street dweller is put side by side with the voice of famous musicians. The most thoughtful comment on freedom is put side by side with a statement on freedom made as a joke. The favela dweller speaks before the philosopher, the intellectual. As Bakhtin (1984: 123) would say: "Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid." The research method that I adopted fostered this aspect of the carnivalesque because in allowing for freedom to be apprehended as concrete objects, it also allowed for freedom to be followed as these objects travelled through different dimensions of people's lives often crossing boundaries of sex, class, race and establishing new boundaries from the point of view of freedom in itself. I believe that opening myself up to research and writing in this particular way allows me to present facets of a social situation that is likely to have remained invisible otherwise.

Another reason why the carnivalesque proves to be an appropriate genre for my ethnography is the fact that carnival is not really about abstract thought. Carnival needs to be lived, experienced, in the same way that I have been arguing that freedom needs to be considered, i.e., as experience. The freedom that the carnivalesque genre brings goes beyond the intellectual exercise that I present in my work: "(...) carnivalistic categories are not *abstract thoughts* about equality and freedom, the interrelatedness of all things or the unity of opposites. No, these are concretely sensuous ritual-pageant "thoughts" experienced and played out in the

form of life itself” (Bakhtin 1984: 123). Take for example, the lyrics that introduce this chapter. These are the lyrics of a samba that was used as the 2003 theme of the most famous samba school of Rio de Janeiro, called Estação Primeira de Mangueira. In the lyrics, one sees the play of diverse elements that come in close contact and will end up be experienced as a musical performance, as a dance, as a celebration. The ethnographic narrative presented in my thesis pieces together a wide variety of performances of freedom with the objective of being experienced as a literary performance in itself (see Bauman 1984).

This is not to say, however, that the carnivalesque is a genre unable to deal with deep concerns. “Carnivalistic thought also lives in the realm of ultimate questions, but it gives them no abstractly philosophical sphere, through a carnival sense of the world, to the concretely sensuous plane of images and events – which are, in keeping with the spirit of carnival, dynamic, diverse, and vivid” (Bakhtin 1984: 134). It is in such spirits that I invite the reader to go through the ethnographic chapters ahead and appreciate what one could obtain from a radical carnivalization of narratives of freedom that go well beyond the more established narratives in which the objects of freedom tend to exist. In this sense, the form under which the ethnography is presented becomes in itself an analytical tool meant to reveal the complexities, polyphony, connections and polyglossia of freedom as lived experience in Rio de Janeiro. I hope the reader will also be able to experience freedom in the carnival that is approaching.

Chapter 2: Metaliberdade / Metafreedom

A reminder before the carnival starts: not everything is carnival, right? There are always those that do not like carnival, people that get upset by the mess on the streets, that hate the loud music, that wish that others would display more respect, or be more thoughtful during carnival. It would be fair to say that some people would like to have the power to prevent carnival from happening at all. Before I move on to the carnivalesque of freedom, I would like to focus our discussion on a specific type of freedom that could be argued to operate as a regulator over the multiple possibilities of existence of freedom in Rocinha. In order to distinguish such a specific kind of freedom from others, I will give it the name of “metafreedom” and I will postulate it as the freedom necessary for the interpellation of the lexicon of freedom to happen. But before I address the issue of metafreedom in more detail, I will first introduce some debates on meaning (semantic and indexical meaning) and I will also deal with other issues related to the production and circulation of the five objects of freedom that I explore in the thesis: *livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberada*; *liberdade*. The general objective here is to face a variety of questions surrounding the carnivalesque of freedom and to address what seems to be the most serious one: the issue of metafreedom.

The pre-fieldwork viva

It was during my pre-fieldwork project defence at the University of St Andrews in January 2009 that I first became sensitive to the dimension of the problems involved in even attempting to give a definition of the meaning of freedom. The problem rested not just on the semantic level, though, it seemed to have further implications within a wider pragmatic context. It was then that I

realised how the mere possibility of determination of the meaning of freedom could be taken as an act that created unfreedom itself. In the first paragraph of my research proposal I had written:

This research is inspired by the Foucauldian (in Oksala, 2005: 208) analytical perspective that freedom “refers to the indeterminateness of the constitutive matrix and to the contingency of all structures”.

I had two examiners for my *viva* and I would come to spend more than an hour debating my proposal with them before I was given the green light to begin fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro. One of the examiners started off the discussion by saying that he liked the idea of undertaking research on freedom but was concerned that I seemed to be the only one to be free in my whole proposal because I was already starting the project by stating what freedom was meant to refer to. To which I promptly replied that, by the same token, by trying to determine himself who was free and who was not free in that situation in which we were engaged, he had just taken away my own freedom and perhaps *he* had now become the only one to be in fact free in the whole story. After living in Rocinha, I did end up scrapping many ideas that I had previously defended in my research proposal. But that episode offered me a valuable opportunity to begin to reflect more carefully about the problems presented by a potentially reductive approach to the topic of freedom. It also made me start thinking more about issues that later on would help me to frame the question around metafreedom (and I thank the above-mentioned examiner for his help).

Discussions on meaning

Likely influenced by ideas on language by Austin (1962), in 1976 a seminal essay by the anthropologist Michael Silverstein was published: “Shifters, Linguistic

Categories, and Cultural Description” defends the idea that linguists and linguistics have given undue priority to the descriptive function of language. In Silverstein’s (in Basso and Selby 1976: 14) words: “All linguistic analysis of the traditional sort proceeds on the basis of the contributions of elements of utterances to the referential or the denotative value of the whole. And it is on this basis that the traditional segmentation, description, and definition of all *linguistic categories* is made.” Silverstein (in Basso and Selby 1976) continues the article by arguing that he would call the study of “meaning” within this pure referential function of language: semantics. Silverstein (in Basso and Selby 1976) argues that anthropologists, however, were in a privileged position to expand the notion of “meaning” towards a more pragmatic one. This belief led Silverstein (in Basso and Selby 1976: 19) to state: “The problem set for us when we consider the actual broader uses of language is to describe the total meaning of constituent linguistic signs, only part of which is semantic”.

Whether a complete description of meaning is ever a possible achievement is a matter of debate (see Derrida 1997). However, as discussed in the previous chapter, in an empirical study of freedom, if the anthropologist proposes to grasp ethnographically the existence of freedom as an object, this object has to be experienced somehow. In some cases, the anthropologist assumes semantic knowledge of certain meanings (often not spelled out) for freedom, say: “freedom means X”. Having previously experienced a certain “X” meaning of freedom before, she goes on to look for that same experience of “X” during her research, independently of whether other people would call “X” freedom or not. Finally, having experienced “X” in the field, the anthropologist then finds out what is the linguistic sign that would best refer to “X” in the other language. The advantage of this strategy is that it addresses the issue of “translation” in a straightforward manner: when “X” is fixed, translation becomes a matter of finding an appropriate linguistic signifier for “X”. For example, this approach remediates a situation in which some people could be argued to have no freedom because they do not have an equivalent word for freedom in their language. The disadvantage that I see with

that approach, however, is that it previously assumes certain meanings for freedom that are not just difficult to spell out, but if they were possible to spell out, they would reveal that those meanings attributed to freedom are often the ones chosen by the anthropologist herself and not by the people with whom the ethnography is conducted. In an extreme scenario, we would then end up with “native” signs for a freedom that has more meaning to people foreign to that context.

In my case, I felt that I had to adopt a more pragmatic method if I were to give precedence to the “native” meanings of “liberdade”. I knew before my research that there was a semantic equivalent of “freedom” in Portuguese language: “liberdade”. However, as soon as I started fieldwork I realized that, when used in different contexts, the sign “liberdade” (and all the other four signs that I researched) acquired new meanings that were not always given or exhausted by their semantic reference, and even less so by their dictionary definition. So, in my fieldwork I became less interested in the experience of a stable set of *meanings* of freedom and more interested in tracking the very *existence* of a set of signifiers (*livre; livre-arbítrio; libertação; liberada; liberdade*) put to use in the linguistic performances of people in Rocinha. I allowed these signifiers to be the metaphysical basis (the concrete objects) that eventually led me to register a range of meanings that freedom had in the life of people in the favela.

Each time I encountered what I took to be an object of freedom, I noted it down, first mentally, until I found an opportunity to write it down into the little notebook that I always tried to carry around with me, in my back pocket. Usually late at night, before going to bed, I would get one of my big notebooks from under the mattress and write down my more complete field notes, those were usually about all the many things that had happened during that day. As I wrote those daily notes, I always checked the little notebook to see if I had come across any specific mention to freedom that day. If so, I would include that episode in that daily note and expand on it if necessary. Perhaps due to anxiety, in the beginning of

my research I was more likely to try to prompt situations that could lead people to express freedom (not always with success). The successful situations of this type will likely be clear in the events that I describe in the following chapters. Some weeks into my research, however, I felt more at ease to just lead my life and wait for expressions of freedom to take place. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that during the whole fieldwork I tried to keep myself hyper-alert to expressions of freedom. This was true to the point that many months after fieldwork I would still jump just to hear someone around me saying something using words such as “freedom” and “liberdade”.

There is a further point to be made about the empiricism that I have been proposing in the thesis, however. I do not believe that empiricism leads me into objectivity. All objects of freedom that I registered, and that I am going to present in the next chapters, depended to a certain extent on the existence of Moises Lino e Silva as a researcher – and as whatever else I represented to people that I met in Rocinha. This is to say that the identity of the objects of freedom that I discussed before also depend on other various identities that were somehow unified under myself as a research tool, as a mobile locus of vision, hearing, speaking, emotions, writing and so on. Without my specific research interest, these iterations of freedom would likely not have acquired the status of empirical research objects.

If some of the points made above make my treatment of the dynamics between signified and signifier – and also the treatment of my research methods – more concrete, I would still like to add some comments about issues that I faced in relation to language. I am a Brazilian anthropologist, who conducted fieldwork in the Portuguese language, and wrote this thesis in the English language. It was while studying English at high school in Brazil that I learned that “liberdade” should be translated into English as “freedom”, without knowing for sure what “X” experience the English word “freedom” referred to. Years later, when I started my PhD in Scotland, “freedom” as a linguistic sign became an important node in my writings about “liberdade” because of the flexibility that it seemed to offer me in

terms of translation. It is very likely to be the case, however, that “freedom” does not really encompass for a native speaker of English all the different meanings of “liberdade”. For example, in Portuguese there is no equivalent for the distinction made in English between “freedom” and “liberty”. In most instances in the thesis, I have privileged the use of the form “freedom” in my free translations. I accept the challenges of working in between two different languages in the spirit of Quine (1960) and his classic “radical translator” argument, which holds that translation can never be exact, it is always bound to indeterminacy. The expectation, though, is that the abundance of uses of the words *livre*, *livre-arbítrio*, *libertação*, *liberada*, and *liberdade* in the next chapters will help to reduce the indeterminacy of semantic translations by showing how these words are in fact used in a variety of pragmatic situations in Rocinha, so that an equivalence can be more precisely delineated by the reader.

If we are getting too close to a Wittgensteinian (2009: 25) argument that: “the meaning of a word is its use in the language”, I must reinforce the fact that in this thesis I am not primarily concerned with the definition of the *meaning* of freedom. I will, therefore, not explore a Wittgensteinian concept of meaning in depth. Having said that, my research does suggest that the use of words in a language cannot be absolutely predicted; empirically, the concrete use of words can only be known *a posteriori*. I must also say that my main thesis advisor did ask me to be aware of Gellner’s (1979) book called *Words and Things*. In this book, Gellner (1979) – with Bertrand Russell’s support – makes a passionate attack against Wittgenstein and the school of “ordinary language philosophy”. The author argues (Gellner 1979: 285-287), for example: “the complexities and untidiness of actual speech seldom contain clues of importance, and generally deserves to be unified under simpler notions.” I respectfully disagree. As anthropologists, I believe we should be in a position to accept untidiness and what Gellner (1979) calls “mysticism”, and even the possible absence of meaning, as important aspects of the lives of people with whom we share our enterprise. Gellner’s (1979) suggestion that actual speech would be better off being reduced into simpler

notions does not appeal to me as being a necessary requirement, at least not for anthropologists. Perhaps some analytical philosophers would feel more comfortable with more simplified notions, but as an anthropologist I am happier when I am embracing the complexities of actual speech, accepting it for what it is.

I am aware that in the carnival of freedom to come some readers will miss some clarity and simplicity. They may even miss a reductive type analysis permeating each chapter, something that could help lead them into a conclusion, that could ground their feet to a safer shore. The experience of living in a buzzing urban centre such as Rocinha never felt clear, simple, or safe to me. Therefore, it is only honest that I try to share these impressions of favela life with the reader, making use of a deliberate literary (and aesthetic) device to achieve that goal. An alternative to this approach would be to pause the carnival from time to time to entertain a more analytical search for the grounds of freedom based primarily on thought experiments. On this front, I would have to agree with Fenves (*ibid.*) when the author argues that: "Thinking is 'de-liberation' as long as thinking means above all seeking grounds. From the perspective of this search, the thought of freedom is self-defeating." In this sense, I would kindly ask Gellner (1979) and others to bear with me while I resist requests to disrupt my carnival. Although I must say that the carnival is not ready to start just yet.

The iterability of freedom

Carnival happens every year in Rio de Janeiro. There have been many iterations of carnival. Still, carnival one year is never quite like the other year. And the people that take part in carnival are sometimes the same but every year they are also different people because they wear different costumes, they hang out with different friends, they drink different quantities of alcohol. They are the same but different. Considering that part of my strategy was to follow linguistic signs

constituted as concrete objects, I soon realised that these objects appeared so many times and in so many different contexts in Rocinha that something had to be said about that fact. I came to believe that the Derridean (1979) concept of iterability would be a helpful way to understand some characteristics of these various iterations of freedom in a carnivalesque parade. Iterability stresses the fact that the repetition of words and statements in language implies two things at the same time: sameness but also difference.

On this topic, Loxley (2007: 77) explains that:

“The notion of iterability points to a necessary feature of linguistic elements as such, a quality they must have if they are indeed to be considered linguistic. Specifically, it refers to the repeatability of which linguistic units must be capable: a sign or a mark that was not repeatable would not be a sign or a mark, and could not be an element in a language or code.”

This is not to say, however, that language could be said to be only a mechanistic reproduction of itself. What breaks the possibility of a machine-like type of understanding of language for Derrida (1978) is the necessary difference that is also a fundamental part of language within the concept of iterability. The fact that we are able to recognise that something is a repetition of something else already implies that these two things are necessarily different, even if they are the same. Loxley (2007) argues that it is exactly because of this fact that we are able to say that the letter “a” and the letter “A” are the same as each other, although different. And this point is made not just in terms of orthography. Rapport (1987: 140) talks about a similar phenomenon of sameness and difference in relation to the very constitution of what he calls society: “I want to view society, in fact, as constituted by multiple agreements and disagreements over preferred verbal usage.”

I argue that each time that someone used one of the five objects that I examined (*livre*; *livre-arbítrio*; *libertação*; *liberdade*; *liberdade*), that performance was based on the very ability of repetition that makes language possible and that

also made it possible that I identified these signs as concrete objects, as signs that could be experienced ethnographically. However, each single performance of these objects is a distinct performance and therefore necessarily different from its previous iterations. This is to say that on one level each of the objects that I studied was the same object coming up and up again in many different situations, however, each time that each object was constituted, it was also constituted as a new object with particular qualities. Each chapter to come could be seen as a box containing many objects of the same type. For example, chapter 4 contains objects of the type: “livre”. However, each single iteration of that object within that box is at least partially different from all the others. The different particular qualities of each object of the kind “livre” that are presented in the performances described in chapter 4, show that the object “livre” as lived experience goes well beyond the mere presence of an identity element; beyond a basic identity, it acquires complex characteristics while leading lives of its own.

The case for metafreedom

Among the many lives of the object “liberdade” that I encountered while in Rocinha, however, one of them displayed qualities that caught my attention. In my field notes, there was an iteration of the object “liberdade” that had been performed by my friend Ricky when talking to one of our neighbours. This iteration was registered as such: “Quem te deu a liberdade de falar assim comigo, hein? (Who gave you the freedom to speak to me like that, huh?)” This statement had been made in response to a suggestion expressed by our neighbour that Ricky was involved in drug dealing. What makes this performance special to me is the fact that it contains an overt reflection on the freedom that people may or may not have in the use of language within the context of life in Rocinha.

In a book entitled *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech*, Stanley Fish (1994: 106) argues that the idea of "free speech" as, for example, present in the American Constitution is unattainable because "in as far as the point of the First Amendment is to identify speech separable from conduct, and the consequences that come in conduct's wake, there is no such speech, and therefore nothing for the First Amendment to protect." This idea refers back to the argument that every utterance is in itself an act and therefore it does something to the world, speech is a form of conduct (Austin 1976). In Rocinha, where no rule of law had been permanently established by the Brazilian state, it could be argued that the experience of "there's no such thing as free speech" is somehow more intense than compared to life in other places, such as in the United States as presented by Fish (1994). This is to say that while living in Rocinha I felt that freedom of expression was somehow counterbalanced by an exceptionally acute awareness of the possibility that the speaker could be interrogated: "Quem te deu a liberdade de falar assim comigo, hein? (Who gave you the freedom to speak to me like that, huh?)"

Beatrice Hanssen (2000) argues that in the liberalist conception, the use of language is in itself seen as a performance of a determined "right to freedom". But what would happen when a formal "right to freedom" is not established? Would it become more likely, for example, that "freedom of speech" would not be taken for granted? Hanssen's (2000) point seems to confirm my previous intuition in that it could be argued that in Rocinha the "liberal" legitimizing narrative of freedom of expression as a legal right was simply not as credible as it is said to be in other places. In Rocinha, "freedom of speech" seemed to present itself much more as a matter to be decided by reference to social rights acquired by engaging in particular relations over time rather than through the invocation of a formal legal principle. If an acute awareness regarding the possibility of different performances of language being subjected to interrogation could be said to exist in the life of people in Rocinha, I would therefore be able to suggest that these circumstances make evident a form of control that could be said to operate in the favela. Indeed, it is worth remarking that interrogation itself could be understood as an important disciplinary practice (Foucault 1977). The argument would be that for those aware

of the norms of expression in the favela, linguistic performances always took place in the face of a special regulatory mechanism.

This is a strong claim, however, and before accepting it, I would like to subject it to my empirical findings. It would be impossible to sustain that a question such as Ricky's above is actually performed every time that something is expressed in Rocinha. Empirically, this is clearly not the case. The issue then would be whether it could be argued that such a question is a possibility that people in Rocinha have to consider significantly more carefully than in other places when expressing themselves? If so, an important consequence would be that if the possibility of interrogation of those expressions exist under the name of freedom itself ("Who gave you the *freedom* to speak to me like that, huh?"), a particular kind of freedom could be said to emerge: the freedom to interpellate freedom. "Metafreedom" could be the name given to the particular kind of freedom argued to hold control over expressions of freedom. This is to say that a particular kind of freedom would be necessary in order to express all utterances concerning freedom. One would need to first have the freedom of expressing freedom in order to have freedom at all. The stakes here are high, if metafreedom could be proved to exist, the objects of freedom that I studied in Rocinha could all be said to be subjected to metafreedom. The whole carnivalesque of freedom would be subjected to metafreedom. Freedom would therefore no longer be free but determined by a second-order kind of freedom instead (called metafreedom).

Before I give my opinion on whether the existence of metafreedom should be accepted or rejected, I would like to take the metafreedom claim a bit further. Deploying a "companions in guilt" type of argument, it could be claimed that "Quem te deu a liberdade de falar assim comigo, hein? (Who gave you the freedom to speak to me like that, huh?)" operates as a type of statement that should be considered as important for my research on freedom as the well-known statement "Você sabe com quem está falando? (Do you know who you're talking to?)" is taken to be a key aspect of Matta's (1991: 170) analysis of the distinction between persons and individuals in Brazil. In other words, it could be argued that the

expression “Quem te deu a liberdade de falar assim comigo, hein? (Who gave you the freedom to speak to me like that, huh?)” has a key symbolic role in the understanding of the topic of freedom in Rocinha. In this comparison, however, I would not be able to extend the scope of my claim to the whole of Brazil because the extent to which metafreedom could be said to be an issue in the life of different communities would vary based on how the regulation of freedom of expression could be practiced in different places. For example, I heard from the anthropologist Márcio Goldman that “Quem te deu a ousadia de falar assim comigo, hein? (Who gave you the boldness to talk to me like that, huh?)” would be the question most likely to be asked by people in Bahia state under similar circumstances. From my own experience, among the people that I know in Goiás state, an equivalent question would likely be formulated like this: “Quem te deu o direito de falar assim comigo, hein? (Who gave you the right to talk to me like that, huh?)” Hence, even in a scenario in which metafreedom could be said to exist in Rocinha, it would be important to notice in what way, under what names, under which mechanisms, it is that freedom of expression is regulated in the life of different communities. What do different people particularly assume to be necessary for “freedom” to be expressed? Boldness? Rights? Freedom? The answer to these questions would certainly vary a great deal from community to community.

In any case, the acceptance of the argument of metafreedom could be further defended based on a desirable epistemological consequence. If metafreedom existed, it would give us access to an often-unexplored pragmatic dimension related to the interpellation of freedom, it would reveal an important indexical meaning of freedom. It could be argued: each time that freedom is interpellated as a concrete object, that interpellation leads to the constitution of free subjects through a process of indexical signification.

As a background to this claim, I would like to recall the distinction that Silverstein (in Basso and Selby 1976) makes between semantic and pragmatic meaning: all semantic meaning can be said to be pragmatic, in the sense that semantics also depends on practical acts of reference. However, this is only one of

the several functions of the pragmatics of communication. Silverstein's (in Basso and Selby 1976) work offers an important basis for anthropologists to engage in more complex ethnographic discussions about other dimensions of "meaning". In 1971, Benveniste brought a certain category of words into the debate that I will call indexical elements of language. These were elements that had no fixed semantic meaning because they were context-dependent *par excellence*. A classic example of an indexical would be the personal pronoun "I" that happens to index a different speaker every time that it is performed by a different person. Let us hold on to these thoughts.

Althusser (1971), on a different front, argues that subjects are constituted ideologically, through a process of interpellation. He uses the classic example of a subject being hailed by a police officer to illustrate a situation of interpellation. Following from Althusser (1971), Judith Butler (1997: 25) employs the idea of interpellation in her work, as seen in *Excitable Speech*, where she states: "recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence". Combining the concept of indexicality presented above with the argument that subjects can be constituted by interpellation, the existence of metafreedom would propose the following: each time that freedom is interpellated as a concrete object, that interpellation leads to the constitution of free subjects through a process of indexical signification. Metafreedom therefore would point to another dimension of the constitution of freedom in Rocinha: every performance of freedom becomes in itself an act that constitutes freedom in pragmatic terms because every time that an object of freedom is constituted, the speaker (performer) is also pragmatically marked as a subject that holds an important kind of freedom (of expression) in that community.

Another possible way to put the claim of metafreedom would be through the argument that there is an elliptical claim that is necessarily made and read into statements that interpellate freedom in Rocinha. To make use of an ethnographic example, I propose that we take my friend Renato and what he once told me about "liberdade institucional (institutional freedom)". He said: "Eu acho que ausência de

Estado na favela é um tipo de liberdade institucional (I think that the absence of the State in the favela is a type of institutional freedom)". In this statement, freedom (liberdade) is present as an object that I heard and registered in my field notes. This object could be said to refer to the absence of the state in the favela, which is constituted by Renato as a kind of freedom. But freedom here also presents another dimension of meaning, namely, indexical meaning. Considering that Renato made this statement in a context where metafreedom is an issue of concern, it should be read thus: "(I have the freedom to express that) I think that the absence of the State in the favela is a type of institutional freedom." This is to say that Renato's interpellation of the object of freedom as "institutional freedom" carries with it a complexity of meanings that communicate more than is often assumed.

To sum up the argument that could be raised in favour of metafreedom, I would like to make one last observation. To say that metafreedom operates as a mechanism of control in Rocinha, and that it indexes free subjects, could also be defended by arguing: there is a particular mutual awareness when people express freedom in Rocinha; metafreedom could be seen as a type of metacommunication.

Ruesch and Bateson (1968: 209) write about the concept of "metacommunication":

"For this new order of communication, the term "metacommunication" is here introduced and defined as "communication about communication." We shall describe as "metacommunication" all exchanged cues and propositions about (a) codification and (b) relationship between the communicators. We shall assume that a majority of propositions about codification are also implicit or explicit propositions about relationships and vice versa, so that no sharp line can be drawn between these two sorts of metacommunication."

If understood as a type of metacommunication, it could be argued that metafreedom implies an exchange of cues about freedom among people, an

exchange that is codified in Rocinha in a way that it is not necessarily the same as in other places. Metafreedom itself, however, would be understood as a second-order kind of freedom, one that is necessary for the constitution of first-order expressions of freedom. Along those lines, one could go even further and push the argument to say that if metafreedom existed it would also constitute a type of meta-culture.

On this topic, Lee (in Urban 2001: xi) argues:

“Metaculture consists of judgments people make about similarities and differences, whether they judge token instances of cultural production to be manifestations of the same cultural element; they are second-order form of semiotic-reflexivity that helps frame first-order processes.”

The points made in this section are speculations that could be further elaborated if desired. However, for the purposes of my argument, the important question here rests on what the concepts of metacommunication and meta-culture could possibly allow for: an understanding of metafreedom as a “cultural” product formed out of the relationships experienced by people in Rocinha, one which could be judged to be similar or different from other regulatory discourses of freedom experienced by other people in the world or in different times in history. This would be the broad claim that one could possibly reach going all the way down the road of metafreedom. The question remains whether we should accept or reject the existence of metafreedom as a second-order type of freedom that operates in Rocinha.

A biased speculation

Whatever comment I can make regarding the claim of metafreedom will necessarily be biased by prior commitments that I have already undertaken earlier in the thesis. These include, for example, a commitment to empiricism and to

nominalism. I accept that the case presented for the existence of metafreedom – as a second-order kind of freedom that holds control over carnivalesque iterations of freedom – feels intuitively strong. However, from an empirical point of view, it could be said that most of the argument for the existence of metafreedom (except so far my witnessing of the expression: “Who gave you the *freedom* to speak to me like that, huh?” and the situation that I experienced with my pre-fieldwork thesis examiner) is not based on concrete experience but instead on deductive thinking, imagination, and rationality. This observation alone does not prove that metafreedom does not exist. From an empirical perspective, however, in face of this lack of empirical evidence, it could be proposed that the case for metafreedom would be better argued based in a scenario in which metafreedom existed as some sort of a platonic object: one that would be impossible to be accessed through empirical methods. The main trouble with this possibility is that it would run directly against my empiricism and my nominalist type of scepticism and I would have to remain unconvinced on the matter. The other possibility that I could raise would be that it is still possible to believe that metafreedom exists because in the other hundreds of events of the carnivalesque of freedom that I present in the thesis one could possibly find enough evidence that could inductively support a belief in the existence of metafreedom, such as the episode of a girl that once shouted at our neighbour Mané Luiz. After he told her something sexually charged, this girl reacted: “Quem te deu a liberdade? Não te dei essa liberdade não, hein!?! (Who gave you the freedom? I did not give you this freedom, huh!?!)” In this case, again, it is not clear whether the control established by the girl was a response to a concrete interpellation of an object of freedom or to an abstract notion held by this girl that our neighbour had been “taking liberties” with her.

It was exactly on the issue of “tomar liberdade” (to take freedom or liberty) that, looking over my notes for further evidence to support the claim of metafreedom, I actually found this particular use of freedom that seems to go against the determination of metafreedom over freedom. On the 6th of November 2009, for example, my friend Auro spent some time trying to explain to me an

expression used by Priscila, a transvestite friend of mine. The expression in question was “dar um it (to give an it)”. Most of what I knew up to that moment was that Priscilla really liked to “dar um it”, according to what I constantly heard from her. Auro explained it: “dar um it é tomar liberdade com os outros, entendeu? (To give an *it* is to take freedom with others, do you understand?)” When Priscilla walked around talking to people that she did not even know, sometimes asking homophobic guys to go out with her, blowing kisses at married men on the bus, she was in fact putting the expression “dar um it” (to take freedom or liberty) in practice. The issue of “tomar liberdade com os outros (to take freedom [liberty] with others)” was a concern expressed by different people during my fieldwork. For instance, my friend Karina also reminds us that freedom is often taken instead of given (chapter 8). She once remarked: “Gente, o Auro toma liberdade demais com o Lennon! O menino é tímido, coitado! (People, Auro takes too much freedom [liberty] with Lennon! The guy is shy, poor him!)” Now, all this seems to me to be evidence that freedom does not necessarily have to be given by a second-order kind of freedom in Rocinha. In fact, freedom does not need to be given at all: freedom, as Priscilla and others practiced it, could simply be taken based on their own will.

It would still be possible to argue, however, that metafreedom exists as a form of control but that some people were just unruly, that some people (such as Priscilla and Auro) disregarded the rules of metafreedom. However, if this possibility were granted, metafreedom would have already lost its claim of necessity (necessary causal powers) over freedom. When it comes to discussions on the topic of freedom, the question over the possibility of determination (and not just influence) seems to be of particular importance.

On a more technical front, however, if the existence of metafreedom seems to be so uncertain, another strong argument that could be raised against it is that we should simply follow the principle of Occam’s Razor on the matter. That is to say that, in case of doubt, we should avoid the unnecessary complexity that the

possible existence of such a metaphysically weird object would add to the situation that I describe.

In the end, based on my research method alone, I would prefer to hold that I am unable to give a final definite answer to the claim of metafreedom. When I propose to present a carnivalesque of freedom, however, I am certainly not arguing that metafreedom does not matter in my research. The tension generated by the possible existence of metafreedom in the face of a carnivalesque of freedom is an important question that animates my thesis. Perhaps I could even say that it is exactly in the face of the possible existence of metafreedom that a carnivalesque of freedom becomes more significant as a form of freedom in itself. I do not believe, however, that empiricism could provide a final answer to this problem. For me it is important to recognise the limitation of my methodology and to appreciate its consequences.

Philosophically, long ago Hume (1978: 168) had already famously argued that causal relationships between entities, as determination, could never be experienced:

“When we transfer the determination of the thought to external objects, and suppose any real intelligible connection betwixt them; that being a quality, which can only belong to the mind that considers them.”

Instead, Hume argued that necessity could be “felt by the soul and not perceived externally in bodies” (ibid.). This is to say that I do not believe that empiricism can possibly prove that there is a causal relationship between metafreedom as a regulatory discourse and the actual objects of freedom that I present in the next chapters, even though one could feel that it does. Even in the scenario that the freedom to express freedom is believed to exist based on inductive knowledge, one must keep in mind that induction does not imply necessity. The discussion presented in this chapter was entertained exactly in terms of possibility. In this sense, although I hope that my debate here helps to shed light on certain elements that could work in tension with the carnivalesque of

freedom, my proposed type of non-reductive empirical analysis allows me to go ahead without feeling obliged to explain the causes of freedom. Some will come to think that an anthropology of freedom in the way that I propose does not give the answers to the “problem” of freedom that they were hoping for. However, on this point I would argue that there is a political dimension implied in the use of ethnography as an empirical research method when it comes to the question of metafreedom: ethnography seems to turn “ignorance of specific causes into the very guarantor of freedom” (Fenves in Nancy 1993: XVI).

What I present in the next chapters is the experience of freedom at the limit. There is no concern with writing reductive explanations for the kinds of freedom presented in each chapter. Nevertheless, I would kindly ask the reader to attend to the analytical form under which the carnivalesque is arranged. I will come back to a more speculative mode and also grant more thought to metafreedom in the last chapter of the thesis. For now, however, I invite the reader to enjoy a celebration of freedom as existence, as complex existence. I also invite the reader to feel free to make free associations. Freedom will be presented in all the diverse forms under which I myself experienced it having lived in Favela da Rocinha. Welcome to the carnivalesque of freedom!

Chapter 3: Liberdade I / Freedom I

Priberam Dictionary of Portuguese Language:

Liberdade

(L. libertas, -atis)

s. f. / sb. fem.

1. Direito de proceder conforme nos pareça, contanto que esse direito não vá contra o direito de outrem. / Right to proceed as we wish, considering that this right does not go against the right of someone else.
2. Condição do homem ou da nação que goza de liberdade. / Condition of the man or the nation that enjoys freedom.
3. Conjunto das ideias liberais ou dos direitos garantidos ao cidadão. / Set of liberal ideas or rights granted to a citizen.
4. [Figurado] Ousadia. / [Figurative] Boldness.
5. Franqueza. / Frankness.
6. Licença. / Licence.
7. Desassombro. / Resolution.
8. Demasiada familiaridade. / Excessive familiarity.

The samba of Liberdade/Freedom (Part I):

Travessa Liberdade / Freedom Street

Liberdade e amizade / Freedom and friendship

Mais liberdade no Ceará / More freedom in Ceará

Quem te deu a liberdade? / Who gave you the freedom?

Olha a liberdade / Mind the freedom
 Eu te dou liberdade para mentir / I give you the freedom to lie
 Mais liberdade para fazer essas coisas! / More freedom to do these things!
 Liberdade vigiada / Freedom under surveillance
 Sua própria liberdade / Your own freedom
 As asas da liberdade! / The wings of freedom!
 Não pode dar liberdade para pobre! / You cannot give freedom to the poor!
 Liberdade não existe / Freedom does not exist
 Para quem curte liberdade / For those who enjoy freedom
 Liberdade demais é perigoso! / Too much freedom is dangerous!
 Uma ideia de liberdade / An impression of freedom
 Acha que droga traz liberdade / They think that drugs bring freedom
 Liberdade para o Jony / Freedom for Jony
 Liberdade não é libertinagem / Freedom is not libertinism
 Achando que liberdade significa ficar na putaria! / Thinking that freedom means to
 fuck around!
 Devemos lutar pela vida, amor e liberdade! / We should fight for life, love and
 freedom!
 Liberdade com santidade / Freedom with sainthood
 Gosto muito da minha liberdade!!! / I like my freedom a lot!!!
 A liberdade que os pais querem / The freedom that parents want
 Paz, Justiça e Liberdade / Peace, Justice and Freedom
 Liberdade institucional / Institutional freedom
 Filho tira muito a nossa liberdade / A child takes away too much of our freedom
 Sobre liberdade? / About freedom?
 Liberdades pessoais / Personal freedoms
 Poder e liberdade! / Power and freedom!
 Liberdade está em Jesus / Freedom is in Jesus
 Existe uma falta de liberdade aqui / There is a lack of freedom here
 Liberdade de culto religioso / Freedom of the religious cult
 Querem a liberdade / They want freedom

O signo que mais gosta de liberdade / The sign that likes freedom the most
Eles tem uma liberdade total / They have total freedom
Existe liberdade! / There is freedom!
LIBERDADE DE ESCOLHA / FREEDOM OF CHOICE
Liberdade para fazer isso / Freedom to do that
Por causa da minha liberdade / Because of my freedom
L? Liberdade! / F? Freedom!
O pessoal da favela perde um pouco a liberdade / People who live in the favela lose
a bit of freedom
Viva a liberdade / Live freedom

The parade of Liberdade/Freedom (Part I):

Travessa Liberdade / Freedom Street

Soon after my arrival, I used to walk around to explore the favela, trying to get to know as much of it as possible. Thus I would frequently roam around without a clear destination. Occasionally, Menem would come with me, sometimes I would walk around with the whole PAC photography group, and now and then I would go by myself. I was alone on the 22nd of February 2009 when I had this beautiful vision of a blue sign that was posted on a pole in Boiadeiro Street. It read: “Travessa Liberdade (Freedom Street)”. I looked down the street and noticed that Travessa Liberdade linked Boiadeiro Street to perhaps the busiest commercial street in Rocinha, which was majestically called Via Ápia, in Roman fashion. I smiled and walked down Travessa Liberdade towards Via Ápia. It was as if I had found a treasure, one whose value I could not estimate then and there, but it had made my day nevertheless. The first bar on the corner of Travessa Liberdade and Boiadeiro Street was called “Bar da Liberdade (Freedom Bar)”. Months later, that

bar would come to remind me of my friend Carmélia, the owner of a day-care centre in Rocinha, who lived very close to that bar and loved a song that went as follows:

“É que mesa de bar é onde se toma um porre de liberdade
Companheiros em pleno exercício de democracia
(It is just that a bar’s table is where one gets drunk with freedom
Comrades in the full exercise of democracy)”

(Author: Ed Motta)

In the first days of 2010, I asked Renata how she thought that Travessa Liberdade had come by that name. She told me: “Travessa Liberdade é onde tudo acontece, tudo pode! Até boca, prostituição, essas coisas! (Travessa Liberdade is where everything happens, everything is allowed! Even drug selling, prostitution, these things!)” I took notes of what she said as she knew I would.

In September 2009, right after teaching an English class, Maria Beatriz and I went to a Bahian Restaurant in Rocinha. As we passed by Travessa Liberdade I asked her: “Por que que você acha que essa travessa se chama liberdade? Why do you think that this street is called freedom?” She replied: “Ah, sei lá! É porque é onde pode fazer o que quiser? (Oh, I don’t know! Is it because this is where people can do whatever they want?)” I smiled saying: “I don’t know either!”

Franci told me she wanted ice cream. And so on the 4th of November 2009 we walked all the way to Travessa Liberdade with Armando and Carolina too. While we had our melting ice cream, I asked: “Por que que essa travessa é chamada liberdade, Armando? (Why is this street called freedom, Armando?)” He smiled and said: “Isso é para a sua pesquisa, né? (This is for your research, yeah?)” I confirmed and he then said: “Sei lá! Por que foi aqui que os escravos foram libertos? (I have no idea! Because it was here that the slaves were freed?)” And he

laughed at himself, as if he knew he was making things up. Francielle looked at him and laughed too. “Nice try!”, she said.

At the beginning of the PAC photography course on the 17th of March 2009, I overheard students talking. Fernanda asked another girl: “Você mora na Liberdade? (Do you live in freedom?)” It took me a few seconds to realize that she was referring to “Travessa Liberdade”, the street in Rocinha.

Liberdade e amizade / Freedom and friendship

We were all watching a big blank screen that was put up on a sidewall of the hangar-like space in which the PAC photography course meeting took place in an area of conurbation of favelas called Complexo do Alemão (the German Complex). This was the 18th of February 2009. “Clap, please!”, the guy holding the microphone asked. And so the first group to present stood up. They were the hosts of that day, the group from Complexo do Alemão who soon started showing amazing pictures of their home favela. Their photography tutor grabbed the microphone after their presentation and among other things criticized some technical details in their pictures: “Estudantes ainda tem a liberdade de errar, mas não por muito tempo. (Students still have the freedom to make mistakes, but not for a long time.)” And many of the dozens of students sitting in their chairs showed a shy smile in their faces. But the same tutor then went on to say that people from favelas had a unique opportunity in photography. Only people living in favelas themselves could produce the pictures we had just been shown and no one else in the whole world could do that. He said: “Not even BBC could do that. And that is because every single one of you, students in this course, have something that other people don’t have”. And he then raised his tone: “Vocês tem liberdade e amizade para conseguir fazer esse trabalho! (You have freedom and friendship to be able to do this work!)” The crowd cheered wildly.

Mais liberdade no Ceará / More freedom in Ceará

Miuxa, one of my neighbours, said that she was planning to move back to her home state (Ceará) because that would be better for her sick husband. She was worried that some day he would get lost and would never be found. She used to lock him up at home to go out and do her chores. “He would have a better life in Ceará!”, she said. A few days ago her husband shouted through his window telling me to open the door for him, he thought that I had the key for it. A few days later, when I met Miuxa again, I asked her: “Vocês tem mais liberdade no Ceará do que aqui (Do you have more freedom in Ceará than here?)” She had a friend in her company that day and both replied at once: “Yes!” They said that in Ceará there was more space, even to raise children, for children to play. “Even money is not so tight over there as it used to be.”, Miuxa said. One day I told Amélia that Miuxa was planning to move back to Ceará. To which she replied: “That is what she says, but she has moved back many times and she always, always, ends up returning to Rocinha!”

Quem te deu a liberdade? / Who gave you the freedom?

23rd of March 2009. Ricky walked down the beco (alleyway) that afternoon wearing a black hoodie. He passed by my window and soon I heard him having an argument with one of my neighbours, Dona Chica. The old lady had seen him passing by and said out loud that she was already preparing herself for the day when the police would come and arrest Ricky, implying that he was involved in drug-trafficking. By the tone of his voice I could tell that Ricky was really angry with her. He said: “Quem te deu a liberdade de falar assim comigo, hein? Eu não sou bandido não! Eu não sou como o seu filho não!!! (Who gave you the freedom to speak to me like that, huh? I am not a bandit! I am not like your son!!!)” (see chapter two). Rumour had it that one of Dona Chica’s sons had been heavily

involved in drug trafficking in Rocinha. He first went to jail for a while, then returned to Rocinha, and there he ended up being killed under mysterious circumstances. As a reply to Ricky's question, Dona Chica remained in silence.

Amélia complained to me on the 23rd of April 2009 that Miuxa always left her sick husband locked up at home, that she never took him for a walk on the beach or anything like that. She complained: "O coitado fica sempre preso dentro de casa! Por isso que tem dia que ele fica louco aí querendo fugir! Ele já fugiu algumas vezes e foi um trabalho danado para achar ele! Também, ele fica preso como bicho! Precisa ter mais liberdade!!! (The poor man is always locked up at home! That is why there are days when he gets crazy trying to run away! He has even escaped some times and it was hard work to find him! No wonder, this is because he is locked up like an animal! He needs to have more freedom!!!)" I just nodded. Later on that same day Amélia came down the stairs from her house to chat with me again. She kept looking into the alleyway in front of our house while telling me something about her son Moreno, who she complained was never at home. A young woman then passed by the beco and Amélia stopped talking for while to hear what was going on. We heard our neighbour Mané Luiz saying something to the woman and she was screaming back at him: "Quem te deu a liberdade? Não te dei essa liberdade não, hein?! (Who gave you the freedom? I did not give you this freedom, huh?!)" And Amélia smiled looking at me: "Well deserved, he probably said something gross to her! I do not trust him!!! Once in a while I have to tell him off for his jokes! And still whenever I pass by him he keeps looking at me with eyes of crazy sexual desire! Indecent!! Huh!!!" And Amélia laughed, as if she had just been somehow vindicated.

Olha a liberdade / Mind the freedom

I had been on the bus with Maria Beatriz and Maria Eduarda talking about my boyfriend. Afterwards, Maria Beatriz went home and told everything to her

mother. I was in my room, writing my fieldnotes about the episode on the bus when I heard Amélia coming down the stairs and putting her face into my window. She was holding Maria Beatriz by the arm. “I came to apologize!” – she said. “What for?” – I asked. “Because Maria Beatriz has been making up stories about you!” – she replied. “What stories?” – I asked. Maria Beatriz then jumped in and shouted: “Isn’t it true that you are viado (gay), Moises?” Amélia looked at her in anger and said: “Olha a liberdade, Maria Beatriz! Olha a liberdade com o moço, hein!!! (Mind the freedom, Maria Beatriz! Mind the freedom with the young man, huh!!!)” I told Amélia that Maria Beatriz was ok, to let her go. Amélia then covered a wide and naughty smile with her right hand.

Eu te dou liberdade para mentir / I give you the freedom to lie

A ritual of evil magic took place on the 10th of August 2009 in Mato Alto, in the West Zone of Rio. I was sitting still, and tensely watching the spirits possess people. A female spirit embodied in a strong man was talking to a young blond girl who was standing to my left. “Exu do Lodo” was how the spirit introduced himself. He then told her: “Você tem que aprender a mentir, minha filha! Eu te dou liberdade para mentir e se você aprender a mentir direito se tornará muito poderosa!!! (You have to learn how to lie, my daughter! I give you the freedom to lie and if you learn how to lie properly you will become very powerful!!!)” The ritual went on until very late, the smell of animal blood was everywhere.

Mais liberdade para fazer essas coisas! / More freedom to do these things!

It was past midnight one day in March 2009 and I had gone out with Priscilla and other friends. Priscilla and I talked for a long time and she was telling

me how she had only started transforming her body after she moved to Rocinha. She said that she had come from Ceará, from a town called Guaraciaba do Norte and things were too quiet there. “I was a bicha-boy (gay-boy) before moving here, like you!” – and she pointed to my trousers. She told me in detail that when she moved to Rocinha she felt that she could change her body. “Aqui tenho muito mais liberdade para fazer essas coisas! (Here I have much more freedom to do these things!)” She also highlighted that her objective was not to transform herself into a woman: “I like to be the centre of attention and to confuse people! I love it!!!” – she smiled. “I like this thing that people cannot say for sure whether I am a man or a woman”. Then we talked about the places that she liked to go at night: “Lapa, Madureira, Rio das Pedras.” “What about Rocinha?” – I asked. She replied: “I know almost everyone in Rocinha already, and they all know me. It gets boring. I like to go out to places outside of Rocinha, where I don’t know people and they don’t know me! Hahaha...” She kept laughing out loud and continued: “I like the adventure of meeting new people. Fora da Rocinha eu tenho liberdade de fazer coisas que eu não faço aqui! (Outside of Rocinha I have freedom to do things that I do not do here!)” What a big smile she had at that moment; licking the red lipstick on her mouth and making a loud noise gasping. We all laughed!

Liberdade vigiada / Freedom under surveillance

In early April 2009, a Canadian volunteer was working at the Many Friends Institute (MFI), an educational NGO in Rocinha. He was setting up an internet network for some donated laptops. The idea was that the kids studying at MFI would have free internet access. Menem was worried about it, though. He creased his face and asked Armando: “E as crianças vão ficar livres para olhar o que quiser na internet? (And the children will be free to browse whatever they want on the internet?)” Armando promptly replied: “Vamos colocar filtros, claro! Vai ser uma liberdade vigiada. (We will have filters, sure! It will be freedom under

surveillance)". Menem was still not happy with the answer and just kept nodding his head in disapproval and repeating: "Liberdade vigiada, liberdade vigiada, sei... (Surveilled freedom, surveilled freedom, I know...)"

Sua própria liberdade / Your own freedom

About two months after moving to Rocinha, I met Florence Dane, the sociologist who first introduced me to Rocinha. She was drinking a glass of water at her in-law's house. While playing with her baby son, she asked me how I was doing and I said that I was enjoying my time in Rocinha. Florence then told me that it could be "beginner's excitement" only and that I needed to be careful, I needed to look after myself! She then offered to give me a piece of advice, which I surely accepted. She told me: "Você precisa aprender a falar não para as pessoas para garantir a sua própria liberdade! É um conselho que eu te dou. (You need to learn to say "no" to people in order to guarantee your own freedom! That is a piece of advice that I give you.)" And she went on to tell me how some people in Rocinha liked to exploit foreigners and people like myself.

As asas da liberdade! / The wings of freedom!

In the morning of the 20th of April 2009, I felt like eating watermelon, as indeed I very often did. I walked down my beco just to stop at "Sacolão do Chaguinha" to buy a slice of watermelon, for which I paid 1 Brazilian real. On the way back I noticed that there was a motorcycle parked near the entrance to my beco and it had a big sticker on it. I read the sticker with my mouth full of watermelon: "Honda, as asas da liberdade! (Honda, the wings of freedom!)" And I thought about the relationship between free movement and consumption while I kept walking back home with the pink watermelon going down into my stomach.

Não pode dar liberdade para pobre! / You cannot give freedom to the poor!

On an evening in late April 2009, I was talking to my friend Pedro about a visit I had made to Portão Vermelho (Red Gate), a part of Rocinha that is mainly accessible from a big gate on Gávea Street. I told him that the density of the forest impressed me and that some houses were built almost in the middle of the trees. He rolled his eyes and said: “Não pode dar liberdade para pobre! Deixa derrubar uma arvorezinha e em breve estão destruindo a floresta inteira! (You cannot give freedom to the poor! If you let them chop a single little tree, soon they will be destroying the whole forest!)”

Liberdade não existe / Freedom does not exist

On the 10th of January 2010, I visited an Afro-Brazilian religious centre owned by Pai Gelson in a neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro called Catete. They were meant to hold a special day for “desobsession” (exorcism) that Sunday. When I returned from Catete I met Armando and Francielle. They were very impressed that I had gone to a “desobsession session” at Gelson’s Center. They tended to justify it in terms of my research, though. That I used to do what looked like crazy things just because of my research. “Tudo pela liberdade, né, Moises? (Everything for freedom, right, Moises?)” They laughed. But Francielle’s face quickly turned serious again and she asked a question to herself but out loud: “O que é liberdade? Acho que é estar sozinha em uma ilha deserta! (What is freedom? I think it is to be alone in a desert island!)” And a few seconds later her facial expression changed again: “E se eu quiser sair? Ai, não! Então acho que a liberdade não existe. (And what if I want to leave? Oh, no! So I think that freedom does not exist.)” Armando said nothing else on the topic.

Para quem curte liberdade / For those who enjoy freedom

In later April 2009, I took a bus from Rocinha towards a neighbourhood called Madureira. It was past midnight and most people in my beco had warned me not to go out to Madureira at that time at night. But I was not alone. Priscilla, Charles and Kadu all came to the big gay night out in front of a nightclub called Papa G. When we finally got there, in front of the nightclub there were huge crowds, scores of people selling drinks on carts, and lots of parked cars with their doors opened pumping out loud funk music. There were transvestites running around, bums moving to the sound of funk everywhere. I got a bit dizzy and looked up to the sky for a second. That is when I saw a big sign written in big letters: “Papa G. Para quem curte liberdade, sensualidade e tudo mais. (Papa G. For those who enjoy freedom, sensuality and everything else.)”

Liberdade demais é perigoso! / Too much freedom is dangerous!

It was Labour Day holiday in Brazil on the 1st of May. Nevertheless, people were working at MFI, placing orange safety nets on the windows of the MFI building, on the third floor. From the rooftop of Francielle’s house, Menem, Afrânio, Bentham and myself were trying to help and also photographing the work being done. Up there, Menem started to discuss religion with Bentham, a tall volunteer from the USA who could speak Portuguese quite well. Menem asked Bentham about his religion and he replied that he did not believe in one fixed religion or view. Menem then raised his eyebrows and said: “Bentham, mas os seres humanos precisam de limites. Liberdade demais é perigoso, Bentham! (Bentham, but human beings need limits. Too much freedom is dangerous,

Bentham!)" Nothing else was said about religion and we turned the conversation to the orange safety net again.

Uma ideia de liberdade / An impression of freedom

Clarice, a French volunteer at MFI who was studying architecture at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) in Rio, had been spending a lot of time building a new roof for the MFI's laje (rooftop). She told me that she would like to have a little garden on the rooftop too. I asked her why? She replied: "Fica mais bonito e passa uma ideia de liberdade, não? (It is more beautiful and it gives an impression of freedom, doesn't it?)" I knew to take notes about that comment.

Acha que droga traz liberdade / They think that drugs bring freedom

During the early hours of the 30th of May 2009, I was sleeping with my window open as I often did. A voice started calling my name from the outside. The voice got louder and louder and I got more and more scared. "It is Mike, Moises!" – the voice then said. I remembered that I had met an English guy in Rocinha a few days earlier and his name was Mike. He wanted to volunteer at MFI and we had talked a bit about books and libraries. When Auro came to visit me the next day and I told him that Mike had come to wake me up during the night looking for money, Auro looked at me with a serious face: "Esse povo acha que droga traz liberdade, mona! Coitado deles. (These people think that drugs bring freedom, darling! Poor things.)"

Liberdade para o Jony / Freedom for Jony

On the 20th of June 2009, I was walking around Rocinha, introducing the place to a fellow anthropologist from Canada. A few days before then, the PAC photography group had been invited to the headquarters of “Observatório de Favelas (Favelas Observatory)” in Favela da Maré and I had met this guy there. As I was showing him around, we went uphill first and then found a beco that walked all the way back downhill cutting through the heart of what was meant to be one of the “poorest” parts of Rocinha, known as “Roupa Suja”. It was on that route, going downhill, that I met a big wall that made me stop. A message handwritten on that wall read: “Liberdade para o Jony (Freedom to Jony)”. “Who was Jony?” Probably someone in jail, I thought to myself.

Liberdade não é libertinagem / Freedom is not libertinism

Francielle invited me for dinner at her house again on the 28th of June 2009, we were making hotdogs that day. She had told me earlier on that she had some stuff for me and I was curious about it. We sat at her two-seat sofa and she asked me over dinner if I had seen Dunga on television? Dunga was the Brazilian football team coach at the time. I replied that I had not. Franci then told me that Dunga had said on television that for the Brazilian team to do well it was necessary “liberdade com responsabilidade (freedom with responsibility)”. She told me to include that in my notes and also to include another saying that had come to her mind: “liberdade não é libertinagem (freedom is not libertinism)”. She added: “this is an important Brazilian saying, you know!” I was full of hotdogs and full of notes to write down when I returned to my place that night.

Achando que liberdade significa ficar na putaria! / Thinking that freedom means to fuck around!

On the first day of July 2009, Auro passed by my house and complained about Mazinho. He told me that Mazinho was going through a difficult moment in his relationship with his boyfriend, Bruno. This was mainly because Mazinho wanted to go back to his life of “putaria” (frequent sex with many different people). “Sauna, cinemão, boites, pegação por aí! (Sauna, sex cinema, boites, cruising around!)” – Auro said. It was very clear that he did not approve of Mazinho’s sexual practices. He mentioned that Mazinho was becoming “vicioso” (immoral, vicious). “Eu gosto dele! Por isso me preocupo de ele ficar achando que liberdade significa ficar na putaria por aí! (I like him! That is why I worry about him thinking that freedom means fucking around!)”

Devemos lutar pela vida, amor e liberdade! / We should fight for life, love and freedom!

Gay Pride in Copacabana beach took place on the 1st of November 2009 and I was there. During the parade I met one of my students from MFI, where I taught basic English. I was surprised to see him. He asked me if he could hang out with my group and I agreed. Amélia had gone to the Gay Pride parade with me and I was expecting to meet many other people there, including Mazinho, Priscilla, and some people from what was called the “PAFYC group” (or “young-gay-guys group”) from Rocinha. As we walked down the road listening to loud electronic music, seeing colourful flags and half naked bodies all over, my student told me about his family and how his mother was an evangelical woman who had migrated from Ceará to Rio. She used to go to a church called the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), he said. I asked him more about his life story and he told me: “When I arrived in Rocinha there were only women and men, and some transvestites. There was no such thing as gay people. Do you understand? For that reason I had

many girlfriends and I even had a son. But now I am less confused and have decided that I am gay. I am gay, do you understand?" I surely did. Then I asked him about the time when he lived in Ceará. "In Ceará there is a lot of prejudice still today! But my family in Rio accept me. Even my mother, who belongs to the UCKG, accepts me!" – he said. "And she does not want to liberate you from evil? Chase your Pomba-Gira spirit?" – I asked him smiling. He replied: "She tried, she really tried but she could not do it! Now she's even stopped trying to take the Pomba-Gira spirit out of other people... First she would have to be able to solve the case of my Pomba-Gira, right? So, it is better for her to leave us alone!" He laughed out loud. According to many evangelicals, Pomba-Gira was a female devil that could make straight guys become gay. On the many sound trucks passing by us from time to time, there were messages being displayed. One of them read: "É direito nosso amar e viver livremente. (It is our right to love and live freely.)" Another truck carried a banner: "Devemos lutar pela vida, amor e liberdade! (We should fight for life, love and freedom!)" Yet another truck carried the message: "Duque de Caxias deve respeitar a liberdade de expressão! (Duque de Caxias [a city in Rio de Janeiro state] must respect freedom of expression!)" There was also a big truck dedicated to "liberdade religiosa (religious freedom)", which was carrying representatives of different religions, some wearing ritual clothing. The last car was called: "Carro da tolerância religiosa: Brasil é país laico. (The truck of religious tolerance: Brazil is a laic country.)" And the celebration went on until very late at night, ending up with lots of sex at the beach for many of my friends.

Liberdade com santidade / Freedom with sainthood

On the 7th of July 2009, Laiza took me to a church called Reviver, in the neighbourhood of Barra da Tijuca in Rio de Janeiro. Some people there were dressed in very extravagant clothes, with lots of jewellery. Others looked like more traditional evangelicals to my eyes. Most people were from Barra itself but others

were coming from Jacarepaguá and even Rocinha, Laiza said. While reading Isaiah 61, the pastor referred to people with chains on their feet and said that we needed to “arrebentar essas correntes, nos livrar de amarras! (to brake these chains, to free ourselves from these ties!)” Later on he mentioned that Reviver is about “liberdade com santidade! (freedom with sainthood!)” At some point he blessed the keys of people’s cars and asked for donations to a project to take the Reviver Church to Portugal. The pastor then told the members of the church to pray against the devil: “Sai diabo! Chega de depressão, chega de briga com o seu marido! (Get out devil! Enough with depression, with fights with your husband!)” At that point a woman grasped the microphone and demanded: “Você está com sua vida aprisionada? Liberta, Senhor! Repitam comigo: liberta, Senhor! (Do you have your life encaged? Free, Lord! Repeat with me: free, Lord!)” An anthem played out loud: “Quando oprimido Ele te liberta! (When oppressed He frees you!)” Then many people were “arreatada” (taken by the Holy Spirit), including Laiza, and soon the floor of the church was almost entirely occupied by horizontal bodies. The pastor covered them all with white cloths. A big guy grabbed the microphone again and started saying that he was ashamed to come to the church in his old car but he knew that soon God would bless him with a better one. And people replied: “Hallelujah!” The main pastor took the microphone back, proclaiming that she just had a revelation: she had seen flowers for Iemanjá (an Afro-Brazilian deity of Candomblé). The pastor kept on saying that someone was doing “macumba” (Afro-Brazilian magic) on a certain girl in the church in order to destroy her life. The pastor shouted: “Mas Deus disse que o trabalho foi desfeito: queima Iemanjá! Senhor, liberta essa filha de todo mal! Tire os problemas conjugais! Tire os trabalhos e oferendas que fizeram para acabar com ela! (But God said that the witchcraft was undone: burn Iemanjá! Lord, free this daughter from all evil! Take away her marital problems! Take away the witchcraft and offerings that were made to destroy her!)” The girl in question was standing in the middle of the church, crying. “It is important to keep on praying!” – the pastor told her afterwards. “Deus vai mudar seus entendimentos, ok? (God will change your understanding, ok?)” The girl cried even more, torrentially. After church, Laiza told

me a lot more about “arrebatoamento”. When I met Paizinha later on that day she wanted to know what had happened during our visit to Renascer and confessed that she had not felt comfortable going to a church in Barra da Tijuca. Paizinha also told me that in order to be taken over by the Holy Spirit one had to “dar lugar a Deus (make room for God)”. “One has to slowly let Him take control over us.” – she said.

Gosto muito da minha liberdade!!! / I like my freedom a lot!!!

Armando wanted to go to Botafogo Shopping Mall on the 22nd of July 2009 in order to buy a gift for Carolina’s godmother. On the way back from the mall, we took a bus and sat ourselves on the last row of seats. From my position I could see a guy to my left holding a thick book entitled “Umbanda”. I indicated it to Armando and he made the sign of the cross with his right hand and laughed. A few stops later the guy got off the bus and Armando said: “Do you know why I think I could never be in “macumba” (also a general term used for Afro-Brazilian religions and practices)?” I said: “No... Why?” And he replied: “Porque eu não iria para o roncó nunca! Gosto muito da minha liberdade!!! (Because I would never be able to go to the *roncó*! I like my freedom a lot!!!)” Peterson and Vásquez (2008: 117) define roncó as the “sacred inner room that serves as the initiate’s retreat” in Afro-Brazilian religions. I guess Armando would define it more like a prison, though, a place from which sometimes one cannot get out for a long time.

A liberdade que os pais querem / The freedom that parents want

Auro clapped by my window around 7pm on the 26th of July 2009. He came in and put his backpack on the floor. He told me that we would go out that night. As

he put both of his hands around his waist and gyrated his upper body, Auro said: “Sou filho de Ogum com Iansã, meu bem! E filho de Ogum com Iansã gosta de liberdade!!! (I am a child of Ogum with Iansã [Candomblé deities], dear! And a child of Ogum with Iansã likes freedom!!!)” We went out then, and met our friend Marcus who was just arriving from work. After spending some time at his house, we decided to walk around Rocinha and see a bit of its busy nightlife. Motorcycles running, lights, people, food, music... Rocinha’s nightlife was fully on. We then called Mazinho to have him join us. He invited us to his house. And that is where we headed. As we all chatted in Mazinho’s living room during that late evening, Marcus mentioned a problem that he had been noticing in the world. He shared his concern with us: “A liberdade que os pais querem para os filhos é bem diferente da liberdade que os filhos querem. Isso gera muito conflito entre pais e filhos. (The freedom that parents want for their children is very different from the freedom that the children want. That generates a lot of conflict in between parents and their children.)” Mazinho agreed, and Auro too.

Paz, Justiça e Liberdade / Peace, Justice and Freedom

In the early morning of the last day of July 2009, as I was preparing to leave home, a woman was passing through my beco and I overheard her conversation with a friend of hers. She was saying that a relative of hers went to jail. She then asked the person walking with her: “O que você ia preferir: comprar sua liberdade ou ficar lá dentro mofando? (What would you prefer: to buy your freedom or to rot in there?)” I could not hear the answer. Then I finished dressing and left Rocinha to visit another favela, called Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo (aka PPG). There I met Rose, who told me something I had not thought about that much. She told me that life in PPG was strongly influenced by life in jail. Traffickers would go to jail and come back with a “jail mentality” and they would run the favelas in that way. She said that it was not by chance that the motto for the trafficking commands refer to

freedom and that traffickers have a strong concern with the guarantee of freedom in their communities. She said: “What is A.D.A’s (Friends of Friends) motto? It is: “Viver e deixar viver. (To live and let live.)” And C.V.’s (Red Command)? It is: “Paz, Justiça e Liberdade (Peace, Justice and Freedom).” I was amazed, I loved Rose.

That same day, back home in Rocinha, Maria Beatriz asked her father, who was watching television: “May I go to Boiadeiro with Isabel?” He replied: “You only want to be loose on the streets, right? No, you are not going!” A few minutes later Amélia told us that she had heard that Dona Tina’s grandson, Lairson, had escaped from his house in Muzema through a window and had gone clubbing with his friends all night long. She said that Dona Tina was very mad at him. Bezerra commented: “Ele já tá velho, né? Não pode viver só preso como eles querem! Tem que dar liberdade para o garoto, tem que dar um voto de confiança! (He is getting old, right? He cannot live only caged as they want him to! They must give the boy some freedom, they must give him some trust!)” And I looked at Maria Beatriz, who was not a boy. She was silent, with her arms folded, and looking sad near a corner of the living room.

Liberdade institucional / Institutional freedom

During the PAC photography course on the 4th of August 2009, Renato, a student of Social Sciences at the Catholic University of Rio (PUC-Rio), talked to me: “Eu acho que ausência de Estado na favela é um tipo de liberdade institucional... mas o pessoal não quer ver por esse lado! (I think that the absence of the State in the favela is a type of institutional freedom... but people do not want to see it from this side!)” He said that while the curls of his hair kept dancing around. After the course that day I went straight home to work on my notes because I knew that later on I was going to meet Peterson and we would stay out chatting until very late, as usual. And so I met Peterson near the lanhouse (some sort of internet café) and Samira was there with him that evening. We chatted a bit and decided to walk

to the beach. When we reached the sand, Peterson started to talk about Samira. He told me: “Ela é sapatão! Na verdade ela pega tudo... Ah, liberdade sexual! (She is a dyke! In fact, she does everything... Oh, sexual freedom!)” And he laughed, as she slapped him hard.

Filho tira muito a nossa liberdade / A child takes away too much of our freedom

Maria Beatriz threw a huge tantrum on the 28th of January 2010, because she wanted to go swimming with her cousins and her mother would not let her go. Amélia argued that it was too dangerous for her to go out around town without the supervision of an adult. We had travelled to Guaraciaba do Norte (Ceará) and there was this small hotel in town, with a swimming pool. For a couple of Brazilian reais, paid in advance, they opened the facilities to anyone. Amélia complained to me after the fight with Maria Beatriz: “Tá vendo, Moises? Filho tira muito a nossa liberdade, dá trabalho. Ter filho é bom e ruim ao mesmo tempo! (You see, Moises? A child takes away a lot of our freedom, it is hard work. To have children is good and bad at the same time!)” And so Maria Beatriz spent the whole morning crying. Soon after lunch, though, she was playing with her cousins again. Her eyes were still red but she was playing and laughing again. Over dinner, Maria Beatriz’s grandmother told us a story about her own life. She said: “Eu era muito privada de liberdade quando moça, não podia fazer nada! Por isso foi melhor casar logo e meu pai escolheu o marido que era o meu tio viúvo. Ele era bom para mim, me leva para andar, passear. Mas amar mesmo eu nunca amei o meu marido. (I was very deprived of freedom when I was a youngster, I could not do anything! For that reason it was best to get married soon and my father chose the husband who was a widowed uncle of mine. He was good to me and would take me to walk around, stroll. But as to real love, I never loved my husband.)” Maria Beatriz heard what

her grandmother had to say in absolute silence. Once in a while she turned and looked deeply into Amélia's eyes, with anger.

On the 6th of August 2009, young Carolina confirmed that she was pregnant. We went together to get her pregnancy test result from a clinic near Rocinha. We sat down on the curb outside the clinic and she opened the white envelope. She went quiet and cried for a while and then she told me: "Sabe por que não quero ter filho? Anota ai: porque quero ser livre e filho tira muito a nossa liberdade! (Do you know why I do not want to have children? Take note: because I want to be free and a child takes away too much of our freedom!)" I hugged her.

Sobre liberdade? / About freedom?

Auro came to my house very early in the morning of the 12th of August 2009. As I got up and looked through the window, there was a funny smell in the beco. It smelled of a chemical used to kill bugs called "Creolina". Auro came in and told me something that he had just found out: "Meu primo tá trabalhando com a Elza, nega! Acho que ele tá assim porque minha tia deu liberdade demais para os filhos dela! (My cousin is stealing, dear! I think he is doing that because my aunt gave too much freedom to her children!)" Auro was agitated and asked me for a glass of water. That same day, in the evening, I walked with him to meet Marcus at the bus stop near the popular market in Rocinha. We had arranged to go and visit the transvestites that worked in Barra da Tijuca. Marcus knew some of them. Auro could not come with us, though. He went to work. When Marcus and I got to Barra da Tijuca, we got off at a square called "Praça do O". Soon we met a transvestite that was friends with Marcus, she was called KB7. Marcus told her that I was living in Rocinha and I was doing a research on freedom. She looked at us with a funny face and remarked: "Sobre liberdade? Eu ainda preciso ser liberta! Ainda não fui para a Universal não, meu bem! (About freedom? I still need to be freed! I have not been to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God [UCKG] yet, my dear!)" And

she smiled fixing her tight dress on her curvy body. We hung out there for a while, laughed together and Marcus asked for news on different friends that they had in common. We were briefly introduced to other transvestites but we did not stay there for too long. As soon as we realised we could have been disturbing the influx of clients that used to slowly drive around the square in expensive cars, we decided to leave.

Liberdades pessoais / Personal freedoms

During the evening of the 21st of August 2009, very rude and nasty bouncers forced me to leave the building of the UCKG near Rocinha. I felt horrible. The pretext they used was that I was not allowed to take notes during a religious service. My night then ended at the police station in the neighbourhood of Gávea, where I went to file a formal complaint against the UCKG. My friends in Rocinha were all appalled by UCKG's attitude but unsure about whether or not it was a good idea to report the case to the police and if that could put me in trouble with the favela traffickers. Throughout the episode, I reflected on topics such as freedom of the press and freedom of expression. These things were never ever mentioned by anyone that had in any way taken part in the story, though. At that time, only a TV Globo's advertising campaign, that was broadcasted once in a while, openly supported "freedom of expression" as a right. After I had talked to the police officer that night about what had happened, though, I was given a copy of a document that he had typed formalizing my complaint against UCKG. In this document I noticed that the article of the Brazilian Criminal Code used to base my charge against UCKG referred to the protection of my "liberdades pessoais (personal freedoms)". When I read the document, I had a little moment of bliss! I smiled and thought: ethnographic research can be very serendipitous indeed.

Poder e liberdade! / Power and freedom!

I was returning from the supermarket with Auro on the 22nd of August 2009, and as we passed by the “boca” (drug selling point in the favela) carrying our plastic bags, he made a comment: “Você sabe por que que traficante gosta tanto de arma? Porque elas dão a sensação de poder e liberdade! Eu tenho que tomar muito cuidado! Tenho um fascínio muito grande por poder e por armas! (Do you know why traffickers like arms so much? Because they give the sensation of power and freedom! I have to be very careful! I have a great fascination with power and arms!)” Meanwhile, gossip about my UCKG episode kept coming to my ears. Harley had come to talk to me in the afternoon, he said that the traffickers would call the pastor and would tell him off for what the church had done to me. Harley was happy to give me such news but I was extremely upset and worried that the situation would really come to involve the traffickers. In the evening, I told Francielle and Auro that I was getting worried about the situation. “Wow! The police do not do much, but the traffickers do!” – Francielle said laughing. And Auro quickly added: “E bicha também faz! Você deveria ter chamado eu ou a Larinha travesti e rapidinho tinha umas 300 bichas na porta da Universal batendo palma e chamando para briga! (And fags also do! You should have called myself or Larinha transvestite to help you and soon there would be about 300 fags at the doorsteps of UCKG clapping out loud to call them for a fight!)” Francielle laughed even more. As I walked back home late that night I overheard a conversation in which a girl told her aunt: “Quero casar não tia! Tenho medo de perder a liberdade. (I do not want to get married, aunt! I fear losing my freedom.)” I did not sleep very well that night but luckily never heard anything else about traffickers working on my case.

Liberdade está em Jesus / Freedom is in Jesus

I met Auro again on the 24th of August 2009. We were talking in a big group of people in front of MFI. Auro told us that he had seen his cousin – who was not

even 12 years old yet – kissing another boy on the streets of Rocinha. He commented: “Acho lindo que ele tenha liberdade para namorar, eu tinha que esconder! (I find it beautiful that he would have the freedom to date, I had to hide it!)” Menem and Olga, however, were not very comfortable with the topic. Menem said: “Não sei que conceito de liberdade você tem, Auro. Só falo uma coisa: liberdade está em Jesus! (I do not know what concept of freedom you have, Auro. I will only say one thing: freedom is in Jesus!)” Auro just rolled his eyes and replied: “Ah, tá! (Yeah, yeah!)”

Existe uma falta de liberdade aqui / There is a lack of freedom here

On the 10th of August 2009, I met Armando and Francielle to go out to Carmélia’s house for dinner. Just before leaving from Armando’s house, a very loud music came in through the windows. We could no longer hear each other. That lasted for about the length of a whole song, a funk song that some neighbour decided to play as loud as possible. Later on Armando reflected: “Existe uma falta de liberdade aqui que me incomoda muito! As pessoas não respeitam o espaço e a privacidade do outro. Talvez isso seja o que mais me incomode de morar aqui! Mas tudo bem, é só que minha mãe sempre criou a gente respeitando o nosso espaço e a nossa individualidade! (There is a lack of freedom here that bothers me very much! People do not respect each other’s space and each other’s privacy. Maybe that is what bothers me the most about living here! But that is ok, just that my mother always raised us respecting our space and our individuality!)” Francielle agreed with him and I was a bit surprised to hear Armando complaining about Rocinha for the first time.

Liberdade de culto religioso / Freedom of the religious cult

Around the middle of September 2009, TV Globo aired a long advertisement campaign in its most expensive advertisement window, around 8pm, which is the time when a lot of people in Brazil watch their favourite soap opera. The television campaign showed many different religious scenes, representing diverse types of religions. At the end of these scenes a voice narrated a message: “Liberdade de culto religioso. Globo, liberdade de expressão! (Freedom of religious cult. Globo, freedom of expression!)” I watched one of those advertisements with Amélia, at her house. After watching it, she told me that every morning, really early, Globo had been discussing different religions at length. It seemed to me that Globo was somehow addressing those ads towards the UCKG and the power that they were achieving in the media through a rival television channel that the UCKG owned, TV Record.

I visited a Candomblé house located in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro on the 10th of February 2010. Talking to the pai-de-santo (father-of-saint) of the house during a divination session, I heard him complaining that there has been a growing intolerance towards Candomblé in Brazil, mostly coming from some evangelicals. “Existe uma falta de liberdade de culto religioso que é inaceitável. (There is a lack of religious freedom that is unacceptable.)” – he said.

At MFI on the 29th of September 2009, Auro had a row with Paizinha because of his belief that macumba was a perfectly acceptable form of religion. Auro himself used to say that some day he would like to become an Umbanda priest (pai-de-santo). Paizinha, as it was often the case, proclaimed that people should meet Jesus and his love and then they would drop all macumba and would become evangelicals. Auro tried to argue that there was Jesus in macumba too. Paizinha did not like that and said that what Auro called Jesus, she called the devil. Auro then got angry and complained: “Liberdade de culto, gente! Esse povo tem que entender isso! (Freedom of cult, guys! These people have to understand that!)” Paizinha noticed that he was upset but replied nonetheless: “Tudo bem, mas parte da minha missão é evangelizar e eu vou continuar lutando! (That is ok, but part of

my mission is to evangelize and I will keep fighting!)" Armando, wide-eyed and with his hands on his waistline, did not say much.

The last days of September in Rocinha were humid. Auro told me that I had missed the "II Caminhada pela Liberdade Religiosa (2nd March for Religious Freedom)" that had taken place in Posto 6 of Copacabana beach on the 20th of September 2009. He told me he had watched it all on television. Before going to bed that day I did some research on "liberdade religiosa (religious freedom)" and I found a forum called "Testemunhas de Jeová Livres (Free Jehovah's Witnesses)". They stated on their website that their mission was: "Libertar as pessoas da prisão que é essa religião! (To free people from the prison that this religion was!)" However, they did not seem to want people to stop being "Jehovah's Witnesses", just that they should become "Free Jehovah's Witnesses."

Querem a liberdade / They want freedom

Auro invited me to walk to the beach. It was late night but it was so warm. I liked the idea of walking by the beach at night. September was coming to an end and I had started missing Rocinha already, I wanted to enjoy every second living there. As we walked down the beach's black and white cobblestones pavement, Auro told me: "Did you know that the superior astral plane visits the inferior astral plane? The inferior astral plane also believes in God, they just refuse to follow him; they do not want to follow the Lamb of God. Querem ser livres, querem a liberdade! (They want to be free, they want freedom!) The Middle East and all their problems, that region is dominated by the inferior astral plane! Who do you think the President of Iran is? An evil black wizard!!! Do you think that the inferior astral plan is happy with all these good things that Lula is doing? Of course not! They would love to destroy our country. If they could they would have destroyed the whole planet already!!! They hate us and they hate this planet! Are we not the

image of God? There you are! They hate us!!! Moises, they hate us!!!!!!” The ocean was agitated that night, big waves ahead.

O signo que mais gosta de liberdade / The sign that likes freedom the most

Monday morning, the 19th of October 2009. I met Carmélia talking to Armando at MFI. I kissed her and started to listen to their conversation. She wanted a favour from Armando; she wanted him to find someone who could bring her a netbook computer from the USA. She would pay for it, of course; she could pay in advance if necessary. Armando looked at her and said that he would try. She said: “Please! You know how much I like to be mobile, to be free, right? Please!” We laughed: it sounded like a bit too much of a drama for a netbook. She looked at our faces and told us: “É sério isso! De verdade mesmo! Aquário, meu ascendente, é o signo que mais gosta de liberdade! (This is serious! Truthfully indeed! Aquarius is my ascendant, it is the sign that likes freedom the most!)”

Eles tem uma liberdade total / They have total freedom

On the 21st of November 2009, I had met Samira in the evening. We had bought some sweets for a few cents and we were eating them out of a brown paper bag looking at some boys on the street. As we munched on the sweets, Samira remarked to me: “Sabe o que que me impressiona nesses meninos? Eles parecem que não têm mãe! Eles têm uma liberdade total de ficar na rua até tarde e fazer o que querem! Nem eu que sou mais velha faço isso. Não é assim com minha mãe não!!! (Do you know what impresses me the most about these boys? They seem not to have a mother! They have total freedom to stay out until late and to do whatever

they want! Not even me, who is older then them does that. It is not like that with my mother!!!)”

Existe liberdade! / There is freedom!

After meeting Murilo on the 10th of July 2009, we went to his church in Jacarepaguá. There, they prayed over a woman. “João Caveira, sai dela! Ela vem pedindo libertação, Senhor! Que seja repreendido todo mal! Enfermidade, dores, sai! Toda obra de feitiçaria, sai! (João Caveira, get out of her! She has been asking for liberation, Lord! That all evil be reprehended! Infirmities, pains, out! All work of witchcraft, out!)” And the woman fell, hitting both of her knees on the floor. “Palmas, irmãos, ela está liberta! Onde o Espírito Santo está existe liberdade! (Clap, brothers, she has been liberated! Where the Holy Spirit is present there is freedom!)”, Murilo said. And the small crowd clapped as loud as they could.

LIBERDADE DE ESCOLHA / FREEDOM OF CHOICE

A friend of mine from Brasilia travelled to Rio on the 19th of December 2009. He wanted to go out to a very famous gay nightclub. Sure, I thought it would be a good idea to check out Rio de Janeiro’s posh gay scene. The place was called “The Week” and we had to put our names on a guest list beforehand. What I remember the most about the place is the excessive number of laser beams flashing everywhere. I also remember that the vast majority of the guys there had very muscular bodies and they seemed to be so proud of their muscles that most of them had no shirt on. There were more people shirtless in the nightclub than otherwise. In one rare case in which a muscular guy was dressed, his t-shirt was

emblazoned with the message: “LIBERDADE DE ESCOLHA! (FREEDOM OF CHOICE!)”

Liberdade para fazer isso / Freedom to do that

On the 4th of January 2010, I was having a laugh with Armando at MFI. Renata had left her social network (Facebook) account opened in one of the shared computers. As a joke, I wrote and published something from her account. The message suggested that she liked girls. Gustavo laughed, Menem laughed, Armando laughed and Renata got really mad at me. She told me: “Ai, credo! Não te dei liberdade para fazer isso não! Não posso nem ficar logada? Credo! (Oh, gosh! I did not give you the freedom to do that! I cannot even be logged in? Gosh!). And Armando laughed even harder.

Por causa da minha liberdade / Because of my freedom

On the 5th of January 2010, a big group of people from MFI had gone to play volleyball at the beach. While we played, we saw a cousin of Auro's (called Wanderley) a few meters away from us. He was a slim boy and was surrounded by many other stronger teenagers. The crowd was shouting things at Wanderley. One of the guys said: “Ele é viado, um dia ele me escovou ali no escuro! (He is a faggot, he sucked me off in the dark one day!)” Armando got angry and felt that he should intervene. So he walked over to the guys shouting and said that the guy who claimed to have been sucked off was as gay as the one who had allegedly sucked him off. And the MFI crowd cheered for Wanderley. The strong teenager shouted back at the MFI crowd, saying that he was not a faggot. When we got back to Rocinha we soon managed to find Auro to tell him the whole episode. Auro only

said: “Wanderley is a devil too, darling! He has that holy face but he does a lot of evil things already!” Armando was upset and said in a loud tone: “Mas cadê a mãe desse menino? Tá vendo? Esse é o tipo de liberdade que não pode ter! (But where is the mother of this boy? You see? This type of freedom is the one that cannot be!)”

Later on that same day I met Mazinho and after hugging me for longer than usual he told me: “Sabia que por um lado foi bom terminar o namoro com o Bruno? Por causa da minha liberdade! (Do you know that in a way it was good to finish my relationship with Bruno? Because of my freedom!)” He looked sad and had his eyes filled with tears. So I just hugged him once again.

L? Liberdade! / F? Freedom!

Maria Beatriz was playing in the backyard of her grandmother’s house in Ceará. While playing, she sang a song by Xuxa that followed the letters of the alphabet and assigned a word for each letter: “A de Amor! B de Baixinho... L? Liberdade! (F? Freedom! K as in Kid, L as in Love...) I kept washing the dishes that we had used for breakfast as I heard Maria Beatriz playing outside.

O pessoal da favela perde um pouco a liberdade / People who live in the favela lose a bit of freedom

With his right knee on top of the sofa and looking out of the window of his house, Armando complained to me about the air-conditioning wars that happened in our alleyway. People who owned an air-conditioning machine pointed it at the house in front of them and, the beco being so narrow, hot air flow kept being shot

back and forth between neighbours. He said: “Essa guerra de ar quente do ar-condicionado! É nessas coisas que o pessoal da favela perde um pouco a liberdade! (This war of hot air-conditioning airflow! It is in these things that people who live in favela lose a bit of freedom!)”

Viva a liberdade / Live freedom

Amélia took over the cooking while we stayed at her mother’s house in Ceará. On the 26th of January, she cooked ribs for lunch. Maria Beatriz and I decided to go out to buy a bottle of soft drink to go with the ribs. At the supermarket I saw condoms sold under the brand “freedom”. After lunch we watched television and a samba school called Portela was on television. Carnival was coming very soon. The lyrics of Portela’s samba for 2010 was:

“Viva a liberdade com a paz do amanhecer / Live freedom with the peace of dawn

Num Rio de Janeiro que vislumbra melhorias / In a Rio de Janeiro that looks for betterment

Através dessa ferramenta de inclusão e socialização / Through this tool of inclusion and socialization

Vamos viver em estado de graça! / Let us live in a state of grace!”

Chapter 4: Livre / Free

Priberam Dictionary of Portuguese Language:

Livre

(L. liber, -era, -erum)

adj.

1. Que goza de liberdade. / That enjoys freedom.
2. Independente. / Independent.
3. Que não tem peias. / Without ties.
4. Que pode dispor de si. / That can make use of itself.
5. Que está em liberdade. / That is in freedom.
6. Salvo (do perigo). / Saved (from danger).
7. Isento. / Immune.
8. Desimpedido, desobstruído. / Unimpeded, unblocked.
9. Desembaraçado. / Free of complication.
10. Que não está ocupado. / That is not busy.
11. Não comprometido ou obrigado. / Not compulsory or obligatory.
12. Que não está ligado por vínculos matrimoniais. / Not tied by matrimonial links.
13. Não proibido. / Not forbidden.
14. Não monopolizado. / Not monopolized.
15. Espontâneo. / Spontaneous.
16. Licencioso. / Libertine.
17. Descomedido. / Without limits.

adv.

18. Com liberdade. / With freedom.

s. m. / subj. masc.

19. [Desporto] Punição que consiste na passagem da bola à equipe que sofreu falta.
/ [Sport] Punishment that gives the ball to the team that suffered a fault.

The samba of Livre/Freeness:

Quem está livre? / Who is free?

Eu sou livre! / I am free!

Você é livre, meu filho! / You are free, my son!

Bandidos não são completamente livres / Bandits are not completely free

Livre da justiça / Free from the Justice

Livres da Rocinha / Free from Rocinha

Solteiro, ainda livre! / Single, still free!

De livre e espontânea vontade / Out of free and spontaneous will

Deus me livre! / God free me!

Livre de todo mal / Free from all evil

Livre para pedir / Free to ask

Gosto de gastar livre / I like to spend freely

Livre do preceito / Free from precept

Consciência livre / Free conscience

Ao ar livre / Al fresco

Correndo livre / Running free

Tempo livre / Free time

Sentir-se Livre / To feel free

Livre mas totalmente dominado / Free but totally dominated

Mais livre / Freer

Verdadeiramente livre / Truly free

Livre para escolher / Free to choose

Mente livre / Free mind

Tão livre / So free, as free

Este país é livre / This country is free

The parade of Livre/Freeness:

Quem está livre? / Who is free?

On the bus to Complexo do Alemão, we were telling jokes and laughing for most of the journey. I really liked to spend time with the students of this state initiative, although at that time I had only known them for a few weeks. They were mostly teenagers from Rocinha with an interest in photography. The educational project aimed to teach residents of four favelas – Rocinha, Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo, Manguinhos and Complexo do Alemão – how to use professional cameras as a way of registering the changes that the PAC (Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento / Growth Acceleration Project) was promoting in these four “communities”. Lula had launched PAC during his second mandate as the Brazilian president (2006-2010). Lilica was on board the bus with us too. She was unemployed at the time. Lilica had been born and raised in Rocinha and worked very hard in order to get a university degree in journalism. She was unemployed and disappointed. Although, later in the year she did find different jobs, not all of them were related to journalism. Lilica had told me that she felt that the word “comunidade” (community) was an interesting, appropriate, way to talk about a favela because for her there was indeed a sense of unity around people living “como-uniidade” (as-unity) in Rocinha. The focus on the word community brought to my mind Turner’s (1969) concept of “communitas” as the experience of togetherness. Lilica often told me about the stigma and also the joy of being a “favelada”, a favela dweller. Many years earlier, I had read a book by Carolina Maria de Jesus (1994) called “Child of the Dark” that was a groundbreaking piece published in the 1960s and supposed to be the first book ever published by a favela dweller in Brazil. In a form of a diary, the book described the “realities” of life in a favela. Her comments reminded me of this book. I told Lilica that I felt safe

with these young guys, that it was weird for me because security had been such a major concern preceding my research and perhaps I had never felt so safe in Rio de Janeiro as when with them. She smiled and said: "I understand you. Actually, when you look at the way some people that I know live in condomínios (gated communities) in Barra da Tijuca, it makes me think of that song by O Rappa called "Minha Alma (My Soul)". Do you know this song?" She concluded: "Cara, quem está livre? (Dude, who is free?)"

Minha Alma / My Soul (Autor/Author: Marcelo Yuka)

A minha alma tá armada e apontada / My soul is armed and pointed
para cara do sossego! / to tranquillity's face!
Pois paz sem voz, paz sem voz / Because peace without voice
Não é paz, é medo! / Is not peace, it is fear!
As vezes eu falo com a vida, / Sometimes I talk to life,
As vezes é ela quem diz: / Sometimes it is life that says:
"Qual a paz que eu não quero conservar / "What is the peace that I don't
want to keep
Prá tentar ser feliz?" / To try to be happy"
As grades do condomínio / The bars of the gated communities
São prá trazer proteção / Are meant to bring protection
Mas também trazem a dúvida / But they also bring the doubt
Se é você que tá nessa prisão / Whether it is you who is in the prison
(...)

I continued attending the PAC photography course with their meetings every Tuesday and some Thursdays in the afternoon in Rocinha. Some days we would also take busses and go to different favelas. On the 17th of March 2009, one of the guys in the course got a bit sad and blue in the afternoon. We tried to talk to him about his sadness and he told us that a friend of his had just died in Rocinha

hit by a stray bullet, calibre 0.30. The other guys got quiet too. Eduardo said: “We have to hold on to God!” And the others kept quiet. He proceeded: “Ninguém está livre dessas coisas, né, cara? Quem está livre? Ninguém está livre! (No-one is free from these things, right dude? Who is free? Nobody is free!)” And I remembered my fears, my friends, and my family back in Goiânia, in the central region of Brazil. They would always say how dangerous Rio de Janeiro was, that stray bullets were killing people everywhere, bullets everywhere, bullets coming from the constant conflicts between the police and traffickers. They said that just to visit Rio was such a big risk, let alone go into a favela! It was as if stray bullets were the rule rather than exception. Menem broke the silence that day in March and said: “Não tem bala perdida, tem bala achada! É raro, cara! (There is no such thing as stray bullets, there are found bullets! They are rare, dude!)” And people in the room burst out laughing.

Eu sou livre! / I am free!

On the 23rd of January 2010, I was about 2,100Km away from the city of Rio de Janeiro. Amélia, Maria Beatriz, and I had gone to spend a few weeks in Guaraciaba do Norte in Ceará State, in northeast Brazil. There, while walking around town I saw a woman wearing an old blue t-shirt, with a few holes in it. It said in capital white letters: “EU SOU LIVRE PARA AMAR A DEUS! (I AM FREE TO LOVE GOD!)” And that made me miss my friend Francielle back in Rocinha who once told me that her pastor asked them to repeat this very same message during their Sunday services. Francielle’s parents were both migrants from Ceará too.

I used to be a volunteer at the Many Friends Institute (MFI), teaching Basic English to some young adults from Rocinha. Months before I left for Ceará, Francielle told me during one of our conversations at the MFI: “I remembered you last night, Moises!” Francielle, Armando, and I lived on the same alleyway. She continued: “Did you hear it during the night? Did you hear it?” Armando said: “I

think I know what it is! I also heard it!!!" – and he smiled. "What is it?" – I said. Francielle then looked at me and put on a different voice, one of an angry woman: "Eu não sou sua escrava! Tá ouvindo? Eu sou livre! Livre!!! (I am not your slave! Do you hear me? I am free! Free!!!)" And for a second I was not sure what was going on. Had I done something wrong? Armando laughed. He said: "Yes, this woman was out of control last night! She was walking down our alleyway and shouting at this drunken guy walking behind her! She was really mad at him!!! How come you did not hear them fighting? You better take notes about this woman because she kept shouting: Eu sou livreeeeeee! (I am freeeeeeee!) Sure you didn't hear it?"

Another day at MFI, Auro said: "Sometimes I think I shock the gringo volunteers, don't you think, Moises? Especially that Canadian guy, Ian! Acho que ele fica chocado de ver como eu sou livre! (I think he is shocked to see how free I am!)" And then Auro started moving his body as a very sensual woman would do and walked around until he walked out of MFI. Auro had told me before that he was about to become a travesti when he was younger but now the idea no longer appealed to him. He liked to be a "bicha-boy". And I knew what he meant because Priscilla had once explained to me that "bicha-boy é um viado que veste roupa de homem (bicha-boy is a gay guy that wears male clothing)".

A couple of weeks later, Auro invited me for a coffee at this Portuguese bakery in Rocinha. On our way up to the place, he was making me laugh putting on funny faces and different voices to call the attention of people on the streets. At one point he paused for a moment near a foul-smelling rubbish dump on Boiadeiro Street. He lifted his white tight fitted t-shirt and showed me both of his brown nipples. Meanwhile, he put on an even thinner voice and said: "Eu sou livre, meu bem! (I am free, darling!)" And walked away ahead of me towards the bakery. A few months later I heard Auro calling me outside the window of my house. He said he would have to come back later on to talk to me. He complained that he was tired, he had worked too much last night at the Ferrington Hotel as a waiter: "Bicha, isso é escravidão! Pelo menos eu sou extra e sendo extra eu sou livre para reclamar com o gerente! (Fairy, this is slavery! At least I am just temporary at the

hotel and being temporary staff I am free to complain to the manager!) And I do complain!"

Mazinho's mother also liked to complain about life sometimes. She was in her fifties and had come to Rio de Janeiro from Sergipe State in the northeastern part of Brazil. She moved to Rocinha to be able to live with Mazinho's father without a "proper" marriage. "The first time I put my feet in a favela was because of my love for that man!" – she used to say. The couple separated the day she found out that Mazinho's father was keeping a second family. On that day she got so angry at him that she tried to beat him up. She was furious. But she managed to live without him and he ended up having many other women. Recently, he ended up having two other children with yet another woman. Mazinho invited me to have lunch at his place, a two-storey house much further up the hill than my own. What a beautiful view of Rocinha, and the sea, they had from their rooftop! Mazinho and his mother lived alone. Mazinho was complaining about his bad luck with men over lunch. His mother then said: "Eat more rice, Moises!" And soon after, she also said: "You know what? I don't cheat on anyone! I hate betrayal". Mazinho smiled somewhat awkwardly as she continued saying with a semi-naughty face: "Se tiver solteira eu pego uns por aí porque sou livre, né? Mas não traio! (If I am single I mess around because I am free, right? But I don't cheat!)" And Mazinho turned to me: "É verdade, ela não trai! (It is true, she doesn't cheat!)"

From my house I had no view of the sea. The easiest way to get to the sea was to walk down my alleyway, turn right, then left and walk down the length of Valão Street. Then I had to turn right and walk down all the way up to the corner of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG). Then I had to turn left, go underneath a viaduct and turn right at FIAT, the big car shop. Walking for another few blocks past the big buildings in the neighbourhood of São Conrado I would soon reach Hotel International. After that, while crossing the road I could already start smelling the ocean and soon I would feel the sand under my feet. As we got to the beach one August afternoon, we met Larinha, a red haired travesti that I knew but was not really friends with. My neighbours who were with me joined Larinha

and her other friends. As we sunbathed, Larinha told us stories about her time as a prostitute in Quinta da Boa Vista, the same area where Museu Nacional is located in Rio de Janeiro. She told us about the rush of blood she used to feel every time she took that bus towards Quinta da Boa Vista, the pleasure of not knowing what would happen throughout the night. Being a prostitute was tough, she said. But sometimes tough was good. I asked her if her family did not mind it, if they were not worried about her. She replied: “Minha mãe sabe de tudo que eu faço! Não tenho podres, sou livre, meu bem! (My mother knows everything that I do! I have no dirty secrets, I am free, my darling!)” Larinha was working as a hairdresser at a salon in Rocinha when I met her. She told me that she was not making enough money “batalhando” (working as a prostitute) in Quinta da Boa Vista. At the beach, Larinha’s body in the bikini showed no signs of her penis, something that all my neighbours remarked on after we left the beach.

Você é livre, meu filho! / You are free, my son!

Dona Ninha was the matriarch of a strict evangelical family. On her face one would almost always find a loving smile, although she was also an angry woman and she liked to cry. One day we were talking by the doorsteps of her house, just Dona Ninha and myself. She was telling me about her childhood and about this one friend of hers that she cannot forget. Just like her husband, this friend was also called José. “But his nickname was Zé da Boneca (Doll Ze)” – she said. “Oh, how I miss him, Moises! Zé da Boneca... always with his doll under his right arm. He would come to see me in my house in Ceará everyday. When my mother would let me play a bit it was with him that I liked to be. I liked him even more than playing with other girls. Zé da Boneca was very sweet and he loved his doll just like a mother loves a daughter. He used to make dresses for his doll and would often give me some doll clothes too. He was very good at making doll dresses. Beautiful colourful dresses! He was very sweet but had a very tough life, you know? His

family didn't like him, they never did. They never accepted his love for the dolls. One day Zé left his home and never returned. I remember that day so well. I cried so much. My friend was gone! I only heard from Zé again many years later, he had been working as a professional dressmaker in São Paulo and was able to make a living by himself. Because of his high-quality work, years later he was invited to work abroad. Zé moved to Paris and once in a while he would still call me and we would talk for a long time on the phone. Oh, my friend Zé da Boneca! I will never forget him. One day by surprise he showed up in Rocinha. He told me his family never accepted his love for the dolls. Zé died some years ago. And I still remember our dolls holding hands and wearing those beautiful dresses. Why? Why did they hate him? Moises, listen to me, my son: *Você é livre para ser o que quiser, tá, meu filho!* (You are free to be whatever you want, ok, my son!)” And she warmly hugged me, smiled and her eyes filled up with tears.

Bandidos não são completamente livres / Bandits are not completely free

To get to the classroom that was used for the PAC photography course in Rocinha, we had to go a long way uphill through some very narrow alleyways. As we passed a narrow open air sewer and climbed up some more twisted cement staircases we came to the entrance of a white building that was also used as a venue for other state funded educational projects in Rocinha. Everyday before the PAC course instructor arrived, the group members used to sit and talk about many things. On the 5th of March 2009, one of the topics was trafficking. Eduardo said that for him “to deal drugs was simply wrong because it was against both God’s law and human law”. He said that the work itself was probably very unpleasant as a trafficker anyway. And he kept talking at me and to the other students while we waited in the sun-boiling room: “Look, you have money as a bandit but you cannot enjoy life! What is the point? Traffickers have to be constantly worried about being

caught by the police, or another enemy - they are always hiding. Most of them cannot even go out of Rocinha, right!” He concluded: “Bandidos não são completamente livres, esse é o problema! (Bandits are not completely free, this is the problem!)”

Ney was the dono do morro (owner of the hill) during my time in Rocinha. He was the recognized leader of all other traffickers in the favela and belonged to a large trafficking faction known as Amigos dos Amigos (A.D.A), i.e., “Friends of Friends”. Ney got this position after the former “owner of the hill”, called BTV, was killed in what people used to describe as a cinematographic police operation that took place in Rocinha in October 2005. The story goes that a sniper had shot BTV in the head, from a hole on the wall of a tall building near my house. Moments of chaos followed the splash of BTV’s blood until the traffickers were able to determine who would become their new leader. The general favela population had not much say in the matter although they would talk intensely about the topic. Amélia, for instance, often said that she missed BTV. Once upon a time, Auro’s uncle was also the “owner of the hill” in Rocinha. Auro came from a kind of “noble” family in this regard. For example, people would still point him out sometimes and say: “Olha o sobrinho do Eraldo! (Look, Eraldo’s nephew!)” Auro used to tell me many stories about the time when his uncle ruled Rocinha, including stories about the amount of money that a trafficker like that can make. He had known some female bandits but told me that there were a lot more male bandits than female ones in Rocinha. One day I explicitly asked Amélia, my “mother” in Rocinha, whether she thought bandits were free. She was making chicken stroganoff for lunch when I got to her small kitchen and asked her: “Amélia, do you think bandits are free?” She looked at me with a funny face and said: “Por que a pergunta? Livre? Que liberdade? Quando a polícia chega ai eles correm feito rato! (Why this question? Free? What freedom? When the police arrive here they run like rats!)” I smiled and sipped some fresh water.

On this note, one last thing: one day at Many Friends Institute, Afrânio pointed his finger to a student that used to take English classes. He remarked:

“Hey, I really admire that boy! He used to be a bandit and now he is a student and a worker. He used to rob people with a gun and everything! Then he went to jail because you know, right? Bandido mais cedo ou mais tarde ou perde a vida ou perde a liberdade, não tem saída! (A bandit sooner or later either loses his life or his freedom, there is no way out!) And then in jail he starts to live like a bird, receiving his food behind bars! And in jail time doesn’t go by, my brother! It must be fucked up!”

Livre da justiça / Free from the Justice

On a steamy afternoon, Priscilla passed by me while I was eating a slice of a red juicy watermelon that I had just bought from the little fruit market around the corner from my house. All of the sudden, Priscilla opened her red juicy mouth, dripping with lipstick. I was frozen. She whispered close to my left ear: “Delicious!” And she looked at me, rather than at the watermelon. So I smiled and from that moment onwards Priscilla became my first transvestite friend in Rocinha. On the 1st of November 2009, she came around to my house in the early evening to ask me to go out with her for a walk at the beach. That usually meant that she wanted to look for guys with whom she could possibly have sex at the beach. But she did not want to cruise alone that day. Walking towards the beach, we passed by the tall buildings in the neighbourhood of São Conrado and suddenly a large luxury car almost hit us on its way out of a garage. The opulent middle-aged woman who was driving this big car still felt entitled to blow the horn at us. Priscilla moved closer to the car’s window. She shouted as loud as she could: “Filha da puta! (Son of the bitch!) If you had knocked me down with that car I would have beaten you up!” And the scared woman drove away as quickly as possible. I laughed and said: “Priscilla, one day someone will just sue you or something!” She laughed at me: “Sue me? Are you serious? Who is going to find me in Rocinha, fairy? Eu sou livre! (I am free)! I don’t even have an address, darling!! You are so naïve sometimes!!!)”

The building right beside the one in which I lived in Rocinha used to belong to a good friend of Amélia's. This rather short man from Ceará had in the past, during a crisis, let Amélia and her family live in the basement of his building for many months, rent-free. "He was a good man! Big heart." – Amélia told me. A few years later this same man would come to murder his wife. He used a knife to tear her body apart, a woman that only a few minutes earlier had been having passionate sex with a very tall man, whom Amélia did not know. The tall man escaped but the wife did not. The neighbours could smell her blood everywhere. And Amélia was sorry for her friend: "He was so jealous! So angry! So desperate!" After this bloodshed, Amélia's short friend explained himself to the traffickers and decided to run away, back to Ceará. It was there that the police caught him. Amélia said she missed her friend a lot: "Se ele tivesse ficado aqui na Rocinha ia ficar livre da Justiça! (Had he stayed here in Rocinha, he would be free from the Justice!) But he was silly. He got scared and fled to Ceará. He is in jail now." I felt weird, maybe sorry too. Sorry for Amélia, for the wife murdered, and also for the betrayed husband. Had he stayed in Rocinha, maybe he would be free. But maybe this man could just not live free from the Justice like so many other murderers that used to hide themselves in Rocinha. Maybe not him, not a big-hearted man?

This music once played out loud in one of the bars in Rocinha:

Teatro dos Vampiros / Vampire's Theatre

(Legião Urbana / Urban Legion)

(...)

Nesses dias tão estranhos / In these strange days

Fica a poeira / Dust remains

Se escondendo pelos cantos / Hiding in the corners

Esse é o nosso mundo / This is our world

O que é demais / What is too much

Nunca é o bastante / Is never enough
E a primeira vez / And the first time
É sempre a última chance / Will always be the last chance
Ninguém vê onde chegamos / Nobody sees where we got
Os assassinos estão livres / Murderers are free
Nós não estamos... / We are not...
(...)

Livres da Rocinha / Free from Rocinha

“Metodista” was the name of a Methodist Evangelical private school located in Bairro Barcelos, one the most expensive parts of Rocinha. Paizinha, one of Dona Nina’s daughters, used to teach there before moving to work at the Many Friends Institute. She was a great teacher. Apart from the love she showed towards the children, she was also very engaged with her work and was at that time finishing a university degree in Education. Once in a while, Paizinha would complain about the mentality of people living in Bairro Barcelos. She used to say: “Eles acham que são livres da Rocinha! (They think they are free from Rocinha!) Many people there used to ask me how did I feel living near Valão Street? Many people told me they were afraid to walk on our side of the favela! So silly, isn’t it?! When I used to teach at Metodista I used to hear so many silly things... You would be surprised!”

Solteiro, ainda livre! / Single, still free!

Maria Beatriz was 11 years old when I arrived in Rocinha. Very often I felt that she was a bit jealous that her mother had decided to adopt me. I liked Maria

Beatriz and I knew that she liked me too but our relationship was not always easy. Her mother used to say she was a moody girl. Maria Beatriz used to say that her mother liked me better than she liked her own daughter. One day, I went upstairs to have breakfast with Amélia and Maria Beatriz. As we started eating our bread and butter the girl started to pick on me, questioning where I had been last night, saying that I had got home very late! Amélia then told her: “Let him be, girl! Ele é livre e desempedido! (He is free and not committed!)” To which Maria Beatriz promptly replied: “He is not! Ele não é livre, a gente sabe que ele é comprometido, isso sim! (He is not free, we know that he is committed, right!)” And we all laughed. Amélia continued: “Deixa ele, ele é livre, leve e solto! Deixa assim. (Let him be, he is free, light, and loose! Leave it like that.)”

Paizinha, Armando, Menem, Francielle and I had gone out to buy a doll at Botafogo Praia Shopping Mall. On the way back we decided to hop off the bus and have dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Copacabana. Over dinner Paizinha was telling us a story about when they were all young in our beco and she remembered Armando running around as a kid, trying to play with the older children. To refer to that time, a time in the past, she said: “Eu ainda era solteira na época, ainda era livre. (I was still single then, I was still free.)” And maybe I was the only one who remarked on that statement. Paizinha looked at me and added: “But I always wanted to get married and, with God’s grace, I don’t regret it!” From Copacabana, we took one of the vans used as public transport in Rio and it took us back to Rocinha via the beautiful Niemeyer Avenue, by the sea.

One of my students at Many Friends Institute, Gustavo, was not officially married in the civil registry, nor at the church. Nonetheless, he “lived together (morava junto)” with a girl. On the morning of the 17th of July 2009, he came to help me paint a wall at my house. While we worked and the green paint dripped on our faces he complained: “I really like my wife but she wants to stick to me for the whole day! All the time! Even when I need to go to the toilet she wants to come with me, can you believe it? And if I don’t let her in, she will wait outside the door!” I laughed and kept painting and he kept complaining: “Eu gosto de me sentir livre

mas ela não entende isso! (I like to feel free but she doesn't understand that!) I am not sure what to do." And I had no advice on that case either. Some people raised questions about Gustavo's sexuality. "Do you think he is gay?" – they asked me. I did not really want to comment on the topic, although sometimes we joked about it. Maybe only Gustavo could answer that question and the answer he used to give was a clear: "No, I am not!"

Priscilla used to say: "Yes!" That she was gay, she was a woman. "Sou gay, sou mulher. Trava, travesti! E daí? (I am gay, I am a woman. Trava, travesti! So what?)" And the word *travesti* translated to English as travesti, reminded of the cover of Don Kulick's (1998) book on Brazilian transgender prostitutes. Except that Priscilla was no longer a prostitute, she said she had stopped being one about a year before I met her. To me she was simply a neighbour, a good friend. Once she invited me to visit her mother again, before the kind old lady would go back to Ceará. As we opened the beige door and stepped into the small living room of their house in Rocinha, her mother was agitated, waiting for us. She assumed that we were running after men: "Você, hein, Osmar? Livre e desempedido correndo atrás de homem, que coisa feia! (You, Osmar? Free and uncommitted running around after men, such an ugly thing to do!) I want you married and with kids, ok!" I felt a bit bad to be there at that moment. Priscilla hated to be called by her male birth name. Priscilla looked at her mother and replied half jokingly: "I am really terrible! God gives me his back when he sees me! I am the devil! Remember that soap opera in which that woman deceived even the devil? I am worse than the devil!" And Priscilla laughed like a female devil. Her mother then welcomed me properly, kissed me on the cheek, and offered me some dark coffee.

De livre e espontânea vontade / Out of free and spontaneous will

It was common for wedding ceremonies in Brazil to include an important question directed to each party getting married: "É de livre e espontânea vontade

que você aceita seu marido/esposa? (Is it out of free and spontaneous will that you accept your husband/wife?)” In fact, this was a legal requirement in order to officially register a wedding according to Article 1,535 of the Brazilian Civil Code of Laws (Brazil and Ghignone 2002: L-010.406):

“Art. 1.535. Presentes os contraentes, em pessoa ou por procurador especial, juntamente com as testemunhas e o oficial do registro, o presidente do ato, ouvida aos nubentes a afirmação de que pretendem casar por livre e espontânea vontade, declarará efetuado o casamento.”

“Art 1,525. The parties being present, in person, or via special attorney, together with the witnesses and the Register Official, the president of the act, after hearing from the parties getting married that they intend to do so out of free and spontaneous will, is going to declare the marriage concluded.”

Many years before I arrived in Rocinha, both Paizinha and Laiza had already married in the evangelical church. However, when the question of free and spontaneous will was made in relation to the payment of the tithe, they seemed to have different views on the matter. Paizinha and I went to visit Laiza at her house because the latter had been feeling ill and had recently had a fit at the Many Friends Institute, after teaching a Portuguese language class. Drinking a glass of water at Laiza’s living room, Paizinha complained about the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) because, according to her: “They keep dirtying the image of the evangelicals!” She was referring to a scandal that had happened in October 2009, which involved an accusation on national television (Rede Globo) that the UCKG had been evading taxes by using tax-free money collected from people’s tithes to buy private property, such as airplanes. I asked Paizinha her opinion on people that pay the tithe and she said that she was not paying her tithe at that moment because she did not have a full-time job yet. She said: “Quem dá o dízimo tem que ser de livre e espontânea vontade. (Those who pay the tithe have

to do it out of free and spontaneous will.) Because it is in the Bible that compulsory tithe is not worth anything!" Laiza, who was a Pentecostal Evangelical too, and with extreme fervour, was a bit surprised and said: "But there are many pastors that say it is compulsory to tithe no matter what!" Paizinha agreed with her but condemned this type of position as wrong practice; in the same way that she had already condemned the UCKG.

Deus me livre! / God free me!

Armando ended up becoming a good friend of mine. During my first weeks in Rocinha, though, I felt that he was a bit wary about my research and even my presence. Armando had a very heavy presence himself; a lot of people really respected his opinions and his words. No wonder he ended up becoming the president of the Many Friends Institute (MFI) and some sort of a boss to all the MFI volunteers. Armando was used to dealing with all sorts of people (including foreigners, aka, "gringos") that wanted to come to Rocinha for different reasons and many of whom would try to use the Many Friends Institute as a way of gaining access to the favela. I was no gringo for him but sometimes he would wonder about my background too. Armando had had some not very positive experiences with some writers and anthropologists in the past and maybe for that reason it took a while for our friendship to develop. He was always talkative and sometimes very funny. We laughed a lot together and often had very long conversations on the wooden bench that a French volunteer had made for the MFI, or else in the cosy living room of his house, close by to the MFI three-story building. Over many nights we would make dinner together and with other friends we would chat until late. During one of these nights Armando told me: "Deus me livre de morar em São Paulo! (God free me from living in São Paulo!) I love going there for tourism, but the poor really suffer in that city!" I asked him: "Why do you say that?" And he said: "The difference is that here in Rio the poor and the rich live together, near one to

the other. In São Paulo it is not like that. There, one is here and the other is far away! I think it is because of the beach... Here we have the beach and we have more mixing of people. I don't know but I think that the poor are freer here in Rio."

When my period in Rocinha was coming to an end, I was looking for souvenirs to buy and I asked Armando to come with me to the "Hippie Market" that took place at General Osório Square, in Ipanema, on Sundays. As we walked through t-shirts, dolls and paintings he remarked on the abusive prices of this so-called hippie venture. Armando then said that if he were to ever move out of Rocinha, it would have had to be because he had somehow become very rich. It would have to be a complete transformation. He said he liked to live in Rocinha and often complained about people that were born there and happened to move out. People from the favela moved to Ipanema often to sleep at work, or to become a doorman at one of the expensive buildings. He said that these people just assumed they were better off than the people they had left behind in Rocinha. He concluded by saying: "Deus me livre de morar em um prédio aqui como porteiro! (God free me from living in a building here as a doorman!) The person has no freedom! It is like Titi, she can't even make a single noise where she lives!" Titi used to be one of our neighbours in Rocinha but her husband had gotten a job as a doorman in Ipanema and, as it was common practice, the management had offered him a very small flat in the building where he worked and where they could live for free. Titi seemed very happy to live in Ipanema. Armando was not at all impressed, though.

Livre de todo mal / Free from all evil

Arriving at the MFI that morning, I meet Laiza. She was wearing a long blue skirt, a white tight-fitted t-shirt, and had an arc on top of her hair. Laiza had just taught her morning class and was alone at the MFI. She said hello and stared at me

in silence for a few seconds. She got closer to me and said: “Posso orar para você? (May I pray for you?)” I agreed to it. She asked me to sit on the French wooden bench. I did. She stayed up. She closed her eyes and put her right hand on top of my head while saying:

“Oh Lord, illuminate this life! Look after your son! He needs you, oh Lord! Senhor, livre o Moises do homem violento, do homem que engana e de todo mal! (Lord, free Moises from, the violent man, from the man that deceives and from all evil!) Amen!”

Her voice was different during the prayer, it sounded like she was on the verge of crying. When she finished, she sat down with me. I thanked her. She kept her eyes closed and asked me to come to church with her sometime. I agreed to it. She then opened her eyes and asked me if I knew anyone, any gringo, interested in Portuguese lessons: “Já te falei que estou livre para dar aulas de Português? (Have I told you that I am free to teach Portuguese language?)” I replied by saying that I would make the gringos that I knew aware of it. She smiled, thanked me and went on to prepare for her class.

On the first day of 2010, I was watching television at Amélia's. Jornal Nacional (TV Globo National News) was showing different New Year's celebrations across the country and also across different religions. At one point they showed a “pai-de-santo” (father-of-saint) who was blessing people at the beach in Copacabana and calling the names of Orixás, the Afro-Brazilian deities. He was saying: “Livre-nos de todo mal em nome de Oxalá, Oxalufã e Oxaguian! (Free us from all evil, in the name of Oxalá, Oxalufã, and Oxaguian!)” And images of white flowers being washed away into the sea followed from his blessing.

A few weeks later Amélia, Maria Beatriz and myself were to travel to Amélia's hometown, Guaraciaba do Norte. Maria Beatriz did not know her family back in Ceará yet, Amélia had not returned there for 25 years. Now that Maria

Beatriz's grandmother was sick with severe heart problems, Amélia had decided it was time to go back to Guaraciaba. I waited for a good ticket sale and in late January the three of us boarded a plane for the northeast. On Sunday at 6:30 pm we went to mass at the old church of Guaraciaba. Most people attending the mass were very formally dressed. Amélia told me she remembered her childhood, when going to mass was the biggest event of her week. Live music was played during mass. Towards the end of the hour-long celebration, the priest would pray: "Libertos e cativos são parte da igreja, de um só corpo. Jesus disse: Deus me mandou para libertar os escravos e livrai-nos de todo o mal! Caminhem em paz, livres do pecado. (Free and captive people are all part of the church, of only one body. Jesus said: God sent me to free the slaves and free us from all evil. Walk in peace, free from evil.) Amen!" And people slowly started to leave the church only to gather a few metres ahead, to gossip at the church square.

Livre para pedir / Free to ask

On the 17th of August 2009, I learned that Bishop Edir Macedo had given an interview on TV Record in which he talked about some of the accusations regarding his church "extorting" financial contributions from its followers. Bishop Edir Macedo was the founder and religious leader of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG). He was also said to own TV Record. According to Paizinha, at some point during the interview, Bishop Edir Macedo mentioned: "Eu sou livre! (I am free!)" And she retorted: "Livre... sei, livre para pedir o dinheiro dos outros, né? (Free... I know, free to ask for people's money, right?)" She shook her head in disapproval. Her hair tied in a bun did not move.

Gosto de gastar livre / I like to spend freely

“Rainha do Açaí (Açaí Queen)” was a favourite for people living near my house. Açaí is a round dark purple fruit, similar to a dark grape but harder. Originally it came from the Northern parts of Brazil but it had become very popular in Rio and other places in the country in the last few years. The 20th of May 2009 was a sunny day and many people were gathered at MFI trying to help the French volunteer architect to build a roof for the rooftop of the MFI building. She was using bamboo for the structure and the children were all excited about the new space. As we were getting tired and sweaty, Armando opened his wallet and asked some of the children to go and buy us some food at Açaí Queen. He then changed his mind and got more money out of his wallet and ordered even more food. His sister wondered: “Why spend so much on food?” Armando looked up from his chair and said: “You know I do not like mean people. And I do not like anyone controlling me either! Gosto de gastar meu dinheiro livre! (I like to spend my money freely!)” The children soon returned, loaded down with snacks, sweet juices and delicious smoothies.

Livre do preceito / Free from precept

I heard three loud claps outside my house. It could only be Auro, it was always Auro clapping that way! I drew back my flowery curtain and there he was, waiting to come in, dressed head to toe in white. He dropped his backpack in a corner and washed his hands in the kitchen sink. Then he sat on my bed. “Everything ok, dear?” – I asked him. He replied: “Oh, darling... I am following this precept (preceito) for Ramatis. I am not eating any meat nor having any type of sex, any type at all! But I do like to follow the precept before the meetings, you know? I like it. Now, some people follow the precept but they are suffering and already thinking about the future, about when, where, with whom, in what position they are going to have sex again! Já querendo se ver livre do preceito, pode? (Already looking forward to being free from the precept, do you believe it?)

In that case, I think that the precept was already voided, right! These people... Oh, dear!" Auro stayed for a while longer, gave me some lotus incense and then left for the Spiritual House of Ramatis in the neighbourhood of Tijuca. He would take two busses to get there and another two to get back.

Consciência livre / Free conscience

Apart from being one of my best students, Mazinho was also very good at his work as a sales person at Rio Sul Shopping Mall, near Copacabana. He worked in a big shop selling toys, all sorts of toys and games. Mazinho used to like the wealthy old ladies. With a good sales record, Mazinho would get a bonus towards the end of the month. His salary was heavily dependent on the sales commission he would get according to his sales figures for each month. One evening, I met Mazinho near Valão Street and we talked about toys again. He told me: "I am so angry at my manager! He gave me my sales figures for last month and I am sure the numbers are wrong! I sold many more toys than he is saying, I am sure about that. And I fought with him, of course I did! And you know what? Se quiser pode até me mandar embora porque minha consciência está livre! (If he wants, he can even give me the sack because my conscience is free!)"

Ao ar livre / Al fresco

"Hello, Marcus?" – I said. "Hello, is that Moises?" – he said. I replied: "Yes, Moises speaking! Are you coming soon?" He said: "I'm in a taxi crossing the tunnel now, I will be in Rocinha in 10 minutes, ok?" I hung up the phone. Marcus was coming from the International Airport of Rio de Janeiro. He was fluent in English and studied "Languages and Literature" at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio (PUC-RIO). Marcus was born in Rocinha and had moved out a few years after he

got his job with London Air. Then he moved back in again, apparently because he missed his friends in Rocinha. However, he had still kept the flat he had bought in Jacarepaguá for his family to live in. Marcus arrived some 15 minutes after my phone call. We met in Boiadeiro Plaza, he hugged me, and then Auro, who had introduced me to Marcus a couple of months previously. Auro and Marcus had grown up together and were best friends. "Like sisters", they used to say. On the evening of the 8th of November 2009, the three of us were listening to a wonderful CD by Maria Bethânia in Marcus' living room. Marcus gathered the cups in which we had had British tea and took them to the kitchen. On his way back, he stopped near the staircase leading up to his bedroom. Marcus looked serious and also sad. He had something to announce: "People, I am preparing myself to move out of Rocinha once and for all. I need to do it, it is time to go!" I was a bit surprised then. I thought Marcus lived in Rocinha because he liked it there, out of love. "Why? What's changed?" – I asked him. That took us towards a long and heated conversation about life in Rocinha. He said: "Do you really want to know what bothers me about the favela? So many things... Por exemplo, incomoda olhar as pessoas comendo nas mesas ao ar livre. (For example, it bothers me to look at people eating on tables al fresco. They eat like animals. And do you know what? To throw a birthday party for a child on the street is just not right, it cannot be right. I do not even like to look at those scenes. Everybody should have a proper house and hold their parties at home." I questioned him by saying that there could be different ways of living life and maybe people were not as bothered by these things as Marcus himself was? He replied: "I know, it could be, but it would be wrong for me to continue living here. Do you understand it? That would be a silly attachment to my childhood. This childhood that I cannot leave behind! Just wrong." Auro seemed divided on the matter. And I, who had never realized how much of a problem eating al fresco could be for someone, had some trouble getting to sleep that night. I kept thinking about the town, the shanty, and the town.

Correndo livre / Running free

There was only one door to the outside of my house, and there was only one window that I could open to get some fresh air too. The neighbouring buildings were erected too close to mine and they had blocked all the other windows. It was actually possible to kind of open those other windows but not much air would come in through them. More likely, rats would scurry through the windows in search of food. I therefore kept this one window open at all times, and the door open as often as possible. The air coming through the alleyway would cool me down a bit and avoid mould and damp from taking over the walls of my house. One day, Amélia, Auro and I were on the inside of a very narrow veranda that I had in front of my house. Suddenly, a group of several kids passed running, shouting, and laughing all the way down the front alleyway. Amélia looked at them and said: “Eita, gente... Esses menino correndo livre por ai! (Goodness, guys... These children running free around there!) Look at what they are doing!!!” And we looked with curiosity. They were playing with the corpse of a huge black rat, carrying it by its tail. Auro just laughed and said: “Oh, I used to do that a lot... I used to kill rats by the tail! Quando criança eu era mais livre que esses meninos! (When I was a child I was freer than these children!) You would not even believe it!” It was not only my own childhood that was filled with scenes of freedom.

Muito livre / Very free

One of the photography instructors for the PAC course was a neighbour of mine. Curly-haired Renato was always very kind to me. I was chatting to Armando on the steps in front of Dona Nina's house one afternoon when Renato saw us and stopped for while. Armando asked him about his cousins-in-law, how were they doing? Renato smiled showing his very white teeth. “Those girls are hard work! You know!!!” – he said. Armando replied: “That is why I am asking, they are missing too many classes at MFI!” Renato said: “They are terrible! Maria Flor and

her sister, for example, they spend the whole night wandering around the streets of Rocinha. Hoje em dia as crianças são muito livres, não têm limites! (Nowadays, kids are very free; they have no limits!) When I was a child, at 8:00PM we had to be in bed and sleeping! Partly because, you know, it was more dangerous to be out at night. But also because our parents were more strict and they used to enforce more rules and required more respect from us too!” Armando agreed and after some silence he said: “But I always managed to escape from my parent’s rules!”

On the 23rd of July 2009, I was talking to Armando again. This time at Carmélia’s house. Carmélia was making us dinner, drinking beer, and listening to samba music. Her kitchen was taken by this mixed smell of food and cigarette smoke. Carmélia asked if Renata would not come for dinner. Armando said he was expecting her to come because she had quit her job now. He remarked: “Nossa, a Renata está muito livre agora! (Wow, Renata is very free now!) Have you seen her? She even painted her nails bright red again and put her nose piercing back on!” Carmélia was impressed.

A few days earlier, on the 14th of July 2009, Renata had found the door of my house opened and surprised me while I was writing in bed. She appeared through my door jumping up and down: “Consegui! Consegui!! Estou desempregada!!! Livre!!! Liberdade!!! Viva!!!! (I have managed! I have managed!! I am unemployed!!! Free!!! Freedom!!! Yay!!!!)” For a while, I could not really understand what was going on. She looked so happy. I guess that for me it was hard to understand what she was saying because I assumed that being unemployed should not normally coexist with the happiness that Renata showed in her eyes. Her eyes were dancing. She was delighted at her unemployment because she had hated her job as a waitress at Hotel International, yet had not wanted to quit, because if she did she would lose her employee benefits.

Tempo livre / Free time

Towards the end of February 2010, I broke one of my teeth eating açaí smoothie mixed with jujuba, a type of sweet that when mixed with the ice in the smoothie turned really hard and sticky. One of those sweets got stuck in an old filling and that was it, it was the dentist's waiting room for me. I waited for my dental assessment in a crowded room in a clinic just across from the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. After quite a while, a dentist with short black hair got me on her chair. Mirror in and mirror out of my mouth, she started asking me about my life. We kept talking and I ended up telling her about my research. She got really interested in the topic. She said: "I am very interested in this thing! Can I ask you a question? There is something about Rocinha that I do not understand. You know what? People no longer want to work! Sério, preferem ficar sem trabalho para ter mais tempo livre! (Seriously, they prefer not to have a job so they can have more free time!) It is a big problem for us here at the clinic. We need cleaners, secretaries, people to work in general, but nobody stays long-term. People from Rocinha prefer "bico" (temporary, informal work) to fixed long-term employment! I really want to read your thesis, ok?" And with the drill inside my mouth, I tried to smile, worried about the use that some people could make out of my thesis.

I met Renata at MFI, she was one of the students learning English there. At that time, Renata had not quit her job at Hotel International yet. She was very busy. Renata lived on the third floor of a big corner building on Boiadeiro Street. She used to like her place a lot. The only problem was the view from her window; the big open-air dump was just across the road from her building. At that time, Renata was sharing the place with two other girls, both volunteers at MFI. They both helped with the monthly rent. However, that day Renata was complaining about one of her flatmates: "Armando, eu gosto dela! Mas no meu único tempo livre para usar a internet ela sempre fica no computador! (Armando, I like her! But during the only free time I have to use the internet, she is always on the computer!)" Armando replied: "Why don't you just talk to her?" Renata said: "She should realize

it by now! Don't you think? Mas também a menina não tem culpa que eu quase não tenho tempo livre, né? (But also it is not the girl's fault that I hardly have any free time, right?) It is ok."

A few months later a mother walked into MFI. The woman appeared agitated, her grey hair all over the place. She wanted to talk to Armando. She came to ask him if he could put her daughter into a class to study something, anything: it did not matter what. Armando was a bit puzzled: "Why don't you sit down and I will get you a glass of water first?" And so the woman used both hands to pull her hair backwards and sat down. Armando asked her: "So, tell me again? How can I help you? What is wrong?" The woman replied with a trembling voice: "My daughter, she is driving me crazy! Ela tá com muito tempo livre, sabe? (She has too much free time on her hands, you know?) She is always out on the streets learning how to tell lies, each day a bigger lie. She is never at home, always running around the hill! She needs to get herself busy, you see? You need to help me!!!" The clear desperation of the woman in front of me reminded me that to be free might not be always desirable.

Sentir-se livre / To feel free

Ricky was still a teenager when I moved to Rocinha. He had a marked jaw and was tall and lean, with a slightly muscular tanned body that was always on display as he walked around Rocinha wearing football shorts, a golden chain around his neck, and nothing else. He kept his chest closely shaved and, as most teenagers in Rocinha, had his nails done and his hair always perfectly cut. Ricky was very behind in school for his age, he had failed so many years that he had become the object of jokes among his friends. He did not seem bothered by it, though. I could not really tell if and how much Ricky was involved in drug trafficking. "Fake whiskey makes you go out of your mind! A lot of people prefer fake whiskey to the real thing!" – Ricky told me as we walked down to the beach.

He loved the beach and sometimes he would stop by my house to check if I would like to come with him. That day was so warm, I was happy to join him when he showed up. We arrived at São Conrado beach, near Hotel International, and both walked straight into the water. We went further and further into the sea until we were both covered by the refreshing emerald green water. I could not see Ricky anymore. He suddenly reappeared right in front of me with a happy face. “Muito bom o mar, me sinto livre como um pássaro quando estou na água! (The sea is great, I feel free like a bird when I am in the water!)”

July was usually the peak of winter in Brazil. But on the 8th of August 2009, it was so warm in Rio that it was hard to be indoors. People were out, chatting on the alleyways. Some had just their heads sticking out of their windows. I met Dona Ninha in front of her house. She confessed to me: “Moises, I am an evangelical woman, you know that. But I must say that I do not like evangelical clothes at all... I really do not! They are very tight around the neck and too long on the arms. Not for me. Eu gosto de me sentir livre! (I like to feel free!)” And the electricity went off. The electricity would go off many times over the summer months to come. “Light”, the electricity company in Rio, blamed the power failures on the people, for illegally connecting all sorts of fans, fridges, and air conditioners to the network and therefore overcharging the system during hot days. People blamed “Light” for discriminating against the favelas, providing them with a differentiated third class service. Gringos coming to Rocinha on the frequent “favela-tours” liked to take numerous pictures of the poles in the favela covered in electric wires. The dwellers were amused at the gringos photographing the nests of wires, and gossiped about them while waiting in the dark for “Light” to come and fix the power.

The 6th of February 2010. Perla was a singer. I met her for the first time at Carmélia’s house, in Rocinha. Perla lived in a neighbourhood called Abolição (Abolition), in the North Zone of Rio. Her “terreiro de Candomblé” (Candomblé house) was also located in that same neighbourhood. Candomblé was one of the so-called “Afro-Brazilian” religions, known worldwide largely through the photographs and writings of Pierre Verger (1980). For a while I thought about

what it meant for a house with “Afro-Brazilian” roots to be located in a place called Abolição. Perla first welcomed me to her Candomblé house for a party, which was organised by her pai-de-santo (father-of-saint) in homage to an Orixá (a divinity, a saint) called Oxalá. During the party, we talked about Perla’s conversion from Buddhism to Candomblé and her experiences during the first years of initiation into her new religion. In November 2009, I looked again into some Buddhist conceptions of freedom and was reminded of how self-mastery was very important for people to be free according to Buddhist teachings. “As pessoas se sentem muito livres no Candomblé, mas os limites são muito severos! (People feel very free in Candomblé but the limits are very strict!) More strict than most people realise.” – Perla once told me. One of her irmãs-de-santo (sisters-of-saint) agreed and said: “Yes, it is really hard work! In my next life, I want to come back to Earth as an evangelical woman!” And she laughed a lot. The party lasted throughout the night with drums, sweat, possessions, dance, faith, and a lot of food.

Livre mas totalmente dominado / Free but totally dominated

As part of the PAC photography course, we had a few events taking place at Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo (PPC), a famous favela located in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro between Copacabana and Ipanema. When our group went to PPC in July 2009, that favela was still under the control of a trafficking faction called Comando Vermelho – CV (or the Red Command). The first leaders of Comando Vermelho had spent time in jail during the 1970s together with left wing (red) revolutionaries imprisoned during the Brazilian dictatorship (Ludemir 2002). My friend Rose never mentioned Ludemir’s (2002) work to me, though. Nevertheless, she had a profound knowledge about Comando Vermelho. She was born and raised in PPC and told me that most of her family members had belonged to the faction. Rose was in her 30’s and had a beautiful reddish brown skin. She used to talk with an amazing power and beauty in her deep voice. During our visit to PPG, I talked to

Rose about my research on freedom and she was interested in it. As we walked down a steep road that led us out of the favela, she told me: “for me, favela is the place where you can be whatever you want! I have done everything in this life myself. I have even participated in armed hold ups in Ipanema!” There was a small pause before she carried on: “I am lucky that I never ended up in jail! Jail sucks, some people get in there and never leave. Do you get the trick?” And she said sadly: “A friend of mine was caught and went to jail, there his drug addiction only got worse. Hoje ele está livre mas totalmente dominado pelas drogas. Outros entram lá e pegam HIV na cadeia mesmo, quando saem de lá nunca mais estarão livres do virus! (Nowadays he is free but totally dominated by the drugs. Others get in there and catch HIV in the jail itself, when they get out of there they will never again be free from the virus!)” We kept walking downhill while she kept talking: “I was caught by the police once, you know? It was in a hold-up with other guys and I was on my own motorcycle. I was armed. We were running from the police and my friends managed to escape, others made it back to the hillside. But I fell off the motorcycle and the police caught me. It was horrible, as I was lying on the floor I could see them coming to catch me but the pain on my leg was such that I could not run away! At least, I am glad I managed to get away without going to jail. I did spend some nights at the police station but that was it. In fact, it was then that I realised the power of forgiveness. Teve um momento em que eu já sabia que ia sair da cadeia, ia ficar livre. Mesmo assim, estava me sentindo horrível. Foi só quando eu olhei no olho da minha vítima e pedi perdão que eu fui me sentir melhor! (At a certain point I already knew that I would get out of the cell and be free. Even then, I was feeling horrible. It was only when I looked into my victim’s eyes and asked for forgiveness that I came to feel better!)”

Mais livres / Freer

Armando was talking to me in front of my house, on the 4th of February 2010. He was in the alleyway and I was inside my little mosaic-patterned veranda. I looked up and saw Harley, my landlord, walking up the alleyway. He got close to us and had to wait for Armando to move out of the way so that he could get past. Meanwhile, Harley turned to us and said: “Izabel, Maria Clara and the other girls are in Muzema today. They like it there!” Izabel and Maria Clara were daughters of my front door neighbour, Daiana. They were around 13 and 7 years old respectively. Diana, their mother, was no taller than Izabel and did not look much older either. Muzema was the name of the neighbourhood in the West Zone of Rio where Harley had bought a plot of land and recently built a new house to which he moved when he left Rocinha. Armando slowly got out of Harley’s way and replied as Harley passed by: “As meninas gostam porque lá tem mais espaço, ficam mais livre, né? (The girls like it there because there is more space; they are freer, right?)” Harley, a couple of steps away by then, confirmed with his right arm lifted up: “That’s right!”

On the 26th of April 2009, I met Priscilla drinking beer at the so-called Beco da TELERJ (TELERJ alleyway). According to Priscilla, this alleyway had got its name from the state owned telephone company station that used to operate there. That was before many of the public companies were privatised in Brazil during the 1990’s, including those in the telecommunications sector. Hence, if TELERJ as a company died in 1998, its name remained alive in Rocinha. What I found more exciting about Beco da TELERJ, though, was that it had one of the highest concentrations of bars in Rocinha. I was going to buy food in Via Ápia that evening when I heard the distinct voice of Priscilla calling my name. That alleyway was one of her favourite spots to hang out in Rocinha. I was very happy to see her and stopped to chat. I greeted Kadu and his friend named Charles. I had met Kadu before with Priscilla. I sat down and the four of us chatted for a long time listening to forró, a music style more typical from the Brazilian northeast. Kadu sipped some more beer and said: “Ah, I really wanted to go somewhere today! I really feel like getting out of Rocinha tonight... Eu me sinto mais livre quando eu saio fora da Rocinha, as pessoas não me conhecem fora daqui! (I feel freer when I go out of

Rocinha, people don't know me outside of here!) Here I know everyone already!" Once in a while some interesting man would pass by us, temporarily interrupting the conversation. Priscilla would try to call the guy's attention somehow, sometimes more successfully than others. Then back to the conversation again and we were talking about silicone implants. Priscilla told me that a lot of transvestites think it is glamorous to have huge boobs. She said: "Elas acham que ter silicone é close, é ter a liberdade de ser mulher! (They believe that to have silicone implants is cool, it is like having the freedom to be a woman!) I don't want fucking silicone boobs! I prefer my little hormone boobs and I use my special bra when I want something bigger. Eu me sinto mais livre assim. Tenho peito só quando eu quero! (I feel freer like that. I only have boobs when I want them!)" And we ended up staying in Beco da TELERJ until very late, too late for us to have time to actually go out to any other place before sunrise.

Verdadeiramente livre / Truly free

"Morning, Amélia! Everything all right? Have you had breakfast yet?" – I said after climbing the stairs through the very narrow passage that led into Amélia's house. "Come in, Moises!" – She replied. And I found her watching television sitting on an old, beige, single person sofa that she used to keep in front of a 29-inch television screen, just beside her small dinner table. Until recently she had had no table at home and we would hold our dishes on our hands or laps while having our meals. But one of her friends had decided to move back to Ceará and had left a nice little round dinner table behind. I walked to the small kitchen, grabbed an orange, and took a seat at the table next to Amélia. She was drinking coffee and watching an advertisement on TV Globo proclaiming: "O cidadão tem direito a educação, só quem estuda é verdadeiramente livre! (The citizen has a right to education; only those who study are truly free!)" And I felt that TV Globo was using these narratives of citizenship, education and freedom in a very top-down manner. I could not help but to look at Amélia, whom I knew could not write

much and sometimes asked me for help to read and write things for her. She looked back at me and smiled with her black eyes down into her cup of milk with bitter coffee.

Livre para escolher / Free to choose

Paizinha told me on the 9th of March 2010:

“Deus nem liga para os ateus. Acredite em Deus se quiser, Moises! Você é livre para escolher. Mas tem uma coisa, tem que escolher sem ver!”

“God does not care about atheists. You believe in God if you want to, Moises! You are free to choose. But just one thing, you must choose without seeing!”

Mente livre / Free mind

Auro visited me and told me more about the spiritual centre that he frequented, the House of Ramatis. He said that the great part of their work is related to charitable activities. For example, he explained, in Ramatis they use a technique of having those in need of care sit on a chair and those with more developed spirituality (aka “spiritual mediums”) put their hands near that person in need and will use their own energy for the benefit of the person seated. He said: “Last week we had an extreme case, though. There was a woman that came to us because spirits of the shadows had been persecuting her. She had no peace, this woman! So we had to resort to a special procedure called “gaiola energética (cage of energy)”. The mediums surrounded the woman and fenced off all the negative

energies that were attacking her. Assim, a mente da pessoa fica livre de qualquer influência externa! (In this way, the person's mind becomes free of all external influence!) But we only do that in very extreme cases. It is dangerous!"

On the 19th of August 2009, the PAC photography group had one of their last meetings. It was a big meeting that took place at the headquarters of the ONG Observatório de Favelas (the NGO Favela Observatory) in a favela in the North Zone of Rio called Maré. Rose was present at that meeting and took the lead when it came to present the work that the group from PPC had produced during the last months. They had taken many pictures in the form of portraits of people that lived in PPC. Pictures were projected on a big white wall while Rose narrated them. At some point she said: "And this is Mr Carlos, he is from the slavery times. É de uma família de escravos e no Pavão eles encontraram a liberdade! Lá eles se tornaram livres! (He is from a family of slaves and in PPC they found freedom! There they became free!) There was something emotional in the way that Rose was conducting the presentation. Another picture flashed on the wall of the dark room. It showed a woman on a wheelchair and Rose narrated: "Her name is Márcia. She suffers from severe osteoporosis and, as you can see, lives in a wheelchair. Remember that in the favela there are staircases everywhere. How does Márcia live? Mas conversando com ela, apesar das dificuldades, ela disse que a mente dela ainda passeia livre pelos becos da favela! (But talking to her she said that, beyond the difficulties, her mind still strolls free on the alleyways of the shantytown!) And this is something I wanted to say, there are difficulties living in a favela! But we are used to overcoming difficulties, we are strong and we are alive, and we will not give up!" Rose got more emotional. Her deep voice got very shaken towards the end of the presentation. People in the room started to clap and when they turned the lights back on, many eyes were filled with tears.

Tão livre / So free, as free

Armando, Gustavo, James and I came back from the beach around 7:00 PM that day. It had been an amazing day of much sea and fun. We had also played sand volleyball in the afternoon. On the way back we cracked jokes all the time, most of them had some sexual content. A lot of them had to do with teasing Gustavo about his sexuality. Armando would see a guy with a big bulge on his trunks, walking down on his way to the beach and as soon as the guy would pass by us Armando would say something like: "Is that big enough for you, Gustavo?" He would reply: "Big enough? That was huge!" And we would all laugh, including Gustavo. "But I am not interested, thanks!" – Gustavo would add. Armando then said: "Você nunca foi tão livre, hein, Gustavo? (You were never as free, right, Gustavo?) And Gustavo nodded and laughed. As we got to the entrance of Valão Street, I tried to make some fun. I suggested that Gustavo should help James – an English volunteer at MFI – to have a shower and wash away all the sand from his body. Armando remarked, kind of joking too: "You are very naughty, Moises! Just because we've got back to Rocinha you think that you can say whatever you want? Behave!" We all laughed and Gustavo replied: "Ué! Aqui ele se sente em casa, se sente livre! (Hey! Here he feels at home, he feels free!)" And I smiled.

One evening at MFI, some of the older students mentioned that Amsterdam must be really cool with drugs legalised. Armando commented: "Aqui na Rocinha isso é tão livre quanto lá! (Rocinha is as free for that as over there!) But when I say this, Betje gets really angry at the comparison because all the other things are so different, the whole situation is so different, she tells me." Betje was one of Armando's best friends. She was one of the first volunteers to have helped at MFI and she would come back to Brazil from the Netherlands almost every year to spend time with Armando and his sister in Rocinha.

Natanael arrived early at the PAC photography course on the 4th of August 2009. He took his glasses off to clean the lenses on his pale yellow shirt and said: "Have you seen that Brazil is deporting some illegal migrants?" He seemed surprised. He continued: "Gringos being deported now? O Brasil é tão livre para essas coisas! (Brazil is so free for these things!) What is happening?"

Esse país é livre / This country is free

On the 8th of March 2010, President Lula visited Rocinha to inaugurate the new sports centre that had just been built beside the Reinaldo de Lamare building in Rocinha. Bezerra, Amélia's husband, was employed by PAC to work as a bricklayer in the construction of the sports facilities. It was a big day; at the time, Lula was the first president ever to have visited Rocinha. Amélia and I got up early to get a special t-shirt, the required uniform for the population to wear to have access to the event. Ricky was working for the local politician that was distributing these propaganda t-shirts. We got toasted under the hottest sun for a long time while we waited for Lula to arrive at the sports centre. And we waited and waited. Some people left to go back home and eat something. Well after lunchtime, the President arrived. People clapped. He had Dilma Rousseff with him too. Towards the end of 2010 we would come to know that Dilma would be the next President of Brazil, replacing Lula from the 1st of January 2011. At the end of Lula's visit and after many politicians had already spoken to the public, President Lula read a message on a banner that a PAC bricklayer was carrying around with him. It was a message saying that the guy would really like to play football with the President. Lula told him on the microphone that they would arrange a match someday. Then the President remarked that many people would complain that he liked to mix with the poor people, that he did not even had a university degree himself, that he was giving away too much national money to the benefit of the poor classes in Brazil. Then Lula angrily stated: "Não adianta as pessoas acharem ruim, falar de mim, porque esse país é livre! (It is useless for people not to like it, bad-mouth me, because this country is free!)" And people cheered. Afterwards, Lula and the other politicians left in expensive bulletproof black cars with air-conditioning and a strong security team surrounding them. We left on foot, all toasted after hours standing under a brutal shining sun, and wearing our sweaty t-shirts marked with

the names of numerous politicians. As we walked out of the sports centre, the Brazilian National Anthem was being played out loud:

Ouviram do Ipiranga as margens plácidas / It was heard from the placid
banks of Ipiranga
De um povo heróico o brado retumbante / the resounding cry of a heroic
people
E o sol da liberdade, em raios fúlgidos, / and the sun of freedom, in shining
rays
Brilhou no céu da pátria nesse instante. / shone in our patria's skies at that
moment.

Se o penhor dessa igualdade / If the assurance of this equality
Conseguimos conquistar com braço forte, / We managed to conquer with
strong arms
Em teu seio, ó liberdade, / In your bosom, oh freedom
Desafia o nosso peito a própria morte / Our chest defies death itself

(...)

Letra / Lyrics:

Joaquim Osório Duque Estrada

Música / Music:

Francisco Manoel da Silva

Chapter 5: Livre-arbítrio / Free will

Priberam Dictionary of Portuguese Language:

Livre-arbítrio

s. m. / sb. masc.

1. Faculdade da vontade para se determinar. / Faculty of the will of self-determination.

The samba of Livre-arbítrio / Free will:

Isso se chama livre-arbítrio / This is called free will

Livre-arbítrio é escravidão / Free will is slavery

Deixa você com o seu livre-arbítrio / I will leave you with your free will

Por causa do livre-arbítrio / Because of free will

O diabo é parte do seu livre-arbítrio / The devil is part of your free will

Crente tem livre-arbítrio muito restrito / Evangelicals have their free will very restricted

Eu gosto é de livre-arbítrio / What I like is free will

O livre-arbítrio dos outros gera carma / Other people's free will generates karma

Exu não tem livre-arbítrio / Exu has no free will

Batizar se a pessoa tiver o livre-arbítrio / Baptise if the person has the free will

Livre-arbítrio e liberdade / Free will and freedom

The parade of Livre-arbítrio / Free will:

Isso se chama livre-arbítrio / This is called free will

Thursday morning, the 6th of August 2009 and I was teaching Basic English at MFI once again. After class, some of my students, Armando, Paizinha and myself spent some time chatting as usual. Paizinha had been teaching Portuguese to some children that morning. I asked about her plans for the weekend and she said that she was not expecting to go out but that on Sunday she had to teach in the “Sunday School”, for her church. I asked more about it, wondering what was taught in those Sunday classes and she said: “muita coisa, acho que vamos ter uma lição sobre livre-arbítrio, por exemplo! (a lot of things, I think that we will have a lesson on free will, for example!) It is at Sunday school that we learn that many people who claim to be evangelicals do not really know the word of God properly. Let me tell you, something that a lot of people do not understand: “Deus não quer destruir o diabo. Deus quer que você escolha a Ele no lugar do diabo, e por amor. Isso se chama livre-arbítrio. (God does not want to destroy the devil. God wants that you choose Him over the devil, out of love. This is called free will.)”

Livre-arbítrio é escravidão / Free will is slavery

My days were often very busy in Rocinha. I used to feel that a big difference between living in my hometown and living in Rocinha was that if I wanted to hang out with people in Goiânia I had to look for them, it usually had to be something planned in advance. In Rocinha, I felt that it was almost the contrary. If I wanted to

be alone in my house for some reason, I had to plan to be alone. That evening Auro came to my house to invite me to eat a burger with him. It was around 7:30pm on a Monday in July 2009. I was hungry myself, so it was nice to go out and eat something and talk to Auro. He wanted to go to this burger and juice place on Boiadeiro Street, which he liked very much. We got a table near the wall where the menu and prices were written down: 3 Brazilian reais for a regular burger and 2 Brazilian reais for a big glass of juice. Auro was on his second burger and I was drinking my second fruit smoothie (vitamina) when he started talking about the religious place he frequented, the House of Ramatis. He was saying how serious they were with their spiritual work and that he admired that. Then, after one more bite, he said out loud: “Conhecei a verdade e a verdade vos libertará! (Know the truth, and the truth will set you free!)” I was a bit surprised to hear that phrase then and asked him why he had said that. He said he liked this saying. He continued: “Isso está no Evangelho [João 8:32]. As pessoas querem muita liberdade mas livre-arbítrio é escravidão! Liberdade mesmo é fazer a escolha certa, baseada em conhecimento e muita doutrina. (This is in the Scriptures [John 8:32]. People want too much freedom but free will is slavery! Proper freedom is to make the right choice, based on knowledge and a lot of doctrine.)” We talked a bit more as he noticed I was trying to understand his argument about free will. We finished our food and from there we called Marcus. We then met him and walked to Mazinho’s house, the three of us together.

Deixa você com o seu livre-arbítrio / I will leave you to your free will

On the 19th of December 2009, Auro and I had gone for some pizza at a market called Supermarket and on the way back we met Peterson talking to a group of people that I did not know. He was sitting on the ground of an alleyway behind Valão Street, where there was a lanhouse (internet café). That alleyway

was used as a meeting point for friends that lived in different parts of Rocinha. Auro asked how Peterson was doing and if he was feeling better, working and so on. Peterson replied that he was doing great, very well and excited. He said: “Man, I have decided to attend these rituals in Mato Alto! I want to become a proper Evil Wizard.” I was more surprised than Auro, perhaps. Peterson looked at me and continued: ‘I returned to Mato Alto the other day and I managed to be possessed by “Exu da Morte (Exu of Death)”, now I am going to do everything I can to spend four days and nights at a cemetery! And I would really love to be able to film the whole thing, it would be awesome.’ Auro was clearly not impressed. His only remark was: “Deixa você com o seu livre-arbítrio. Vou respeitar, mas um dia você será cobrado! (I will leave you to your free will. I will respect it, but some day you will have to answer for this!)” Auro then told me he wanted to leave, although I would have liked to stay and chat a lot more with Peterson.

Por causa do livre-arbítrio / Because of free will

I met Auro near my house that morning. We had arranged to walk to Supermarket, the market recently opened in São Conrado. On the way down, Auro pointed to different men that he had had affairs with. Then he remembered that he had something to tell me. He contracted his forehead and put the tips of his fingers in front of his mouth as if telling me that he was shocked. He said that he had just heard some hot gossip about Peterson. I asked him what was it? He said: “Mona! É muito babado! (Darling, it is hot, hot gossip!)” I was very curious but he said he would only tell me once we reached the market. Getting there, we sat and ordered some fresh orange juice first. Auro then finally told me that he had heard that Peterson was sleeping around with boys from the church, the UCKG. But what Auro found more surprising, he said, was that Peterson had acquired a reputation in the church already: “Ele já tá com fama de pegador na Universal. Porque anda pegando os irmãos. Ele é tarado por crente! (He has already gained a name at the

Universal Church. Because he has been sleeping around with his church brothers. He is crazy for evangelical boys!)" I laughed a little and Auro told me off, he said that it was a serious matter! He commented: "E eles falam que ele pode por causa do livre-arbítrio. Mas sabe o que não suporto nesse povo? É que só eles tem livre-arbítrio, os outros não? Controlam a vida de todo mundo mas eles podem? (And they say that he can do it because of his free will. But do you know something that I do not stand about these people? Only they have free will and not the others? They control everybody's life but they can do whatever they want?)"

O diabo é parte do seu livre-arbítrio / The devil is part of your free will

I went to MFI in the morning and met Laiza and Armando at work there. I wanted to let them know that in the evening I was due to go to a "Magia Negra (Evil Magic)" ritual somewhere in a shantytown on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. Armando told me to be careful; he was really concerned about my safety. He wondered with whom would I go. I said I would go with Samira, Peterson and a group of people that he did not really know. Laiza was horrified at the idea, I could tell just by looking at her eyes. She sat down on a bench and pulled her long skirt down over her knees. Then she looked back at me and said she had something serious to tell me: she had heard that evil spirits were threatening Peterson with death. I was very curious to hear more. Laiza then said that she would not be able to tell me more details, but that the only way she saw for Peterson to escape from death was to go back to church. I told her that he had been going to UCKG often! She then said that going to UCKG would not help him to win this case because his true calling was not at the UCKG. In her own words: "Mas o chamado dele mesmo não está na Universal, está na igreja que ele frequentava, onde ele foi criado na Raiz! (But his true calling is not at UCKG, it is in the church where he used to go before, the church in which he was raised in Raiz!)" I got a bit worried about Peterson after this conversation but soon dismissed my concerns, thinking that

perhaps Laiza was a bit crazy, perhaps she was making things up. Francielle arrived at MFI just as I was about to leave. I told her I was going out that night to this place called Mato Alto for an “Evil Magic” ritual. I felt like talking to people about it because I felt worried about it myself. Laiza told me that if I was going there for my research then I would be wasting my time because there would be no freedom at all there. Francielle agreed and asked me not to go. She said: “Lá não tem liberdade nenhuma, vai fazer o que lá? (There is no freedom at all there, what are you going to do there?)” Paizinha, who had just heard about my evening plans after coming from a classroom upstairs, said unconcernedly that if I wanted to go I should go. We were all somewhat surprised at her attitude. Paizinha explained: “Até escolher adorar o diabo é parte do seu livre-arbítrio, Moises. (Even to choose to worship the devil is part of your free will, Moises.)” And she peacefully walked by me and grabbed some water. Armando looked at Laiza who looked at Francielle who looked at me.

Crente tem livre-arbítrio muito restrito / Evangelicals have their free will very restricted

Although I was friends with both Marcus and Auro, it was more often the case that I would go to Marcus’s house to meet him and that Auro would come to my house to meet me. That evening, though, both Marcus and Auro had come to visit me in my house at once. As I hugged them to welcome them into my house, I could tell that both were wearing nice fresh colognes. Because I basically spent all my time while at home in the only room with a window, I offered them my bed as a seat. Marcus took the offer and Auro knelt on the floor with his elbows on the bed. They asked me how I was doing and I told them I had been going to a lot of different evangelical churches with different people. Marcus told me something that Auro had already told me: that he (Marcus) had been born into a family of very conservative evangelicals. Marcus said: “Mas, sabe, eu não era feliz sendo

evangélico. Sei lá, acho que crente tem livre-arbítrio muito restrito! (But you know what? I was not happy being an evangelical. I don't know, but I think that evangelicals have their free will very restricted!)" Auro looked at him, started swinging his indicator finger back and forth and said: "Yeah, but you still have some things that are very related to your evangelical background. This business of looking for love in men, for example. Now, I am not like that, darling! I know how to just cum nicely and leave!"

Eu gosto é de livre-arbítrio / What I like is free will

As soon as our English class was finished on the 20th of October 2009, Mazinho and I met Auro talking to Armando downstairs at the entrance of MFI. Auro was standing near the bookshelves and Armando was sitting behind his desk. Auro hugged me and hugged Mazinho. These hugs followed what Auro said to be the traditional way for people to greet others when possessed by a spirit in Afro-Brazilian religions. He touched his left side shoulder on my right side shoulder first and then the other way around. Mazinho laughed. Mazinho used to laugh a lot and sometimes when he hugged Auro he laughed and he pretended to be possessed by some spirit. The conversation quite naturally followed from that towards the issue of "macumba". Auro and I were talking about "fortune telling" and how we would like to have a reading done, as it was common practice in Candomblé, and also in Umbanda. Mazinho would often get his readings done by the lady in Rocinha who he called his "mother-of-saint", who looked after Mazinho's spiritual life in his religion (Umbanda). Armando on the other hand said: "Eu não gosto de nada que quer saber sobre o meu futuro! Eu gosto é de livre-arbítrio, não acredito nessa coisa de destino. (I don't like anything that wants to know about my future! What I like is free will, I don't believe in such a thing as destiny.)" Auro looked at him in a rather sceptical and annoyed way. He said: "Well, that's up to you, Armando!"

O livre-arbítrio dos outros gera carma / Other people's free will generates karma

A couple of days before the end of 2009, Auro talked to me about Peterson once again. It seemed to me that Auro was genuinely worried about Peterson. After we finished having a cup of coffee at Dona Amélia's house, we went downstairs to my house and he said that he had met Peterson last night. Peterson was said to be alone and to have kept his head down low, crying near the lanhouse. Auro had recognised his extremely thin figure, clad totally in black, as usual. With his head in between his arms, Auro only saw Peterson's longish fake blond and curly hair silhouetted against the darkness. Auro said that he even stopped and tried to talk to Peterson that day. Peterson said that he had gone to see a doctor and that he had just been diagnosed with depression. Auro told me that he thought there was something else to this story because Peterson had always been depressed. He thought that, for example, part of the problem could be that Peterson had been paying for gay sex with teenagers and that perhaps, after paying them, he came to regret his behaviour and would then cry. Auro finished the story by saying: "Acho tudo isso muito estranho e até queria ajudar, mas ir contra o livre-arbítrio dos outros gera carma para quem interferir! (I find this whole story very weird and I even wanted to help him, but to go against other people's free will generates karma for the one who interferes!)"

Exu não tem livre-arbítrio / Exu has no free will

As I got more and more interested in Candomblé and in the narratives of freedom in the religious dimension, I started to do more research on the topic. On the 4th of February 2010, for example, I came across a random website in which

people claimed the following: “No Candomblé, opta-se por não fazer Exu como Orixá de cabeça porque Exu não tem livre-arbítrio e pode assim desequilibrar a cabeça da pessoa. (In Candomblé, we choose not to make Exu the Orixá of anyone’s head because Exu has no free will and that can imbalance the person’s mind.)” Next time I met Auro, I made sure to confirm this information with him. He liked to answer my questions about religious issues. He told me then that in some types of Candomblé people would devote their heads to Exu but that for most of the Candomblé traditions – such as in the Ketu tradition, for example – the information on the website could be considered accurate. To devote one’s head to an Orixá was sometimes explained to me as the ritual that would bring a certain person closer to a given God of her devotion.

Batizar se a pessoa tiver o livre-arbítrio / Baptise if the person has the free will

Around Christmas day, I started hearing that there would be many “macumba” events taking place at São Conrado beach in the evenings. Mazinho was excited about this and his own religious group was to hold an event at the beach to celebrate the end of the year. Auro had told me that the end of the year is a busy time for people in Candomblé and Umbanda. Even Pai Gelson would host an event at the beach near Rocinha. Gelson was the leader of a big Umbanda group based in the neighbourhood of Catete in Rio. He was a former resident of Rocinha and a long-term acquaintance of Auro. They had a lot of respect for each other. “Gelson is a child of Oxossi” – Auro used to say. Both Auro and Mazinho came to the beach for Pai Gelson’s event that evening and we stayed there until very late at night, watching all the people wearing white and dancing, many becoming possessed by spirits. The spirits consulted members of the public and tried to offer them comfort and advice. Auro later remarked at the fact that Pai Gelson (while

possessed by a spirit) was baptizing some people and that he found that to be a beautiful ritual. He said: “Acho bonito isso porque eles querem que seja assim, só pode batizar se a pessoa tiver o livre-arbítrio para escolher, entendeu? (I find it beautiful because they want it to be like that, you can only baptise someone if the person has the free will to choose it, do you understand?)” I felt that Auro was really touched by the ceremony, maybe he was thinking about himself and his long life history dedicating himself to different types of “spiritualist religions”, since an early age. All this out of his own will, according to him. In February 2010, Auro would come to say something to that effect again. He told me: “Ninguém é filho de santo obrigado, a pessoa tem livre-arbítrio! (Nobody is a child of any saint by force, the person has free will!)”

Livre-arbítrio e liberdade / Free will and freedom

There were different age groups coming for the Sunday religious classes that were taught by Paizinha at MFI. They mainly discussed the Bible with the church members, Paizinha had told me. On that Sunday, the 16th of August 2009, Paizinha had just taught a morning group when she met me near her house. She told me that she was thinking of me during class because that day they had discussed the difference between “livre-arbítrio e liberdade (free will and freedom)”. She said: “Por causa do erro de Adão e Eva, que foi fruto do livre-arbítrio, a liberdade para os evangélicos tem limites. Nisso somos diferentes de outras pessoas. Por exemplo, a liberdade das novinhas parece ser sem limites. Para nós isso não é bom! (Because of Adam and Eve’s mistake, that was an outcome of free will, freedom for the evangelicals has limits. In that sense, we are different from other people. For example, freedom for the group of young-gay-guys of the favela seems to be unlimited. For us this is not good!)” She continued: “Eu tenho medo do inimigo, tenho certeza de que se eu sair da igreja eles vão me pegar

novamente! Mas você está interessado em libertação, né? Olha só, o mais importante é que só a verdade liberta e a verdade é a bíblia! (I am afraid of the enemy, I am sure that if I leave the church they will catch me again! But you are interested in liberation, right? Look, the most important thing is that only the truth liberates and the truth is the Bible!)” She was in a hurry to go back to the classroom and got into her house with a slight smile on her face. On her hands, she had a heavy Bible and another pile of notebooks.

Chapter 6: Libertação / Liberation

Priberam Dictionary of Portuguese Language:

Libertação

s. f. / sb. fem.

derivation from fem. sing. libertar

v. trans. and pron.

1. Tornar ou ficar livre; dar ou ficar em liberdade. / To become or be free; to give or to be in freedom.

2. Livrar(-se) do que estorva ou incomoda. / To free from what bothers.

3. Tornar(-se) quite. / Disoblige.

v. trans.

4. Exalar / Exhale.

The samba of Libertação / Liberation:

Libertação nesse sentido / Liberation in that sense

Cultos de Libertação / Liberation Services

Congregação Evangélica da Libertação / Evangelical Congregation of Liberation

Era um hino de libertação! / It was a liberation hymn!

O álcool fez a libertação / The alcohol did the liberation

Vigília da Libertação / Liberation Vigil

Grupo de Libertação / Liberation Group

Libertação para manipular as pessoas / Liberation to manipulate people

Deus, traga libertação! / God, bring liberation!
Libertação no Limite / Liberation at the Limit
Depois da minha libertação! / After my liberation!
Ênfase no trabalho de libertação / Emphasis on the work of liberation
Nossa libertação é mais no sentido amplo / Our liberation is in the wider sense
Procurar Deus para ganhar a libertação! / Look for God to get liberation!
No Daime a libertação é diferente / At Daime liberation is different
Peçam para o Senhor a libertação! / Ask the Lord for liberation!
Esse pastor precisa de libertação / This pastor needs liberation
Que haja libertação! / That there be liberation!
Interessado em libertação / Interested in liberation
Libertação é tudo equê! / Liberation is all faking!
Um longo processo de libertação / A long process of liberation
Libertação do Ego / Liberation of the Ego
Estou fazendo libertação / I am undergoing liberation
Libertação toda sexta-feira / Liberation service every Friday
Isso de libertação é mentira, bicha! / This thing of liberation is a lie, butterfly!
Libertação e a vitória! / Libertação and the victory!
Libertação lá no Gelson / Liberation at Gelson's
Cultos de libertação? / Liberation services?
Libertação fraca / Weak liberation
Obrigado, Senhor, pela libertação! / Thank you, Lord, for the liberation!
Nesse culto de libertação / In this liberation service

The parade of Libertação / Liberation:

Libertação nesse sentido / Liberation in that sense

I had my hair cut in a small salon in Valão Street on the first day of July 2009. As I waited my turn on a bench inside the salon, I overheard the conversation that the two barbers were having with the customers on their respective barber chairs. The young barber was talking to his customer about the latest hairstyles in Rocinha. The older guy was talking to his customer about Ceará and people that I certainly did not know. Both of the barbers had a strong Ceará accent. Instead of choosing whether I wanted the older or the younger barber to cut my hair, I just told them that I would go with whoever finished first. And so in about 15 minutes I had the younger barber working on my hair. I took the opportunity to chat with him too and, as he moved the scissors around my head, he told me that he belonged to the Baptist church in Rocinha. As I expressed my interest about his religious life, he invited me to visit his church “without a more serious commitment (sem compromisso)” – he said. I told him that I was interested in “Cultos de Libertação (Liberation Services)”. And then he said that at his church, the Baptist Church, they did not hold many services like that. “Não fazemos libertação nesse sentido mas trabalhamos muito com o louvor a Deus... (We do not do liberation in that sense but we praise God a lot...)” He must have noticed my slight disappointment when I heard so. The haircut cost me 7 Brazilian reais and soon I was back home having a shower. From that day on, the barbers would greet me almost every time that I passed in front of that salon.

Cultos de Libertação / Liberation Services

One of my English students at MFI was called Fafá. She had joined the group late, shortly after the start of the classes, and Armando told me that I had a special mission with her. Fafá was a singer and had travelled throughout Europe singing at different venues but had never sung in English. She could manage some German, though. Fafá told me that she was born and raised in Rocinha and because of her voice she had managed to travel to foreign countries. She had been back in Rocinha for some time and really wanted to learn English. Once in a while she would come up to me with some lyrics in English that she wanted to learn. She would ask for my help with pronunciation and admitted to finding it all very difficult. I was a witness to her difficulty. In our English class at MFI on the 26th of May 2009, Fafá stayed after class and kept chatting to me. That is when she told me more about herself, that she was an Evangelical Christian. I asked her if she had ever been to UCKG and she said that she would go there once in a while. I asked her when exactly. And she said that it was only when other friends wanted to go to UCKG that she would go. I asked her: “E você já foi para um desses Cultos de Libertação? (And have you ever been to one of those Liberation Services?)” She confirmed: “Yes, many times!” I guessed so and I was curious to hear more. “Do you like these services?” She said that they were powerful services but sometimes she would get scared when, for example, they turned off the church lights at midnight and started calling evil spirits to manifest themselves through people. I asked her what would usually happen then. She said that many people would get possessed. “Have you really seen possessed people” – I asked? “Many, many times!” – she said. And she kept talking: “Do you know *novinhas*, a group of young gay guys that live in Rocinha? So, they are always going for liberation there and getting possessed!” I must say I got deeply intrigued by the idea of these young gay guys going to the UCKG to get liberated from evil spirits. It was after that day that I started attending liberation services at UCKG every possible week.

Congregação Evangélica da Libertação / Evangelical Congregation of Liberation

From my very first weeks living in Rocinha, I realized that the number of evangelical churches in the favela was well beyond what I was used to seeing in other places in Brazil. Many of those were small churches; some had a single door only and consisted of a few chairs scattered around a small room. There was one church located on the “S” part of the main road that crossed Rocinha (Curva do “S” – Estrada da Gávea) that had only a small door but it held a big banner on top of that door: “Congregação Evangélica da Libertação (Evangelical Congregation of Liberation)” – it read. The banner also said that services were held on Wednesdays and Fridays. One day I asked my friend Menem if he would come with me to a service at that church. He told me that it was a bit weird to do it, since we did not belong to their congregation and did not know anyone in that congregation. However, he ended up coming with me to a Wednesday service. We arrived at 19:30, the time advertised on the church’s banner. We found no one there, even though the church was open. We waited outside for another half an hour. The pastor arrived around 20:10 and started to pray by himself. No one else arrived until around 20:30. That was when Menem convinced me that it was not a good idea for us to stay there, just the pastor and the two of us. Before I agreed to leave, however, he promised to take me to a “proper” liberation cult in some other church. Menem used to say that he was an Evangelical Christian himself but his church was located in Copacabana.

Era um hino de libertação! / It was a liberation hymn!

As a way of raising money for MFI, Armando had the idea of selling t-shirts with prints inspired in favela motifs. One of the MFI volunteers, a French girl who

had helped build all the furniture at MFI, was also very skilled at drawing. She had donated one of her drawings of an aerial view of the favela so that Armando could use it on the t-shirts. The plain white t-shirts were not manufactured in Rocinha, though. It was cheaper to buy them ready made from Saara, a big commercial area in the city centre of Rio de Janeiro. On the 27th of May 2009, Armando, Menem and I took the bus from Rocinha to Saara to buy t-shirts. Armando bought around 20 plain t-shirts of assorted colours. It was sweaty on the bus back to Rocinha and to make things worse we were stuck in traffic for a long time. As I looked out of the window, in a moment of deep silence the wind blew on my face. Soon I started hearing Menem sing. I suddenly jumped, I was sure that I had heard him singing something with the word “liberdade” in it. I immediately turned to the inside of the bus again and looked at him very curiously. He immediately stopped. I said: “Keep on singing!” And he replied: “Why? Do you like my voice?” – and he laughed. I said that I wanted to know what music that was. He said: “Era um hino de libertação! (It was a liberation hymn)”, but he did not sing it again. So, I asked him about liberation hymns. He said that there were many different ones and that he had learned them all in church.

O álcool fez a libertação / The alcohol did the liberation

On the 16th of December 2009, Auro came to visit me in my house and told me that he just had an argument with an evangelical woman who wanted to evangelize him. It all happened near the “No Limite” shop – he said. “Moises, I told her she had no idea of what she was talking about when she said that I was living in sin!” He continued: “I simply told the woman that I had read the Bible from cover to cover and that I was not living in sin. Had she read the whole Bible herself? Clearly not!” Auro was agitated and sipped some more water before calming down and telling me that he had other news to tell me too. He had heard

one more time from someone, someone who he could not name, that Peterson and a friend of his only went to church to cruise for guys. And that once, after pastoral service, the two of them managed to take an evangelical guy from UCKG to the beach at night. This evangelical guy allegedly ended up drinking some alcohol at the beach. And Auro concluded: “Ai você sabe, mona! O álcool fez a libertação do verdadeiro instinto do moço e ele terminou fazendo o que tinha vontade mesmo. Terminou beijando outro homem na praia, meu bem! (Then you know, darling! The alcohol did the liberation of the boy’s true instinct and he ended up kissing another man at the beach, my dear!)” Auro laughed out loud, agitated, putting his both hands on his on chest and moving them around his nipples.

Vigília da Libertação / Liberation Vigil

Amélia’s daughter, Maria Beatriz, was in a bad mood that day. The two of them were fighting and I could hear Maria Beatriz screaming from their living room, just above my house. I avoided going up to eat with them. When Auro passed by my house later on, I went out to buy some food. On the way down Valão Street, I noticed that the UCKG had gathered some church members near this smaller rubbish dump located there. The image of this group wearing formal clothes, all in black and white colours, and many guys wearing a full suit, contrasted very much with the pile of rubbish in the background. They were talking to people who passed by the place and they also had a sound system set up through which they were inviting people to attend a “Vigília da Libertação (Liberation Vigil)” that would take place that week, in May 2009.

Grupo de Libertação / Liberation Group

The first time that Paizinha heard that I was interested in knowing more about liberation services offered by evangelical churches, she told me that she would take me to her own church and show me what they did there to help people find liberation. On the 4th of June 2009, she invited me to come to church with her. I agreed to it and we met just before 7:00pm in front of my house. She was wearing a long patterned dress and her hair was wet, she had probably just had a shower. She had also brought her two daughters along with her and they were dressed up too. We walked down the alleyways towards the church, which was located in a place in Rocinha called “Raiz (Root)”; near a huge tree with big roots that was said to have never been cut off. In fact, that was one of the few trees that had survived in the lower parts of Rocinha. On the way to church, we came across another neighbour that lived near my house. Kristina was also an evangelical woman and belonged to the same church as Paizinha. We stopped briefly to talk to Kristina and she was delighted to hear that I would come to church that day. I smiled at her and noticed that Kristina was wearing a white t-shirt with the print of a dove in the middle of a nest made of broken chains. It was a blue ink print. The t-shirt said “Grupo de Libertação (Liberation Group)”. I then got even more excited about the service that we were about to attend. Kristina told us she would meet us in church in a few minutes and we kept moving. I asked Paizinha about this Liberation Group and she said that it was a special task force within her church that was specifically in charge of liberation. Paizinha also said that she used to be in charge of that group for a while but that it was such hard work and with her domestic life being so busy she had to quit her position. The more I heard from Paizinha the more I wanted to find out about liberation. We got to church a bit early and not many people were around. Paizinha greeted some people standing near the church’s door and introduced me to them as a friend. They looked excited. She then said I had come for the Liberation Service. Suddenly, they looked disappointed. A woman wearing a long pastel-pink dress then told her that it was the wrong day for that; there had been a change in the schedule.

Libertação para manipular as pessoas / Liberation to manipulate people

Armando told me a story about a friend of his that went to UCKG and felt like leaving in the middle of the service. However, as this girl was walking out the door, the pastor stopped whatever he was saying at that moment. He looked at the girl and said: “Você tem que ter fé, irmã! Sabe por que que a sua libertação está difícil? Porque o diabo está escondido em você! (You have to have faith, sister! Do you know why your liberation is so difficult? Because the devil is hidden inside you!)” And the girl kept walking away in silence. Armando then said: “Sabia que eu acho isso um absurdo? Absurda a forma como a Igreja Universal tenta usar a idéia do diabo e da libertação para manipular as pessoas! (Did you know that I find that absurd? It is absurd the way that the Universal Church tries to use the idea of the devil and of liberation to manipulate people!) My friend got very angry with the pastor that day but said nothing. Because it is very tricky too, right? Had she said anything rude back to the pastor, or reacted in some aggressive way, for the church she would have been deemed to be confirming the fact that she was really possessed by the devil! Right?!?”

Deus, traga libertação! / God, bring liberation!

On the 2nd of July 2009, Paizinha and Laiza decided to take me to what they guaranteed to be a good liberation service. We took a van on the big road that crosses Rocinha all the way from São Conrado to Gávea. Laiza asked the guy that was charging us for the ride to stop at a place called 99 in Rocinha, which is located on the other side of the hill from where I lived. Going up on the van, we would go past the highest point of the road and then we would start going downhill towards the wealthy neighbourhood called Gávea. Then, at a very sharp bend – in front of a

place where many motorcycles were parked– we alighted from the van. We turned going down a narrow alleyway from there and kept walking. Laiza vaguely remembered where the church was located. Paizinha stopped an old lady to ask if she knew where was the exact direction of the church: “Tanque de Betesda (Pool of Bethesda)”. We happened to be almost in front of it already. At the entrance to the church there was a notice board with some colourful notices and a staircase going down. Laiza led the way downstairs, we were following the loud music coming from below. When we got to the room underground, there were many chairs and some benches in front of a place with a lot of musical instruments, a microphone and a man on his knees signing on this microphone. At first the church was empty, with a few people singing while others slowly arrived. The newcomers would kneel down and join the others in prayer. Paizinha told me that I did not have to kneel down myself, but she did it herself. Meanwhile, the guy with the microphone was praying out loud: “Deus, traga libertação! Liberta dos desejos pelas coisas do mundo! Liberta da prostituição! Liberta os Kardecistas, Budistas, os adeptos da bruxaria! Liberta minha filha Luriela, oh Deus! (God, bring liberation! Liberate from the desire for worldly things! Liberate from prostitution! Liberate the Kardecists, Buddhists, and the adepts of witchcraft! Liberate my daughter Sheila, oh God!)” Most women in church were wearing long monotone dresses with long sleeves and high collars. Most of them had long hair too; some had their hair braided. Many men were wearing formal shirts and formal trousers; some had dressed in full suits. Laiza told me that she was always happy to visit other evangelical churches. “Eu sou viciada no gozo de Deus (I am addicted to God’s happiness)” – she said. During the service the pastor told us that nobody should be sad that night: “The enemy wants to see you sad, my brother! But God, he wants to see you happy!” They then sang a song that was very agitated, the chorus of which proclaimed: “Sou Pentecostal, quando eu canto o diabo passa mal! (I am Pentecostal, when I sing the devil feels sick!)” And as they were singing and singing, the holy spirit started to touch some people and some women started to spin and spin. They went faster and faster, while their long dresses started to inflate like blossoming flowers.

Libertação no Limite / Liberation at the Limit

On a corner right at the entrance to Valão Street, there was a big yellow shop that sold clothes at a very low price. What I thought to be more attractive about this shop, however, was its name. The shop was called: “No Limite (At the Limit)”. For quite some time I thought that such a name was a reference to the location of the shop, which was near the physical limit between Rocinha and the Lagoa-Barra Road. Talking to Franci one afternoon, however, I realized that the name was also a play on the name of a television show that had been very successful when aired on TV Globo a few years ago. This show was called: “No Limite”. Franci pointed out to me that the name of the shop had even been painted using a colour scheme that made explicit reference to the graphic style used by TV Globo for that television show. On the 10th of June 2009, there was another sign placed beside “No Limite” that called my attention too. On top of a small church, a squared sign said: “Igreja Evangélica Assembléia de Deus / Ministério Leblon / Cristo / Poder que liberta (Evangelical Church Assembly of God / Leblon Ministry / Christ / Power that liberates)”. A stall right in front of this church was selling evangelical calendars. Many of them had the title: “Libertação”. I now wish I had bought one of them.

Depois da minha libertação! / After my liberation!

Murilo no longer lived in Rocinha. Paizinha and I went on a long journey in a white van before we were able to meet him in a small favela in Jacarepaguá. The

first person to greet us there was not Murilo, though, but a relative of his. She was a tall blond woman with green eyes and lived in a six-floor building that her husband had recently built. They were doing very well in terms of money, Paizinha told me. Paizinha had known Murilo's family for a long time and they had a lot to catch up on while we drank our coffee in her friend's spacious kitchen. The blond woman talked: "Estou bem agora. Fui liberta da depressão, graças a Deus! (I am well now. I was liberated from depression, thank God!)" But she also complained that for a long time she had to hide from her husband that she was going to the evangelical church; he did not like Evangelical Christians. She said that she always felt like going to the evangelical church but it was only when she moved back to Ceará with her husband and children for a short period that she started doing so, still in secret. When she lived in Rocinha, there were too many people gossiping about her life, she said. When I met Murilo that day, he had no house to call his own. He lived at his fiancée's house and her family supported him while he was preparing to become a pastor. Paizinha expected me to record his testimony, and so I did. Among other things, Murilo told me from behind his thick eyebrows that God had totally changed his life. "Até minhas tatuagens mudaram de sentido depois da minha libertação! (Even my tattoos changed meaning after my liberation!)" – Murilo said. The tattoos had come to represent the word of God in his life. He also showed me a DVD recording in which he appears undergoing "um processo de libertação (a process of liberation)" over many different services at a church that I could not identify. During some moments of the video, Murilo was filmed while evil spirits possessed him. After talking to Murilo at his fiancée's house, Paizinha, Murilo's in-laws and myself went to the church in which Murilo was working at that time. It was near his place but he took pride in driving us to the place using a car that the main pastor of his church had lent him. The church was small but there were a good number of people attending the service. Green plants decorated the flaking pale-blue walls. Murilo prayed over an old lady that had difficulty in walking. He raised the tone of his voice over the microphone, put his hand on top of her head and said: "João Caveira, sai dela! Ela vem pedindo libertação, Senhor! Que seja repreendido todo mal! Enfermidade, dores, sai! Toda

obra de feitiçaria, sai! (João Caveira [the name of a spirit], get out of her! She has been clamouring for liberation, Lord! May all evil be reprehended! Diseases, pains, out! All witchcraft, out!)” And the woman fell to her knees on the floor. Murilo smiled, dried the sweat on his forehead and said: “Palmas, irmãos! Ela está liberta! Onde o Espírito Santo está, existe liberdade! (A round of applause, brothers! She is free! Where the Holy Spirit is, there is freedom!)”

Ênfase no trabalho de libertação / Emphasis on the work of liberation

Laiza passed by my house on her way to MFI on the 15th of July 2009. She stopped to tell me about a service that she had attended the other day in PPC, a favela located in between Copacabana and Ipanema. She confessed that she had gotten a bit scared trying to find her way to the church in a favela that she was not familiar with. She had heard about the power of this church and she wanted to attend one of their services but she had no clue about its exact location. She then narrated how traffickers ended up approaching her to ask her if she was lost. “Those traffickers belonged to the Red Command, a rival faction to the one that rules in Rocinha! Oh, Lord...” – she said. Laiza was really scared that the traffickers would ask her where she was coming from! It had been a blessing that they did not. “Nothing happened, God looks after me!” – she told me. I asked her if the service had been good? She replied: “Foi ótimo, com muita ênfase no trabalho de libertação: Jesus, liberta os bandidos! Liberta os traficantes! Bem intenso! (It was great, with a lot of emphasis on liberation work: Jesus, liberate the bandits! Liberate the traffickers! Very intense!)” Then, Laiza opened her eyes wide and punched her left opened hand with her right fist while repeating the prayers that had been said at the church in PPC. She noticed my enthusiasm with the whole episode and promised to take me there to visit this church some day. Before she continued her walk to MFI, she said that actually only one bad thing had happened to her on her visit there, something that she had forgotten to mention:

“A very unpleasant woman also attended the service! This woman looked at my belly and asked me if I had been blessed with a pregnancy!!!” Laiza then remarked: “I am only fat... This woman needs a lot of prayers, Lord! The devil in her needs to be tied up!!! Oh, I am telling you!” So I laughed, and I laughed. She laughed too and we waved good-bye.

Nossa libertação é mais no sentido amplo / Our liberation is in the wider sense

On the 22nd of July 2009, Priscilla’s mother and I took a van from Ipanema to Rocinha. Arriving at the favela, we stopped at a paper shop by Boiadeiro Street. My friend Pedro had been working at that shop for many years. I introduced Lucy to him and as we talked more, I ended up realizing that both Pedro and Lucy were from Ceará and both were Catholics. Pedro was one of the most active members of the Catholic Church in Rocinha. As the conversation went on and on among the three of us, I asked Pedro what Lucy could do as she was looking for liberation for her children. “Se ela precisar de libertação para os filhos dela na Igreja Católica como seria, Pedro? (If she comes to need liberation for her children in the Catholic Church how would that work, Pedro?)” – I asked. Lucy confirmed that she was very concerned about her children and wanted them to sort out their lives. Pedro then replied: “Na Igreja Católica quase não tem isso não. Nossa libertação é mais no sentido amplo, na batalha do povo da terra e essas coisas. As pessoas querem libertação muito fácil. Isso não existe. Nós também temos que carregar a cruz assim como Jesus carregou. Olha uma cruz Católica, Jesus ainda está lá para nos lembrar do sofrimento. Já na cruz evangélica, até Jesus já se libertou! Ele não está mais lá. Por isso que ultimamente o pessoal só quer coisa fácil e que traga benefício imediato! É com o tempo que os problemas se resolvem. (In the Catholic Church we almost do not have such a thing. Our liberation is more in the wide sense, in the

struggle of people that live from the land and those things. People want liberation too easy. That does not exist. We also need to carry the cross just like Jesus did. Look at a Catholic cross; Jesus is still there to remind us of his suffering. Meanwhile, in the evangelical cross, even Jesus has been liberated already! He is no longer there. That is why lately people only want easy things that bring immediate benefit! It is with time that problems are solved.” I was fascinated listening to Pedro speaking, but Lucy changed the topic of conversation to talk about Ceará.

Procurar Deus para ganhar a libertação! / Look for God to get liberation!

As our van passed by Niemeyer Avenue, we saw blue waves crashing against big rocks. This was one of my favourite views of Rio de Janeiro. By my side, Lucy told me that she was worried about Osmar (aka Priscilla): “It must be some spirit that is with him, that makes him be like that and that makes my other son have problems with alcohol!” I looked at her and told her not to worry so much, Priscilla seemed happy. She smiled and kept talking: “You see, Moises? All my children were raised in the Catholic Church but they got spoiled when they arrived in that hell called Rocinha!” I think I said nothing at that point; I smiled and just looked out of the window to see the waves while I was thinking about what I had just heard. I looked back at Lucy and she kept talking: “I like Rio, but I think that Rio das Pedras (a favela in the West Zone of Rio) is better than Rocinha, because it is not so busy!” I replied: “Do you think?” She said: “Quer saber? Tanto o Osmar quanto meu outro filho bêbado no Ceará têm é que procurar Deus para ganhar a libertação! (Do you know what? Both Osmar and my drunken son back in Ceará have to look for God to get liberation!)” Soon we were in Ipanema and in a few minutes we got off the van. I was accompanying the 53-year-old lady so that we could sort out some documentation that she needed to use for Priscilla’s youngest brother to get a much-needed spinal surgery in a public hospital in Rio de Janeiro.

No Daime a libertação é diferente / At Daime liberation is different

It was late at night on the 25th of July 2009. Auro and I met Peterson waiting for his friends in Valão Street. He was standing in between a tiny shop that sold açai berry smoothies and an evangelical church. The closer we got to him, as we walked towards him, the louder we could hear strong beats coming from above our heads. Auro remarked that Peterson was not stopped there because of the church but because there was a macumba ritual going on at Jair's that day. Jair was a "pai-de-santo (father-of-saint)" who had inherited a "terreiro" (religious space for rituals) from his mother. His terreiro was located on the rooftop of a tall building in Valão Street. Peterson told me that he had been waiting for news on a friend of his. This person was said to be unconscious and lying on a corner of the terreiro while other people were desperately trying to help him. "It is a spiritual issue!" – Peterson said. He kept getting news about his friend's situation over his mobile phone and refused to go up to the rooftop. Peterson said that he was not going to any macumba ever again, he was going to a different religion instead: "Santo Daime (Holy Daime)". I asked him more about the Holy Daime religion and he told me that in their rituals they all drink some sort of sacred tea made with Amazonian leaves and they have amazing spiritual experiences then. I asked him if this magic tea somehow liberated people from anything. To which he replied: "Bom, lá no Daime a libertação é diferente da Igreja Evangélica. É mais um tipo de limpeza espiritual que eles fazem nas pessoas. (Well, there at Daime the liberation is different from the one in the Evangelical Church. It is more some sort of spiritual cleansing that they do on people)". Auro had no patience to listen to the conversation anymore and told me to keep talking with Peterson because he wanted to go home. And so I stayed there and asked Peterson if anyone in the group of young-gay-guys of the favela also went to Daime. He shook his head: "Elas só vão para macumba aqui e às vezes para a Universal. Eu que levei elas na

Universal a primeira vez, eu falei do Culto de Libertação para elas. Agora muitas vão lá sempre, pegam santo e tudo! Se bem que tem muito equê também, eu acho. Ultimamente elas não estão indo muito para lá porque o Jair proibiu. O Jair disse que elas têm que ficar de preceito. (They only go to macumba here and sometimes they go to the UCKG. I was the one who took them to the UCKG for the first time, I told them about the Liberation Service there. Now, many of them often go there, they get possessed and everything! Although I think there is a lot of faking going on too. Lately they have not gone there so often because Jair forbids them. Jair said that they have to follow their precepts.)” He noticed I was interested in the conversation and kept talking: “I never faked being possessed like these guys do! Ever since I was a child I could see spirits, even when I belonged to the Evangelical Church and I was firm in my faith as a Christian. Depois eu desviei um pouco do caminho mas eu ainda vou para a Universal para ser liberto das obras do mal! (Later on I went off track a bit but I still go to the UCKG in order to be liberated from these evil things!) But I must say I have also attended some macumba rituals lately. I asked him why he kept going to macumba at the same time. He replied: “Do you know Xuxa (a Brazilian celebrity)? She got everything she has from going to macumba! Fame, money, everything!!! I may have gone to macumba but the difference is that I chose not to be a slave of these spiritual entities. These young gay guys are slaves of evil entities! They are always bowing to these spirits, cooking for them, giving them gifts and everything. I even go and sometimes talk to the entities but I am sure they deceive us. One day at the beach I asked a spirit for help and she pretended she was cleaning my body but I got sick after that cleaning! After that day it was only when I went to the UCKG again that I got better. Eu fui liberto do que aquele espírito do mal, a Pomba-Gira, colocou em mim. (I was liberated from what that evil spirit, Pomba-Gira, had put on me.)” I was absolutely fascinated by the narrative. There was no time to say anything before he started talking again: “I like Daime, though. It is good there. A única coisa que eu tenho medo no Daime é que na última vez em que fui lá também tive uma experiência de ser liberto, liberto do meu corpo! The only thing I fear in Daime is that the last time I went there I had an experience of being liberated too, liberated from my body!) It

was scary. I am glad I was wearing this ring that they gave me at the UCKG. Thankfully, no evil spirit managed to get into my body while I was out of it!” And he showed me a silver ring on his left hand. Peterson had thin fingers. He then used his thin fingers to answer his phone, which had started ringing again. He told me that he had to leave but that he would like to talk more to me about these things some other day.

Peçam para o Senhor a libertação! / Ask the Lord for liberation!

At the UCKG service on the evening of the 31st of July 2009, a girl called Mariana talked to me. She was one of the people I had met through Peterson. We sat next to each other at church. She was laughing at some people she thought were faking possessions and told me that she wished that her spirit possessions were fake too. “But they are not...” – she said with sad eyes. The voice of the pastor then rose in volume, so loud that I could not hear Mariana for a while. The pastor said: “Nosso Deus não está preso na cruz, ele foi liberto! Ele está nos céus! Você também pode se libertar esta noite, meu irmão, minha irmã! Você vai sair, diabo! Sai, diabo! Queima toda macumba, todo trabalho de feitiçaria! Liberta dos vícios das drogas, do baile funk! Liberta a Pomba-Gira, liberta do Tranca-Rua! Vamos gente! Peçam para o Senhor a libertação! (Our God is not tied to the cross, he has been liberated! He is in heaven! You can also be liberated this evening, my brother, my sister! You are going to get out, devil! Get out, devil! That all magic be burned, all witchcraft be burned! Liberate from drug addictions, from baile funk! Liberate the *Pomba-Gira*! Liberate the *Tranca-Rua* [often considered Umbanda spirits]! Let’s go people! Ask the Lord for liberation!)” Suddenly Mariana’s body started to shake vigorously. I was frightened and concerned. She started to make deep squealing noises, similar to the sound that pigs make when dying. Soon one of the many people that were helping the pastor in the service came up and grabbed Mariana by the arm. Along with numerous others, she was taken to the front of the church,

near the stage, where the pastor stood. Many helpers, wearing white tops and blue trousers or skirts, were praying over the possessed amassed by the stage. Then, another woman nearby me started to shout while jumping up and down: “Liberta, oh Senhor! Me liberta da traição! (Liberate, oh Lord! Liberate me from infidelity!)” Some ten minutes later Mariana came back to her original place, by my side. Her pale face was all red and her eyes were filled with tears. The only sounds coming out of her mouth now were deep sobs. She said: “I am a lost cause!” And she kept crying. The pastor kept praying for everyone: “Tie, oh Lord! Tie all debts, all shyness, all unemployment, and all sickness! Tie all evil, amen!!!” Another twenty minutes of final prayers and the hundreds of people were slowly walking out of the church. By my side, Mariana was still crying. “At least I have already been liberated from the drugs!” – she said. And we slowly left the church too.

Esse pastor precisa de libertação / This pastor needs liberation

On the 9th of August 2009, we celebrated Menem’s birthday. A small party took place at his fiancée’s house. She lived in one of the houses on the same beco where I lived. No alcoholic beverages were served during the party, which did not prevent the conversation from getting heated. Auro talked about a transvestite called Amapola and how even the pastor of Amapola’s church used to lust over her when she transformed herself into a woman. “She was just so beautiful!” – Auro said. To this comment, Paizinha promptly replied: “Ah, duvido! Ou então esse pastor precisa de libertação! (Oh, I doubt it! Or else this pastor needs liberation!)” Judging by his face, Auro did not like the comment. Minutes later, Paizinha started the prayer for Menem. She passionately asked God to liberate him from all evil and all temptations.

Que haja libertação! / That there be liberation!

I had gone to UCKG with Menem and his fiancée Laila that evening. She wanted to go and Menem, who had once been a member of the UCKG, came along with us. The pastor spent a lot of time discussing the accusations of tax evasion and illicit money fundraising made against the UCKG, which had been aired by TV Globo at different points during the month of August 2009. The pastor started by warning people on the microphone that the church was once again under attack by the devil. TV Globo was again trying to challenge the faith of UCKG members, he argued. And later on he said that we needed to be careful because there were reporters coming to the services to tell lies on television later on. A few minutes after, he stated: “Se você olhar e tiver alguém com camera ou gravador perto de você pode pegar e quebrar! Eu dou permissão (If you look and see anyone with a camera or a voice recorder near you, you can grab it and break it! I give you permission)”. The atmosphere was very tense at the church, which was empty compared to other days. Later on the pastor called to the stage a man who was said to be possessed by a spirit called “Exu Cachaceiro (Alcoholic Exu)”. The pastor then prayed over the whole church while the possessed man was in front of us. He said: “Livra, Senhor! Dos vícios, da dívida, do adultério, da AIDS, da prostituição! (Free, Lord! From addictions, from debts, from adultery, from AIDS, from prostitution!)” At the same time the helpers of the church started to circulate around the space, many of them moving very quickly. One of them, a young guy wearing formal clothes, came near Laila and myself and started praying over both of us at once: “Que haja libertação! (That there be liberation!)” – he said. I could hear another helper praying over a woman by my right side. In the middle of a wave of possessions, a mother with many children got possessed too. Some helpers then took the children outside the church while other helpers said prayers upon the mother. The pastor who was still dealing with that first possessed man, struggled to liberate him from the Alcoholic Exu. The pastor then said: “Só fica de pé se for de carne! (He will only stay up if this is just flesh!)” He was making a reference to the

fact that if that possession was not just flesh (faking) that the man and the evil spirit in him would fall down on his knees, defeated by the power of God. Soon the man was on his knees. Many people clapped and cheered. The pastor kept preaching: “Jesus foi para a cruz para que haja a libertação, irmãos! (Jesus went to the cross so that there would be liberation, brothers!)” And people clapped again. Towards the end of that service the pastor announced: “No próximo culto, tragam fio de cabelo de alguém que você quer ver liberto para colocarmos no pé da cruz! O cabelo tem o DNA dessa pessoa, o endereço dela, ok! (For the next service, bring a piece of hair from someone that you want to see liberated so that we can place it near the cross! This person’s hair contains the DNA of that person, meaning, the person’s address, ok!)” A final round of clapping and we left the church while a very loud happy music played in the church. Laila looked so sad, though.

Interessado em libertação / Interested in liberation

Paizinha arrived a bit flustered at MFI and told me a story that was bothering her. She said: “There is a woman, a mother, who is a drug addict and lives here in Rocinha. This woman is no longer looking after her children. As crianças estão sempre soltas na rua! (The children are always loose on the street!)” Then, she said that someone reported this woman to the “Conselho Tutelar”, a formal Brazilian institution in charge of family welfare. So, when the woman learned that she had been reported to this institution, she got really desperate and ran into Paizinha’s church during service. Paizinha said: “Ela estava pedindo para ser liberta! (She was asking to be liberated!)” Then Paizinha became silent. “And then what?” – I asked her. Paizinha sat down and told me that they tried to help the woman. She explained: “Moises, para nós o corpo é um templo sagrado. Nada que faz mal ao corpo é certo: vício, sexo com qualquer um por aí, drogas... tudo isso é contra nossos princípios! Para essa mulher ser liberta ela precisa de duas coisas muito importantes: primeiro, ela tem que querer ser liberta de verdade. Segundo,

ela tem que acreditar que Deus é mais forte que tudo isso na vida dela. (Moises, for us the body is a sacred temple. Nothing that does harm to the body is right: an addiction, sex with random people, drugs... all that is against our principles! For this woman to be liberated she needs two things that are very important: first, she needs to truly want to be liberated. Second, she needs to believe that God is more powerful than all these things in her life.)” A strong smell of cooked beans came in through the windows. I just nodded my head as Paizinha spoke and she kept saying: “Eu não sei você, mas eu tenho medo do inimigo. Tenho certeza que se eu sair da igreja os espíritos vão me pegar novamente! (I do not know about you, but I am afraid of the enemy. I am sure that if I leave the Church the spirits will catch me again!)” Armando then intervened in the conversation and said that this last phrase sounded more like terrorism. Paizinha did not reply to his comment, she turned to me again and told me: “Mas parece que você está interessado em libertação, né? Olha só, o mais importante é que só a verdade liberta e a verdade é a Bíblia! (But it seems that you are interested in liberation, right? Look, the most important thing is that only the truth can set you free and the truth is the Bible!)”

Libertação é tudo equê! / Liberation is all faking!

There were many nights in which people would come to my house to invite me to go for night walks. Sometimes we walked as far as the end of São Conrado's beach. On the 17th of August 2009, Peterson had invited me to join a group of people that he knew who were going for a walk. I said: “Sure!” And we gathered near the lanhouse (internet café) and waited for more people to join us. I soon realized that many members of the PAFYC group (aka young-gay-guys group) were going for a walk at the beach along with us. On the way to São Conrado, we passed by the corner of the UCKG church and one of the guys, Brendo, made a comment out loud: “Detesto crente! (I hate Evangelical Christians!)” And he turned his face

away from the church in disgust. Some people laughed at him, Peterson just rolled his eyes and remained silent. As we got to the beach, Peterson chose a spot on the sand in a location near Hotel International. The group of about ten people followed him and we kept talking for over an hour at that spot. I then met Viny. He was older than most of the PAFYC guys. He said that he used to work as a hairdresser. He smoked a lot and his hair was longish and dyed red. He talked to me for quite a while and on the way back to Rocinha we were still engaged in conversation. He told me that he really regretted having gone into “Magia Negra” (Evil Magic). It had been a big mistake for him to go to Mata Alto for evil rituals, he said. He told me that he came from a good family of Candomblé people from Bahia and he was so proud of that and then he lost sight of his religion. He talked about his grandmother with much admiration: “Minha avó é tão forte no santo que ela passa mal só de chegar perto de um crente! (My grandmother is so powerful with the saints [of Candomblé] that she feels sick just to get close to an evangelical person!)” I expressed some surprise and he kept talking: “Os crentes são cheios de equê, mona! Esse negócio de libertação é tudo equê! (These evangelicals do a lot of faking, darling! This business of liberation is all fake!)” I smiled. He looked at me and he kept talking, saying that he missed a good and proper macumba. “Good macumba is only found in Bahia, where I come from. There are real Candomblé yards there! It is not like here where people do their rituals on the rooftop of buildings. Over there they have big spaces for rituals and big houses for the Orixás. Huge areas, whole plantation areas!” – he said. Viny had a note of nostalgia in his voice while telling me that he would go back to Candomblé some day but for now he was glad that he had at least left Magia Negra. He narrated: “Foi um trabalho me livrar daquele pai-de-santo, tá, mona! Ele me prendeu muito, mandou o Exu Caveira várias vezes atrás de mim. Para me libertar dele tive que enfrentar ele, mona! Minha Padilha bateu de frente com o Exu dele! Nada mais aconteceu comigo. Quem venceu? Ele é muito mal aquele homem, uma vez ele brigou com uma amiga minha e amaldiçoou essa menina que ela ficou com problema na perna! (It was hard work to get rid of that father-of-saint, ok, darling! He had me very much caught up, he sent Exu Caveira [a spirit] several times after me. In order to

liberate myself I had to face up to him, darling! My Padilha [a female Exu spirit] clashed head-to-head with his Exu! Nothing else happened to me after that day. Who won? He is very evil that man, once he fought with a friend of mine and he bewitched her so that she got a chronic problem in her leg!)” As Viny said these last words we were back to the same spot in front of the lanhouse where we had gathered earlier. Viny went home. I stayed a little longer with Peterson, hanging out with the other guys.

Um longo processo de libertação / A long process of liberation

Samira came to my place on the evening of the 6th of September 2009. She wanted me to hang out with her in front of the lanhouse. From my place we walked down the alleyway, then turned left and soon, when we reached a bar on a corner, we turned right to find a small place where motorcycles were usually parked. From that spot we only had to keep walking down a bit. Just passed a group of traffickers, and passed a candy shop, we found Peterson seated on the pavement with a big group of people, some of whom I knew from the PAFYC (young-gay-guys group). Peterson was agitated that day, wondering if anyone new of a macumba (Umbanda ritual) that he could attend that Sunday night. I was surprised to hear that he was looking for a macumba after what he had told me before; that he was not interested in such a thing anymore! He noticed the surprise on my face and told me: “Dude, every time that I go to the UCKD it is the same thing! I get possessed there and the spirits beat me up at the church, a thousand things happen! So, I think it is better just to go to a good Umbanda place once and for all”. That was one of those moments in which Peterson overtly displayed angst in relation to his life. His lack of patience with what he himself had described to me before as “um longo processo de libertação na Igreja Evangélica! (a long process of liberation in the Evangelical Church!)” was very tangible at that moment. Samira

just looked at him and put her left hand under her chin. She said: “I really feel like going to a macumba too!”

Libertação do Ego / Liberation of the Ego

It was Independence Day holiday. Contrary to my expectations, I did not hear any reference to freedom in relation to such a symbolic day from anyone in Rocinha. Francielle, Laila, Menem and I even walked to watch a display of the Brazilian navy fleet at São Conrado beach. Not even then any reference to freedom was made. It was more like a day for relaxing and to party. In the afternoon, Auro stopped at my house and we went up to have coffee at Amélia's. Auro started talking about a book that he was reading about the role of many different religions. After drinking three cups of coffee, he then said that I should study Hinduism. I said: “Why? Nobody here seems to be into Hinduism, right?” Auro said that he was very much into Hinduism and from an spiritualist perspective I would be interested in it too: “A falange Hindu, a função deles é fazer a libertação do ego. Libertação, entendeu? Um luxo. (The Hindu sect, their function is to bring about the liberation of the Ego. Liberation, got it? Luxurious.)” He smiled, had another cup of coffee and kept talking about what other functions he believed different religions to have.

Estou fazendo libertação / I am undergoing liberation

I met Peterson in one of the busy alleyways of Rocinha on the 2nd of October 2009. I complained that I had not seen him in a while. He replied with a big hug and said: “You disappeared yourself! No, no... you are right, I have been so busy! I don't even have time for Daime now. I am only going to the Universal Church of the

Kingdom of God. Universal, Universal, Universal..." And he moved his right hand making a sound with his fingers to indicate the intensity with which he had been going to the UCKG. At this point, a friend of his that I did not know looked at him and laughed hard. Peterson did not like that and promptly said: "Sim, eu estou fazendo libertação lá mesmo! Qual é o problema? (Yes, I am undergoing liberation there indeed! What's the problem?)" And his friend said nothing else. Then Peterson went on to tell me that there would be a party in Mato Alto: "Do you know what? The father-of-saint there said that on Monday he is going to receive vibrations coming directly from the devil himself, from Lucifer! I think this thing only happens once or twice in the whole year! A lot of people from Rocinha want to attend it... Are you going too?" I told him that I was not sure. He replied: "Eu também não sei. A Samira quer que eu vá mas eu estou em processo de libertação dessas coisa! Você sabe... (I am not sure either, it is Samira who wants me to go but I am undergoing a liberation process from these things! You know...)" I replied: "Sure!"

Libertação toda sexta-feira / Liberation service every Friday

Samira told me in the evening that her aunt knew "como prender o santo" (how to hold the saint, i.e., to avoid possession)! But she also said it was something very hard to do for people that often got possessed. That same evening we walked to the beach and soon after we got there, Peterson "virou no santo" (got possessed). Samira was in fact hoping that this would happen because she needed to talk to the Pomba-Gira (a female spirit) that Peterson carried with him. This Pomba-Gira consulted Samira and talking to her on the sand, near the water, the spirit made Samira cry. I tried not to hear the conversation at that time, as I felt that something deeply intimate was going on between Samira and that Pomba-Gira. But Samira said it was ok for me to know, no secret. She had heard from Pomba-Gira that a girl that Samira used to date had made an offering for an Orixá

to cause Samira's death. A mother-of-saint had been mentoring the ex-girlfriend and helped with everything. Peterson's Pomba-Gira had told Samira that the offering had been done to an Orixá called Omolu. They had even tried to place some charms in Samira's house, Pomba-Gira said. Trying to wipe the tears from her sweet, round face, Samira sobbed: "I am crying out of anger! Why do they have to do that to me?" A few minutes in silence and Samira told me: "Quero ir para esse Culto de Libertação que tem toda sexta-feira na Raiz (I want to go to this Liberation Service that takes place every Friday in [a place called] Root)". I told her I would like to go with her and she said: "Now?" I replied: "Is it on now?" We rushed back to Rocinha. Peterson had decided to stay at the beach by himself; even the Pomba-Gira had left him at that point. Samira and I ended the night in front of a church that looked more like a house. It was so crowded that we had to watch everything from the outside. Ten minutes standing outside and Samira decided to give it up. She took a motorcycle-taxi up to her home and only the smell of burned fuel was left behind as the motorcycle fumed uphill.

Isso de libertação é mentira, bicha! / This liberation thing is a lie, butterfly!

I told Priscilla's friend, who was called Cacá, that I had been kicked out of the UCKG by a group of bouncers working at the church. I told him the whole story, that apparently they had seen me writing on a piece of paper during the service and thought that I was a TV Globo reporter. So they had removed me from the service by force, body searched me and stolen my notes before escorting me out of the church. Instead of being sympathetic to me, however, Cacá scolded me: "Mas por que que você vai na Universal também? Num lugar desses! (But why do you go to the UCKG? A place like this!)" I told him that I had been going there because I was interested in their liberation services. To which he promptly replied:

“Libertação? Tá, tá! Isso de libertação é mentira, bicha! Deixa de ser boba!
(Liberation? Ok, ok! This liberation thing is a lie, butterfly! Stop being stupid!)”

Libertação e a vitória! / Libertação and the victory!

It was the first days of 2010. Francielle, Menem and Laila finally had taken me to visit their own evangelical church, called Maranatha, located in Copacabana. The church was operating in what looked like a former cinema theatre. It was common at that time in Rio de Janeiro for evangelical churches to take over buildings of cinemas that were going out of business. During the service, there were people playing instruments and a lot of music at the church. The focus of the service had not been on liberation. Nonetheless, the old pastor in charge of the service ended up mentioning liberation at some point. At the beginning of the prayers he had said: “Brother, give freedom for the Holy Spirit to flow in you, ok?” And later, after many minutes of intense and emotional prayer he concluded the moment by saying: “Senhor, dai-nos a libertação e a vitória! (Lord give us liberation and victory!)” Everyone clapped intensely.

Libertação lá no Gelson / Liberation at Gelson’s

On the 6th of January 2010, Peterson passed by me when I was walking back home with Amélia. He had not seen me, so I grabbed him by the arm and said: “When are we going to macumba again?” He laughed and replied: “Vamos sim... Mas só se for aquela de desobsessão, de libertação lá no Gelson, tá! (Yes, let’s go... But only if we go to that one of desobsession (exorcism), of liberation, that will

take place at Gelson's, ok!)" I agreed to it and he told me that he would talk to me later because he was in a hurry. And he left walking towards Valão Street, clad as usual, all in black.

Cultos de libertação? / Liberation services?

When we were travelling in the Brazilian Northeast, Amélia and I passed by a church in her hometown (Guaraciaba do Norte) and I noticed a sign painted on an external wall bearing the times of the "Cultos de Libertação (Liberation Services)". Even in Guaraciaba these services were taking hold, although talking to different people I gathered that Catholicism was still more important in the town, at least for Amélia's family and friends. On the 21st of January 2010, I visited Kadu's mother in her house. This was even further into the interior of Ceará state. Amélia, Maria Beatriz and I took a ride on the back of a truck for about 30 minutes in order to get to her village. Kadu's mother lived in the same village as Priscilla's mother, Lucy, and the two ladies knew each other well. Priscilla used to say that Kadu was her cousin. Kadu's mother was very dry in my conversation with her. Sitting on a dark purple sofa in her living room, she told me: "Eu me preocupo com o Kadu. Tem que libertar esse espírito do homossexualismo dele! Não aceito esse negócio de querer ser mulher não, nasceu homem tem que morrer homem (I worry about Kadu. This spirit of homosexuality needs to be liberated from him! I do not accept this business of wanting to be a woman. If he was born a man, he has to die as a man)". Lucy, who had a somehow more relaxed attitude towards the topic, looked at me and blinked. So I asked Kadu's mother: "Como que ele pode ser liberto? Cultos de libertação? (How can he be liberated? Liberation services?)" She said: "Não é nem tanto o culto, só da pessoa aceitar Jesus ela já vai sendo liberta! A pessoa tem que querer que Jesus liberte! (It is not so much the service, if the person accepts Jesus she starts to be liberated already! If the person wants it, Jesus

liberates!)” She became more comfortable with us and offered us something to drink. She then said that once in a while Kadu used to call her crying. He asked her to pray for him. “Nada no Rio presta! Meu filho Kadu era evangélico até ir para lá! O meu outro filho que morava no Rio voltou um dia para me visitar de surpresa e o inimigo fez com que ele saísse de casa uma noite, ele caiu de moto e morreu! (Nothing in Rio is any good! My son Kadu was an evangelical person until he went there! My other son who lived in Rio came back to visit us one day by surprise and the enemy made him go out one night. He fell from his motorcycle and died!)” We did not stay much longer as it was getting dark and Amélia wanted to return to Guaraciaba that same day. I thanked the woman and tried to hug her without success. Later on I heard some gossip that Kadu’s brother got very rich working with illegal schemes in Rocinha. Rumour had it that he was counterfeiting credit cards, something that Kadu himself had never told me.

Libertação fraca / Weak liberation

I climbed up the low wall in front of Francielle’s house, put my head in front of the window and asked her father, who was sitting on the sofa watching television, if Francille was at home. It happened that her father was not alone that day. Francielle was in the kitchen and asked me to come in. In the living room, her father was in the company of an old lady, Francielle’s aunt. I walked through the living room feeling a bit awkward to be there while they were having guests. As I talked to Francielle in the kitchen, I heard her aunt complaining: “Isso é demônio, Sr Francisco! Mas por que que tem tanta oração mas não tira isso dela? Sabe por quê? Isso é igreja fraca, de libertação fraca! (This is the devil, Mr Francisco! But why is it that there is so much prayer and they don’t take it away from her? Do you know why? This is because it is a weak church, of weak liberation!)” I believe that the old lady was referring to Francielle’s sister – Laila, who had been having some issues then – and also to her mistrust in Laila’s church in Copacabana.

Obrigado, Senhor, pela libertação! / Thank you, Lord, for the liberation!

It was Julinho's birthday party on the 6th of March 2010. His mother (Babi's sister called Luna) had invited me to the party. Most people from our beco in Rocinha were also invited to the party, which took place at a private club near Barra da Tijuca. There was lots of food, lots of colourful balloons everywhere, people laughing in a beautiful garden and many children playing around. Just before the time came to sing "Parabéns" (Happy Birthday), an evangelical song was played out loud. It said: "Obrigado, Senhor, pela libertação! (Thank you, Lord, for the liberation!)" Towards the end of the song, Julinho's uncle said a few words in prayer for him and for all of us who were at the party. During that moment, and only that moment, all seemed to have gone quiet at the party.

Nesse culto de libertação / In this liberation service

Paizinha and her two sisters (Mirna and Olga) decided that they would take me to a very good liberation service near the Resident's Association in Rocinha (AMABB). We had arranged to go out at around 7:00pm. At 7:01pm, the three of them showed up in front of my house in long dresses, hair combed with gel, bringing with them Mirna's very young children. We walked together to AMABB and from there we had to climb a staircase to reach a very small church located on the rooftop of a three-storey building. As we sat down, the pastor was already on his knees, praying. The pastor was a young man, married and with many children around him. He was very passionate and loud in his prayers. He prayed for the youth: "Liberta a mocidade! (Liberate the young people!)" He then prayed for couples: "Liberta os casais! (Liberate couples!)" After this prayer we sang songs

from a book called “Harpa Evangélica” (Evangelical Harp), that most people carried around together with their Bibles. The lyrics said: “Liberta os pecadores do pecado! Liberdade plena só com Jesus! (Liberate the sinners from sin! Full freedom, only with Jesus!)” After signing that song, the pastor invited another man to take over the microphone for a few minutes. This guy was even younger, almost a teenager. He prayed with his eyes closed: “Jesus me disse que nesse culto de libertação Jesus vai tirar doenças! A prisão do pecado? Precisamos sair dessa prisão, irmãos! (Jesus told me that in this liberation service Jesus will take away diseases! The prison of sin? We need to get out of this prison, brothers!)” And people clapped and clapped. Towards the end of the service, Paizinha was invited to stand up and give her life testimonial. She said: “Primeiro eu ia para igreja só para olhar e ficar liberta dos demônios! Depois entrei de cabeça e digo que Deus existe! Ele é real e já fez obras na minha vida! (First I used to go to church just to look and to be liberated from demons! Later on I dived into it and I tell you that God exists! He is real and he has done wonders in my life!)” The pastor concluded the night by telling us that we should be faithful to God and reminding us what could happen to us if God got angry with us. “Earthquakes and the world falling on top of our heads!” – he said. He used the then recent earthquakes in Haiti (which occurred on the 12th of January 2010) as an example of God’s punishment: “God kills to punish! What if he decided to let this whole rock upon which Rocinha rests fall down on top our heads? Watch out!!!”

Chapter 7: Liberada(o) / Liberated

Priberam Dictionary of Portuguese Language:

Liberada

fem. sing. part. pass. de liberar / fem. sing. past. pple. of to liberate

Liberar

v. tr. / v. trans.

1. Tornar livre. / To turn free.
2. Libertar (de dívida ou obrigação). / To liberate (from debt or obligation).
3. Entregar cédulas ao tomador de ações até definitiva colocação destas. / To give bonds to shareholders till the definite issuing of their equities.

The samba of Liberada(o) / Liberated:

O negócio lá é liberado mesmo, mané! / The thing there is really liberated, man!

Ficando mais gay... mais liberado! / Becoming more gay... more liberated!

Só não era liberada como eu sou hoje! / I was just not liberated as I am today!

Ele quer se liberar mas não sei... / He wants to liberate himself but I don't know...

Já é liberado, meu bem!!! / Liberated already, my darling!!!

Tá toda liberada agora! / She is all liberated now!

Sou uma bicha liberada, mãe! / I am a liberated fag, mom!

Já foi liberado para trabalhar / Liberated to work already

Esse pessoal é muito liberado! / These people are so liberated!

Eu prefiro ser uma bicha liberada! / I prefer to be a liberated fag!

Tá tudo liberado!!! / Everything is liberated!!!

The parade of Liberada(o) / Liberated:

O negócio lá é liberado mesmo, mané! / The thing there is really liberated, man!

The 16th of February 2010 was a day of carnival in Rio de Janeiro. Armando, Mazinho, Gustavo and myself decided to go to Copacabana to watch a special event that only happens once a year. This was a formal Gay (LGBT) party called “Baile Gala Gay” that took place in a traditional Copacabana nightclub. We had no tickets to get into the party, though, as they were too expensive. The big party for us was not really to get into the nightclub. That was not the point. The idea was to watch other people walk into the club wearing their gay carnival costumes: many of them very extravagant, some very posh and some very humorous. There was also the chance to see some celebrities, the most famous celebrities of the LGBT scene including transvestites that had once appeared on television or were singers in different bars; people known to the wider public. Different television channels were also present, thus making of “Gala Gay” a much more prestigious event, guaranteeing that guests would be on television. As for the guests, walking down to the entrance of the club was a bit like a red-carpet-Hollywood moment. There were also a lot of people just like us, watching everything from outside. This crowd sometimes shouted at the guests, laughed at them, tried to talk to them. Somehow, the outsiders were part of the big show too. Gurgel, one of our neighbours, was not

present at the party, neither inside nor outside the club. Nonetheless, he was glued to his television, following all the footage from his living room in Rocinha. The following day, Gurgel saw me passing in front of his house going towards the bakery to buy some milk. He stopped me to ask me if I had really gone to the “Gala Gay” live. I confirmed so and he laughed. He said: “Cara, vi tudo pela televisão! Tinha até homem beijando na boca!!! O negócio lá é liberado mesmo, mané! (Dude, I saw everything on television! There were even men kissing on the mouth!!! The thing there is really liberated, man!)” And I felt a mix of prejudice, interest and amusement in his attitude. But I was used to Gurgel and his slightly homophobic comments and I always felt that he also held some deep fascination with the gay scene, especially with transvestites. Priscilla was one of his favourite topics of conversation with me.

Ficando mais gay... mais liberado! / Becoming more gay... more liberated!

James was around 20 years old, thin, with dirty blond hair. He had travelled all the way from England to work as a volunteer at MFI. At first, he was a bit quiet but as soon as his Portuguese skills got better he started to become more talkative. Armando and I were at MFI with James that afternoon. We were talking about our friend Gustavo and how he was such a nice guy, very friendly. Gustavo was a guy that people liked to pick on because he was married and had a baby daughter but still many people (such as Armando, Carmélia and Mazinho) thought that he could well be gay because he did not really conform to their expectations of how a heterosexual man should behave; he was far from a latino stud. Perhaps inspired by previous comments made about Gustavo’s sexuality, James told us that day in early February 2010 that he thought Gustavo was changing. In his words: “Acho que o Gustavo está se liberando, ficando mais gay... mais liberado! (I think that Gustavo is liberating himself, becoming more gay... more liberated!)” Armando and I both laughed.

Só não era liberada como eu sou hoje! / I was just not as liberated as I am today!

Ryle was another volunteer at MFI. A short light-haired Australian guy that used to teach English while I was there. We even taught some classes together. He was very shy but it seemed to me that he enjoyed the liveliness of life in Rocinha. Just before he returned to Australia he organised a big party at the hostel where he used to live and work in the neighbourhood of Flamengo, near the central zone of Rio de Janeiro. He told me that he wanted a lot of people at his party and that I should invite anyone I would like to attend it. And so, most people involved with teaching and administration at MFI ended up going to his party. Many students from the English class I taught also attended. Although Priscilla was not involved in MFI, I invited her to come along with us too. She was a bit hesitant about accepting the invitation, though. She asked me if she would not be out of place there. I said: "No! We will have fun!!!" But she worried about what to wear for the occasion. It was the 20th of October 2009. At the time that we had arranged to meet in front of MFI, Priscilla did not show up. I thought she had given up on us. So, I decided to run up to her house and see what was going on. I had to get one of Priscilla's neighbours to open the downstairs gate for me because it was locked. "Is she not at home?" I thought out loud. As I went up and knocked on Priscilla's door, her older brother answered. I was certain then that Priscilla was not at home. He asked me to come in. He said that Priscilla was in the bedroom trying to decide what to wear. As soon as she saw me, the only thing that she said was: "Melhor ir de calça, né? Vestido não, né? Mais adequado para o evento, né? (Better to wear trousers, right? No dress, right? More adequate for the event, right?)" I told her: "We are laaate, Priscilla!" And she laughed while putting on very tight jeans. However, as if to compensate for the trousers, Priscilla poured thick make-up on her face, including some golden glitter on her eyelids. Her mouth was once again dripping with lipstick and she chose one of her highest high heels to put on. As she walked into the living room, her brother, who was eating a full plate of rice and beans looked at

her and said: “Funny that in Ceará you were not like that, right, Priscilla? Remember that you would even steal my clothes to wear? Male clothes! My football socks and everything! Look at your trousers; don’t you have something more masculine to wear? You used to dress like a man in Ceará!!!” To which Priscilla replied: “Filho, no Ceará eu já era bicha. Só não era liberada como eu sou hoje! (Son, in Ceará I was a fag already. I was just not liberated as I am today!)” Her brother laughed and shook his head in disapproval. I tried to hurry her on so we could leave. Still, she added to her brother: “Now that my mother has gone back to Ceará, the last thing I need is for you to be annoying me instead of her!” She blew him a wet kiss in the air and we left. We had to walk fast, but that was just impossible. Priscilla was trying to walk elegantly on her high heels but she had to hold on all the walls she found on the way downhill, towards Valão Street. It was hard to stand on her high heels on a very irregular slope. In any case, we made it to the party, looking beautiful.

Ele quer se liberar mas não sei... / He wants to liberate himself but I don’t know...

At least once a week we would gather at Armando’s house. We often watched television together and sometimes he would cook for us too. The number of people coming to those events varied from week to week. Some days we had almost 20 people chatting in his living room. The space was not very big but we squeezed in and occupied the floor when necessary. One of the walls of the room was still red at that time and on a corner table Armando had numerous souvenirs that volunteers had brought him from their many home countries. On the 5th of January 2010, one of my best students and a good friend of mine came for the gathering. Mazinho was very funny and he liked to tell stories, so that day we were listening with amusement to Mazinho telling a story of a cousin of his who had just recently gotten engaged to marry a woman, whom Mazinho referred to as a

“rachada”. I once asked Mazinho about it and he said that he thought the origin of the term was a reference to the “racha”, the “crack” that a lot of people had in between their legs instead of a penis. In any case, the point of discussion that day was that Mazinho was very concerned that his cousin would marry a woman. We laughed at the situation. Mazinho kept a serious face. He added: “É sério gente... eu fico com pena! Dá para ver que ele quer se liberar mas não sei, ele não consegue parece. Tá na cara que aquele menino é viado, gente! Coitado... (It’s serious, people... I am sorry for him! It is possible to see that he wants to liberate himself but I don’t know, it seems that he is not able to. It is obvious that he is a fag, people! Poor thing...)” And then some of us laughed even harder, while others hardly laughed at all.

Já é liberado, meu bem!!! / Liberated already, my darling!!!

There were two main routes out of Rocinha: one going down Valão Street, which led to the neighbourhood of São Conrado; and another one going uphill, which lead to the neighbourhood called Gávea. I lived much closer to Valão and usually used that route. Leaving from my house, though, at a certain point I could either turn left or right in one of the alleyways to get to Valão Street. The turn to the left passed in front of the infamous lanhouse (internet café) before reaching Valão Street down below. Some people that I knew always preferred to turn right and avoid the other alleyway. Different people tended to avoid different places in Rocinha that they thought to be dirty, full of people they called weird or stinky. The lanhouse alleyway was one of those places some people liked to avoid. There were always traffickers around there, mud on the ground, people drinking at small bars, a married creepy guy that liked to stare at me and once invited himself to my house, and so on. Nevertheless, that was also the alleyway that led to Priscilla’s house and to Cacá’s house and a place where I could be certain to find some of the PAFYC guys. Peterson, Samira, a drunken woman that became my friend and many

people that I liked, also liked to hang out near the lanhouse. Going down the lanhouse alleyway on the 14th of September 2009, I met Peterson talking to a woman, who looked evangelical to me judging by her long-sleeved dress. I waited for him to finish his conversation and bought some sweets in the meantime. When Peterson was finished with his friend, he came up to me from my right side and Patrick, one of the PAFYC guys, joined me on the other side. Patrick used a very common way that the PAFYC members had to greet each other, saying: “E ai, viado?!? (What is up faggot?!?)” And then I lifted my right hand and we clapped hands, a sort of “high five” movement, as was fashionable with the PAFYC members. Other young gay guys followed Patrick and gathered around us while Peterson was telling Patrick off by saying: “Look at you, Patrick! Behave like a man!!!” – to which followed a general booing from the other guys. A guy in the PAFYC group with short blond hair and green eyes added: “What’s the problem with you, Peterson?!?” Peterson laughed, he was obviously joking. But Patrick did not miss the chance to add a final comment: “Peterson, deixa de ser encubado! Que dia que você vai se liberar? Todo mundo aqui já é liberado, meu bem!!! (Peterson, stop being incubated [repressed]! When will you free yourself? Everybody here is liberated already, my darling!!!)”

Tá toda liberada agora! / She is totally liberated now!

After spending most of the afternoon at the beach chatting with Larinha and some of her friends, Amélia and I walked home very slowly. The sand in my flip-flops hurt the skin between my toes. For some reason Amélia decided to take the longer way back home, which wound behind Hotel International. This road was a continuation of Avenida Niemeyer (Niemeyer Avenue) and led to the very busy car viaduct that was used as a main stop for public transport in Rocinha. As we got nearer home at the end of Valão Street, we passed by one of our neighbours, Wanessa. She was about 16 years old at that time and was wearing very tight jeans

displaying the curves of her body. Wanessa smiled at us and Amélia said hi. I smiled back. As soon as Wanessa was gone, Amélia turned to me with her eyes wide open and her forehead lifted up in wrinkles. She then covered her mouth while laughing and told me: “Moises... Did you see that? Did you see her clothes? Did you see her lipstick? She used to be so different, Moises! She used to be very evangelical just like her family. She was always at church with her mother and everything... Nobody used to see her walking around the streets!” I just said: “Really?” And Amélia kept talking and clearly enjoying herself: “Agora ela está toda mudada! Sempre por aí nos becos... Usando calça e tudo. Deus sabe o que mais que ela anda fazendo, né! Tá toda liberada agora! (Now she is completely different! Always around in the alleyways... Wearing trousers and everything, God knows what else she is doing, right! She is totally liberated now!)” And Amélia laughed and covered her laugh with her hand again. I could not help but to laugh too. Soon we reached the gate of our house.

Sou uma bicha liberada, mãe! / I am a liberated fag, mom!

On the 14th of July, I went to Priscilla’s house again. She lived on the 3rd floor of a tall building consisting entirely of rental flats. Her mother was telling me all about the latest developments in her long journey going from hospital to hospital trying to get the adequate treatment that her youngest son needs for his backbone. The boy was suffering from a serious problem, his spine was totally out of place and his whole upper body was curved to one side. Maybe this had been a consequence of his heavy lifting work in the countryside of Ceará state, Lucy told me. Priscilla once again was in front of the mirror putting on some make-up before we went out to one of our nocturnal walks at São Conrado beach. Earlier on Priscilla had shown me the tiny pink underwear that she was wearing and had even made a joke about the art of hiding her penis. This art was known in Rocinha as: “trucar o penis”. She explained: “The tighter the underwear, the easier it is to do

it, it holds it tighter!” And she laughed. When she finally got ready to go, I said good-bye to her mother but then they started arguing again. Her mother said that it was too windy to go to the beach wearing just a short dress, such as the one that Priscilla was wearing. Priscilla immediately raised her voice: “I have been a trava [transvestite] for years now, mom! Years!!! Get it into your head that I will not go back to being ‘uma bicha de calças (a fag in trousers)’. So, wind or no wind I will still wear my dress, ok!” Her mother looked at me with funny eyes. She told me that I was looking very well in trousers myself. Priscilla kept shouting: “Nunca! Sou uma bicha liberada, mãe! (Never! I am a liberated fag, mom!)” Priscilla grabbed her small bag from the living room shelf, which was also used to hold the television screen. In that bag she usually kept her keys, sometimes some condoms, sometimes some money and at all times a very sharp little blade. We stormed off to the windy beach.

Já foi liberado para trabalhar / Liberated to work already

I did not know Jango very well at that time. On the 30th of June 2009, Auro stopped to chat with me in front of my house on his way back from his job at a five-star hotel in Barra da Tijuca. He was sometimes called to work as a waiter in different places around Rio. He was very relieved that day, he told me, putting his right hand on his chest and exhaling as he looked up. “What happened?” – I asked him. He said that he had heard from Jango earlier and that he was relieved to know that his friend was doing ok after a long period of “preceito e doutrina (precept and doctrine)” to which he had gone through as part of a ritual in Candomblé. Jango had spent days locked up in a Candomblé yard on the outskirts of Rio, he said. “These rituals are very good. But if anything goes wrong it could be a disaster. People need to know what they are doing!” – he kept telling me. But Jango was well and could even talk to people again, for a while he was not even supposed to speak much. Auro said: “Ele ainda tem que cumprir certas restrições mas já foi liberado

para trabalhar (He still has to follow certain restrictions but he has been liberated to work already)". And even without knowing Jango, I was enjoying the conversation very much. I invited Auro to come in but he declined on that occasion. He said that he had to go home and study for a physics exam that he had to sit at his university that week.

Esse pessoal é muito liberado! / These people are too liberated!

Samira, a big group of people and I chatted away very late at night in front of the lanhouse near my place in Rocinha. Many of the people in that group did not live near Valão Street but would just use that spot as a convenient meeting point. There were other groups of gay friends in other parts of Rocinha too, who met in different places and often did not like the PAFYC group; Samira told me. As we talked, a drunken man kept walking up and down the alleyway and whenever he passed by us a lot of people covered up their noses to avoid his foul smell. In between covering her face and not, Tchutchuca told some of his friends about a party that took place in a very high up part of Rocinha, called Cachopa. "There were about 40 men hungry for sex in the party and then there were a few fags, all young fags. It was an amazing party, I had a lot of fun!" I looked at Samira as if asking for confirmation, trying to figure out if he was serious. Samira looked back at me and remarked at the wild sexual activities in which some of these young gay guys got involved. She said that she was always worried that they would end up in trouble some day. She told me: "These guys do things that even the devil would doubt! I just hear stories and have a hard time believing in them myself but later I often find out that these stories are true!" Beijinho Moreno nodded and added disapprovingly: "Verdade... Esse pessoal é muito liberado! Muito rosa!!! Eu, hein! (True... These people are too liberated! Too pink!!! Oh my!)" Once Auro told me that Beijinho Moreno was the only member of the PAFYC group that had some respect among the older generations of fags in Rocinha. Somehow I felt that

Beijinho Moreno had an ambiguous relationship with the rest of the PAFYC group. He spent a lot of time with them, but clearly did not approve of a lot of the things they used to do. Mary remarked at how perfectly feminine Beijinho Moreno looked; and he thanked her. But then Mary said: “Mas acho mais bonito quem é viado por dentro e homem por fora! (But I find those who are fags inside and men on the outside to be better-looking!)” Beijinho replied: “I have not decided yet!” And Samira jumped in too: “This is what I think: people have to choose one or the other, either you are a fag or you are a transvestite! I don’t care... What I don’t like is this business of people that don’t know what they are... some go halfway only. They keep walking around wearing male trousers, trainers, and put on female tops that only cover their tits... Just like this one that Tchutchuca is wearing! Look at him! Long hair, short top, beard and trousers... Tchutchuca is fucked up!” I looked at Beijinho Moreno and he said that he thought he was still too young to make a definite decision on that front. Samira then told him: “Shut up! You look like a perfect girl already.” Beijinho Moreno was around 12 years old then.

Eu prefiro ser uma bicha liberada! / I prefer to be a liberated fag!

Priscilla and I decided to go out on the night of the 6th of July 2009. I went to meet her at her house around the time that we had agreed upon. I was not surprised to find that she was not yet ready. “It will take me a while longer to get dressed, fairy! Sit down!” – she said. Priscilla obviously liked to take her time getting dressed. Her mother had the television on blasting in their small living room. At the same time, she kept chatting with me and watching a soap opera. Meanwhile, Priscilla was spending more time in front of a big mirror that she kept in the bedroom. Her house had only one bedroom and about five or six people lived there. Priscilla used to share the space with two older brothers and their respective female partners, who usually slept there too. During those days in July, however, the house was extra busy because they were also hosting Lucy and Priscilla’s youngest brother,

who were both visiting from Ceará. So, during the night, there were mattresses all over the place, I was told. Once in a while, Priscilla would call me into the bedroom to ask my opinion on what dress or what shoes to put on. Sometimes she would try different options and would come to the living room trying to walk as a top model. “I am more beautiful than Gisele Bündchen [a famous Brazilian model]!!!” She said that during one of her strolls in the living room, wearing a mini skirt with fluffy tiger patterns. At this, Lucy looked at me cringing. She shook her head in disapproval and said again that she would like Priscilla to at least wear trousers instead of skirts. “Just like you wear trousers yourself!” – Lucy pointed to me. Priscilla put her hands on her hips and from the height of her massive high heels pronounced that she would never do so, never: “Escuta... Não, não vou usar calça! Eu prefiro ser uma bicha liberada mesmo! (Listen... No, I will not wear trousers! I prefer to be a liberated fag indeed!)” Only the television spoke for a while and Priscilla then turned to me: “If I wore men’s clothes my mother could easily tell people that I am not queer. That is what she wants. But I *am* queer!!!” As she returned to the bedroom to try on a new outfit, I could still hear her saying: “Melhor mesmo é ser liberado! (It is much better to be liberated!)”

Tá tudo liberado!!! / Everything is liberated!!!

On Sundays, big parties often took place in Rocinha. There was a weekly event known as: “Baile Funk do Emoções”. Hundreds of people from Rocinha and from outside would gather at a party location in Estrada da Gávea (Gávea Road) known as “Emoções (Emotions)”. From around 10pm onwards people would dance to the rhythm of funk until daybreak. I was often invited to go to the baile by Ricky or Moreno and many times I had a lot of fun partying with them. I was not the best at dancing but I certainly enjoyed the beat of the music. On top of that, some of the lyrics also grabbed all my attention:

Demoro! Oba Oba! / Sure! Yay Yay! (by MC Dentinho)

Nesse verão eu não quero nem saber / This summer I don't even want to know

Vou convidar os amigos para curtir um lazer / I am going to invite my friends to have some fun

Já tá desenrolado / It is sorted out already

Tá tudo na moral / It is all arranged

Piscina liberada, churrasquinho e futebol / Swimming pool liberated, barbecue and football

Só pra quem gosta de curtir, zuar, ficar de boa / Only for those who like to have a good time, have fun, relax

É só me responder: Demorô! Oba! Obaaa! / Only answer me: Sure! Yay! Yayyy!

(...)

E só pra mulherada eu dou um papo na humildade / And just for the girls I will say something with humility

Quero todas mergulhando na piscina a vontade / I want all of you diving into the swimming pool with gusto

Biquini cavadinho pra geral perder a linha / Small cut bikinis for everyone to get out of control

Comendo linguiça e tomando uma cervinha / Eating sausage and drinking a little beer

Depois de várias cerva / After many beers

Não vem que não tem / There is no excuse

Tá tudo liberado e ninguém é de ninguém / Everything is liberated and nobody belongs to anybody

Tá tudo liberadoooo!!! / Everything is liberatedddd!!!

Chapter 8: Liberdade II / Freedom II

Priberam Dictionary of Portuguese Language:

Liberdade

(L. libertas, -atis)

s. f. / sb. fem.

1. Direito de proceder conforme nos pareça, contanto que esse direito não vá contra o direito de outrem. / Right to proceed as we wish, considering that this right does not go against the right of someone else.
2. Condição do homem ou da nação que goza de liberdade. / Condition of the man or the nation that enjoys freedom.
3. Conjunto das ideias liberais ou dos direitos garantidos ao cidadão. / Set of liberal ideas or rights granted to a citizen.
4. [Figurado] Ousadia. / [Figurative] Boldness.
5. Franqueza. / Frankness.
6. Licença. / Licence.
7. Desassombro. / Resolution.
8. Demasiada familiaridade. / Excessive familiarity.

The samba of Liberdade/Freedom (Part II):

Mais liberdade / More freedom

A liberdade que você tem em casa / The freedom that you have at home

Cheia de liberdade / Full of freedom (or liberty)
Pintando a Liberdade / Painting Freedom
Liberdade é... / Freedom is...
Estátua da Liberdade / The Statue of Liberty
Quero é ter minha liberdade, rapaz! / I want to have my freedom, man!
Sentiu a liberdade, mona? / Did you feel the freedom, darling?
Ela acha que sexo é liberdade! / She thinks that sex is freedom!
Liberdade também é uma cadeia / Freedom is a jail too
BTV deu liberdade aos gays da favela! / BTV gave freedom to the favela gays!
Cadê a liberdade? / Where is freedom?
Saudade da minha liberdade! / I miss my freedom!
Pára dessas liberdades / Stop with those freedoms
Pelo menos temos a nossa liberdade! / At least we have our freedom!
Um sonho de liberdade / The Shawshank Redemption
Excesso de liberdade / An excess of freedom
Com quem ele tem liberdade / With those whom he has freedom
Liberdade para falar / Freedom to talk
A verdadeira liberdade / The true freedom
A coitada da menina não tem liberdade / The poor girl has no freedom
Condenado em liberdade / Condemned while in freedom
Liberdade aos cativos / Freedom for the prisoners
Isso não é liberdade / This is not freedom
Canguru, liberdade? / Kangaroo, freedom?
Não há liberdade sem... / There is no freedom without...
Ogum é a liberdade em pessoa / Ogum is freedom personified
Liberdade de expressão / Freedom of expression
“Dar um it” é tomar liberdade / “Dar um it” is to take freedom (or liberty)
Só querem liberdade / All they want is freedom
Liberdade para o Sorriso! / Freedom to Sorriso!
Querem a liberdade de volta / They want freedom back
O país da liberdade / The country of freedom

Toma liberdade demais / Takes too much freedom
A Umbanda dá essa liberdade / Umbanda gives people this freedom
Liberdade para perguntar as coisas / Freedom to ask things
Liberdade de imprensa / Freedom of the press
Confundir brincadeira com liberdade / To confuse jokes with freedom
Freedom, freedom... / Liberdade, liberdade...
Queremos é liberdade! / What we want is freedom!
Liberdade de andar / Freedom to walk
Maternidade tira a liberdade / Motherhood takes freedom away
Expressão da liberdade / Expression of freedom
Privado de liberdade / Deprived of freedom
Não ter liberdade / Not to have freedom
Sobre a liberdade e a prisão / About freedom and prison
Negro é a raiz da liberdade! / Black is the root of freedom!
Liberdade para escolher / Freedom to choose
A liberdade das travas na Europa / The freedom of transvestites in Europe
Tal liberdade / So-called freedom

The parade of Liberdade/Freedom (Part II):

Mais liberdade / More freedom

During my first weeks in Rocinha, I always tried to eat something – fruit-salad, açaí smoothie, pão-de-queijo (cheese bread) – while passing by the drug selling points (bocas de fumo) in the favela. There was a big one on Valão Street, the main way that lead me to my house. Whenever I had to pass there, I kept my eyes glued on my food and walked fast hoping that no trafficker would stop me for

an interrogation, to question my presence, to ask for my fieldnotes, or anything like that. As I got to know some more of my neighbours, I shared this concern with them. I was talking to Dona Bela when her daughter laughed at me and said that in Rocinha I would have no trouble at all. She told me that people in Rocinha could come and go wherever they wanted. It was much better there than in other favelas. “As pessoas tem mais liberdade aqui (People have more freedom here)”, she said. And then she explained that the sheer number of strangers that come in and out of Rocinha on a daily basis to buy and abuse drugs made it very difficult to control who was coming in and out. Within a few weeks, I was already passing by the drug selling points with no food in my hands.

On the 16th of August 2009, I was hanging out at MFI when a conversation started with Paizinha. She told me that she did not like the UCKG at all and she thought the only reason that her father kept going to services there was because he wanted to achieve financial success. “He says that our own church is weak, that we have been going there for such a long time and nothing changes in our lives in financial terms!” – she told me. “Mas não é só isso não, ele também gosta da Universal porque eles dão muito mais liberdade para os fiéis no jeito de se vestir, se portar e tudo mais. Nisso a Universal é igual a Igreja Católica e não a Igreja Evangélica. Aliás, muita gente nem aceita a Universal como sendo uma Igreja Evangélica de verdade. Eles usam sal grosso, rosas, umas coisas que parece mais macumba do que Igreja Evangélica! (But that is not all, he also likes the UCKG because they give much more freedom to their followers in the way they should dress, behave and everything else. In that respect the UCKG is like the Catholic Church and not the Evangelical Church. By the way, many people do not even accept the UCKG as a real Evangelical Church. They use coarse salt, roses, things that look more like macumba stuff than Evangelical Church!)”

Auro told me on the 6th of March 2010 that there was a big difference between himself and our friend Mazinho. He said: “Eu tenho casa para trepar, então tenho mais liberdade que Mazinho, entendeu? Deus não dá asa para cobra, meu bem! (I have a house in which to fuck, therefore I have more freedom than

Mazinho, do you understand? God would not give wings to a snake, dear!)” I guess he was referring to his concern that Mazinho would abuse his sexual freedom if he did not share his house with his mother.

When I was in Rocinha I would sometimes visit a group called ASPA (Ação Social Padre Anchieta / Father Anchieta Social Action). They started off in 1963 as a branch of the Catholic Church that used to do a lot of social work in Rocinha. It has been argued that during the 1980s, it was the Catholic Church that led most social work activities that took place in favelas (Diniz in Boschi 1982). On the 31st of March 2009, I was at ASPA and talked to a person involved in social work there. He told me that at that time they were mostly engaged in teaching children during the day and basic literacy to adults at nights. In the past, they had been a much bigger organisation and had done a lot more, he said. Their location in a grand old building in a prime location on Boiadeiro Street was a testimony to that glorious past. I stayed for the adult literacy class that night and in that pale-beige room I met some excited students. An old lady started chatting to me and told me that she really wanted to learn how to read. She just could not wait to learn, even though she was well past her 60s! I asked her if reading would make a lot of difference in her life. She replied: “Ah, sabendo ler a gente tem mais liberdade para andar sozinho, achar endereços, ler as coisas, né!!! (Ah, knowing how to read, people have more freedom to walk around alone, find addresses, and read things, don’t they!!!)

A liberdade que você tem em casa / The freedom that you have at home

I told Amélia about the French girl that Armando had asked me to accommodate in my rooms for a week until she could find another place to live. Amélia laughed and said: “Coitado! Ela vai é tirar a liberdade que você tem em casa!!! (Poor you! She will take away the freedom that you have at home!!!)” A few

days later Marie arrived and shortly after that she ended up moving upstairs to live in a room that Amélia decided to let her.

Cheia de liberdade / Full of freedom (or liberty)

Maria Beatriz was baptised at the Catholic Church in Largo do Boaideiro on the 26th of April 2009. The ceremony was crowded, so crowded that Maria Beatriz's father had to watch everything from outside, through the window. After the ceremony, Amélia hosted a party for Maria Beatriz and when the party was over, we started to gossip, while cleaning the mess people had left behind. At one point Amélia smiled and told me: "Aquela gringa americana estava cheia de liberdade comigo hoje, encostando a cabeça no meu ombro durante a festa! Você viu? Eu não dei essa liberdade para ela não... (That American gringa was full of freedom [liberty] with me today, putting her head on my shoulder during the party! Did you see it? I did not give her that freedom...)" I looked funny at Amélia and she started laughing.

Amélia came down to my house to chat on a fresh morning on the 23rd of April 2009. She complained to me, laughingly: "O Cícero estava cheio de liberdade pro meu lado hoje! Disse que era pra eu abrir a porta pra ele. Eu disse que não podia e aí ele me disse que estava de pau duro! O coitado, nem sabe o que está falando. (Cícero was full of freedom [liberty] towards me today! He told me to open the door for him. I told him that I could not do it and then he told me that he had a hard on! Poor man, he does not even know what he is saying.)" I jokingly replied: "Será? (Do you think?)" And she gave me a soft slap on my hand.

Pintando a Liberdade / Painting Freedom

Babi showed me a letter in a fancy envelope that she had recently received from the “Ministro dos Esportes (Minister of Sports)” granting the donation of some balls to a project in which she used to help in São Paulo. She was obviously very proud of the letter. She told me: “O Governo Federal doou essas bolas como parte de um projeto chamado ‘Pintando a Liberdade’ (The Federal Government donated these balls under a scheme that is called ‘Painting Freedom’)”. I did some research on the project on that same day and I found out that its name was due to the fact that the balls had been manufactured by prisoners in Brazilian jails, who had received salaries and reductions on the total amount of time that they would spend in jail if they joined the scheme.

Liberdade é... / Freedom is...

The PAC photography group went to visit Insitituto Moreira Salles (IMS) on the 15th of April 2009. This was a non-profit institute set up by a Brazilian millionaire and it was dedicated to the promotion of “culture”. The IMS was located in Gávea, very close to Rocinha. After the visit our group was chatting on a staircase outside one of the buildings. We started to talk about some philosophical-sounding subjects. Maxwell, one of the photography students, put on a tone of “philosophical sobriety” while he spoke, half-jokingly. He was making observations about “life”, some of which I thought seemed to resonate with his evangelical background. He mentioned: “Life is good but one must know how to live in order to achieve eternal life! It’s not enough to think about the present only, the now”. I listened carefully to them, waiting for a good opportunity to bring up the theme of freedom in the debate. When Maxwell had finished telling the others that he wanted to move to California someday, I asked them: “Since you are speaking like philosophers, what would you have to say about the topic of freedom?” Maxwell replied: “Liberdade? Liberdade é andar de patins in line! É simples!!! (Freedom? Freedom is to inline skate! It is simple!!!)” Then, Paulinha laughed and said:

“Liberdade é tirar um passarinho da gaiola porque o coitado não fez nada para ficar preso assim! (Freedom is to take a bird out of the cage because the poor thing did not do anything to be kept like that!) At this, the group clapped and cheered. Then she took advantage of the moment and added: “Liberdade é liberar a maconha porque foi Deus quem criou a plantinha e por isso ela não faz o mal! (Freedom is to liberate marijuana because it was God who created the little plant and therefore it does no harm!)” People laughed even more but Maxwell shook his head in disapproval. They then asked me what I thought about freedom. I did not know what to say but made up a narrative. I said: “Liberdade é não julgar os outros? (Freedom is to not judge others?)” And Maxwell promptly replied: “Não, agora você está errado! Querendo ou não todos nós seremos julgados um dia! Mas não vou ficar discutindo religião não... (No, now you are wrong! Whether you want it or not everybody will be judged some day! But I am not going to discuss religion...)” Soon one of the photography teachers, Enzo, came over and asked us to lower the tone of our conversation as we were apparently making too much noise. We should mind our behaviour at least while at the IMS, he said.

Renata found out that she was sick, with a light pneumonia. Armando and I visited her at her house and tried to cheer her up. There I saw a newspaper article pinned on her wall with a text by a Brazilian philosopher called Marilena Chauui. The text talked about freedom. It said: “A liberdade é a capacidade para darmos um sentido novo ao que parecia fatalidade, transformando a situação de fato numa realidade nova criada por nossa ação. (Freedom is the capacity to give new meaning to what looked like misfortune, therefore transforming a *de facto* situation into a new reality created by our action.)” Renata was in bed, with fever, but likely aware of the possibility of creating a new reality out of her misfortune.

Afrânio, Armando’s right-hand at MFI, was starting a new project with Matt, related to health and fitness. For that purpose, they decorated a section of the rooftop of Pizza Lit (a pizza bar) and invited us for the first classes. I went there on the 18th of September 2009, with Menem. On arrival, I was amazed to see the messages chosen to decorate the walls. One read: “Liberdade é o movimento da

sua vontade! (Freedom is the movement of your will!)” And another one: “Amar a liberdade é amor aos outros! Amor ao poder é o amor a nós mesmos! (To love freedom is to love others! To love power is to love ourselves!)” I talked to Afrânio after class about those phrases. I listened to him tell me about an artist friend of his who had done the paintwork and helped him to choose the messages. While we talked, sweat poured down my face.

Estátua da Liberdade / The Statue of Liberty

On the 8th of March 2009, I went to Barra Shopping Mall with Amélia and Maria Beatriz. This was the biggest shopping mall in Barra da Tijuca, a *nouveau riche* neighbourhood to the west of Rocinha. Amélia looked around for a long time but only bought a few items of clothing for Maria Beatriz. On our way back to Rocinha, as we walked to the bus stop I noticed a big replica of “Estátua da Liberdade (the Statue of Liberty)” decorating the façade of the New York City Centre, an annexe building of the mall. Maria Beatriz then asked: “Onde mais tem uma Estátua da Liberdade como essa? (Where else is there a Statue of Liberty like that?)” I said: “New York, you mean?” And she said: “No, I mean, where else in Brazil?” And I couldn’t answer. On the bus, as I was talking to Amélia, she said that she felt sorry for children in Rocinha because they did not have much space available for them to play. She then told me sadly: “Liberdade mesmo era no Ceará que a gente corria solto brincando. Tinha espaço! Isso que era liberdade! (There was real freedom in Ceará, where we used to run loose playing. There was space! That was freedom!)” Maria Beatriz looked at her mother for a minute and then simply turned her head towards the window of the bus. She was staring into the wide green ocean while we passed by “Elevado do Joá”, a part of the Lagoa-Barra road that was built by the sea.

Quero é ter minha liberdade, rapaz! / I want to have my freedom, man!

I was watching television at Amélia's house. This was a rare occasion on which Amélia's husband, Bezerra, was not at work. We all chatted while watching television. She mentioned something about suspecting that a cousin of Bezerra's eldest son was getting involved in drug-trafficking activities. She said that he was probably making good money already. I then joked with Bezerra saying: "It is always an option, right?" And he replied straight away: "Eu não! Não sou doido! Quero é ter minha liberdade, rapaz! Depois nego vai preso ai, no presídio é uma humilhação do caramba! Nego esculacha! (Not me! I am not crazy! I want to have my freedom, man! Those people go to jail and are very humiliated, big time! There is no pity!)" Amélia agreed: "That is what I always tell my son, Moreno!"

Sentiu a liberdade, mona? / Did you feel the freedom, darling?

Auro and I went out for a "rolé" (a stroll) in Rocinha. We decided to take two motorcycle-taxis all the way up to Cachopa to visit Vitor, an old friend of his. We had to weave through several cars and buses that were stuck in traffic in Gávea Road. On the motorcycles, however, we moved fast and the air was flowing quickly around our bodies until we arrived at our destination. Auro got off of his motorcycle first, smiling. When I got off mine, he asked me: "Sentiu a liberdade, mona? (Did you feel the freedom, darling?)" Yes, in fact I had felt it.

Ela acha que sexo é liberdade! / She thinks that sex is freedom!

A huge white plastic bubble was put up near the “S” curve by Gávea Road. The structure was meant to be used for a sequence of parties planned for the month of June 2009. Some people wondered who was financing all that. Auro, Mazinho and I had an idea but we were not sure either. In any case, we had arranged to go to a party at the bubble that night. We met at the entrance, where we got our tickets. The first thing we noticed when we arrived there was that the party was full of heavily armed traffickers. Most people were dancing to funk music. Some were dancing and heavily-armed at the same time. Mazinho loved the electronic music they played at some point and started to dance in a very sensual way. Auro moved closer to my ear and disapprovingly remarked: “Olha a Mazinho, adorando tudo isso! Ela acha que sexo é liberdade! (Look at Mazinho, loving all this! She thinks that sex is freedom!)” Soon Auro was dancing too.

Liberdade também é uma cadeia / Freedom is a jail too

At the PAC photography course on the 28th of July 2009, we teased Menem for not wearing any underwear that day. Earlier on someone had spotted this fact. Natanael said: “Eu também gosto de andar pelado! Gosto de ser livre, liberto! (I also like to walk around naked! I like to be free, liberated!)” But then he complemented his statement by saying: “Para mim, como evangélico, a maior busca é ser livre mas liberdade também é uma cadeia, tem que ter limites! Sou liberto mas não faço tudo o que quero. Liberdade também é uma cadeia. (For me, as an evangelical, the biggest search is to be free but freedom is a jail too, there has to be limits! I have been liberated but I do not do everything that I want. Freedom is also a jail.)” Most people seemed to agree with him but no discussion followed from it. Soon the teacher arrived and class started. At the end of the class, I realised that Dana was wearing a t-shirt with a red triangle in it. That triangle had been taken from a flag used during a Brazilian independence movement called: “Inconfidência Mineira”. The red triangle had a message encircling it saying:

“Libertas quae sera tamen”, Latin for: “Liberdade antes que tardia (Freedom even if late)”. At the end of the class, the group soon dissolved into the many alleyways of Rocinha and I had no chance to talk more to Dana about her t-shirt.

BTV deu liberdade aos gays da favela! / BTV gave freedom to the favela gays!

Auro and I were at Marcus’s house and decided to go out to buy some food. On the way to the supermarket we passed by a group of guys in a dark alleyway. They started teasing us saying: “Olha os viadinhos! (Look at the little faggots!)” – and they laughed out loud. Auro got really upset and walked down to them. I saw a physical fight coming. Auro told them to have more respect. They shut up immediately. On the way back from the supermarket, though, Auro wanted to confront them again. I was worried. Auro then shouted at them: “Até onde eu sei a lei do morro não é xoxar viado não, hein! Toma cuidado! (As far as I am aware, the hillside law is not to tease fags, huh! Be careful!)” Auro then asked me if I had seen the fear that the guys had cutting through their faces. He was proud of himself and I was somehow proud of him too. He added: “Since BTV, it has been forbidden to bully ‘viado’ in Rocinha. O BTV deu liberdade aos gays da favela! (BTV gave freedom to the favela gays!) Nowadays, it is Ney who guarantees our freedom!” – he added. I was really impressed by the whole episode. Auro kept talking: “BTV costumava dizer: vai fazer graça com a cara dos meus viados? Vai não! (BTV used to say: are you going to make fun of my fags? No, you are not!)” And Auro continued, he was excited: “BTV liked us! He used to claim that fags were necessary to liven up the big parties that he loved to promote in Rocinha!” Auro looked happy, I was still a bit shaken even if amazed to learn how these two drug lords had just been argued to be protectors of gay freedom in Rocinha.

Cadê a liberdade? / Where is the freedom?

In the morning of the 7th of August 2009, Menem called on me to join them for some exercise. Rocinha was very quiet that day, and heading down Valão Street I saw policemen in groups. Policemen? I wanted to go back home. Menem told me to keep calm; I had not done anything wrong, right? We walked all the way to Pizza Lit, where Matt had rented a new space for physical education classes on top of that building. The streets were very empty that day. We went upstairs and from the rooftop I could see policemen all over. I could also read a message scrawled in black graffiti on a white wall opposite: “Liberdade para os amigos! (Freedom to friends!)” While we exercised our arms with very heavy sand-filled balls, I kept thinking about the favela “occupation” and the policemen downstairs. I wondered if things would be ok on our way back home. We walked back home in a group with Matt, Menem, Laila and myself. When Amélia saw me, she told me that I should have stayed at home that morning. In the afternoon things got even tenser, with people running down our beco every minute. Amélia stayed at home all day but once in a while she would stick her head out of the window to see what was going on. We saw a young boy walking down the beco, playing with a ball. He seemed to be completely detached from the tense situation. Amélia asked him: “Where is your mother? Is she not worried about you?” To which he replied: “And do I care about my mother?” A woman with short red hair passed by our beco with a cigarette in her hand. She stopped in front of our house and chatted to Amélia on one side of the alleyway and to our neighbour on the other. The latter also had her head out of her window. The red-haired woman told us: “I love all that! I find it so beautiful to watch armed men!” The neighbour laughed. The woman hung around for a while and said that she would go down to Valão to see some more action. After she had left, Amélia told me that this woman was a mother of three sons: all of them were traffickers. Around dinnertime I asked Amélia if she thought it was ok for me to go over to Franci’s house that evening, as we had arranged to have dinner. Amélia told me to go but to be careful. I left and when I got to Franci’s

house she laughed at me: “What are you doing here? You are crazy!” Franci was clearly upset about the police “invasion” and remarked: “Tá vendo, Moises? Cadê a liberdade agora? (You see, Moises? Where is freedom now?)” We ended up having dinner exactly as planned.

On the 6th of June 2009, we were eating dinner at Francielle’s house again. Armando, Menem and Laila were all there too. The living room was full. We were talking about the metal gold, for some reason. Specifically about the very heavy gold chains that traffickers liked to wear in Rocinha. Franci put her fork down for a second, raised her eyebrows and said: “E bandido rico serve para quê? Não pode nem sair daqui! Cadê a liberdade? (And a rich bandit is good for what? He cannot even get out of here! Where is the freedom?)” Armando nodded his head in agreement.

Saudade da minha liberdade! / I miss my freedom!

Armando arrived back in Rio from a training programme in the USA on the 21st of July 2009. Carolina, Francielle and I took the bus early, before 6:00am, to meet him at the airport. As we entered the bus, Carolina tried to open the window and soon realized that the windows would not move because the bus was air-conditioned. She shouted: “Não tem liberdade nessa porra, não? Nem abre a janela! (There is no freedom in this fucking thing, is there? The window does not even open!)” – and she started laughing. Armando arrived at the airport on time and on the journey back to Rocinha we talked about a planned night out with Mazinho, Ricky, Moreno, Waldemiro and others. “Le Boy”, a gay nightclub in Copacabana, would be our destination. Carolina and Francielle said they would definitely not come. Armando rested for the whole afternoon that day. Shortly before dinner, I met Auro and invited him to join us. He said he would like to but he had to work. He asked me to walk to the market with him briefly and on the way there we met an old lady that could always be found on the lanhouse alleyway near my house.

This woman used to drink a lot; she especially liked to drink at a small bar on that alleyway. She clapped her hands when she saw us approaching the bar and then proceeded to kiss us and hug us. She was clearly drunk. When we finally managed to continue our journey, Auro told me: “Ela disse uma vez que gosta da gente porque ela tem liberdade com a gente viado. Mas ela não tem liberdade com as outras pessoas. (She told me once that she likes us because she has freedom with us, fags. But she has no freedom with other people.)” When I got back home the boys were already waiting for me to go to “Le Boy”. In the van on the way to Copacabana, a guy had already started flirting with Mazinho. Soon after we got to the nightclub, Mazinho started to flirt with another guy. He pointed the guy out to me and complained: “Ai, tá vendo aquele gatinho ali? Ele tá me olhando! Ai, que nervoso! Às vezes dá muita saudade da minha época de solteiro, saudade da minha liberdade! (Ah, do you see that cutie over there? He is looking at me! Oh, I am getting nervous! Sometimes I really miss it when I was single, I miss my freedom!)”

Mazinho liked to wear shorts and t-shirts. On the 27th of July 2009, he was wearing the shortest pair of shorts I had ever seen on him. He had come to my house to talk and was visibly sad. Auro had been there chatting to me already. It was not long before the three of us started discussing the issue surrounding Mazinho and his boyfriend, Bruno. Mazinho told us that even though he was “married”, he still felt sexual desire for other men and because of that he had decided to split up with Bruno. I was surprised to hear about the end of the relationship but Mazinho explained again: “Eu sinto falta da minha liberdade, o Bruno não estava me completando e me satisfazendo (I miss my freedom, Bruno was not completing me, he was not satisfying me)”. Mazinho started to cry then and told us that they had split up over the phone. “Do you know what I did just after we split up, Moises?” – he asked. I said “No...” And his voice got deeper: “I went immediately to a gay sauna. But now I feel so sad!” Auro told him: “Está certo, se você não gosta do Bruno a coisa certa é devolver a liberdade dele e cada um seguir seu rumo (You are right, if you no longer like Bruno, the right thing to do is to return his freedom and each one should follow his own path)”. Mazinho cried even more. He said that he was always going to think of Bruno with love but that

he felt very confused. He put his head on Auro's lap and closed his eyes. Only tears would come out of those brown eyes that night.

Pára dessas liberdades / Stop with those freedoms

As we walked out of Rocinha to go to Muzema, Amélia told me with an air of disapproval: "Olha aí, tem criança demais solta na Rocinha! Cheia de liberdade aí nos becos! (Look around, there are too many kids loose in Rocinha! Full of freedom running around the alleyways!) They don't even go to school because their parents don't make them go. Maria Beatriz is different; she has never been "criada solta em beco (raised loose in becos)". We were going to visit Evelyn's new house in Muzema. When we got there, Amélia told Dona Tina that Maria Beatriz had been awkward with me, that she had been rude to me lately. Dona Tina looked at her and said: "Pára dessas liberdades com o moço, menina! (Stop with those freedoms with the young man, girl!)" Also that day, Evelyn told me a story about the "milícia", a group of reformed military, she said, who was in control of the area where she lived: "Eles passaram um cara que pegava jaca da árvore aqui! (They killed a guy who used to come here to steal jackfruit from the tree!)" Everyone at the house disapproved of the killing but at the same time seemed to agree that the victim had deserved it.

Pelo menos temos a nossa liberdade! / At least we have our freedom!

It was sunny at Amélia's house. Her son Moreno was there and we were having breakfast in late July 2009. With his mouth full of bread and butter, Moreno announced that he was going to stop working. Closing his mouth again, he smiled mischievously. Amélia took him seriously and said: "And what are you going to do?"

Will you just be loose, then?" He replied: "I am going to make money, sure!" Amélia was puzzled: "How?" Moreno said: "I am going to work travelling. Doesn't Moises travel to study? I am going to travel to traffic!" Amélia did not laugh. In fact, she got really angry with him: "Seu pai já te falou, coitado daquele que vai preso! Podemos passar dificuldade, mas pelo menos temos a nossa liberdade! Escuta bem isso que eu estou te falando!!! (Your father has already told you, poor is the person who goes to jail! We can go through difficulties, but at least we have our freedom! Listen well to what I am telling you!!!)" Then Moreno put his head down, laughing, and replied: "That is what you say now but whenever I show up here with a lot of money in my pockets you are going to like it, right?" And Amélia got so very upset that she quit the discussion. From then on we kept eating in silence.

Um sonho de liberdade / The Shawshank Redemption

One afternoon, I was walking down the beco towards the corner mini-market, to buy some bread. Francielle was looking out of her window and when I passed she called my name. She wanted to chat, and so we did. I stood in the beco, just in front of MFI. Francielle told me that she had watched a film and she really liked it. It was called "Um Sonho de Liberdade (The Shawshank Redemption)". I asked more about it but then Amélia came up the alleyway looking for me. She was wondering what had happened to the bread that she had been waiting for. I really had to go.

Excesso de liberdade / An excess of freedom

Auro stopped by at my house on the 3rd of August 2009. He was wearing a red Jewish skullcap on top of his head. He laughed and told me that the hat was

part of his waiter uniform that day. I said: "What?" He had been told to wear it while working as a waiter at all Jewish events. He then kneeled on the floor of my bedroom and placed his hands on my bed, as if praying. He started chanting out loud. I could not really understand the words but guessed that it was something that sounded like Yoruba language. He was making a reference to the Afro-Brazilian religions, I thought. When I looked at him and realized that he was actually trying to make fun by mixing all these diverse religious elements, I started laughing and so did he. He could not stop laughing. When he managed to catch his breath, he said: "Excesso de liberdade, né?!? (An excess of freedom, right?!?)" And we both started laughing again.

It was the 17th August 2009 then. On that day I met Auro again. Amélia noticed that I was talking to him downstairs and offered to make some coffee for us. We went upstairs and the house smelled of fresh coffee. Auro told us a story about a friend of his called Walter. Walter had some clout in the favela, Auro said. He continued his story: "But then one day Walter was walking around in Rocinha and a woman called him 'bicha escrota (screwed faggot)' for no good reason. So Walter 'virou na Dona 7' (incorporated a spirit called Dona 7) and broke a glass bottle on the woman's head". I asked: "Oh, and what happened to him?" Auro replied: "Guess what? Walter earned a lot more respect that day!" Amélia laughed but Auro remained serious and said: "Foi por causa das brigas e vitórias das bichas velhas da Rocinha que hoje as novinhas tem essa liberdade! (It was because of the struggles and victories of the old generations of fags in Rocinha that nowadays the young gay guys have such freedom!)" He added: "These struggles made the group of young gay guys possible". I listened very carefully because Auro knew much about this topic from personal experience. He continued his reflection: "But now the old generation of fags is really worried about the way that these young fags are behaving. Com todo esse excesso de liberdade, todos os gays e travestis da Rocinha, todos podem terminar perdendo o respeito novamente! (With all this freedom in excess, all the gays and transvestites of Rocinha, all of them could end up losing respect again!)" Auro paused and for a moment there was silence in the room. He put his cup down and before changing the topic of the conversation he

said one last thing: “That is why I keep telling Peterson to stop being crazy. And he replies that he is not crazy, he is the reality! Crazy bitch.” At that point, Auro finally laughed once again.

Com quem ele tem liberdade / With those whom he has the freedom

After praying over my head on the 5th of August 2009, Laiza talked about her husband. She was seated, with her hands clasped together between her closed legs. I could still see her gold wedding ring shining in between her legs, though. She said that God had given her a good husband; that I had to meet him someday. “Ele é quieto mas brincalhão com quem ele tem liberdade! (He is quiet but likes to crack jokes with those whom he has the freedom!)” – she affirmed. It had really been a long struggle for Laiza to find someone to marry her. She often told me all about it and she kept repeating how thankful she was to have found a man to call hers.

Liberdade para falar / Freedom to talk

During the PAC photography course on the 11th of August 2009, Natanael said that he believed that there could be many things that were true in life. However, he said: “Of one truth I am sure; Jesus e apenas Jesus pode libertar as pessoas (Jesus and only Jesus has the power to free people)”. Eduardo liked what he heard and joined the discussion adding: “É isso ai, liberdade é diferente de libertinagem! Mas de acordo com a Bíblia, para a pessoa ser realmente livre, tem que ser através da cabeça dela e não da dos outros ou a do pastor (That is it! Freedom is different from libertinism! But according to the Bible, for the person to become totally free it has to be through her own head and not through other people’s head or the pastor’s head)”. The discussions before and after class were

often heated and often touched on the issue of religion. Most students in the group seemed to be inclined to Evangelical Christianity, while the main teacher for the course was an adept of macumba, as he liked to put it. Later on that Tuesday, Paizinha, Laiza and I went to an evangelical service in PPG. At the top of numerous steep stairs, we met Rose and her girlfriend. They had been going to evangelical churches too. The service took place in a small house. During her prayers, the pastor woman said in a powerful voice: "Jesus, come and free the oppressed souls!" People kept praying for more than an hour. At the end of the service Jesus made a revelation to the pastor. The revelation was announced and it concerned *me*, it was revealed that I would become a good evangelical pastor some day. As we walked to take the bus back home, Paizinha asked me if I had liked the service. I said yes. She then said that if I went to church more often it would become easier for me to get in touch with God. She said: "Para mim é fácil, tenho liberdade para falar com Ele. Porque conheço Ele há 17 anos! (It is easy for me because I have the freedom to talk to Him. Because I have known Him for 17 years!)"

Mazinho visited me again on the night of the 8th of January 2010. He shouted my name through my window and I opened the door. "Let's go for a walk on the beach!" – he said. As we walked down to the beach, the air was damp and warm and smelled salty. Some friends of mine stopped us near Hotel International. Marquinho, who belonged to the PAFYC group, turned to Mazinho and asked: "Bicha, me dá 50 centavos! (Faggot, give me 50 cents!)" Mazinho just said: "No! Not me". And he turned his face to the guy. Later on Mazinho remarked: "Eu, hein? Não dei liberdade para falar comigo assim! Me chamar de bicha e ainda pedir dinheiro??? (Oh, my? I did not give him the freedom to talk to me like that! Call me faggot and then even ask for money???) I laughed but Mazinho was truly upset.

Auro explained: “Desdobramento is when the person leaves the material body for a determined time and then returns to it”. I was taught that lesson in mid-August 2009, while we talked about his religion over some juice at my place. Auro also said that it would take him a lot more time studying, preparing and understanding his own religion before he would be allowed to undergo desdobramento. “Mas imagina, desdobramento deve ser a verdadeira liberdade, mona! Ai, que alívio sair da carne! (But imagine, desdobramento must be the true freedom, faggot! Oh, what a relief to get out of the flesh!)” – he asserted with shining eyes. Auro also said that there was even an evangelical guy in his religious group in Ramatis. I was very surprised to hear so and he explained: “But it is a different type of evangelical, not like these people in Rocinha. Ele é um evangélico que realmente foi libertado, com uma mente liberada! Sem mesquinharia. (He is an evangelical that has been truly liberated, with a liberated mind! No meanness.)” I poured him more orange juice.

A coitada da menina não tem liberdade / The poor girl has no freedom

Over breakfast on a warm morning in late August 2009, Amélia told me that she felt sorry for Sasha. “A coitada da menina não tem liberdade para nada! Sempre vigiada pela imprensa, cercada de segurança! Credo!!! Eu não queria isso não. Gosto de viver assim, solta! (The poor girl has no freedom to do anything! She is always under surveillance by the press, surrounded by bouncers! Gosh!!! I would not want that. I like to live like this, loose!)” – Amélia told me. Sasha was the only daughter of a very famous blond Brazilian celebrity called Xuxa. Many would say that Sasha had it all: she was rich, beautiful, famous and could own whatever she wanted. Amélia seemed to disagree.

Condenado em liberdade / Condemned while in freedom

On the 2nd of September 2009, I was chatting to Afrânio at MFI when a bulky student arrived. Prompted by Afrânio, the guy then started talking to us about his life story. He told us about how he managed to leave jail and rebuild his life. He started by saying: “When I was in jail I received a leaflet. I had nothing to do, so I liked to read everything that I could possibly get hold of. I had heard about Jesus before but it was with these leaflets that I started to like the word of God. At first, I read them just to pass the time but then the word ended up liberating me!” I asked him: “What do you mean?” He replied: “First Jesus liberated my heart and then he liberated me from jail itself! I should have stayed there for at least 5 years because I was caught in a hold-up using a gun. I ended up staying in jail for only 8 months! A juíza viu que eu tinha me arrependido do que fiz, arrependido de verdade, que tinha bom comportamento e que eu tinha virado evangélico. Então eu fui julgado em liberdade e condenado em liberdade com uma pena branda, graças ao Senhor Jesus! (The judge noticed that I regretted what I had done, that I had truly regretted it, that I had behaved well and that I had become an evangelical guy. So I was judged in freedom and condemned while in freedom, with a soft penalty, thanks to the Lord Jesus!)” He still added: “Alguns vão para a cadeia e voltam pior, mesmo quando saem da cadeia e ganham a liberdade são piores do que quando entraram! No meu caso foi diferente, eu fui preso e saí liberto de verdade, com a graça do Senhor Jesus! (Some go to jail and return from it even worse, even when they leave jail and gain freedom they are worse than when they got in! In my case it was different, I went to jail and left truly liberated, with the grace of the Lord Jesus!)”

Liberdade aos cativos / Freedom for the prisoners

I went to visit my aunt on the first weekend of September 2009. Being a nun, she lived in a convent located in a neighbourhood of the north zone of Rio de Janeiro called Tijuca. At the convent, I saw a small note on a board outside the main church: “O espírito do Senhor é sobre mim, pois que me ungiu para evangelizar os pobres, enviou-me para curar os quebrantados de coração, a pregar

a liberdade aos cativos, a restauração da vista aos cegos. A por em liberdade os oprimidos. (The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.)” Luke 4: 18-19

Isso não é liberdade / This is not freedom

A concerned Menem asked me on the 7th of September 2009: “Is it true that you are mingling with the group of young gay guys?” I said: “Yes, why?” And he replied: “Você vai terminar queimando seu filme andando com essas novinhas! Se fosse eu não ia querer que me vissem com eles! Sabe qual a questão? Se eles querem ser livres, problema deles! Só que para mim isso não é liberdade!!! (You will end up getting a bad reputation by hanging out with them! If I were you I wouldn’t want people to see me with them! Do you know what the question is? If they want to be free, that is their problem! Just that for me that is not freedom!!!)” I must confess that I got slightly upset with Menem that day. I liked him but I also liked the young gay guys of Rocinha a lot and I was not ashamed of them, not at all.

Canguru, liberdade? / Kangaroo, freedom?

Ryle, the MFI volunteer from Australia, taught a class with me in September 2009. Mazinho asked him during class: “O que que é aquele canguru australiano? Qual o símbolo do canguru, liberdade? (What is that Australian kangaroo? What is the symbol of the kangaroo, freedom?)” Ryle replied: “Well, it just happens to have a lot of kangaroos in Australia!” Mazinho laughed and said that he still wanted to travel to many places; one of his favourites would be to go to New York City so that he could see the “Statue of Liberty”. Then I got curious and asked Mazinho: “Why?”

And he said that it was because it looked beautiful. Another student, Madalena, said that she wanted to go to a country where she could smoke pot. Everybody in the classroom laughed. She then added: “No, no... thank God I am free from this addiction!” After class, Auro was at my house when Menem passed by and decided to stop to chat a bit. Auro was talking about prostitution and transvestites. Menem was very interested in the topic and remarked: “A man that turns into a woman... How is that possible? Crazy thing”. Auro replied: “So what? I almost turned into a woman myself! I could indeed have become a woman if I had only wanted to”. To which Menem said: “Argh... Jesus loves you!” And Auro replied: “Eu sei, querida! Foi ele quem me deu a liberdade para fazer isso! (I know, dear! He was the one who gave me the freedom to do that!)” Menem jumped back and said in an angry tone: “Olha que o que você acha que é liberdade não é tão liberdade assim, hein! (Careful that what you think to be freedom is not so much freedom, heh!” Auro turned his head, looked deeply into Menem’s eyes, raised his eyebrows and said: “Well, for me it is!” Menem decided it was time to leave.

Não há liberdade sem... / There is no freedom without...

Peterson’s mother told me on the 13th of February 2010 that she liked her church very much. This old lady with very white hair had been an Evangelical Christian for a long time. “My church cures, saves, liberates but at the same time they keep the services short. I like that” – she affirmed. I asked her more about what type of liberation that they had at her church. She commented: “Todos nós precisamos ser libertos neste mundo. Mas não há liberdade sem a pessoa querer nem sem a vontade Deus! (We all need to be liberated in this world. But there is no freedom without the person’s will nor the will of God!)” Peterson asked her to stop talking about her church all the time. I was actually enjoying the conversation but he called me out of the room in which we had been chatting. He pulled me by the

arm, taking me away from his house and down the alleyway; leaving his old mother speaking to herself.

Ogum é a liberdade em pessoa / Ogum is freedom personified

Auro and Menem were once again arguing about religion. They were debating this at MFI and there were many people around them, both volunteers and students. As they got more and more excited and raised their voice more and more, Armando intervened: “I already told you that this is an institution free of religion!” And we all laughed while they kept arguing. Auro was saying how he was not afraid of arguments. He had just scolded a guy that worked at Bradesco, a big Brazilian bank. Auro told us that he had gone to Bradesco and felt that the bank’s cashier had not treated him properly. So Auro asked the cashier promptly what the issue was with him. Auro laughed out loud and said to Menem: “Tá vendo? Isso é um filho de Ogum! Ogum não tem amarras! Ogum é a liberdade em pessoa! E por isso que eu sou assim! (You see? This is a son of Ogum! Ogum has no ties! Ogum is freedom personified! That is why I am like that!)” And Menem shook his head. Auro grabbed Menem by his neck and told him not to disapprove of it because Ogum was his Orixá too. Ogum was Menem’s spiritual father – claimed Auro. To which Menem quickly replied: “I already told you, man! Jesus Christ is my father, Auro!” And the fuss continued.

Liberdade de expressão / Freedom of expression

I met the Brazilian anthropologist Márcio Goldman on the 5th of November 2009. He told me that in Bahia it was much more common for people to use the expression: “Não te dei ousadia (I did not let you dare)”, rather than, “não te dei a liberdade (I did not give you the freedom)” to do something. After lunch, I walked

down to the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in the city centre and as I passed by shops and street sellers, I saw a banner on a big building that said: “É livre toda liberdade de expressão! (It is free, all freedom of expression!)” I thought to myself: “Wow...” So, I grabbed my little notebook, took note of the message and kept walking. As I attended Joanna Overing’s public lecture at UFRJ that day, I was especially interested in the amazing point that she was making regarding the positive and negative dimensions of power in Amazonia and the relationship between individual liberties to different forms of constraints among the Piaroá of the Venezuelan Amazon.

Back to Rocinha and TV Globo’s accusations that UCKG was committing fiscal violations had been widely debated in the media and by people in Rocinha that day. The UCKG leader, Edir Macedo, had said in an interview that the UCKG was free to ask their followers for money. Meanwhile, TV Globo had been running ads on their channel saying: “Liberdade de expressão, nós apoiamos essa causa! (We support the cause of freedom of expression!)” I watched one of those ads as I was eating my rice and chicken at Amélia’s house on the 17th of August. What a delicious smell her homemade food used to have!

“Dar um it” é tomar liberdade / “Dar um it” is to take freedom (or liberty)

On the 6th of November 2009, Auro explained to me how to use the expression: “dar um it (to give an it)”. As I understood it, I only knew that my friend Priscilla really liked “dar um it”. Auro explained it: “Dar um it é tomar liberdade com os outros, entendeu? (To “give an it” is to take freedom [liberty] with others, do you understand?)” So, when Priscilla walked around talking to people that she did not even know, sometimes asking homophobic guys to go out with her, blowing kisses at married men on the bus, all this was what she meant by “dar um it”. There were so many new expressions that I had to learn during my time in Rocinha that Auro used to tell me it was a bit like learning another

language. I soon realised that communication with my LGBT friends in the favela would become especially difficult if I were not to learn their language. In fact, some of the gay guys used to think very low of me when I demonstrated my lack of knowledge of gay slang. Thanks to Auro, I learned things quickly.

Só querem liberdade / All they want is freedom

Auro, Marcus and I walked around Rocinha on another warm day, in early November 2011. Marcus remarked: "Have you seen that young gay guy? He is almost a woman!!!" And Auro replied: "They will learn, dear! They will learn that in our society it is not cool to live like that! They will learn with time and with society. Just wait." Babi, who overheard our conversation as we were heading back to my home alleyway, said: "I had two students that were like that. They were all girly, you know? But we kept talking to them, explaining things and so on and now they are like boys!" And she seemed very proud about this, while I was cringing. Auro told her: "But in Rocinha people accept girly boys!" And he went on to say: "But here it is like that: if it is not my son, if it is somebody else's son, then it is ok!" Auro closed the topic of conversation with a negative tone when talking about what he called "ghetto fags". He said: "Gente, eu também já fui bicha de gueto! Para elas relacionamento sério não existe. Só querem liberdade e pronto! Para elas é isso que satisfaz. (People, I have been a ghetto fag too! For them, serious relationships do not exist. All they want is freedom and that is it! For them this is what is satisfying.)"

Liberdade para o Sorriso! / Freedom to Sorriso!

Auro and I discussed the issue of vanity on the 14th of September 2009. As we walked down Valão Street on the way to the Portuguese bakery in Rocinha, he remarked on how Marcus had liberated himself from a lot his vanity already. At the bakery, it was a friend of Auro's that was serving people that day. Auro talked to him and ordered a coffee for himself, a chocolate with milk for me and a dozen small pieces of cheese bread for us to share. While Auro checked out a guy passing by outside on the street, I noticed a message written on a green gate in front of the bakery. It read: "Liberdade para o Sorriso! (Freedom to Sorriso!)" I did not say anything, just got my little notebook and took some notes. Auro used to laugh at me and my little notebook.

Querem a liberdade de volta / They want freedom back

On the 23rd of October 2009, I talked about the PAFYC group with Auro again. Once again he seemed to be upset about them. He told me: "Não tenho respeito nenhum por elas. Aquilo chamo de bicha pão-com-ovo... nem bicha coca-cola aquilo é! (I have no respect for them. I call that a bread-and-egg faggot... not even a coca-cola faggot!)" Auro took a bottle of perfume from his backpack, sprayed himself around the neck and said that he was ready to leave. He wanted to go for a walk. As we stepped outside, he commented on his transvestite friends who were working in Europe, how he had much more respect for those. He mentioned: "Todas terminam pagando a dívida. Porque elas querem os papéis de volta, mona! Querem a liberdade de volta!!! (They all end up paying their debts. Because they want their papers back, darling! They want their freedom back!!!)" Auro was referring to a supposed human trafficking scheme that used to take transvestites from Rocinha to Italy. The organisers of the scheme would lend money to the transvestites to finance their trip and would then confiscate their papers (passports and other documents) when they would arrive in Italy. The only way to get their documents back was by working to pay off their debts. By the time

they managed to pay the money back, though, their debts were very often twice or three times higher than the original amount borrowed in Brazil.

O país da liberdade / The country of freedom

Paizinha arrived at MFI wearing a nice dress on Christmas Day. Enzo, a Swiss volunteer had asked Armando to open the MFI building that day so that he could get some of his stuff. He was due to leave Brazil in the following days. However, MFI soon became crowded with people who just wanted to chat on Christmas Day. Paizinha told Enzo: “Vocês viram que absurdo a questão dos minaretes na Suíça? Passou no jornal! Logo na Suíça, o país da liberdade! (Have you seen the absurdity about the issue of minarets in Switzerland? They showed that on the news! Right in Switzerland? The country of freedom!)” Enzo smiled but he was not very happy, perhaps even a bit ashamed.

Toma liberdade demais / Takes too much freedom

Auro liked to tease people. On the 30th of October 2009, he was teasing a young American volunteer at MFI. The guy was quite shy but still Auro liked to talk about gay sex with him. That day Auro was telling the volunteer something about his favourite sex positions. We were laughing at them. Karina, a psychologist who lived in São Conrado, used to be a volunteer in Rocinha helping with the students in MFI too. She laughed and said: “Gente, o Auro toma liberdade demais com o Lennon! O menino é tímido, coitado! (People, Auro takes too much freedom [liberty] with Lennon! The guy is shy, poor him!)” That remark made people laugh even harder at the whole situation.

A Umbanda dá essa liberdade / Umbanda gives people this freedom

A big crowd had gone down to São Conrado beach to watch Pai Nelson perform a religious Umbanda ritual on the 26th of December 2009. Guga, Mikael, Euniro and Peterson were all there carefully watching the spirit possessions taking place. I met them briefly and told Samira that I was surprised to see the young gay guys there. “Why are they all here, Samira?” – I asked. She replied: “You know that fags are macumbeiras, fond of macumba rituals! It’s already a tradition”. Peterson, however, wanted to give his opinion: “Eu acho que é porque a Umbanda dá essa liberdade! Tem essa liberdade de ter viado na religião (I think it is because Umbanda gives people this freedom! There is this freedom of having faggots in the religion)”. Auro also joined the debate and added his view: “In macumba they accept you as you are, do you understand? As a son of God and full stop”. Soon after that, a possessed woman came up to me and held my arm. An indigenous woman was possessing her body and the spirit had a message for me: “Today you will see that this is all true, my son! Stay here and you will see the truth!” Auro laughed at me because I was a bit scared. So, I stayed until the end of the event, well after midnight, and watched a beautiful ritual but that woman never returned to talk to me again, as far as I am aware.

Liberdade para perguntar as coisas / Freedom to ask things

On the 2nd of January 2010, I met Renata at Armando’s. She told us about her conversion from Catholicism to Spiritism. “Eu era Católica, ai quando fui para o espiritismo senti muita liberdade! Você nem imagina! Liberdade de poder perguntar as coisas, contar o que eu sentia! Entende? (I used to be a Catholic, then when I went to Spiritism I felt a lot of freedom! You cannot even imagine! Freedom to ask things, say how I felt! Do you understand?)” Soon Armando and I were on a

different topic, however. We were discussing cases of men that were married to women but slept with other men. Renata said: “Um homem casado que sai com gay sem a mulher saber? Muita falta de liberdade dentro do casamento, hein? (A married man that goes out with gay guys while his wife doesn’t know? What a lack of freedom in the marriage, heh?)” She continued: “Se bem que gay pega mas não namora com outro cara. É só uma coisa de sexo, não? (Although gay people fuck with guys but they don’t date them. It’s just about sex, right?)” And Armando replied with an angry tone: “No, are you crazy?!?” Francielle then said that she had also thought the same as Renata, but when she met me, she changed her mind.

Liberdade de imprensa / Freedom of the press

On the 19th of January 2010, Maria Beatriz got to know her uncle Wanerson, who lived in Ceará and looked after Maria Beatriz’s grandmother. They shared a big but old house where they hosted us during our time in the city of Guaraciaba. That night we had dinner together and watched some television before going to bed. “Vamos lutar contra o monstro da censura! Liberdade de imprensa! (Let’s fight against the monster of censorship! Freedom of the press!)” – announced a political campaign on TV Globo. At night, after we had already gone to bed in the big darkened room, we were trying to get to sleep. Then Maria Beatriz started to talk to her mother. She remarked: “Coitado do Tio Wanerson, preso em casa cuidando da vó! Não tem nem liberdade! (Poor uncle Wanerson, stuck at home looking after grandma! He doesn’t have any freedom!)” And it took us all a long while to get to sleep that night, although we were certainly very tired from the long trip that had taken us all the way from Rio de Janeiro to Guaraciaba.

Confundir brincadeira com liberdade / To confuse jokes with freedom

While I ate a fragrant fresh mandarin in Amélia's kitchen, she looked out of the small balcony that she had near her television room. She told me that she could see my girlfriend Priscilla passing by the beco. Then she laughed out loud, came back in and said: "Tô brincando! Eu sei que ela não é sua namorada. Amigo pode brincar um com o outro! O que não pode é confundir brincadeira com liberdade, né? Sempre falo isso para os meninos! (I am kidding! I know that she is not your girlfriend. Friends can joke with one another! What is not allowed is to confuse joking with freedom, right? I always say that to my children!)" That was the late afternoon of the 16th of January 2010.

Freedom, freedom... / Liberdade, liberdade...

On the morning of the 23rd of July 2009, we went to Carmélia's day-care. Armando came along too. Carmélia asked me how I was doing with my research. I was enjoying it, I thought. She then said that she had something she wanted to sing for me. She tied up her hair a bit and started: "Liberdade, liberdade, abra as asas sobre nós! (Freedom, freedom, spread your wings over us!)" And then she started to dance samba at the same time, shaking her feet and her head. When I got back home from the day-care I did an internet search to find more information about that song. I had heard the song before but only then did I find out that it had been used as the main theme (samba-enredo) for Imperatriz Leopoldinense, a samba school that competed in the main category of Rio de Janeiro's carnival in 1989. We spent the whole evening with Carmélia too, this time at her house. She opened a bottle of wine and kept smoking almost non-stop all night long. On the label around the green bottle I read the name of the wine: "Liberdade (Freedom)". I pointed this out to her. She took the cigarette out of her mouth and said: "See?"

Armando, Francielle and Menem all travelled with me to my hometown in Goiás state. On the 25th of March 2010, I drove them to a city called Pirenópolis, famous for its wonderful waterfalls. As we drove on the car to get to the waterfalls,

Menem put his hand out of the car's window and started playing with the wind. With fresh air blowing on his face, he started to sing out loud: "Liberdade, liberdade! Abra as asas sobre nós! (Freedom, freedom! Spread your wings over us!)"

On the 8th of March 2010, President Lula visited Rocinha. It was a big event held at a recently built sports centre, just across Lagoa-Barra Road. Amélia, Armando, Carmélia and myself gathered as a group among the big crowd that waited for hours to watch Lula's speech live. While we waited, sweating, Carmélia sang incessantly. One of the songs was once again the famous samba theme by the Imperatriz Leopoldinense samba school. Carmélia repeated: "Liberdade, liberdade! Abre as asas sobre nós! (Freedom, freedom! Spread your wings over us!)" – meanwhile I took fieldnotes.

Queremos é liberdade! / What we want is freedom!

On the first day of February 2010, Amélia's eldest brother met us for pizza in the evening. We were seated at a flimsy metal table placed on the crooked pavement in front of a bar, just near the bus station in Guaraciaba. The guy talked a lot but Amélia had warned me that we could never trust a word of what he said. She had told me that this brother of hers was prone to all sorts of scams. In between beers, the guy told us that the politician that he was working for at that time liked to visit all the villages in the countryside of Ceará State using a private helicopter. He argued that the helicopter was a fundamental possession for a successful politician: "Ele chega no bicho e o povo se admira! Ele disse nos discursos que vai parar de prender as motos ilegais na estrada e todos gostaram! O povo aplaudia e gritava: queremos é liberdade! Ah, se continuar assim ele ganha nas eleições!!! (He arrives in the big thing and all the people admire it! He said in the speeches that he will stop arresting illegal motorcycles on the roads and

everybody liked that! People clapped and shouted: what we want is freedom! Oh, if he keeps going like that he will win the elections!!!)” Amélia took another slice of pizza and kept looking at a man on an old bicycle passing on the street.

Liberdade de andar / Freedom to walk

I had lunch at Francielle’s house on the 24th of March 2010 again. We ate white rice, beans, salad and meat. We were sitting all in front of her television, watching a soap opera. “Essa fazenda vai se chamar liberdade e trabalho! (This farm is going to be called freedom and labour!)” – said one of the characters in the soap opera. I asked Francielle what was the name of the soap opera and she laughed: “Have you never watched it? It is the 10th time that this soap opera has been shown on television! It’s called Escrava Isaura (Slave Isaura)!” I had heard of the title but indeed had never watched it. After lunch, Armando and Menem talked about some places in Rio de Janeiro where the residents had fenced off their streets from public access. Menem told us: “Isso é errado porque as ruas do Rio são públicas. Todo mundo tem a liberdade de andar em qualquer rua. Aquela cancela do Juá é errada porque a praia é pública (This is wrong because the streets of Rio are public. Everyone has the freedom to walk in any street. That traffic barrier in Juá is wrong because the beach is public)”. And they got really agitated about the topic while drinking a two-litre bottle of guaraná, a popular Brazilian soft drink.

Maternidade tira a liberdade / Motherhood takes freedom away

It was the 7th of February 2010. Armando said to Carolina: “Shall we take the back alley? Let’s go through the underground world!” There was an air of

adventure and excitement about going down that way. And so we took the lanhouse route home. Francielle clearly did not really like the idea but followed us. We kept walking, turned left, and then right and soon walked past my house. All four of us stopped in front of Francielle's house. There she told me: "Moises, lá na igreja hoje falaram de liberdade, que somos livres para adorar a Deus! (Moises, there at the church they spoke about freedom today, that we are free to adore God!)" And she wanted me to take a note of that event. I did so and that day I ended up spending the whole afternoon working on my notes, until the sun went down. In the evening, I met Armando and Francielle again and we walked together down to Carmélia's house for dinner. We chatted a lot, mainly talking about Armando's sister being pregnant. I told them that the other day Amélia had been complaining about the freedom that she lost when her children were born. Carmélia replied: "A maternidade tira a liberdade sim! Eu vejo pelas mães lá na creche! (Motherhood takes freedom away indeed! I see that in the mothers that come to the day-care!)"

Expressão da liberdade / Expression of freedom

I had to take two busses to get back to Rocinha on the 10th of February 2010. Approaching São Conrado beach, I heard a song being played live by a big group of people on the streets. It was the samba that would serve as the theme for Rocinha's carnival in the year 2010:

(...)

Veio da Espanha a ambição / The ambition came from Spain

Rasgando o mar, buscando riquezas / Tearing the sea, searching for wealth

Não conheciam as filhas do chão / They did not know the daughters of the earth

As protetoras da mãe natureza / The protectors of mother nature

Amazonas, na expressão da liberdade / Amazonas, in the expression of freedom

É festa, é dança, é canto de fé / It is fest, it is dance, it is a chant of faith

O sonho de felicidade / The dream of happiness

(...)

Privado de liberdade / Deprived of freedom

I had gone out to buy food at the supermarket called Supermarket and I was happy that Amélia had come with me. On the way down, as we were passing by one of the drug selling points on Valão Street, a red car was approaching, forcing people to squeeze to the sides of the road. The driver was wearing a thick gold chain around his neck. The smell of marijuana filled the air. Amélia and I exchanged glances: “a big trafficker” – we hinted silently at each other. As the car slowly passed by us, the sound waves coming from it were so loud that they made our bodies shake. It was hip-hop music and the lyrics said: “Essa música é para aqueles que estão privado de liberdade, nossos companheiros! (This music is for those deprived of freedom, our comrades!)” This was certainly a reference to other traffickers in jail. As I got home, I took my Supermarket receipt out of my pocket to put it with other papers that I kept on a pile in my room. On the receipt it read: DATA 20/01/10 (DATE 20/01/10). Our shopping bags were filled with sweets, bottles of soft drink and colourful balloons! It was my birthday!!!

Não ter liberdade / Not to have freedom

Mazinho told me that something weird had happened to him on the 21st of February 2010. He had recently started to work out at a gym near the “S” curve on Gávea Road in Rocinha. A woman had approached him while he was working out. She smiled at him and said: “Meu filho, eu sei que você está sofrendo. Eu também já fui do santo. Mas estar no santo é não ter vida própria, não ter liberdade. Isso não é para mim não! (My son, I know that you are suffering. I have already belonged to the saint too. But to belong to the saint is not to have your own life, not to have freedom. This is not for me!)” Mazinho said he was a bit annoyed with the woman at the time but he kept talking to her. Later on he confessed to me that what she had said to him made sense. She could tell that he belonged to Umbanda (belonged to the saint) but also that he was suffering. Mazinho said that sometimes it was indeed very hard to belong to an Afro-Brazilian religion but he nevertheless loved Umbanda and that he knew that it was the right religion for himself.

Sobre a liberdade e a prisão / About freedom and prison

I had gone over to Armando’s house on the 8th of January 2010. He was having his nails done in his living room, with his right foot on top of a blond woman’s lap. He asked me to sit down and told me that the woman working on his foot had spent some time in jail in the past. I should talk to her, he said. He then turned to her: “What do you have to say about that?” She replied: “About jail you mean?” And Armando said: “Sobre a liberdade e a prisão (About freedom and prison)”. She answered: “Tanto faz, a cadeia é uma prisão mas fora da cadeia também é uma prisão. E eu só fiquei 30 minutos lá! (It does not matter, jail is a prison but out of jail is a prison too. And I only stayed there for 30 minutes!)” Armando turned to me laughing: “Make sure you take notes of all that, ok!”

Negro é a raiz da liberdade! / Black is the root of freedom!

Carmélia welcomed me to her home again, with a big smile, as usual. She was at home, clad only in her pink bathing suit. It was too warm to put on clothes, she said. Once in a while she would exit the kitchen and wet herself under a white plastic shower that she had outside the house. In between her trips from the cooker to the shower, she danced. She was listening to a samba CD playing very loud. “Negro é a raiz da liberdade! (Black is the root of freedom!)” She asked me: “Did you hear that Moises?” I replied: “Sure! How could I not have heard it?” And she smiled again and continued dancing and had more beers and many more showers. Later on I found out that the song in question was called: “Sorriso Negro (Black Smile)” I liked it.

Liberdade para escolher / Freedom to choose

It rained a lot in Rocinha on the 4th of March 2010. Valão Street was covered in a thick layer of mud. My mother, who was visiting me from my hometown, complained about the mud as we walked out of Rocinha to take the metro and visit my aunt in Tijuca. On the metro car, there was an advertisement for a cable television company called NET: “Net, viva sua liberdade de escolha! (Net, live your freedom of choice!)” Later on that day, I met Paizinha at MFI. Armando and a few students were there too. One of the students who lived in the suburbs of Rio told us that her place was dominated by evil. I was a bit puzzled and asked her what she meant by that. She said that her place was full of traffickers, macumba and gay people. Armando laughed and started to question her about her statement. She

said that she was an evangelical woman and they did not accept any of those things as being good. I asked her about the idea of “religious freedom” and what she thought about being more accepting of other religions. It was Paizinha who answered the question, though. Paizinha told me that she was against macumba too but at the same time she was also against imposing the acceptance of Jesus on people that practiced macumba. Paizinha complemented: “A pessoa tem que ter liberdade para escolher que caminho seguir (The person has to have the freedom to choose which way to follow)”. Armando then said that he was confused because Paizinha kept trying to convert people to her religion all the time. She got a bit upset and replied that indeed part of her mission was to evangelise. I pointed out the tension between evangelical proselytism and the recognition of people’s freedom. Paizinha agreed that there was a problem there and explained: “Look, it works like that! God wants people to choose him over evil but He cannot force anyone to do that either!!!”

A liberdade das travas na Europa / The freedom of transvestites in Europe

Auro had strong arms and strong legs and walked like a soldier. On the 13th of March 2010, he told me that a transvestite called Anão had gone to jail, saying that this was a very significant event for the gay community of Rio de Janeiro. Even TV Globo had shown Anão going to jail on the daily news. Anão was the transvestite who “owned” the red light district of Copacabana. No one could work there without her authorisation. She would usually charge a weekly fee to those who worked on the famous streets of Copacabana. Auro seemed very excited about the news. He kept talking about it and also mentioned that the Brazilian government had recently launched an international campaign to combat human trafficking. “Maybe Anão going to jail is already an effect of this campaign?” – he wondered. “Existe uma grande preocupação principalmente com a liberdade das

travas na Europa. O governo até lançou uma campanha que fala sobre a importância do passaporte em relação a liberdade no exterior (There is a lot of concern, above all about the freedom of transvestites in Europe. The government even launched a campaign that talks about the importance of the passport in relation to freedom in foreign countries)”).

Tal liberdade / So-called freedom

On the 4th of April 2010, I was in California as a visiting scholar at UC Berkeley. That day I opened my mailbox and had a new message from Armando. He was telling me that he wanted me to take note of two stories about Ricky and freedom that he had witnessed:

“Ontem lembrei muito de vc, porque estavamos na casa da Dona Ninha e vieram uns crentes visitar o Ricky e a senhora falou sobre liberdade. A mesma havia dito que os jovens procuravam liberdade nesse mundo e nao encontravam, e ela usou dois exemplos. Um foi do próprio filho dela que pelo que me pareceu era muito oprimido por ela para ter que ir na igreja (ela mesma afirmou isso porque acha que isso é a coisa certa) e o filho brigava muito dizendo que queria fazer outras coisas, até que um belo dia o filho dela pichou bem grande na parede do quarto de LIBERDADE ela disse que deixou ele ter a LIBERDADE sonhada e depois ele viu que nao era nada disso. O outro caso ela disse que foi quase igual ao do filho dela era um menino criado dentro da igreja evangelica e se sentia muito preso por causa das regras impostas pela igreja. Então, um dia a mae desse menino tbm deixou ele ter a liberdade dele e o mesmo saiu a procura da tal (liberdade), ficou na rua aprendeu a usar drogas e no dia anterior a visita dessa irma na casa da Dona Ninha ela disse que encontrou esse rapaz e o mesmo disse que nao estava livre porque na rua o SATANAS criou varias ilusoes pra ele e onde ele achava que estava

livre ele se deu conta que estava mais preso de que em qualquer outro lugar e disse que o rapaz se arrependia de ter saído da igreja onde ele sem saber era liberto para ir atrás dessa tal liberdade na rua. Moral da história ela disse para o Ricky voltar pra igreja agora antes que seja tarde demais e precise fazer igual a esse rapaz que vai hoje na segunda feira dia 5 se internar em uma clinica de recuperação para drogados. Ela fez o convite para o Ricky voltar naquele instante mas ele nao aceitou.”

“Yesterday I thought of you because we were at Dona Ninha’s and some believers [Evangelical Christians] came to visit Ricky and the lady talked about freedom. The woman said that the youth search for freedom in this world and do not find it, and she used two examples. One was the example of her own son: it looked to me like he was very oppressed by her, as she forced him to go to church (she even said that herself, because she thought that it was the right thing to do) and the son used to fight a lot saying that he wanted to do other things, until one day the son graffitied the word FREEDOM in huge letters on his bedroom wall. She then let him have his desired FREEDOM and then he realised that it was nothing like what he had thought. The other case, she said, was almost the same as the case of her own son. It was about a boy who grew up within the evangelical church, who felt very trapped because of the rules imposed by the church. Then, one day this boy’s mother also let him have his freedom and he went after it (his freedom). He hung out on the streets, began to abuse drugs, and just one day before going to Dona Ninha’s house the woman who was telling the story said that she had met the guy. He told her that he was not free because on the streets SATAN had created many illusions for him and when he thought that he was free he realised that he was even more trapped than in any other place. She said that the guy regretted having left the church to go after the so-called freedom on the streets, without knowing that he was already free. The point of the story was that she told Ricky to go back to the church now, before it was too late, and that he had to do something like this guy who on Monday, the 5th, would check himself into a rehab clinic. She invited Ricky to return instantly [to church] but he did not accept it.”

I closed my laptop and I missed my friends in Rocinha. So I opened my laptop again and played a song that I had heard playing many times in Rocinha:

O que é que eu vou fazer com essa tal liberdade / And what am I going to do with this so-called freedom

Se estou na solidão pensando em você / If I am lonely thinking of you

Eu nunca imaginei sentir tanta saudade / I never imagined missing it so much

Meu coração não sabe como te esquecer / My heart does not know how to forget you

(...)

Essa Tal Liberdade / This so-called freedom

(Só Para Contrariar)

Chapter 9: The spectacle goes on

“E o espetáculo continua / And the spectacle goes on
Em cada beco em cada rua, / In each alleyway in each street,
Em cada beco em cada rua... / In each alleyway in each street...”
(UPMMR 1983: 180)

Usually, the last group to parade during the carnival competition is called “bateria”. This is the group in charge of the music, the drums and the beat during the parade. When asked to produce a book narrating the history of Rocinha, it was under the form of a carnival parade that the members of the Resident’s Associations of Rocinha (UPMMR) organized 180 pages of poems, memories, pictures and tales about Rocinha. They concluded their book with a section entitled “bateria”. The book itself was named “Varal de Lembranças: Histórias e Causos da Rocinha. (A String of Memories: Stories and Tales from Rocinha.)” In its introductory pages, the authors explained that a string of memories was put together by different people in the community who collaborated towards the composition of the book with their private material, family pictures, and life stories. One after another, the dwellers would meet to peg their material to a historical string, which grew so long that it became a book. The book was then published in 1983 and I managed to get hold of an original copy thanks to a friend of mine that worked at ASPA (Social Action Father Anchieta) in Rocinha. The mimicry involved in having carnival permeate both this thesis and the book “Varal de Lembranças” gives me more confidence to have produced a work that my friends in Rocinha will also appreciate.

The limitation of structures

Turner (1967, 1969) and various others have long argued that apparently exotic rituals are in fact based on structural elements. Likewise, Matta (1991) has already argued that carnival does not necessarily mean the disappearance of structures. In my thesis, I do not propose that structures such as class, race and gender are dissolved just because a carnival of freedom is being held. In fact, the case for metafreedom is a reminder that expressions of freedom could be indirectly linked to those concerns. Instead, however, I have chosen to direct the reader's attention to another important consequence of carnival, which is exactly its ability to cause estrangement to the structures (determinations) of the world to which each one of us are often argued to be subjected to. Turner (1969) seemed to understand this when he argued that it was a carnival type of *experience* that could be taken as a form of "anti-structure". Considering that my ethnography is presented from the point of view of carnival as a heuristic "anti-structural" literary device, hence, it does not seek to explore structural processes in favelas of the kinds that other anthropologists such as Goldstein (2003), Zaluar (2004) and Perlman (2010) have already competently done. The main objective of my own work was to gain the fullest level of insight from its own methodological stance. Through the experience of the carnivalesque of freedom in Rocinha, one of my intentions was that the reader could derive a distinct perspective from which to reflect on which freedoms we have grown used to and which freedoms may have become determining presences in our lives or otherwise. What may seem strange in the many performances of freedom that I present in the thesis could give us a hint as to what the limits of the possibility of our own freedoms are.

This point leads me to Oksala (2005: 207), who argues that the estrangement introduced by otherness is also a way of experiencing freedom. In the author's own words:

“The other as radical alterity importantly opens the constituted subject to what it is not, to what it cannot grasp, possess or know. The arts of existence aiming to transgress normalized individuality would succeed in opening up an ethical sphere exceeding totality and determination because the other is capable of introducing alterity to the constituted subject. The other makes ethical subjectivity possible but also breaks the totality of constituted experience by introducing a plurality in being that resists all efforts of totalization and normalization.”

In carnival I found a genre that I felt to be more inclusive of the plurality of ways that freedom is lived in Rocinha. Through carnival, more voices could be heard within the word-limit that was given for my discussion on freedom. But what happens when the carnival of freedom is over? What does daily life of people in Rocinha look like when it is not represented under a carnivalesque form? It has been suggested that the main characteristic of daily life in favelas is the background of structural violence and lack of freedom to which people in such places are subjected. However, I believe that those representations are not neutral either; they are simply based on a different representational genre (see Jaguaribe 2007).

Paul Farmer (2004: 307) explains that the concept of structural violence dates back at least to the 1960's when it was first used by Latin American liberation theologians to refer to “sinful social structures characterized by poverty”. Farmer (ibid.) then goes on to say: “the concept of structural violence is intended to inform the study of the social machinery of oppression”. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2004) also discusses a similar image of “social machinery” in relation to the question of “structural violence” but adds another dimension to it, namely, the problem of its invisibility. At some point she equates “structural violence” to “the invisible social machinery of inequality” (Scheper-Hughes 2004: 13). There is little doubt that the lenses of “structural violence” have succeeded in

exposing very important issues that have helped with the task of understanding poverty, gender relations, public health and many other topics.

In considering the topic of freedom, however, I was confronted with what could be seen as a limitation of the structural analytical framework. When considered under a structural perspective, would freedom itself not risk becoming determined by structural elements by default? If so, such a framework would perhaps have led me into a pessimistic enterprise whose focus would likely rest on explaining an assumed lack of freedom in favela life, something that most of my friends in Rocinha would not endorse themselves. It was exactly Scheper-Hughes (personal communication 2009) who once strongly advised me to be loyal to people in the field above all things. At some point during my research into freedom, it became clear to me that a “structural violence” approach would not be the best framework under which to argue my case. This is not to say that I became blind to the dynamics of violence in the favela. In fact, metafreedom could itself be understood as an element of violence that operates on a more micro-political level over dynamics of freedom in Rocinha. Nonetheless, following from what I already discussed in chapter 2, I decided that I was in a privileged position to explore other dimensions of favela life that went beyond “structural violence”, something that my specifically tailored empirical method had allowed for.

The question of poverty

A strong link between “poverty” and “structural violence” is often presented in most discussions around the latter concept. Farmer (2004: xx) makes that point and goes on to name the settings in which he considers that such a link is manifested. He states:

“The impact of extreme poverty and social marginalization is profound in many of the settings in which anthropologists work. These settings include not only the growing slums and shrinking villages of the Third World (or whatever it is called these days) but also, often, the cities of the United States.”

It is important for my argument here that in discussions of structural violence a strong link is constituted between “violence”, “poverty” and “slums”. It is exactly at this point that after having lived in a Brazilian favela for more than a year that I feel the need to address some issues raised by the general question of poverty and its relation to ideas of freedom.

Many of the favela dwellers with whom I spent time in Rocinha would certainly be classified as “poor” according to different measurements and some were happy to take that role. However, at the same time, many people there did not like to see themselves as being poor either. Part of the question then seems to rest on the methods used to determine who is the poor. From what perspective did Farmer (2004) and many others portray the slums of Third World as loci of total poverty? How do some people come to see so much poverty where others do not? It is exactly around this point that another issue with structural approaches seem to arise. The question of poverty and unfreedom in slums seem to become excessively marked under a perspective of “structural violence”. Although I do understand the potential benefits of such a feat, I would tend to agree with Rahnema (in Sachs 1992) when the author argues that it is in relation to a given classificatory structure (a given narrative) that people often become classified as poor or not poor; poverty is a very relative measure.

As an anthropologist, a question that I ask myself in this regard is; what narratives will I use? Who deserves my loyalty when I write about the many encounters that taught me so much about life in Rocinha? As I already mentioned, I agree with Scheper-Hughes (personal communication 2009) when she argues that

we should always side with people in the field. Therefore, when people in favelas do not think of themselves as being “poor”, what is the least “violent” position that I can take as an anthropologist; one that will not hurt these people who are now my friends, and for whom I care deeply? Do I believe in what they tell me about themselves, in how they prefer to constitute themselves, or do I believe in other narratives of poverty – of which in the guidebooks of the World Bank there are many – and argue that they really suffer from some sort of “false consciousness” concerning their situation? Can I see better than they can because I am in a supposedly privileged structural position? It seems that these questions can only be answered with wider ethical considerations in mind.

Different approaches to ethics

Escobar (1995) and also Sachs (1992) discuss at length the moral and historical basis on which ideas such as “development”, “poverty”, and “equality” stand. These discussions concern the establishment after World War II of some countries in the northern hemisphere as “developed” as opposed to other “underdeveloped” areas of the world. A new era of global development was thus launched with President’s Truman inaugural speech on the 20th of January 1949. The message was clear: the United States of America should be regarded as the standard of a “developed” nation and other places or other people around the world were expected (through foreign aid) to “catch up” with the American standard of living. A long time has passed since Truman’s speech but the narrative that the world is structurally divided between the “developed” and the “underdeveloped” remains. Although the history of the division between the “rich” and the “poor” dates much further back than Truman’s speech, the expectation that the “poor” has the *obligation* to “catch up” with those that are not judged to be “poor” could still be seen as a reflection of the “development” era launched after World War II.

The total picture that describes a state of affairs in which the world works in a linear manner, “progressing” from “underdevelopment” to “development”, is a narrative that has long served as a form of legitimization for the intervention of the so called “developed” societies into the affairs of the so-called “underdeveloped”. The argument of structural violence, although ethically committed to improving the situation of those identified as “underprivileged”, runs the risk of getting trapped in the same narrative that structurally divides the world into those that are assumed to be “good” and those that still need to catch up with a certain ideal of “goodness”. The problems involved in this take of “development” have been long debated by anthropologists, such as Hobart (1993), who in *An anthropological critique of development: the growth of ignorance* argues that the idea of development has created an ignorant world majority. I would go further to suggest that the impulse for “development” seems to derive ethical legitimization from a problematic narrative that at once holds that the lives led by some people is more appropriate than the lives led by others and that everybody should have the same appropriate standard of living - whether they want it or not; an obvious challenge for any debate on the topic freedom.

An alternative ethics would be informed not by the values of this master narrative but by the particular narratives that arise during fieldwork itself. Ethically, such an approach would try to avoid the creation of what could be called “a differend” between the anthropologist and the people with whom we conduct fieldwork. Ethics would be understood not as a universal set of principles according to which the anthropologist frames herself but as a particular commitment within each unique encounter, each particular conversation, and each particular history crystallised by fieldwork. This might help us to avoid a situation in which the people with whom we live and whose lives we narrate become the victims of a narrative that they never authored. MacIntyre (1984) presents a similar take on the issue when he argues for a virtue-based type of ethics, one that is based on the particular characteristics of different communities. I would be

further interested in how particular narratives, particular interactions, particular commitments, could be argued to be a basis for ethics.

Lyotard (1988: 9) discusses the issue in his own words:

"I would like to call a *differend* the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim. A case of *differend* between two parties takes place when the regulation of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom."

As it concerns the topic of freedom, the ethical problem that Lyotard's (1988) approach exposes is that the so-called poor, when subjected to a narrative of structural poverty – often against their consent – have already been somehow deprived of agency, of will, of power and perhaps they also have become deprived of possibilities for freedom in their own lives. In an extreme case, if those constituted as "poor" cannot argue with the anthropologist under the threat of being dismissed as cases of "false consciousness", a "*differend*" is clearly established. My particular empirical approach to the topic of freedom, which gathers the otherwise more difficult to apprehend objects of freedom for view, is deeply committed to avoiding cases of *differend* between myself as an anthropologist and people in Rocinha whose lived experiences of freedom I try to present to the reader.

Rahnema (in Sachs 1992) points out that the main problem with the definitions of poverty currently used is exactly that they do not allow for the poor to determine their own condition. The poor is often externally determined. For example, poverty by choice, or what Rahnema calls "moral poverty" – which is the idea that it is morally superior to be poor – is not seriously considered in the current development era. This creates a situation of entrapment, one in which the poor can only stop being poor by fulfilling the requirements that are externally

imposed upon them. In the thesis, I tried to prevent a similar situation from happening to the topic of freedom. As an anthropologist, I want to be in touch with the language spoken by my friends in the field and I am interested in how they constitute themselves and their problems through their own language. I want to be by their side in the same way that in many circumstances they stood by my side in Rocinha. If many of them do not use the language of poverty or unfreedom to narrate their own lives, what language do they use? Knowing them, I am certain that to subject some of these friends to certain structural narratives would certainly hurt them. What pain would they feel? Would they call it violence? Would they call it humiliation? I understand that the risk of not taking a structural approach to poverty and freedom is that I ignore “the invisible social machinery of inequality” that is said to operate in Brazil. Not all problems can be addressed in a single research. In my case, I have chosen to tackle the one inequality that both my friends and myself are able to see. Namely, the inequality implicit in the privileged position occupied by some anthropologists, economists, philosophers and others (the ones who are supposed to know) versus the underprivileged position of “false consciousness” in which some people in the world risk to be condemned to live (the ones who are supposed not to know).

In face of the question mark that hangs over the metaphysics of metafreedom, the point made above serves as another argument as to why I shall remain reluctant to argue that my ethnographic method can reveal a higher truth (the existence of metafreedom) of which I am the anthropological mediator. I would much prefer to adopt a position that strives to avoid the creation of cases of *differend* with my friends in Rocinha as a consequence of my analysis. I would feel more comfortable playing the role of a self-declared anthropological speculator rather than the role of the academic in charge of the *séance* of invisible objects. It is under such an imaginative speculative mode that I propose to turn to the next section.

A paradox of freedom

I hope that the disclaimer above will address certain issues that insistently come up whenever people talk about favelas. As I mentioned before, I do not believe that the topic of freedom should be reduced to any of these other topics (violence, poverty, citizenship, etc.) and a main concern of my thesis has been to address the issue of freedom in its own terms. This is to say that I have intentionally not tailored my research around a discussion on how structures of poverty or structural violence, for example, could be said to determine freedom. I do suggest, however, that these issues are very important ones and that they are possibly related to the question of metafreedom. My main focus regarding this latter point, however, goes down the alleyways of speculation on whether freedom could be said to depend on metafreedom as a structure *sui generis* in order to exist or not. Discussions of this sort tend to lead us back to a paradox that I introduced in the first chapters: is freedom what can be determined to be freedom? There was a point that my friend Auro seemed to suggest something along those lines, when he stated: “Liberdade mesmo é fazer a escolha certa, baseada em conhecimento e muita doutrina. (Proper freedom is to make the right choice, based on knowledge and a lot of doctrine.)” If so, this determination would arguably go beyond the issue of structural violence alone and we would likely need an account of a complex network of structures and causal relations in order to explain the conditions of the possibility of freedom. I believe that the concept of metafreedom, if granted existence, would end up functioning as an important node in such a network of discourses and practices that could be argued to regulate freedom.

The carnivalesque of freedom that I presented in the previous chapters was marked by a concentration of various distinct narratives of freedom within a limited textual space (akin to the concentration of various distinct people in limited party spaces that is very common in carnival). I would speculate that the requirement of metafreedom could be said to be a consequence of the relations

established between these many different people in the favela and to depend, for example, on the different levels of intimacy that people consider to have with each other. The more intimacy in their relationships, the less likely it seemed to me that a question such as “who gave you the freedom to talk to me like that?” would come up. If there is a necessary aspect of forced intimacy in carnival, in daily life metafreedom could be said to operate as a reminder that social intimacy (see Herzfeld 2005) may be necessary for freedom of expression to be granted to people. Along the lines of this example, metafreedom could be said to help establish social boundaries that keep a desired distance between people as they go about living their daily lives.

If the carnivalesque is an experience of “anti-structure” (Turner 1969), its excess of different voices and its radical polyphonia would be countered by the structural relations established by metafreedom. If freedom is considered to be a requirement for freedom to be expressed, in the carnivalesque I only present the expressions that actually took place. The expressions of freedom that were silenced by the various circumstance in which metafreedom would be enmeshed could be said to form another important part of daily life that did not make it into my thesis. The absence of expressions of freedom is also frequently experienced in the daily life of my friends in the favela. Perhaps in many circumstances people might have refrained themselves from expressing freedom because they might have judged that they did not have the necessary metafreedom to do so? If in my thesis the lexicon of freedom comes to be used all the time, in daily life in Rocinha as I experienced it, it would sometimes take me three or even more days to hear or see any expression of a word that belonged to the lexicon of freedom that I studied. Contrary to what happens in the carnivalesque, freedom in daily life was diluted among numerous instances in which freedom was absent.

The temptation to keep on flirting with the issue of metafreedom is intense. From the point of view of metafreedom, however, freedom would then have to exist as some sort of determination. As I argued in the two initial chapters, I

believe that I am not compelled by my research method and fieldwork experience to accept such a position. In any case, I would like to grant the reader the freedom to believe in the existence metafreedom or not. Therefore, I will present some further considerations on the issue in order to offer some more “food for thought” for any possible deliberation on the matter.

Another way in which metafreedom could be argued to bring about an interruption in the flow of carnival would be through its power to bring about silence. Whenever the question “who gave you the freedom to talk to me like that?” was raised, a common reaction in the favela was that the person under inquiry would not respond at all, but merely fall silent. This, however, could be a particular characteristic of the conditions experienced in Rocinha because one could picture other places in which such a question would bring about diverse forms of justification, such as: “My freedom of speech is guaranteed by the Constitution!” Such a reaction would be very unlikely to take place in Rocinha, I believe. Whenever people voiced a question regarding other people’s freedom, it was often because they wanted to bring a certain conversation to an end, to halt a speech act that they considered that should not have happened in the first place.

I have already mentioned that the argument for the existence of metafreedom implies the existence of a second-order type of freedom that would be necessary for other expressions of freedom to take place. In this sense, there is in metafreedom a reflexive instance of freedom on freedom. In this line of argumentation, therefore, freedom would still not be reduced a priori to anything else but to freedom itself (although, it would be reduced to another order of freedom). As I have previously hinted at, though, the same could not be said of metafreedom itself. Otherwise, we would risk falling into a situation of infinite regress. Considering that the former type of freedom (second-order) is different from the latter type (first-order), the question would be whether metafreedom itself would also be dependent on the previous existence of a third-order type of freedom and so on, *ad infinitum*. I would argue that this should not necessarily be

the case. Although freedom could possibly be analysed in terms of metafreedom, the bases of metafreedom must not be thought of in terms of freedom. Instead, it would seem necessary to consider a reductive type of analysis and derive an explanation for metafreedom from other aspects of life such religious beliefs, ideas about the body and sexuality, intimacy, kinship and so on.

I propose to give the reader a taste of the sort of discussions that could be possible if metafreedom were said to exist. In the next section, I propose to speculate with more detail about the possible relationships between metafreedom and each one of the kinds of freedom that I have presented in the previous chapters. In doing so, I am using my experience in Rocinha to debate further on the limits of the carnivalesque of freedom and the possible basis for such limits. Considering the uncertain nature of metafreedom, however, I do not make any claim to truth in my remarks below. I also do not claim that my comments are nearly as exhaustive or rigorous as they should have been in case I had chosen to focus my thesis on an argument dependent on the existence of metafreedom. The causal networks of discourse and practices that would need to be explored in the scenario in which one would choose, for example, to focus on a Foucauldian (1977) genealogical type of study of metafreedom in Rocinha would probably require discussions of the length of a second thesis. Having said that, if the arguments to follow appear to be too reductive when compared to the richness of the carnivalesque of freedom, this could also be taken as another point in favour of a non-reductive type of analysis.

Metafreedom of livre

“Home” is an important concept that is directly related to intimacy, familiarity and kinship (Matta 1985). I would like to bring back the focus to one of the vignettes that I described in chapter 4. One day, coming back from the beach to

Rocinha, I suggested that my friend Gustavo should help James – an English volunteer at MFI – to have a shower, washing the sand from his body. At that time, Armando laughed and said: “You are very naughty, Moises! Just because we’ve got back to Rocinha you think that you can say whatever you want? Behave!” Gustavo, instead of getting mad at me, replied: “Ué! Aqui ele se sente em casa, se sente livre! (Hey! Here he feels at home, he feels free!)” I could argue that this is a statement about the perceived relationship established between freedom of expression and the fact that we had returned to Rocinha. Armando is suggesting that the rules for expression in Rocinha were different from those in the neighbourhood of São Conrado, or at least he suggested that I behaved as such. I had previously heard from more than one person in Rocinha that “favelado tem boca suja (favela dwellers have a dirty mouth)”. In other words, favela dwellers tended to curse a lot and they used to say things regardless of the rules of conduct often held by people of other “status” in Brazil. Armando’s comment reflects a bit of that thinking, perhaps he thought I had bought too much into this stereotype that somehow there is more freedom of expression in Rocinha. Gustavo, however, expressed another reason that would justify my verbal behaviour. Whether or not I had more freedom of expression due to the fact that Rocinha was a favela, for Gustavo, I certainly could have more freedom of expression in Rocinha because I simply felt at “home”. The implication of these statements could be that in places where people feel at home there should be more freedom of expression in general. Considering that metafreedom is a particular type of freedom of expression (the freedom to express freedom), if we were to focus on the particular issue of metafreedom around the word “livre”, as expressed by Gustavo, both of the previous arguments could be said to be related to metafreedom. Because Rocinha is a favela, and because Gustavo also felt “at home” in Rocinha, the freedom to express the word “livre” (a kind of freedom), as it occurred, had also been facilitated.

I could also speculate that the expression of “livre” in this situation was partly made possible by other established discourses that allow for a place called

“home” to animate certain discourses on “freedom”. That observation could be supported, for example, by the vignette in which Amélia finds out that an MFI volunteer would spend some time at my place in Rocinha and then she told me: “Poor you! She will take away the freedom that you have at home!!!” Again, in this situation there is an affirmation of a discourse that says: a place where one feels at home is a locus of privileged freedom. Another example that comes to mind is the fact that whenever people visited each other at home in many places in Brazil, it would be common for the host to say to the guest: “Sinta-se em casa! (Make yourself at home!)” This was done as a way to state that formalities should not be of concern, that the guest could feel intimate to the hosts, and that the guest was allowed to feel free in a house that is not his or her home. In this case, then, the metafreedom in Gustavo’s interpellation of the word “free” could be said to be related both to the fact that Rocinha as a favela could be argued to be a differentiated locus of metafreedom, and because the constitution of places called “home” also tend to facilitate the animation of the lexicon of freedom.

On a different episode, my friend Priscilla shouted at a snobbish old lady in São Conrado: “Filha da puta! (Son of the bitch!) If you had knocked me down with that car I would have beaten you up!” Then the scared woman drove away as quickly as possible. I laughed and said: “Priscilla, one day someone will just sue you or something!” She laughed at me: “Sue me? Are you serious? Who is going to find me in Rocinha, fairy? Eu sou livre! (I am free)! I don’t even have an address, darling!! You are so naïve sometimes!!!” Indeed, the only letter that I used to receive at home in Rocinha was the electricity bill. Otherwise, I had no address either. Most people explained where they lived according to the proximity to the main roads and then they gave more detailed information about a certain mini-market, bar, or any other landmark near their houses. One of the hassles of not having an address was that to receive letters and home deliveries one had to give the address of a friend who happened to live near one of the main roads, or else pay for a community postal service delivery. However, the point here is that the inability to be located, to be mapped, also brought clear advantages for people

when it came to, for example, escaping judicial power. Without an address, how could people be located in order to be sued? When Priscilla said: “Who is going to find me in Rocinha, fairy? Eu sou livre!” – the freedom to express “livre” could be argued to come from the recognition of a context in which to be subjected to judicial power is a form of unfreedom. In fact, perhaps it could be said that one of the most powerful tokens of unfreedom in the favela is “the jail” (also the cage). The biggest fear of many people in the favela was to go to jail because some were somehow involved in illegal activities or knew people in that situation; and for those who were not – the majority – their trust in the police was often so weak that many people still feared going to jail unjustly, even without having done anything wrong (see Wacquant 2008).

When Bezerra said: “I want to have my freedom, man! Those people go to jail and are humiliated in prison, big time!” he was confirming a very common discourse that states that not being in prison is to have freedom. When Fernanda said: “Freedom is to take a bird out of the cage because the poor thing did not do anything to be kept like that!”, once again freedom was constituted in opposition of the symbol of the cage. And although there were examples of people who claimed to have found freedom in jail, such as my evangelical friend Leandro, the point is that whenever the discourse of justice, cage, prosecution or jail is used, it also facilitates the freedom to express freedom. In this case, my suggestion that Priscilla could be sued seemed to have provided her with metafreedom (the freedom to interpellate “livre” as a kind of freedom). Perhaps it could be said more generally that there is a dialogical relationship between metafreedom and whatever else people take unfreedom to be. It would be as if, under the threat of unfreedom, metafreedom became dialogically animated. Under the threat of unfreedom people were more likely to constitute freedom.

Menem once told me: “You will end up getting a bad reputation by hanging out with them! If I were you I would not want people to see me with them! Do you know what the question is? If they want to be free, that is their problem! Just that for me that is not freedom!!!” Menem was talking about the group of young gay

guys of Rocinha (PAFYC) and how he did not really recognize their claim to freedom. The way that he put the situation, however, could lead one to think that there is an issue with metafreedom and the force with which freedom is expressed. I noticed a certain attitude of relativism in many of the statements about freedom that I witnessed in Rocinha. When Menem said: "If they want to be free, that is their problem!", there is a certain implication that people may want to interpellate freedom in different ways and this is a problem that different people have to deal with; there is a certain acceptance that to be "free" is a matter relative to different people. However, the force with which Menem stated: "If they want to be free, that is their problem!" was different from the force that he would give to the interpellations of freedom that he would recognize as true relative to his own life experiences. The point here would be that metafreedom could be facilitated when the force with which it is interpellated is not the same force as the "real", of something said as a reality. Just like in a tale all sorts of things can happen, or in other possible worlds all things can happen, equally, in a world that is not one's own, all sorts of things could be easily interpellated as freedom. That is not to say, however, that all interpellations of freedom were considered to be objectively true.

Metafreedom of *livre-arbítrio*

When it comes to "*livre-arbítrio*", an important observation could be made about the frequency with which this kind of freedom was constituted in Rocinha, which was very different to other kinds of freedom that I was concerned with. That explains why chapter 5 is significantly shorter than others. It could be proposed that such a differentiated occurrence of this kind of freedom happens because the freedom necessary to express "*livre-arbítrio*" is harder to obtain than other types of freedom. There were many instances in which the interpellation of "*livre-arbítrio*" was not appropriate for my friends to make in Rocinha. As a general observation, it could be said that "*livre-arbítrio*" was not considered an

appropriate kind of freedom to be expressed in ordinary daily conversations in Rocinha. I state this in relation to other possible places where “livre-arbítrio” could possibly be constantly interpellated such as at a philosophy or divinity school, for example. In fact, it was often within a religious context that the metafreedom of “livre-arbítrio” was obtained in Rocinha, but by very specific people there. It would be fair to say that most occurrences of “livre-arbítrio” took place in a context of religious teaching, be that the case of Paizinha teaching her students at the Sunday school or the case of Auro trying to teach me something about his religious beliefs. In any case, the point here would be that the metafreedom of certain kinds of freedom could be related to the idea that some discourses belong more to the lives of some people rather than others. There is a sense that one should be qualified to have the freedom to express certain freedoms. A priest would likely have more freedom to express “livre-arbítrio” than an ordinary favela dweller, for example. Paizinha and Auro in their position as teachers (the former taught Portuguese and Religion, the latter taught Mathematics and Physics) could both have derived their metafreedom from their specific educational and religious background. Still, “livre-arbítrio” seemed to belong to a specific vocabulary that was often not used in the daily life of most of my friends in Rocinha.

Metafreedom of libertação

“Libertação” as a kind of freedom was also often interpellated as part of narratives used within religious contexts. In particular, it was often the case that my evangelical friends in Rocinha expressed “libertação” much more often than those friends that did not consider themselves to be evangelicals. For my friend Paizinha, for example, “libertação” was a need, a requirement for everyone living in this world. However, she also had some conditions attached to it, namely, that the person undergoing “libertação” should want to be liberated and that God

should want the same. Paizinha also held that only the truth could really set someone free and when I asked her what the truth was, she replied: “the Bible!”

Both Auro and Paizinha had already mentioned that freedom was not exactly about *whatever* one wanted to do but in fact freedom was the *right* thing to do. For Paizinha, “libertação” would come when people started to do what the Bible told them to do. Her freedom to express “libertação” was therefore justified by the idea that the word “libertação” refers to a process in which people change their actions so that these actions follow what the Bible stated to be the right ones. It could be said that it was the Bible that gave Paizinha confidence and freedom to state that “libertação” had taken place or that someone was undergoing a process of “libertação” or someone else had received “libertação”. Therefore, for most of my evangelical friends, the metafreedom of “libertação” could be said to be derived from a set of narratives mainly provided by the Bible and from church practices. Sociologist Patterson (1991) has already suggested that the formation of Christianity as a religion has been historically dependent on metaphors of freedom and slavery.

Nonetheless, other people seemed to derive freedom to express “libertação” exactly because they wanted to express a different view on the topic. Peterson, for example, was very familiar with the use that many evangelicals made of such expression. However, that did not prevent him from interpellating “libertação” once when he was talking to me about different types of “libertação” in other religions, such as in Santo Daime. In a sense he went beyond the determination of “libertação” according the Bible. My friend Cacá also expressed it once saying that “libertação” was a lie and that I should not believe it. In this case I would also argue that some uses of metafreedom were not derived from the Bible but from the fact that expressions such as “libertação” are not exclusive to their main contexts of use, in that they often go beyond it and other people may choose to express it in different ways or to even question its authenticity. In order to do so, these people interpellated “libertação” too. There is therefore a sense in which metafreedom

could be said to be a prerequisite of the Derridean requirement of iterability of language that I presented in chapter 2: “a sign or a mark that was not repeatable would not be a sign or a mark, and could not be an element in a language or code” (Loxley 2007: 77). I could argue that the very requirement of repeatability for a word to be part of language opens up opportunities of metafreedom, which are then taken up by some people according to their different circumstances. Whether the use of “libertação” is appropriate or true for different people is something that varies. Nevertheless, the metafreedom of “libertação” seems to come not just from within one dominant discourse but from the very existence of competing discourses too.

Metafreedom of liberada

Similar to the case of “livre-arbítrio”, “liberada” was a type of freedom that was not interpellated as often as other kinds in Rocinha. It would also be fair to say that most performances involving the expression “liberada” (or “liberado”) fell within narratives of sexuality. The main use of this kind of freedom was made by my LGBT friends in Rocinha to refer to the fact that they were “out of the closet”. In a sense, “liberada” was used as LGBT slang in Rocinha. My extended experiences in Brazil make me realize that alternative expressions are used more often among other LGBT groups to refer to people “out of the closet”, such as the expression “assumido (assumed)”. It could be argued that metafreedom contains a temporal dimension to it and sometimes the freedom to express words such as “liberada” is related to the momentum that certain expressions gain among a certain group of people. However, it is also significant that my LGBT friends in Rocinha thought of sexuality as something that belonged to an interior hidden place in each one of our bodies but at the same time it was also something that could be expressed on the exterior. Those who demonstrated their inner (LGBT) sexual desires in public in the favela were often said to be “liberada”. Their inner selves were, therefore, said

to be liberated through external expression. Along those lines, it could be argued that the momentum that the expression of “liberada” achieved among my friends in Rocinha was facilitated by already existing narratives regarding bodies, feelings, sexuality, and private versus public boundaries, which formed a network that allowed for the metafreedom of “liberada”.

Another line of argument that could be explored in relation to the metafreedom of “liberada” would be to think about its relationship to wider liberal discourses of private ownership. If on the one hand I argued that there was a daily absence of the state in Rocinha, there could be other ways in which the state apparatus and state ideology could be said to be present in Brazilian favelas. For example, Wacquant (2008) discusses the strategy of “punitive containment” in which favelas are argued to become some sort of laboratory for a neo-liberal state that campaigns for the deployment of more hard-power strategies (even military) over a particular population, often in face of a dramatic shrinking of social programmes implemented by this same state. Ong (1987), Ong and Peletz (1995), Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant (2003) and Mahmood (2005) have all previously discussed different forms under which neo-liberal state practices and ideologies can be argued to reflect on human bodies. In the case of expressions of “liberada”, there could be a margin for an exploration of the conditions of possibility that liberal discourses around private ownership of bodies and sexual rights have as basis for the metafreedom of this particular kind of freedom. Indeed, the language of rights employed by gay activists during the Rio de Janeiro Gay Pride 2009 could be taken as indicative of how the status of freedom as a liberal right could be said to reflect on the question of sexuality. “É direito nosso amar e viver livremente (It is our right to love and live freely)” – was a statement registered on my field notes after I saw the phrase being displayed on a banner during Gay Pride 2009, which I had joined in company of many friends from Rocinha.

Metafreedom of liberdade

One of the greatest public advocates of freedom of expression (and therefore indirectly of metafreedom) in Brazil was certainly TV Globo. This nationally broadcasting television channel used to sponsor many advertisements along the following lines: “liberdade de expressão, nós apoiamos essa causa! (freedom of expression, we support this cause!)” Television sets were almost certain to be found in the vast majority of houses in Rocinha and TV Globo was the channel that most people liked to watch, mainly because of the four daily soap operas that the channel used to air. I did not own a television set myself, which people found very strange. Nonetheless, as I went to Amélia’s house almost every day, I used to watch a lot of television with her. To find out the politics behind what is aired on television was a research agenda that Abu Lughod (2005) pursued in a book entitled “Dramas of Nationhood: Politics of Television in Egypt”. Abu Lughod focused her research on the nation-making project embedded in television dramas in Egypt. In common with my research, however, there is the fact that her ethnography also focuses on the so-called subaltern and their taste for television shows. According to my life experience in Brazil, it would be fair to say that favela dwellers liked to watch television shows even more than other groups. These shows were of course often interrupted by long advertisements of all sorts. It was among those advertisements that the TV Globo inserted their campaigns in favour of freedom of expression.

Who gave TV Globo its metafreedom? With what interest do they interpellate freedom? These questions probably deserve a lengthy answer. For the purposes of my current speculation, I would like to briefly argue that TV Globo as a powerful medium of communication could be said to derive its metafreedom partly from singular historical events in so-called Brazilian history. I do not believe that even TV Globo could communicate whatever they wanted, though, and I would tend to argue that TV Globo somehow had a historical basis on which to campaign for freedom of expression. For decades, Brazil lived under a military dictatorship

(1964-1985) that abolished freedom of expression and introduced a severe system of censorship and control over what could be expressed in the nation, mainly impacting the communication industry (see Sore 1984). These events could be said to have given TV Globo the metafreedom to constitute and campaign for freedom of expression. This insight would be confirmed by other messages aired on TV Globo, such as: “Vamos lutar contra o monstro da censura! Liberdade de imprensa! (Let’s fight against the monster of censorship! Freedom of the press!)” Secondly, I believe that TV Globo was also responding to what they could see as a more recent threat to freedom of expression coming from the rise of Evangelical Pentecostalism in Brazil (Vital da Cunha 2009). This fact could be partly seen as a direct threat to TV Globo from the moment that the owner of the UCKG bought a big Brazilian television channel called TV Record and started to preach on television about what was right or wrong for people to watch and say. Although these are mere speculative thoughts, the point is that a reaction to a national historical background of military censorship could be thought of as an element that stimulates metafreedom on a national level.

In Rocinha, however, the memories that I noted concerning the military dictatorship related more often to the violence with which some military forces tried to counter the growth of favelas in Rio de Janeiro. Dona Bela once told me: “in those days, if you built your house out of brick, it would be demolished by the police next day! For sure!!!” In an article entitled *A gênese da favela carioca*, Valladares (2000) discusses in more depth this historical trajectory of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Beyond this military history in Rocinha, TV Globo could certainly be said to be very present in Rocinha too. They were campaigning for metafreedom in the homes of people in the favela. The extent to which this campaign worked or not is not an easy assessment to make. Personally, I never saw anyone in Rocinha directly justifying metafreedom in terms of freedom of expression as a right, although sometimes I heard the following expression “a boca é minha e eu falo o que eu quiser! (the mouth is mine and I say whatever I want!)”, which would reflect a narrative in which the ownership of one’s mouth is meant to grant freedom of expression, and metafreedom.

Perhaps it could also be argued that life under the siege of traffickers in favelas is like living under a dictatorship anyway. I would prefer not to draw such a hasty conclusion considering that my friends in Rocinha did not tend to refer to traffickers in such a fashion. Although the fear of expressing oneself against a background of violence was also clearly present, as can be seen in statements such as this one by my friend Janete: “muitas vezes a voz tem que ser calada, pra poder garantir a sua integridade física! (many times the voice has to be silenced in order to guarantee one’s physical integrity!)” Nevertheless, I would say that an important question would be whether people in Rocinha still had the freedom to refer to traffickers as dictators if they wanted to. Here I believe that the answer would be “yes, they would”. According to my ethnographic experience, perhaps the argument could be made that traffickers held some control over freedom of expression (and therefore metafreedom too) but this control was not complete. In ethnographic terms, I mean that people would avoid expressing certain things in places where traffickers or gossipers could hear what they said but would, nonetheless, whisper the things they wanted to say over coffee in the privacy of their own homes. Again, the publicity or privacy involved in the context in which an expression is made could be said to especially influence metafreedom in the favela.

In the way that my LGBT friends felt protected by drug lords, it is possible to wonder how much the guarantee that LGBT people could express themselves in the favela also impacted on the metafreedom of “liberada”, as discussed in chapter 7, for example. When LGBT freedom was questioned by some of the evangelical people that I knew, people like Auro used to “agree to disagree” regarding the meaning of freedom but still reserved for himself the freedom to interpellate freedom. Once Auro told Menem that it had been Jesus who granted him the freedom to be gay and I would suggest that perhaps the same could be said about his metafreedom: not only the traffickers could be argued to grant metafreedom to my LGBT friends but in Auro’s case he used to suggest that Jesus also granted him

metafreedom. Auro also used to mention that being a “viado (fag)”, made other people more at ease with us, they had more freedom with us. Some people liked to talk to fags whereas they would not speak much with other groups. This could be seen in the ethnographic episode in which Auro and I met a drunken old lady near my house and she hugged us and kissed us and told us that she loved us and talked to us for a while. Auro had told me then: “Ela disse uma vez que gosta da gente porque ela tem liberdade com a gente viado. Mas ela não tem liberdade com as outras pessoas. (She told me once that she likes us because she has freedom with us, fags. But she has no freedom with other people).” Something about us being gay appears to have given more freedom (and metafreedom) to a drunken old lady to express herself. This point could lead back to the question of intimacy, some people felt more at ease with fags, others probably felt more at ease in different groups, but there was perhaps something about the relationship established among different marginalized groups that made their relationship lead to more metafreedom.

Having said that, sometimes even among people that considered themselves to be fags, there were limits regarding freedom of expression. I have in mind the episode in which Mazinho took offence at the way that one of the young gay guys of the favela addressed himself to Mazinho one day as we were walking down to the beach. Mazinho told me then: “Eu, hein? Não dei liberdade para falar comigo assim! Me chamar de bicha e ainda pedir dinheiro???” (Oh, my? I did not give him the freedom to talk to me like that! Call me faggot and even worse ask me for money???)” It was not because Mazinho called himself a faggot that he had given other people the freedom to interpellate him as such.

A last point that I learned with my LGBT friends regarding metafreedom, and that I have previously presented, is that freedom of expression is not only given: it can also be taken without the consent of other people. This is what I realized through expressions such as “tomar liberdade” (to take freedom or liberty) and “dar um it”. As I already mentioned, “dar um it” could also be

understood as taking freedom or liberty with others. My transvestite friend Priscilla loved to take liberties with others. Although “tomar liberdade” was usually seen as a wrong thing to do, it still happened many times and with diverse people. The carnivalesque of freedom shows that freedom is not always considered to be a good thing. Nonetheless, even if against established norms, people who took freedom from others seemed to be able to have metafreedom; and primarily based on their will. If this last point holds, how exactly could one know when metafreedom has been obtained through the determination of discourses and practices or through the free will of someone like Priscilla or Auro? This leads me to some final thoughts.

The existence of freedom and the limits of experience

My research identified, registered and traced a certain lexicon of freedom (*livre*, *livre-arbítrio*, *libertação*, *liberada* and *liberdade*) as used in the daily life of people in Rocinha over an extended period of time. It opened up the possibility to offer an empirical basis to support the frequently neglected relativity, polyvocality and polysemy inherent in the use of the lexicon of freedom. The Derridean (1988) concept of iteration offered me the language with which to talk about the diversity of meanings that freedom acquired for my friends in Rocinha through different expressions of similar linguistic signs in many different events in the favela. My ethnographic experiences led me both to the formulation and the questioning of metafreedom as a possible object of study, one that could provoke further research but that would require different objectives and even research methods from the ones I have adopted in this thesis for its possible future development.

Despite all the speculation that I have engaged with in relation to metafreedom and the five different kinds of freedom mentioned, there seems to

remain an underlying issue that is common to the various expressions of freedom that gave life to a carnivalesque of freedom. If the transformation of freedom from a possibility, from langue, from absence into freedom as an actuality, as parole, as a presence, as a concrete object, requires metafreedom; and if Hume (1978) has a point when he argues that necessity cannot be experienced, it would be honest to say that ethnography as an empirical exercise cannot really provide the basis for the explanation of the necessary relation between metafreedom and freedom. The carnival of freedom can point out to the iterations of the objects of freedom that carry with them particular traces of metafreedom. However, when followed through, these specific traces often lead into silence, into speculation, or into the affirmation of one's unconditioned power over what to express. The exact conditions necessary for someone to obtain the freedom to express freedom (metafreedom) cannot be exactly determined at least for one main reason: in Rocinha when freedom of expression is not "given" by certain particular conditions, it is always a possibility that it can be simply "taken" based on the very will of the speaker. The possibility of "dar um it" exists as a reminder that not everything can be determined when it comes to metafreedom. This is because against all common practices, expectations, prescriptions, moralities, or even regulating narratives, people can still decide to take the freedom to express freedom, even if they later had to face punitive consequences. Therefore, to quote Fenves (in Nancy 1993: xx): 'All experience is a matter of "probability" which means *a limine*, it becomes a matter of sheer possibility. Experience at the limit – which designates *finite* experience – would then be the experience of freedom'. The possible failure of an anthropology of freedom to determine the exact necessary conditions for the possibility of freedom, therefore, should not be taken as an absolute failure but as a token of a discipline that strives to be truthful to its object of study.

The carnivalesque of freedom seems to bring with itself quite a few issues for future debate: First, that a conscious resistance to any sort of reductionism in anthropology, coupled with new fieldwork-based research methods, could bring

about new anthropological knowledge; Second, it seems that more attention still needs to be given to the ethnography of words as an area of research; Third, as a descriptive exercise of the existence of freedom at its own limits, the carnivalesque of freedom is also a reminder that description and analysis are not separate from each other, instead the very form of a description is in itself a tool of analysis that could lead to the uncovering of new facets of social life, as I believe it was the case with the objects of freedom here; Fourth, the carnivalesque of freedom also stresses the fact that analysis does not necessarily need to be done in causal terms in order to constitute a contribution to knowledge. As I remember well from my statistics classes at the University of Brasília (UnB), there is a difference between causality and correlation. Although over many points in the thesis I have pondered on the issue of causality, I ended up stressing empiricism, induction, speculation and analytical correlation as ways of generating knowledge, which I believe to be more fruitful (less self-defeating) when it comes to an anthropological discussion on freedom. In a sense, each chapter of the thesis could be appreciated as a form of analysis in which I presented the lived relations that I found between the existence of certain words as focal points of research and all the varied events (in Rocinha and further afar) correlated to that existence. Fifth, as Foucault himself apparently realised (in Oksala 2005), a “genealogical” research method would leave little (if any) room for freedom: the situation created by a hypothetical genealogical analysis of Priscilla’s or Auro’s metafreedom could be used as an example of that limitation; Sixth, if metafreedom were to be defended, the argument for its existence would require empirical evidence so far not obtained for a reliable inductive argument (the proof of necessary causality would still be impossible even with a reliable inductive argument), or it would have to be based on a rationalization of an intuition that metafreedom in fact exists. Nevertheless, it would also have to be considered that the latter scenario of a rational “deliberation” over metafreedom could create a case of differend with those that take their lived experiences as a basis for knowledge. Meanwhile, I celebrate with carnival an ethnography that seeks the limits of the alterities of freedom; this

parade is also a political gesture against the domination of a reduced number of narratives of freedom over a carnivalesque of less prominent ones.

And the spectacle goes on

In November 2010, the government of Rio de Janeiro decided to occupy the complex of favelas called Complexo do Alemão (the German Complex). This was part of a wider programme that aimed at fighting drug trafficking and at bringing “order” to the favelas of Rio as Brazil prepared to receive both the next football World Cup, in 2014, and the next Olympic Games, in 2016. As the occupation by the police was strongly resisted in the German Complex, the Brazilian government decided to bring in the army to fight against some favela dwellers. The media coverage of the event included a lot of blood and the biggest legitimating narrative used by the army to explain their brutal display of force against those resisting the occupation was to vehemently argue that such a war was necessary in order to bring “freedom” to the population living in that favela. In fact, a commandant of the police group that took part in the operation was cited in many newspapers as saying: “Vencemos. Trouxemos a liberdade à população do Alemão. (We won. We brought freedom to Alemão’s population.)”

It was the early hours of the 13th of November 2011. It was Rocinha’s turn to be occupied by the police in collaboration with the Brazilian army. The operation had been announced on television days in advance by the high order of the Rio de Janeiro government and my friends in Rocinha were anxiously waiting for the time of war to come. Once again, Rocinha would revisit its roots of war. The legitimating narrative behind the operation continued to be made by the government and the national media in terms of bringing freedom to the favela population. After the initial occupation, the professed plan was to install what the local government was calling UPPs (Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora / Pacifying

Police Units) in Rocinha. It was not very clear to anyone how the traffickers in Rocinha would react to such an “attack” by the government, though. Some thought that – bearing in mind what had happened at Complexo do Alemão in 2010 – the traffickers in Rocinha would simply run away and avoid direct confrontation with the police. Many people in Rocinha had quoted Ney – the latest “owner of the hill” – swearing that he and his group would fight the police to the death. A close friend of mine also told me that Ney had held a big party a few days before the scheduled occupation, and at this party he was said to have been very emotional and promised a big bloody fight with the police.

On the 10th of November 2011 I was in Cambridge (USA), chatting on the internet to a friend in Rocinha. At one point in our conversation he told me that he was shaken and could not believe what he had just heard on his television. I was anxious to hear what had happened. He said that TV Globo had just interrupted its regular schedule to show some breaking news. My heart was beating fast. I even thought that the police had decided to invade Rocinha earlier than announced. I asked him what was going on. What did they show on television? He said that it was something very serious. I asked him if he could hear fireworks. He said: no. Traffickers commonly used fireworks to signal trouble in the favela. What was happening? My friend was finding it hard to say anything. I asked him again. He said that he could not really believe TV Globo. I asked him again: “What is going on?” He replied after some silence: “TV Globo said that Ney was caught by the police!” It was my turn to go silent; I did not know what to say. Almost immediately messages started to pop up all over the internet about the possibility that Ney had been caught. My friends from Rocinha started to post frenetically on a social network website called Facebook. Was it true that Ney had been caught? The friend with whom I was chatting asked me to stay online and that he would try to keep me informed about everything. He was still a bit doubtful himself. Minutes later my friends on Facebook started to post links to other online media that brought more news about Ney being captured by the police while trying to flee

Rocinha inside the boot of a diplomatic car. My friend on the online chat and I had both started believing the news.

In Memoriam

What follows here are comments regarding Ney's imprisonment and the ensuing occupation of Rocinha by the police and the Brazilian armed forces. These reactions were posted on the internet by some of my friends in Rocinha (often using nicknames) during the period in which all these events were taking place in November 2011:

Ricky: "LIBERDADE, PRO, NEY (FREEDOM, TO, NEY)"

Henry: SERGIO CABRAL . oquê éh seu estar guardado. a justiça de DEUS . tarda mais não falha .! os planos é do homem . mais a utima palavra é DO SENHOR .! em vez de ficar estalando (upp) poderia . dar melhoria aos HOSPITAIS . da cidade do RIO DE JANEIRO (SERGIO CABRAL [governor of Rio de Janeiro at the time] . what is yours has been kept. The justice of GOD . it takes time but does not fail .! the plans are human . but the last word belongs to THE LORD .! instead of keeping installing (upp) you could . make the HOSPITALS better . of the city of RIO DE JANEIRO)"

Souza: Liiiiiiiiberdade já porrá! :@ , cadeia nun é eterna mano [..] , FÉ em Deus mano , você vai sair dessa! .. é agnt smp! (Freeeeeeeeedom now fuck! :@ , jail is not forever brother [..] , FAITH in God brother , you will get out of this one! .. it is us always!)"

Rax: “Liberdade Pro Ney da rocinha :) *_* vai toma no cú (UPP) (Freedom To Ney of rocinha :) *_* go fuck yourself (UPP)”

Henry: “Liberdade já presidente! (Freedom now president!)”

Rax: "Eu estou triste pq o Ney da rocinha foi PRES000
O
LIBERDADE :) *_*(I am sad because Ney of rocinha was CAUGHTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT FREEDOM :) *_*)"

Rone: “o problema é que a liberdade de ir e vir aonde queríamos que tínhamos a anos pode ser tolida e com ela vai a segurança contra os assaltos, o índice de criminalidade subirá bastante (the problem is that the freedom to come and go from wherever we want, which we have had for years could be diminished and with it goes away the safety against hold ups, the criminality index will go up a lot)”

Beatriz: “Jesus protejá nossa favelá ...UPP ér crl , toma nu cú a UPP :@:@
SOU MULAMBA , sou da favela , sou do povão , sou guerreira . Sou marrenta,
sou do samba , sou do funk , sou do pop. Sou rica , sou pobre. Sou dentista ,
sou frentista. Sou polícia , sou bandida. Sou 37 milhões em um só! Tenho
defeitos , sou brasileira. Mas superando todas elas , conquistei , conquisto e
conq...uistarei ! Eu sou a temida , invejada , tão secada Sou aquela que faz
três times rivais serem amigos quando eu jogo! Sou aquela que nunca
desiste, que acredita no milagre até o último segundo! . nossa favela ér

guerreira igual noso povo , chorarei por ela Quem ama nossa favela ?
Prazer, sou eó a eterna. á Rocinha vai sentir saudades 𐄂:'(LIBERDADE,
PORRA! :@ (Jesus protect our favela ...UPP the fuck , fuck yourself UPP
:@:~ I AM A TRAMP , I am favela , I belong to the big masses , I am a fighter
. I am full of myself , I belong to samba , I belong to funk , I belong to pop. I
am rich, I am poor. I am a dentist, I am a petrol station attendant. I am the
police , I am the bandit. I am 37 million in only one! I have defects , I am
Brazilian. But going beyond all of them , I have conquest , I conquest and I
will... conquest ! People fear me , envy me , put evil eyes on me I am the one
who makes three rival teams become friends when I play! I am the one who
never gives up, that believes in miracle until the last second! . our favela is a
fighter just like our people , I will cry for it Who loves our favela ? My
pleasure, it is me the eternal. Rocinha will miss you 𐄂:'(FREEDOM, FUCK!
:@)"

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