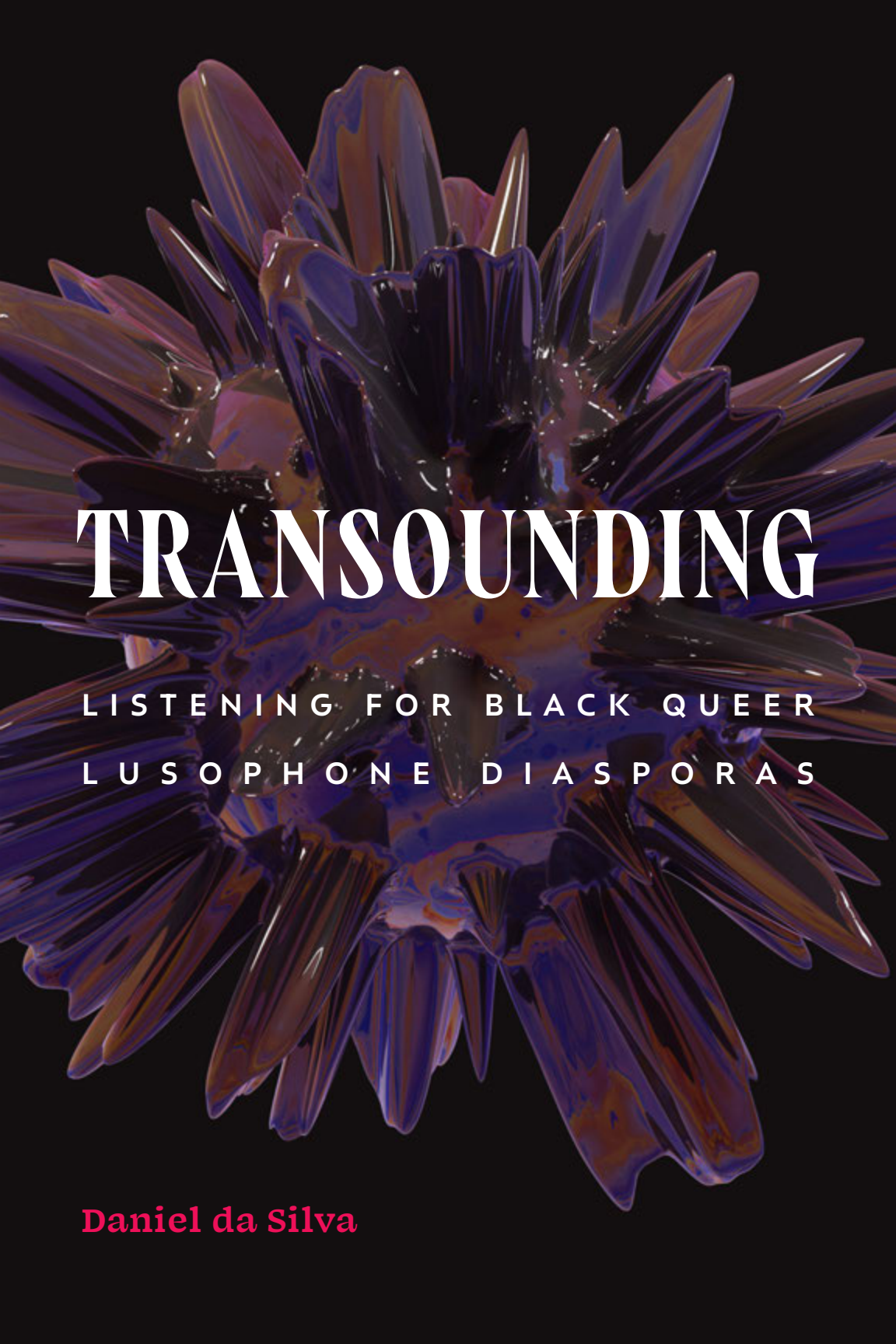


The background of the entire cover is a dark, almost black, space filled with a complex, symmetrical pattern of sharp, crystalline shapes. These shapes, which resemble stylized petals or shards of glass, are rendered in a range of colors from deep, velvety purple to bright, metallic blue. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the upper left, which creates sharp highlights and deep shadows, giving the shapes a three-dimensional, faceted appearance. The overall effect is one of organic complexity and vibrant, otherworldly beauty.

TRANSOUNDING

LISTENING FOR BLACK QUEER
LUSOPHONE DIASPORAS

Daniel da Silva

Transounding



DISSIDENT ACTS *A series edited by Macarena Gómez-Barris
and Diana Taylor*

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Transounding

*Listening for Black Queer
Lusophone Diasporas*

DANIEL DA SILVA

DUKE

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Para os meus pais

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Prelude

I remember hearing his voice. I'm not sure when I first heard it, but certainly through friends with better musical taste than mine or by way of a jukebox at a neighborhood haunt, I heard António Variações's voice. I wondered if it was a woman singing, taken by the lilting vocal turns of "É p'ra amanhã" (It's for Tomorrow; 1983).¹ It wasn't. Yet I heard in his voice the textures of women's voices I had heard in Portuguese popular and folkloric music playing from the cassette player in the family car, through local Portuguese programming on TV, and at social gatherings throughout my childhood. It was the mid- to late 1990s. I was in my early twenties, living in Newark, New Jersey, where I was born and raised, when I found his music. I combed through the dusty bins of shrink-wrapped CDs at Tucha, a neighborhood Portuguese gift shop which sat midway up Ferry Street, the main artery of the Ironbound, Newark's Portuguese enclave. Ferry Street is also ceremoniously named Portugal Ave., though no one calls it that. Tucha has since closed, but in its heyday, you could find just about anything from Portugal, including imported textiles, ceramics, instruments, home goods, knickknacks, books, and magazines. Tucha also carried a motley assortment of music, where I lucked on a CD of António Variações's greatest hits, released as a tribute—Variações had died from AIDS in 1984 after a short but explosive two years in Portugal's pop music spotlight. There were other Portuguese-language music tracks in my rotation: a few albums by the neofado Portuguese group Madredeus, and some classic fados by Amália Rodrigues. Variações was different, removed from the Portuguese soundscape that surrounded me. He sounded as if he were in a provocative arrangement with the registers of a cultural heritage I experienced as the cloistered terrain of family and tradition.

I spent a large part of my twenties escaping the stifling limitations of the neighborhood and culture I called home. The Ironbound is defined by the railroad

tracks surrounding it (bound by iron). The area has existed in ways apart from the once-monied white, Jewish, and majority-Black demographics of Newark, all on the other side of the tracks. Various immigrant groups have shaped the Ironbound throughout its history, including those from Germany, Poland, Italy, Spain, and Central America. Multiple waves of mass immigration from Portugal and later from Brazil throughout the twentieth century have given the area a distinctly Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) soundscape. In Newark, Anglo-American music, histories, and LGBTQ+ identities and politicization were in tension with the sounds of church processions, Portuguese social gatherings, and local restaurants with TVs blaring Portuguese-language broadcasts. A youthful wave of Brazilian immigration moved into the Ironbound in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Eventually, the Ironbound had internet cafés, a sushi restaurant, and a weekly gay dance party held in the basement hall of a local restaurant. These were the exceptions to a quotidian soundtrack that, as I think back on it, was very good at blocking out all of Newark's other sounds and scenes—its storied history of activism, music, and nightlife from gospel to rap, hip hop, goth, industrial, and jazz, to name a few. These were the soundscapes of its other neighborhoods. In the Ironbound, ethnic groups have held onto their languages, traditions, and foods, even as each eventually assimilates and leaves over time.

My upbringing was very Portuguese, from food to faith, wrapped in family gatherings and church feasts at Our Lady of Fátima. Music was my outlet. Church choirs and high school musicals gave way to alternative rock musings. I fell in with young and talented Portuguese American musicians. We wrote original songs and were caught up in a circuit of local gigs and big dreams. We often played to half-empty rooms, and sometimes to a small crowd in clubs and gallery spaces. We toured in a rented van, playing a handful of cities from Boston to DC. I learned that my voice was a source of catharsis for me and others. I remember how it resonated through my headphones as I sang into expensive microphones at magical recording studios, laying the tracks that make up two albums of music. Those compositions—young, imperfect, and brazen—still catch me off guard decades later. I hear myself expressing what felt inexpressible, couching desire in metaphor, rhyme, and the light *tessituras* (textures) of my tenor voice. I sounded bigger than the cement and asphalt streets we always returned to. Hours were spent standing around on street corners and at Portuguese social clubs with friends who sparkled in those settings. I felt dimmed. At some point, I declared openly to friends that I would not spend another night out in the Ironbound. I wanted more than it could give. Desire overwhelmed. I needed a different nightlife. I made the trips to New York ostensibly for better music scenes, and then, as I built up the courage, I headed out furtively for gay ones.

The railroad tracks that surround the Ironbound connect Newark to New York and a world of queerer folk. To get to those trains, however, I had to walk past the hospital where I was born, my elementary school, the homes of aunts and uncles, the Portuguese Catholic church where I had been an altar boy, the same church my grandmother attended and that my parents still attend, at which I had also been a Boy Scout and where I went to Sunday School—all that hard work put into my upbringing, all those judgmental stewards, looking down on me as I scurried by. I spent a decade working in New York's independent music scene, surrounded by different repertoires of expression. My days were spent promoting a diverse range of artists, many of them queer. Nights played out under shimmering disco balls in dimly lit clubs. It was a playlist of mixed tracks, emotions, places, and times, punctuated by a newfound sexual agency. Electroclash, house music, disco revivals, Sylvester's falsetto, indie rock, and the otherworldly voice of Anohni mixed and lingered in my ear. They felt like a paradigm shift—the music and nightlife in tense arrangements with the piercing sounds of the trains that would take me home in the early-morning hours. At times, they were like the rustling reeds that sway sensuously alongside the screeching tracks crossing New Jersey marshlands. At other times, they were an entire woodwind section of sound, bodies, and breath clamoring within a glamorous theater of social and sexual life where I heard and felt more myself.

Variações's voice found me almost two decades and an ocean removed from his recording debut, when he was on the cusp of national fame as one of Lisbon's underground scenesters in postauthoritarian, postrevolution 1980s Portugal. I did not know that world. For me, his voice played from jukeboxes in Portuguese taverns in Newark or from car speakers while I was cruising New York's urban sprawl. Still, he moved me in the way José Esteban Muñoz conceptualizes queer worldmaking emerging from performances that can "transport the performer and the spectator to a vantage point where transformation and politics are imaginable."² I was coming to terms with being gay and navigating a markedly Portuguese, Catholic, and conservative upbringing. Through Variações, I imagined other ways of being. His music sounded like a different kind of Portuguese place—transposing measures of culture and identity through queer desire with dramatic effect. The heart of his voice and repertoire is, in meaningful ways, very Portuguese and provocatively dissident. Visually, Variações was anything but traditional. The album I had happened upon included highly stylized photos as artwork. I searched for more and found campy and homoerotic magazine spreads and videos of performances online where he bared his torso wrapped in leather straps and silk scarves. His lyrics played up the sexual tension. Some of his biggest hits are boldly built around implicitly homosexual themes,

while in performance on stage and in videos, he seemed to dare us to dance with and desire him. This *Variações* resonated more with the pulsing dance floors and dimly lit corners of the gay clubs and dive bars I had only just started to visit.

These resonant tracks took me into and out of states of being. They were a map of constellating sounds, music, people, and places that I put together and that put me together. I listened intently. As a first-generation Portuguese American in the New York area, I was surrounded by so many who had come from small towns to the big city to find themselves. My experience, however, was punctuated by doubt and uncertainty. After all, I was already here and still lost. A sense of dislocation oscillated with the strong pulls of desire and heritage. The Portuguese popular music that I had heard in my everyday life—the soundtrack of Saturday morning chores, family weddings, and family pilgrimages to other Portuguese-prone North American enclaves—felt like a heavy hand on my heart, holding me close, imploring me to stay. It was also in the *Ironbound*, however, that I found a musical footing and a safe port of return when shifting paradigms threatened to leave me adrift. It was in the *Ironbound* that I found António Variações's album alongside imports by other Lusophone artists from Brazil, Cabo Verde, and more—the *Ironbound* has its treasures. In this place that I could no longer suffer, I heard a performance of Portuguese expression that sounded more like my own. He sang of leaving a small town for the big city, of loving his mother, of the quirks of being Portuguese, and the heightened tensions of late-night cruising. His music was like a manual for feeling closely aligned with Portuguese heritage through dissidence and difference, without the pangs of penance or rejection. His voice was at once out of place and distinctly rooted in a place I recognized. I wrapped myself in its textures.

Variações is part of a playlist of music that has carried me into unexpected formations with other voices and repertoires, some Portuguese, some wholly unrelated to Lusophone contexts. Long before he became a focus of this book, he helped me remap a homely heritage as the overlapping and unsettling reverberations of desire and expression across a transatlantic terrain of subjectivities. The resonances remain. They move and map other repertoires and ways of being as part of a queer, dissident, Lusophone diaspora through which I continue to find my voice.

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Introduction

The *New York Times* claimed in June 2024 that Brazilian pop music star Pabllo Vittar was “the world’s next big drag queen.”¹ They were late to the show. In 2018 *Vogue* magazine had already named Vittar “the most famous drag queen in the world,” pointing to her millions of subscribers and views on social media platforms.² Indeed, Vittar has achieved unprecedented success for a drag queen recording artist and performer in popular music. At the time of this writing, she has more than three billion views and streams, with thirty-seven million subscribers across YouTube, Facebook, X, TikTok, and Instagram. Pabllo Vittar is the stage name of Phabullo Rodrigues da Silva, born in 1993 in São Luis, a city in the northeastern Brazilian state of Maranhão. She began performing in drag as an entertainer and host of nightlife scenes. Self-recorded videos of her singing covers of pop songs caught the attention of producers in 2015, leading to TV appearances and music recordings. Her first full-length album, *Vai passar mal*, was released in 2017, and she has since recorded five more, four of which have been certified gold, platinum, and double platinum. She regularly receives approximately eleven million monthly listeners on Spotify, with peaks of more than twenty-one million streams.³ She is the first drag queen to have been nominated for a Grammy Award (Latin, 2018) and to have won MTV Europe Music Video Awards (Best Brazilian Act 2019, 2020, 2024).⁴ She has led Rio de Janeiro’s nationally televised carnival celebrations, and her songs have been its anthems. She has collaborated with global pop stars and brands, including Lady Gaga, Thalía, Charli XCX, Madonna, Coca-Cola, Calvin Klein, and Adidas, among others. She performs throughout Europe and the Americas and sings in several languages across her music catalogue.⁵

Vittar is arguably Brazil’s and South America’s most visible queer artist. She describes herself as a “gay boy who does drag” and as gender fluid.⁶ Standing

over six feet tall without the help of heels, in drag she is a larger-than-life, sexy, confident, hyperfeminine heroine, homegrown yet able to morph into sci-fi, fantasy, anime, and other fantastical forms. Despite her visual impact, Vittar's high-pitched voice is arguably her most recognizable attribute. Indeed, she is the inspiration for and the voice of the character Goldiva—an animated international superhero and pop star drag queen in Netflix's pioneering Brazilian series *Super Drags* (2018). Vittar has a countertenor voice type. A countertenor is defined as “a male high voice” with “an abnormally ultra-light, high range with no apparent register change,” according to the gendered codifications of voice developed for European classical, operatic, and choral music, which continue to inform vocal categorization in music theory.⁷ Countertenors can overlap with vocal ranges typically assigned to female sopranos, and their voices are notable for their ability to “maintain an unusually high tessitura.”⁸

Tessituras are the heart of this book. The musical term is derived from Italian and means “texture,” and definitions of tessitura suggest it refers to a prevailing register of notes or pitches. Tessitura can mean “the general range of a melody or voice part; the part of the register in which most of the tones of a melody or voice part lie.”⁹ It may also indicate “the position of the notes in a composition in relation to the compass of the voice or instrument for which it was written, expressed as ‘low,’ ‘medium,’ and ‘high.’”¹⁰ Notably, the “tessitura of a piece is not decided by the extremes of its range, but rather by which part of the range is most used,” and can describe the quality of a vocal texture or piece, as in “The role of Siegfried in Wagner's *Ring*, for example, ranges from c♯ to c,” but its tessitura would be described as high (and very demanding).¹¹ In the gendered grammar of Portuguese, *tessitura* is identified as a feminine noun and, when used in music, names a “disposição das notas musicais para se acomodarem a certa voz ou instrumento” (arrangement of musical notes to accommodate a certain voice or instrument), while it can also figuratively mean “*contextura; organização*” (contexture; organization), and “*contratenor*” (countertenor) is listed as a related word.¹² Tessituras seem to describe measured tones and pitches, and yet they also signal subjective qualities. A vocal or compositional tessitura seemingly represents its most knowable and effective expression, where it most often resides, from where it comfortably resounds. Nevertheless, when descriptions of countertenor tessituras state that they are *abnormally* and *unusually* high, they imply that male voices are essentially lower and indicate how some tessituras may carry predetermined meanings.

Tessituras can be markers of difference and dissidence. In the tension between self-expression and reception, how might we hear them differently? Vittar's tessitura reveals something about the world in which she resonates. Her voice is

a flashpoint for detractors. Brazilian media outlet *Estado de Minas* assembled a panel of music professionals to assess whether Vittar sings well, whether she sings with her authentic voice, or if she is singing at all. The experts traded an array of possibilities about what we hear when we hear Vittar's voice. Some describe it as infantilized, either from "*questões hormonais*" (hormonal issues) or from straining her tessitura out of its proper, presumably lower register. They suggest that if she were to sing lower in her range, "vai ficar mais agradável" ("it will be more pleasing").¹³ Others worry about the risk of injury from what they perceive as yelling and improper vocal technique. They call Vittar's ability to hit very high notes "interesting" and "special," while also recommending more vocal training. They locate Vittar in a genealogy of Brazilian countertenors that includes Edson Cordeiro and Ney Matogrosso, among others. Some hear Vittar breaking with normative conventions of gender and sexuality, representative of an expanding Brazilian LGBTQ+ visibility. In a note of self-criticism, they suggest that their central question—what to make of Vittar's voice—may be an effect of class prejudices. They oscillate between her voice as true and false, natural and strange, feigned and genuine, and talented and unruly. For them, it is unique and also part of a history of gender-transgressive voices. They vacillate on whether her tessitura is knowable through its affinities and resonances or is out of place among them, and use terms like "abnormal" and "unusual" to describe her singing as a strained aberration. How they hear her is inseparable from her feminine gender presentation, gay sexual orientation, and drag artistry. They hear her voice as sounding trans and wonder if it has been modified as part of a gender transition that Vittar does not claim. Consensus eludes them. Vittar's voice leaves them confounded.

What do we hear when we hear voices and compositions perceived as gender-transgressive, dissident, abnormal, unusual, or out of line? What informs how they sound and how we listen to them? The broad questions that undergird the critical assessment of Vittar's voice also drive the analyses of music and performances in this book. Vittar's critics hear her as a transgression of norms through a conflation of voice, body, music, and meaning. To them, she is a willfully confounding expression—the kind of willful claim that Sara Ahmed hears as an "accusation" of obstinance or perversion.¹⁴ Their directives for less yelling, more training, and more beauty are implicitly accusatory and disciplining. Yet the willfulness they police is also her most resonant expression. Ahmed argues that willfulness may be reclaimed as a political act and art, a craft honed in "the struggle to exist or to transform an existence."¹⁵ Vittar exemplifies this reclamation when she dismisses accusations of a false, strained, uncouth, or altered vocality with laughter: "Dou muita risada quando dizem: 'Ela é linda, mas a voz é muito chata.' Eu amo

a minha voz! Ela é fina, aguda, diferente. . . . Se não gosta é só não ouvir” (I laugh when they say: “She is pretty, but her voice is irritating.” I love my voice! It’s sharp, strident, different. . . . If you don’t like it, then just don’t listen).¹⁶ She admonishes her critics to simply stop listening, though her widespread success makes that difficult. She is seemingly everywhere, and her tessitura is the expression of self-affirmation, and it resonates with others as a dissident social and political expression through which they may also desire to be heard.

Vittar is heard across a vast audiovisual popular music soundscape, like the acoustic territories that Brandon Labelle conceptualizes as both spatial and political.¹⁷ These sonic and aural terrains are not tethered to particular geopolitical demarcations. They shift and move as sonic chorographies that Tariq Jazeel and Tom Western argue carry meaning “across geographies, histories, and disciplines.”¹⁸ Particularly for Portuguese-language popular music, the terrain is globally dispersed. Vittar is not an anomaly: She is part of a diasporic acoustic terrain of nonnormative embodiments and expressions. How might we hear them beyond the dominant tonalities that codify voice, gender, and genre? How might we discern their resonances beyond the local terrain? For whom do they resound? Listening through tessituras may reveal what is not readily apprehended through normative tropes. Some tessituras unmoor us from predetermined anchor points like the measure of a song, a gender, a heritage. For Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) tessituras, we must attend to an immense acoustic terrain.¹⁹ It encompasses Brazil, Portugal, Angola, and other nations and cultures where Portuguese is an official language. It includes enclaves of Lusophone or Luso-Afro-Brazilian diasporas embedded within non-Lusophone people and places. And it reverberates with dissident diasporas: constellations of Luso-Afro-Brazilian expression and subjectivity that inform the registers of Portuguese-language cultures even as they necessarily move beyond normative demarcations of nation, body, being, and desire to claim kinship with other repertoires, resonating with other embodied practices, mapping a different acoustic terrain, and clamoring for recognition.

Queer Oscillations

In Luso-Afro-Brazilian contexts, the English term *queer* as a marker of difference is contested. A Portuguese-language lexicon of identitarian forms of gender and sexual difference and dissidence is already in play, from hyperfeminine gay *bichas* to butch lesbian *sapatonas* and *travestis*—the last term an identity claimed by people typically assigned male at birth that feminize their gender expression through diverse strategies and who may or may not identify as trans women.²⁰

More than local particularities, these and other terms carry meaning for nonnormative desires, embodied performances, and politicized identities entrenched in a history of marginalization, racialization, and precariousness. Scholars and theorists working in and on Global South and Luso-Afro-Brazilian contexts have offered decolonial interventions that reconceptualize queer in more locally resonant forms. *Cuir* translates as “queer” through Portuguese and Spanish phonetics, centering Latin American and Luso-Afro-Brazilian cultures and contexts.²¹ *Transviadagem*, a portmanteau of *travesti* and *viadagem* (effeminacy)—from *viado* (a pejorative for gay)—more accurately names the identities and interventions in Brazil.²² I do not intend my use of *queer* to circumvent these interventions, lived experiences, or epistemologies. In this book, *queer* is an inadequate shorthand for nonnormative expressions of gender, sexuality, and critique, in productive tension with dynamic social and sexual Luso-Afro-Brazilian grammars already in the mix.

Across Portuguese-language cultures, a proliferation of queer performers resonates with expressive affinities discernible in audiovisual productions of popular music that comprise repertoires of performance and subjectivity. The routes through which people were forcibly moved and displaced under Portuguese colonialism also map the flow of hegemonic discourses, cultural practices, and dissenting expressions of desire, movement, voice, rhythm, verse, and refrain. Brazilian artists drive the global reach of Portuguese-language popular culture. In dance clubs and electronic music circuits, however, both Brazilian funk and Angolan kuduro are prominent. Portuguese fado enjoys international renown, though it does not receive as much reciprocal attention in other Lusophone nations. Still, fado divas have popularized the genre’s drama as a familiar world music repertoire. Differing registers of Portuguese-language popular music are recognizable from Rio to Lisbon and Luanda, and in their circuits of expression and reception, queer artists sustain productive interventions. Vittar’s voice is heard alongside the music of artists like MC Linn da Quebrada, the Afro-Brazilian travesti and performer of Brazilian funk music whose album *Pajubá* (2017) critiques the racist, patriarchal, misogynist, and cisheterosexist tropes of Brazilian society. Her repertoire reveals unexpected affinities with Portuguese duo Fado Bicha, whose compositions give a defiantly queer voice and expression to sedimented and cisheteronormative fado canons and conventions. Their reterritorialization of Lusophone cultural heritage resonates with Angolan artist and trans woman Titica, whose musical repertoire projects her well beyond Luso-Afro-Brazilian postcolonial demarcations. Together with others, these artists gather followings through modes of expression whose reverberations are not limited to local music scenes.

Queer Luso-Afro-Brazilian popular music artists and repertoires are part of broader representations of nonnormative gender and sexuality. Histories of diverse Luso-Afro-Brazilian genders and sexualities are documented in colonial accounts and records, evidenced in cross-dressing carnival practices, and imbricated in aspects of Afro-Brazilian spirituality, among other cultural repertoires.²³ Contemporary popular culture representations include wildly popular Brazilian telenovelas with transgender actors, and romantic gay subplots on Angolan TV.²⁴ In political gains, Brazil has seen a record number of queer, trans, and travesti politicians running for and elected to office in the past decade.²⁵ In 2018 Angola's legislature decriminalized homosexual acts and legally recognized the nation's first LGBTQ+ organization, the Associação Iris Angola, which had been operating for several years prior.²⁶ That same year, Portuguese legislators enabled self-determination of gender at will without medical or bureaucratic requirements, adding to wide-ranging laws prohibiting sexual and gender discrimination, though a recent rise of right-wing political parties and discourse in Portugal threatens to undo these laws.²⁷

Political advances and visibility for queer communities in Luso-Afro-Brazilian cultures do not eliminate violence and marginalization, which persist alongside long-standing patterns of complex cultural representations. Brazil presents a striking paradox: a flourishing landscape of LGBTQ+ performers achieving success in popular music exists in tandem with alarming rates of violence against those same communities. Queer people of color in Brazil suffer disproportionately, mirroring broader racial inequalities.²⁸ For Black LGBTQ+ Brazilians, visibility is often a vector of violence, from the heightened risks faced by sex workers to the dangers confronting vocal activists. In 2018 Marielle Franco, a Black gay feminist activist elected to the Rio de Janeiro city council with overwhelming public support, was murdered along with her driver—targeted for having a voice.²⁹ Among the nations tracked by the Trans Murder Monitoring Project, Brazil is the deadliest for trans- and transfeminine-presenting people, and particularly for travestis.³⁰ For these victims and the many who go unreported, the Brazilian Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais (ANTRA; National Association of Travestis and Transsexuals) demands, “Parem de nos matar!” (Stop killing us!) and calls for an end to “*transfeminicídio*” (transfeminicide), emphasizing the gendered nature of violence targeting transfeminine expressions.³¹

The urgency of ANTRA's message reverberates across the Atlantic. Notably, Brazilians make up the largest immigrant community in Portugal, followed by Angolans and Cape Verdeans.³² Queer people from other Lusophone countries living in Portugal face social ostracization, harassment, and violence. In 2006, Gisberta Salce, a Brazilian immigrant and travesti living in Portugal, was

abducted, tortured for days, and killed by fourteen male teenagers.³³ Her murder spurred Portuguese LGBTQ+ activism and resulted in stronger hate crime laws and protections for trans individuals. Although Portugal is often described as a LGBTQ+-friendly country, its conservative and largely misogynistic society, coupled with systemic racism inscribed in ethnocentric nationalism, paints a less rosy picture.³⁴ Lila Tiago and João Caçador of Fado Bicha, both white, Portuguese, and self-identified *bichas*, receive derisive homo- and transphobic attacks for daring to make music that critiques this reality, examined in chapter 5. For Titica, music has mitigated Angola's primarily Christian and conservative culture, offering her a social legitimacy that, nevertheless, as chapter 6 shows, does not shield her completely from transphobic criticism.

While drag queens, queer artists, trans women, and travestis may dominate music charts, their historic and concurrent struggles are relegated to a precariously quotidian soundtrack. Their music is the sound of dazzling nightlife and thriving entertainment industries, part of an amalgam of cultural representation within which their politicized subjectivities are heard by many as so much street noise. Through the din, these artists resound against reductive tropes of sex and song. They form a playlist I have assembled as a locus of study because they reach out to one another in their music, across historical contexts, in registers of voice and composition, through references and collaborations, and in affinities of embodiment, desire, and dissent. For some, their music has been transformative through what Marcia Ochoa describes as *spectacularity*—the impact of mass-mediated expressions on local and embodied performances.³⁵ These artists are seen, heard, and felt through speakers, screens, stereos, streaming platforms, and social media, from center stage and across cultures, and they share expressive characteristics that move and map the resonances between them.

Trans Tessituras

Across Luso-Afro-Brazilian contexts, the artists in this work encompass a range of music genres, identities, and experiences. They have differing voice types, vocal and visual styles, instrumentations, compositions, and repertoires of music and movement. They collaborate sometimes directly and at other times in ephemeral and indirect ways across space and time. They chart a dispersed acoustic terrain through an affinity of expression not easily discernible if we cling to the distances between them and take the measure of their music through normative means. To hear them is to listen for their willful expressions and their resonances with one another; to listen for points of convergence that move across the divides. Listening through tessituras shifts our attention away from rigid categorizations,

the disciplines that study them, and the cultures that claim them. Tessituras tune us into expressive attributes of voice and composition that move between these demarcations, shaped by and giving shape to an affective and material terrain of affinities.

Tessituras are deceptively subjective and promiscuously inclined. They typically indicate the most common or characteristic pitch of a vocal or compositional musical compass, determined by how pitches are distributed, their frequency and duration, or where a voice in song most comfortably sings within a given range or arrangement of pitches.³⁶ They do not describe the limits of a range but indicate where vocal, instrumental, or compositional modes of expression are most dynamic; where, within a range of expressive tones, they most often reside. The tessitura of an expressive form is its most common and knowable locus. Although tessituras seem to describe a particular characteristic of a vocal or compositional expression, they are socially imbricated, predicated on an array of established conventions and arbiters of meaning. They tell us something about a voice or composition in its most resonant mode of expression and how that expression is heard and received, sometimes with unexpected alignments.

For whom are some tessituras heard as unusual or abnormal? Who may discern a composition's most resonant expression, what tones are counted, what tones ignored? What of the breath between notes, the elisions and slurs? Thomas Benjamin describes the tessitura as "the 'heart'" of a composition or voice.³⁷ To hear the heart of a voice or song is to hear more than its pitches in a particular order, more than a matter of musical notation. The analyses at the heart of this composition make a concerted effort to hear tessituras as implicated in a contested and emotionally charged terrain of expression and meaning, to hear tessituras that push beyond conventional musical measures and sonic topographies. How might we hear and describe an unsettling tessitura, the heart of a composition that does not reside easily or comfortably among established arrangements? What of voices and expressions that have unsettled hearts?

Some tessituras move across coded spaces of meaning meant to contain them but that are unable to account for them. They are willful in their movement, insofar as they are strategic orchestrations and intentional vocalizations—a desired arrangement of movements, musical and embodied, even as they may be disavowed, or rendered dissonant in reception. I hear tessituras that disrupt normative conventions of voice, body, and expressive repertoires as trans. They are trans through several key conceptualizations: as movement and prediscursive expression, as a practice of relationality and recognition, and as an analytic. They are trans in the way that Susan Stryker describes transgender as a "movement away from an initially assigned gender position."³⁸ Trans tessituras move away

from conventional measures of expression and reception. They resound toward other points of recognition, across cisheteronormative codifications of voice and body that would assign meaning and value to them, claim them, and dampen their resonance. They are like Claire Colebrook's conceptualization of trans as "a not-yet differentiated singularity from *which* distinct genders, races, species, sexes, and sexualities are generated."³⁹ Before they are assigned as unusually high, abnormally low, or wholly defined by predetermined metrics, trans tessituras desire to be heard. In their reception, however, differences are decreed: Sexed binaries are anchored, voice types assigned, ranges measured, tones disciplined, techniques policed, repertoires made, and cultural heritage claimed, surveyed, and imposed.

Trans tessituras are the unsettled hearts of dissenting voices and compositions, disrupting hegemonic claims on their forms and meanings. They resist classifications that foreclose on a desire to find mutual recognition in reception. They sing out social relationalities of dispossession and integration, of passing through states of being and modes of expression, of being changed and changing into social formations where they may be heard, recognized, or disavowed. They are not only voice types, new voice types, or particular vocal modes, nor are they merely one type of voice or composition. Of the artists in this book, only some of their tessituras can be described as high, for example, and their compositions represent a range of genres with different registers across canons and conventions. Importantly, trans tessituras do not indicate a transgender identity, though in their sounding they may be heard as trans. In the analyses ahead, I do not assign a trans identity to performers who do not claim one. Trans tessituras are interrelational, embodied, and orchestrated expressions not predicated on a particular type of vocality, gender expression, sexual orientation, or compositional arrangement. I discern trans tessituras in movements of voice, body, orchestrations, and arrangements, across a spectrum of gender variance and expression and in diverse cultural repertoires. In resonant compositions, trans tessituras express intentional movements of sound, song, and subjectivity. I follow the impetus of Shi-Yan Chao, who hears male falsetto singing as a mode of "trans practice" in which the *movement* some male singers make into a falsetto register is a "survival strategy," a way to feel their body as they would have it felt or received.⁴⁰ In their movement, trans tessituras unfold compositional survival strategies to be heard and felt in the manner of their expressive arrangements.

Mediated through hegemonic sounding boards, however, trans tessituras may be deemed as uncomfortable, unknowable, and false. They may be described as unpleasant or dismissed as unrefined. They may be received in perplexed and disparaging ways. In their confounding effects, trans tessituras may be made

unintelligible or recognized as queer expressions that are nevertheless hegemonically defined. These effects may also shape their affective receptions—who they touch and move, and whom they deter. In this manner, trans tessituras serve as analytics, analogous to the way Kai M. Green thinks of trans as a way to mark “the limits and excess of the other, simultaneously deconstructing and reconstructing or reimagining new possible ways of being and doing.”⁴¹ The trans tessituras I register here expose the limits of cultural discourses that give form and meaning to Luso-Afro-Brazilian lives, and express other possibilities.

Caught up in hegemonic soundscapes, trans tessituras refuse closed-circuit transmissions. We hear this tension in the melancholic synthesizers that repeat the motif of Afro-Brazilian artist and travesti Jup do Bairro’s “Sinfonia do corpo,” released as a single with a video in 2021.⁴² They phase in and out of tune while her voice, with its low tessitura, moves languorously through the lyrics, also falling in and out of tune. Jup do Bairro’s voice slides up questioningly and dives deep with answers. The heart of this song is its dissident movement.

The video for the song shows her in an apartment, on a toilet, and surrounded by walls, as she sings of a space in which history and hopes have ceased to exist: “Não existia presente e passado / Cadê o futuro que eu construí? / . . . O que pode um corpo?” (Past and present did not exist / Where is the future I made? / . . . What can a body do?). In reply, the composition reveals an arrangement of embodied discourses and dispositions at play: “O juízo judaico-cristão me silencia / Mas é . . . que eu falo demais / Se eu tô com fome, falo que eu tô com fome / Se eu tô com frio, falo que eu tô com frio” (The Judeo-Christian judgment silences me / But yeah . . . I talk too much / If I’m hungry, I say I’m hungry / If I’m cold, I say I’m cold). Against the silencing effects of a moralizing discourse, she talks too much, expressing the precariousness of her existence beyond the measures of pitch and time. She says she is hungry and cold as a way to say she is here. Her subjectivity is a symphonic movement of affective and embodied expressions:

O coração em processo de musicalização . . .

Os órgãos compõem a melodia para o sistema

Sistema tegumentar, esquelético, muscular, cardiovascular, respiratório,
digestório, urinário, nervoso, genital

Capitalista

E não consigo ouvir

Passei toda a minha vida
sob a imersão dessa sinfonia.

The heart in the process of musicalization . . .

Organs compose the melody for the system

Integumentary, skeletal, muscular, cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive,
urinary, nervous, genital system
Capitalist
And I can't hear
I spent my whole life immersed in this symphony.

Jup do Bairro is an orchestration of arrangements—some harmonic, others discordant and contrapuntal—that threaten to drown out her subjectivity, her desire, and her voice, represented by the insolent synths that play along as she sings disaffectedly, “da da da.” How may we hear her so that she may hear herself as part of a resonant system of mutual recognition against the noise of contention and conflict? The *da da da*'s of her song evoke the Dadaists of the 1920s, also referenced by the *tropicalistas* of the late 1960s and 1970s *música popular brasileira* (Brazilian popular music), particularly in Caetano Veloso's track “Alegria” (*Tropicália*, 1968), where the final syllables of Carmen Miranda's name are sung as “Miranda da da da da.” Christopher Dunn hears this as the invocation of an “avant-garde project that sought to expose, and ultimately undermine, the social, cultural, and institutional mechanisms involved in producing and consuming an object recognized as ‘art.’”⁴³ Jup do Bairro's body symphony, however, phases in and out of dissonance, saturated in a discursive and acoustic terrain that hears her only ever as object or project undermined by systems that are already exposed and intimately embodied. How may we hear the movements of her body symphony in ways that offer other returns? How would she sound?

What we hear shapes the bodies we might imagine. Embodied expressions that constitute repertoires of performance and subjectivity are not walled-in phenomena. They move with and through other orchestrations of desire and expression. Body symphonies perform what Suzanne Cusick describes as border crossings, moving from one body and context into another, from modes of expression into modes of reception.⁴⁴ In their reception, they may produce a “vocalic body,” which Steven Connor defines as “an idea . . . [a] dream, fantasy, ideal . . . [as a] surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body,” even when a material body is not present.⁴⁵ Repertoires of popular music and cultural heritage shape the vocalic body of a nation, the imagined voice of an imagined community—Benedict Anderson's succinct definition of nation.⁴⁶ Tellingly, fantasies of ideal bodies, whether imagined or otherwise, have often marginalized and silenced real and material nonnormative embodiments and expressions. When Connor describes the possibility of voice as one that “always requires and requisitions space . . . [as] the very possibility of a world of coming and going,”⁴⁷ we may ask if nonnormative voices and bodies

are heard within the same world of possibility. What space do they require, and how might they requisition it in normative scenes of popular music and national imaginaries? What worlds would have to come and go?

Trans tessituras are the coming and going of queer worlds impeded yet resounding, heard as unexpected, unwanted, or improvised expressions in “scenes of constraint,” the context in which Judith Butler argues we *do* gender.⁴⁸ Trans tessituras move through worlds where the possibility for some voices to take up space is limited by the seemingly immovable and prevailing positions of others. Nina Sun Eidsheim defines these positions as “figures of sound,” whereby fixed tropes, conventions, or categorizations of sounds flatten and reduce their “dynamic, multifaceted, and multisensorial phenomenon” to “static object and incident.”⁴⁹ When figures of sound form around idealized bodies, they make nonnormative expressions incoherent, deviant, and dissident. Conversely, those expressions queer their reception with unpredictable effects. Andrew Anastasias hears this “unpredictability of reception” as voices that “fail to make sense in spectacular ways.”⁵⁰ Jack Halberstam argues that, as a particularly queer art, failure in this sense is “resistant and revelatory.”⁵¹

In resonance with Anastasias and Halberstam, I hear trans tessituras as the material expression of relationalities that fail idealized tropes of embodied expression in spectacular ways, revealing the dissident compositions and arrangements that sustain them. In their reception, they offer us what Deborah Kapchan describes as “sound knowledge,” a method and “state of being and awareness” that can shape the bodies we express and perceive.⁵² Body symphonies are promiscuous compositions. Nina Eidsheim describes this relationship as an intermaterial vibrational practice, a “shared activity . . . of moving and being moved.”⁵³ To listen to trans tessituras is to give them voice and body, to be moved by them and through the worlds that coalesce around them. Jup do Bairro’s body symphony is not contained by the cement blocks that surround her in the music video, nor by the geopolitical demarcations of Brazilian popular culture. The Judeo-Christian silencing she cites moves us into broader Lusophone contexts. Luso-Afro-Brazilian trans tessituras call us to listen across a vast transatlantic terrain of memory, invention, and expression.

Trans/Atlantic Tessituras—Voices That Carry

Lusophone trans tessituras are necessarily transatlantic. As they move through expressive arrangements of voice and body, they form repertoires that carry with them what Diana Taylor describes as “choreographies of meaning,” embodied practices that keep, transform, and produce knowledge and, in Latin American

contexts, invite a “remapping of the Americas.”⁵⁴ Taylor’s focus on the Americas offers a poignant tension for Lusophone nations, all of which exist outside the Americas except for Brazil. Within the Americas, however, communities of Portuguese-speaking immigrants are dispersed throughout North and South America, and Brazilian repertoires of expressive culture dominate a global Lusophone acoustic terrain. Dissident diasporas within it resonate through trans tessituras and unsettle the map of Brazil as a discrete entity. The artists in this work represent diverse voices, genres of music, and cultural practices across Brazil, Portugal, and Angola and beyond, with varying socioeconomic backgrounds, identities, and orientations. Moreover, none of the nine nations with Portuguese as an official language share a border. This disconnectedness creates frustrating pitfalls for frameworks of study—from Brazilian studies that typically exclude Europe and Africa beyond historical placeholders, to Lusophone studies, which privilege Portugal and Lusophone African cultures and downplay Brazil, where, in any case, the *Luso* descriptor—heard more as a designation of things related to Portugal than a linguistic indicator—rings a bit hollow.⁵⁵ Still, Lusophone trans tessituras share affinities and points of tension; they sing off the map, play in the margins, and reach across the water.

Lusophone transatlantic trans tessituras require a recalibration of measures. Transatlantic foregrounding transcends problematic schemas yet reveals troubling discourses in its wake.⁵⁶ The Lusophone transatlantic is an iteration of Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic” configuration as an area of study characterized by its own “structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering.” Gilroy argues that the Black Atlantic counters histories bound up in “nationality and ethnicity [with] little enthusiasm for connecting the life of one movement with that of another.”⁵⁷ Joseph Roach emphasizes the expressive repertoires of the circum-Atlantic as memory, invention, and re-creation.⁵⁸ Although Gilroy and Roach center Anglo-American and Caribbean contexts, Portuguese anthropologist Miguel Vale de Almeida colors the Black Atlantic brown. The color shift attends to lesser-studied Lusophone specificities and a “hegemonic narrative of the Portuguese miscegenation project [with] its supposed actualization in the construction of Brazil.”⁵⁹

Floating on the surface of the Brown Atlantic like an ever-present oil slick is the murky, sadomasochistic discourse of miscegenation. The writings of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, most notably in *Casa grande e senzala* (*The Masters and the Slaves*, 1933), introduced what has come to be known as Lusotropicalism—a theory of Luso-Brazilian exceptionalism supported by the apparent benevolence of their colonial and postcolonial states. Lusotropicalism reimagines the relationship between colonizer and colonized, enslaver and

enslaved, as a sexual and domestic entanglement. For Freyre, malleable, lustful Portuguese colonizers, with a proclivity for sex with women of color, engendered more racially democratic societies, with Brazil as the paradigmatic example, lacking the legally enforced segregation found in the United States. It is a chauvinistic explanation for the genesis of Brazil and Brazilians as a monolith—one people from the mix of Europeans, Africans, and Amerindians. Lusotropicalism became an expedient rationalization for the fascist Portuguese Estado Novo regime (1933–74) in its continued colonization of African territories. Its leaders invited Freyre to tour the empire, from which sojourn he produced a defense of Portuguese colonialism as “*Portugais tão dispersos*” (“Portugals so [widely] dispersed”) and little Brazils in the making.⁶⁰ Despite irrefutable historical archives and contemporary evidence disproving the discourse of Luso-Brazilian societies as benevolent and less racist, Almeida argues that Lusotropicalism is alive as a generic “social fact.”⁶¹ For hegemonic discourses on both sides of the Atlantic, the empire may have fallen, but the fantasy remains.

The miscegenation that Lusotropicalism romanticizes also lays bare the sexual violence that undergirds the Brown Atlantic and begets a locus of gender and sexuality as potent vectors of resistance. It is hard to grasp, however, through disciplinary and cultural silos with “little enthusiasm for connecting the life of one movement with that of another,” to borrow Paul Gilroy’s phrase for bound-up histories.⁶² The pioneering publication of *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, edited by Fernando Arenas and Susan Canty Quinlan, worked against the “minimal attention . . . devoted to the study of sexuality in the realm of Lusophone cultures, with the exception of Brazil.”⁶³ More than two decades later, the Brazilian exception persists, as scholars continue to work on bridging the gaps. Hilary Owen and Anna M. Klobucka note in the edited volume *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections* how an “abundant bibliography of gendered approaches” almost exclusively Brazilianist in focus, is inscribed “within the cultural and theoretical contexts of Latin America.”⁶⁴ The study of difference in a Lusophone context is often subsumed in Brazilianist formations that forgo transatlantic perspectives. Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira charts Brazil as a terrain of the Global South, from which he conceptualizes a decolonial queer theory for and from the tropics where, he argues, “we have reinvented and reconstructed queer genealogy.”⁶⁵ The tropics, however, are mapped onto Brazil. His valuable intervention leaves Portuguese-speaking African nations, which are also included in the Global South, off the map. In the uncharted resonances between them, queerness lives and listens for recognition.

Attending to differences as local peculiarities leaves us at a disadvantage in Luso-Afro-Brazilian contexts that lack the geopolitical intimacy of touching

landmasses. Here, turbulent seas and expressive cultures bind distant people and places together. They are inconvenient to neatly demarcated disciplines and cartographic divides. To counter entrenched nationalisms, edited volumes like *Cultures of the Lusophone Black Atlantic* propose a Portuguese-speaking Atlantic “space of historical and cultural production.”⁶⁶ For some, however, *Luso* sounds suspicious. Some hear it as “Lusofonia” or “Lusophony,” what Fernando Arenas defines as a “geocultural reality” used to make new Portuguese claims on chromatically unstable Atlantic entanglements.⁶⁷ Yet popular music has been a particularly generative form of Lusophony.⁶⁸ Portuguese nightlife pulses with the sounds of Brazil, Angola, and Cape Verde but not without Portuguese ethnocentrism exerting its influence. A musical Lusophony may be claimed, but it is perceived in Portugal as the effects of Portuguese history on the cultural practices of others.⁶⁹ Moreover, the study of popular music follows the trends of other disciplinary silos. With important exceptions, studies abound, many from and on Brazil, some focused exclusively on Portugal, and a few on Angola. Barring some exceptions, our current frameworks are inadequate for discerning the expressions and meanings that move between and beyond them.

Lusophone trans tessituras sing the transatlantic as an unsettled and unsettling site of expression and subjectivity. They are not constitutive of a musical Lusophony. I discern their movements as charting affective and material terrain between sedimented discourses of lonely Lusophone islands floating in a ghost-ridden sea. Lusophone trans tessituras move across entrenchments. They are also deceptively subjective and promiscuously inclined. They may seem like singular expressions, heard as one artist’s or one culture’s creative material, fixed as to what Roland Barthes calls the “grain” of the voice, in which an “erotic relation” plays out through “the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs.”⁷⁰ A vocal grain may register material effects of an intimate and expressive relation—of a body, a cultural heritage—but what of trans tessituras with granular affinities like a sediment that gathers in their movements? What of trans tessituras that share points of friction? What happens when their resonances rub together, like the frottage of Black diaspora that Keguro Macharia conceptualizes as charged, clandestine, intimate, and transformative contact?⁷¹ How can we hear trans tessituras that press against one another in erotic relations with diasporic others on their way through the water?

Lusophone transatlantic trans tessituras play in promiscuous waves of affective returns that carry meaning through a proliferation of repertoires and subjectivities. In the Brown Atlantic, just as in the Black, Blackness undergirds racialized formations of gender and sexual difference. C. Riley Snorton proposes that “‘trans’ and ‘blackness’ [are] brought into the same frame by the various ways

they have been constituted . . . within the logics of transatlantic exchange.”⁷² Lusophone trans tessituras are an expressive transposition of that logic, part of an elaborate repertoire of embodied registers shaped by transatlantic histories of violence and mutability, with Blackness and transness constituted and co-constitutive of what resounds and returns in the wake as the Lusophone trans/Atlantic. For Dora Silva Santana, the transatlantic is a “space of possibilities,” where transitioning happens “across and along the waters, the imposed limits of gender, the secular and the sacred, the expectations of our death, the imaginary that we are not lovable.”⁷³ Lusophone trans tessituras move across this same water, in flux, embodied and aural, routed through language and long-enduring histories in what Christina Sharpe calls “wakefulness,” a consciousness of the legacies of the Middle Passage.⁷⁴ This work discerns Lusophone trans tessituras rippling the surface and sounding from the depths as the expressive and erotic intimacies of trans/Atlantic diasporas transposed into song.

Wily Musicology

The analyses that follow are a work of queer inquiry into the music of queer, trans, and travesti Luso-Afro-Brazilian popular music artists. They compel a listening practice that attends to arrangements of people, places, desires, and expressions within sonic and sexual regimes as resonant compositions. Discerning where and for whom these compositions resonate requires a musicology that hears differently the already-released, -catalogued, and -consumed, like Halberstam’s conceptualization of a scavenger methodology that gathers what was “deliberately or accidentally excluded” from other works.⁷⁵ Lusophone trans tessituras compel a musicology tuned into occluded histories and unsettling reverberations. In popular music, they move under and through global flows of media, capital, and consumption that shape ways of being. To hear them, we may reconsider Brazilian writer and scholar Silviano Santiago’s charge that globalization flattened modes of performing sexual difference in Brazil, exemplified by the act of coming out—the compulsion to “exhibit different behaviors in the public sphere.” He proposes a return to other methods, informed by “a wily form of exhibitionism” that works with “ambiguity of language and behavior . . . refusing to exhibit the appropriate condition . . . refusing to adopt appropriate *bicha/sapatona* (femme gay / butch lesbian) conduct.” He implores, “Couldn’t and shouldn’t the homosexual be more wily?”⁷⁶ What if we turn the question around: Couldn’t and shouldn’t our mode of inquiry be wilier?

Wiliness directs our attention to embodied expression, craft, creativity, and modes of performance whose meanings are not always readily discernible.

Paradoxically, a wilier attentiveness to queer subjectivity and expression in Luso-Afro-Brazilian contexts reveals a problem of positionality at the heart of Santiago's proposition. Who can be wily? Who can move in wily ways, and who is confined to the margins and left exposed? What is the Luso-Afro-Brazilian ground on which difference, wily or naive, is discerned? Brazilian scholar Mário César Lugarinho identifies this discursive terrain as one of ambiguous centers and peripheries, encompassing Lusotropicalism, *antropofagia* (anthropophagy), and a subaltern conceptualization of Portuguese colonialism.⁷⁷ This triangular configuration produces shifty power imbalances. Lusotropicalism remakes the Portuguese colonizer in tropical tones and privileges elite Luso-Brazilian men with social and sexual movement.⁷⁸ The "Manifesto Antropófago" (Cannibalist Manifesto) (1928) replicates this movement, calling for a Brazilian aesthetic produced by consuming European, Indigenous, and African expressive registers.⁷⁹ Yet Indigenous Brazilians cannot ask if they are "Tupí or not Tupí?"—the question that launches the manifesto. They have little say over the hegemonic rendering and devouring of Indigenous people and lands.⁸⁰ Similarly, *antropofagia* subsumes Carnival as its paradigmatic expression—an Afro-Brazilian hybrid made whole with little regard for Black lives after the feast. Finally, sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that the Portuguese empire was a subaltern power due to Portugal's peripheral position in European capitalism.⁸¹ It is an unsettling analysis with a rippling top-down effect for the *worlds within* the Portuguese-speaking world.

The Luso-Afro-Brazilian ground on which difference is determined is unsound. It privileges the movement of white, patriarchal, cisheteronormativity, able to subsume difference and assert dominance at the center and in the margins. Lugarinho describes how this Luso-Brazilian "eccentricity" creates a "shady zone" where there may be "less intense homophobia and greater tolerance for difference experienced in the practices of everyday life in Portuguese-speaking societies."⁸² Statistics of transphobic violence in Brazil prove otherwise.⁸³ The tolerance for some different acts and actors does not preclude racism or homo- and transphobia. Instead, it suggests that Lusotropicalism can also take queer forms. Santos argues that Lusotropicalist miscegenation "is not the consequence of the absence of racism . . . [but] the cause of a different kind of racism."⁸⁴ He articulates the racialization imbricated in a masculinist elaboration of sexual others as effeminate aberrations, always already transitive, and fading into Blackness. The devouring gesture of anthropophagy lends itself to conceptualizations of resistant queer politics.⁸⁵ Still, beneath its hegemonic guise, it is predicated on the abstraction and appropriation of queer of color expression. Brazilian sociologist Richard Miskolci writes that theorists from the

Global South deploy “cannibalistic means . . . feeding ourselves with the best of the center [Global North theories of gender and sexuality], incorporating it as part of ourselves so as to enter into a larger world of exchanges.”⁸⁶ Who is at the heart of this logic of consumption and exchange? Who can be heard as part of “ourselves”? Who feeds and is nourished, and who is decimated and consumed, to make them or us queer? This formation surrounds us with what artist and activist Jota Mombaça describes as queer caravels.⁸⁷ They float on an unnamed sea—the trans/Atlantic subsumed in a queer coloniality with white, cisgender formations of nonnormativity feeding on the others.

Lusophone trans tessituras reveal other terrains of difference and dissidence. A wily musicology attunes our listening to their expression in repertoires of popular music as a craft of composition that exceeds the measures of music and is more than an orchestration of sounds. Attunement, in this sense, is not the alignment or harmonization of pitches, voices, instruments, or emotional states, but rather what Lauren Berlant describes as a “process of encounter [that] makes room for the interlocutors to emerge in their variousness.”⁸⁸ To be attuned to trans tessituras is to hear difference as constitutive of an affective composition; to hear a deconstructive or improvisational intervention in music repertoires as an intentional practice of music making, as Steve Larson argues, a “choice among possible paths that elaborate a preexisting structure.”⁸⁹ These differently elaborated compositions rework familiar forms of expression to carry music and meaning in revisionary and revelatory ways. They are more than the arrangement of musical elements such as melody, harmony, and rhythm, and they do more than organize sounds over time. They are arrangements of desires and dissent in intentional symphonic and embodied orchestrations. To listen for their tessituras is to be attuned to more than the sum of their musical parts. Samuel Adler, in describing the intricacies of an orchestra, observes that “timbre and texture clarify the form as well as the content of a host of compositions,” and that “orchestral colors” and “orchestral fabric give special ‘personality’ to the music.”⁹⁰ Indeed, trans tessituras are the material and affective textures that give meaning to a host of compositional subjectivities: What Adler hears as personality, I hear as presence, as the sound of self-assertion and the orchestration of queer worlds in the making.⁹¹

Transounding proposes an attunement to Lusophone trans tessituras in audiovisual compositions of popular music as expressions of radical transposition. In music, transposition typically involves changing the key or pitch of a composition without altering the relationships between its different elements. In contrast, trans tessituras move through conventional expressive forms in ways that shift the sociocultural relationalities through which they resound. They

are part of a sociality akin to what Lauren Berlant describes as the collaborative practice of “sex, activism, stranger encounters, reading,” not as “performances of disavowal . . . but scenes of a drama of attention in which we seek to work our relationality.”⁹² These compositions call our attention to the ways they shift meanings that have coalesced around conventions of gender and genre in Luso-Afro-Brazilian cultures. They form dissident repertoires as expressions of mutual recognition, affective arrangements of desire, and modes of subjectivity. At times intentionally and at others unexpectedly, Luso-Afro-Brazilian trans tessituras act in concert, which Judith Butler argues can be an “embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political.”⁹³ Against geopolitical divisions and sociocultural dissonances, their modes of expression are concerted and critical interventions in acoustic terrains that resound as orchestrations of a life-sustaining praxis.

Lusophone trans tessituras chart dissident diasporic acoustic and embodied terrains. To hear them is to map their movements into and out of recognizable forms. In compositional references, they write other artists, expressions, histories, and interventions into their songs as citations and augmentations. They claim kinship and occupy space. They materialize what Alexander G. Weheliye describes as the “sociality of the auditory,” the “embodiment of sonic matter” in all its forms.⁹⁴ A wily musicology attunes to the sonic matter through which trans tessituras resound, the reverberations of compositional registers, how they persist, and what may impede their movements. In their sounding, through the trans/Atlantic and across cultural topographies, we can discern their resonances by attending to how they move, what they move toward, what moves with them, and what remains unmoved.

A Resonant Composition

The chapters ahead discern compositions of popular music as both indiscreet and coded transpositions of affective and material forms. They give meaning to social and sexual subjectivity beyond the conventional measures of distance and difference for Luso-Afro-Brazilian cultural and embodied terrains. I have listened for what Dylan Robinson calls “the intersubjective experiences of artistic and musical alterity.” These compositions play with paradigms, sounding out queer, dissident, and diasporic contestations like seismic sociocultural shifts that call our attention to what they leave in shaky states and what they augment and sustain. Analyses of songs, music videos, and interviews, through recordings, performances, critical reception, and resonance, trace how they are expressed and experienced differently across different subject positions and through different

terrains of meaning. Their effects, as Robinson proposes, may come to us through resurgent forms of listening and “the discursive resonance of writing affect” as a “strategic orchestration” of forms of redress.⁹⁵ How music is made, heard, and written about is an intersubjective experience of pleasure and power that is also an orchestration of resistance, intimacy, and sociality. I write about the resonances of Lusophone trans tessituras to hear them in critical relation to one another. My analyses are a form of redress to fans, artists, and scholars of Lusophone cultures and the communities that gather through song. I write about the lives, worlds, and words they imbue with meaning, how others write about them, and how they write others into being.

Transounding is a composition of three movements that separately identify and examine confounding, unbearable, and Black Lusophone trans tessituras, recognizing each as the unsettled heart of voices, compositions, and repertoires. These movements, however, are not mutually exclusive. There is an intimate sociality at play in the reception they provoke and the forms of expression they cite and excite. Lusophone trans tessituras move through and play with one another. The multisensorial events they express and orchestrate are not unilateral. To follow one resonant form of a trans tessitura does not preclude it from having others. They are multiple and overlapping. Some will perceive confounding trans tessituras as unbearable, and Black queer diasporic trans tessituras as confounding. This is a feature of their resonant forms. I gather them into three separate movements to better understand them as intentional arrangements of voices, bodies, and song in particular lines of inquiry, intervention, and recognition.

The first movement discerns confounding trans tessituras that overwhelm otherwise monolithic foreclosures. *Merriam-Webster's* defines the term *confounding* through its verb form as to “throw a person into confusion or perplexity,” to “baffle,” to “fail to discern the differences between : mix up,” and to “refute, to put to shame [as in] a performance that *confounded* the critics.”⁹⁶ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the adjective “confounding” as “destroying, confusing, perplexing, amazing.”⁹⁷ In Portuguese, the term is a bit more straightforward: “confundir [v]—misturar coisas diversas, tomar uma coisa por outra, baralhar . . . perturbar [com amabilidade ou elogios]” (confound [v.]—to mix diverse things, to take one thing for another, to shuffle or jumble . . . to fluster [with affection or praise]).⁹⁸ While the English word transitions easily from verb to adjective form, Portuguese requires different words to describe confounding performances—*desconcertante* (disconcerting, bewildering) or *perturbador/a* (powerfully disturbing). The linguistic differences underscore how confounding expressions resonate differently across cultural contexts, encompassing a spectrum from destructive confusion to productive bewilderment, so that a baffling

mix of elements in one context can be an awe-inspiring performance that defies critical categories in another.

A confounding trans tessitura in Lusophone contexts may be a perplexing, disconcerting, and exhilarating expression within otherwise predictable arrangements. Chapter 1 examines how Pablo Vittar's confounding trans tessitura upsets myopic Brazilian cultural representations of transfeminine gender expression. Through an analysis of music, videos, and vocal performances, I demonstrate how Vittar's compositions and subjectivity confound distinctions between drag queens and travestis that emerged in media discourse in the 1990s that positioned drag as "safe" confusion, while casting travestis as disruptive dissonance. Vittar refuses reductive categorizations through what I define as an *abundant drag*—a polyvalent performance that overwhelms the archetypes, transposing scrutiny into an empowered site of self-creation. Chapter 2 analyzes how MC Linn da Quebrada's confounding trans tessitura exposes and confronts the racialized peripheries of gender and sexuality in Brazil through a strategic deployment of *bixa* travesty subjectivity. On the album *Pajubá* (2017) and related audiovisual performances, Quebrada performs an embodied grammar that reconfigures social and sexual hierarchies, *cui*ring a hostile discursive ground into a terrain of Black transfeminine kinship, desire, and dissidence. In a genealogy of nonnormative voice and performance, Vittar and Quebrada align with Ney Matogrosso; chapter 3 analyzes Matogrosso's confounding trans tessitura as the expression of queer cacophony. A close analysis of his solo debut, *Água do céu-pássaro* (1975), reveals arrangements of incommensurable sounds and subjectivities. Through them, Matogrosso's high countertenor voice mobilizes queer, Indigenous, and Afro-Brazilian registers in cacophonous arrangement against a monolithic Lusotropicalist discourse. Particularly in his cover of "Mãe preta (Barco negro)," Matogrosso resurfaces submerged histories through the performance of a Portuguese fado, refusing discrete resolution of insoluble transatlantic lamentations.

The second movement identifies and analyzes the unbearable trans tessitura expressed through queer iterations of fado and *fadistas* (fado performers). My description of a trans tessitura as unbearable is not a criticism of a voice or composition as intolerable or too extreme to be endured, even as some critics mean just that. Instead, these chapters draw on Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman's framework of sex and intimacy as unbearable, as an overwhelming relationality, an intimate collaboration of "play, aversion, and unbearable intensity" that can ground and unsettle us, revealing new modes of being.⁹⁹ This second section examines how performers and compositions express fado's unbearable drama and inhabit its feminine archetypes to voice dissident Portuguese subjectivities

that exceed the normative frameworks of gender, sexuality, and cultural belonging encoded in fado repertoire. Chapter 4 examines António Variações's performance of the fado "Povo que lavas no rio" ([You] People who Wash in the River) as an expression of the genre's obscured history of dissidence and an iteration of an unbearable fadista, an occluded archetype traced through the figures of Maria Severa and Amália Rodrigues. Analyses demonstrate how Variações inhabits the fadista as an unbearable, queer, acoustic, and embodied terrain. In chapter 5, the unbearable trans tessituras of Portuguese duo Fado Bicha are identified as expressions of a *bicha* (queer and transfeminine) subjectivity, arranged into compositions that transpose fado's dramatic repertoire into explicit queer praxis. This chapter demonstrates how, from bold narratives of same-sex desire to antiracist manifestos, Fado Bicha expresses the unbearable precariousness and sociality of queer Portuguese life and charts contemporary peripheries of queerness and Blackness as resonant fado terrain.

The third movement is a transatlantic crescendo of Black expression that charts diasporic terrains of Black queer subjectivity. Chapter 6 examines how Angolan kuduro artist Titica transposes postcolonial repertoires of music and dance into spectacular trans/Atlantic Afro-diasporic formations. Refiguring transphobic critiques of vulgarity, analyses demonstrate how Titica's compositions expand kuduro's creative assembly of embodiments. By discerning her music through the resistant vernaculars of Black queer diaspora, the chapter demonstrates how Titica reterritorializes Angolan repertoires of expression as a terrain of Black, transfeminist subjectivity. Chapter 7 reveals queer Afro-diasporic orchestrations happening in Lisbon's wake—the yet "unresolved unfolding" that Sharpe identifies as "Black non/being"—as modes of resistance in the aftermath of transatlantic slavery.¹⁰⁰ The compositions, collaborations, and expressions of *afrotravestigenero* (Black-travesti-gender), transfeminine, and Black bicha subjectivities by Puta da Silva, Judas, Pablllo Vittar, and Titica are Luso-Afro-Brazilian Afro-fabulations, which Tavia Nyong'o describes as the "queer hack of the codes" of anti-Black worlds.¹⁰¹ Through electronic incantation, erotic devouring, and sci-fi fantasies, Black trans tessituras chart queer Luso-Afro-Brazilian expressions and subjectivities as diasporic interventions into the wake of Portuguese being.

The composition transitions from movements into the coda, "Lisbon Is Burning," which draws on theories of the refrain as both territorial limit and deterritorializing force to position Lisbon as an uncertain and ancillary convergence of confounding, unbearable, and Black queer expressions. The coda identifies the trans/Atlantic tessituras setting Lisbon ablaze with orchestrations of dissidence and desire. They constellate Luso-Afro-Brazilian expressive repertoires into queer and dissident diaspora, untethered to the logics and aesthetics

of nation and normativity, transposing popular music repertoires and modes of subjectivity. The coda transposes and repeats a Black queer refrain in solicitation as an imperative redirection for Lusophone studies and for disciplines that would circumvent Luso-Afro-Brazilian forms of expression wherever the Portuguese language is already in the mix.

Transounding is a promiscuous arrangement of voices and bodies with an unsettled heart. The tracks within it form a playlist of overlapping registers of desire, language, and music. They express a queer sense of cultural heritage that I have felt in diaspora, and chart dissident diasporas through which I have also been moved. They cultivate a queer relationship of reception and return that Sarah Hankins describes as “embodied, aroused, and situated,” positioning listeners within social power structures undergirded by sexual orders in ways that enable other meaningful arrangements of the sexual and the social.¹⁰² In other words, trans tessituras excite us. Depending on our receptions and returns, we may find we are transformed. I have listened deeply to their resonances, in affinity with Pauline Oliveros’s attention to “the detail or trajectory of the sound or sequence of sounds,” how they move, where they go.¹⁰³ Attuned to what may linger in the ear, bristle the skin, and echo back, this composition resonates across divides and refuses the peripheries and precipices on which Lusophone queerness and Blackness are precariously perched. Trans tessituras move in concert and guide our attention. They strike urgent notes that remake the conditions of possibility in which they may resound. They move beside the matrices of hegemonic Luso-Afro-Brazilian socio-spatial regimes. They move against destructive and delimited cultural forms. They are not merely Brazilian eccentricities, Portuguese dissidents, or Angolan exceptions, nor are they the effects of a troubling Lusophony. As popular music stars, they may be easily dismissed for their brightness as mere avatars of a viral mass media market. Yet they shine and sing in the wake of transatlantic volution. Robin James asserts it is “possible to use sound to think about political ontology, vibratory resonance, subjectivity.”¹⁰⁴ I offer this work as a way to hear Lusophone difference and dissidence already in play.

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Notes

PRELUDE

1. António Variações, *Anjo da guarda* (1983).
2. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 195–96.

INTRODUCTION

1. Jack Nicas, “The World’s Next Big Drag Queen Is Brazilian,” *New York Times*, June 30, 2024.
2. Alessandra Codinha, “What Pabllo Vittar, Pop Superstar, Means to Brazil (and the Rest of Us) Right Now,” *Vogue*, November 17, 2018.
3. For comparison, as of this writing, North American drag queen RuPaul, arguably the most commercially successful drag queen in the world, has less than 300,000 subscribers on their YouTube channel and under 700,000 subscribers on *RuPaul’s Drag Race* YouTube channel, while on Spotify they receive approximately 1.6 million monthly listeners.
4. Brazilian certification of music sales can be found at “Certificados,” Pro-Música Brasil, accessed February 19, 2026, https://pro-musicabr.org.br/home/certificados/?busca_artista=Pabllo+Vittar.
5. On *III* (2020) Vittar sings in Portuguese, English, and Spanish and collaborates with US recording artist Charlie XCX and Mexican recording artist Thalia.
6. In an interview with *Glamour Brasil*, Vittar says she is a “menino gay que faz drag” (gay boy that does drag) while reasserting that she does not identify as transgender, does not seek gender reassignment surgery, and does not conform to the cisheterosexist binary. See Bezerra, “Sou um menino gay: Não sou trans e não faria surgia de redesignação sexual,” *Glamour*, August 11, 2017. On the podcast *PoshPah* in 2022, Vittar declared her identity to be gender fluid.
7. Giles and Steane, “Countertenor.”
8. Jander, “Tessitura.”

9. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “tessitura,” accessed February 19, 2026, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tessitura>.
10. Latham, “Tessitura.”
11. Jander, “Tessitura.”
12. *Dicionário Priberam*, “tessitura,” accessed February 19, 2026, <https://dicionario.priberam.org/tessitura>.
13. Mariana Peixoto, “Pablo Vittar canta bem? Professores de canto avaliam voz da drag queen,” *Estado da Minas*, August 1, 2018.
14. Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 18.
15. Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 133.
16. Matheus Aguiar, “Pablo Vittar rebate críticas à voz aguda: ‘É só não ouvir,’” *Famosidades*, April 12, 2018.
17. LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*.
18. Jazeel and Western, “Sound Carries,” 2.
19. Lusophone countries include Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, and East Timor, which form the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP); significant communities of Lusophone immigrants can be found around the world, particularly in North American and in non-Lusophone European nations. *Lusophone* remains an inadequate but readily understood descriptor for different Portuguese-speaking cultures with resonant affinities that I account for through the braided formation *Luso-Afro-Brazilian*, used throughout the text. For more on that hyphenated descriptor, see Ferreira, “Integrating Portuguese Studies in Interdisciplinary Programs,” 73–81.
20. The term *travesti* is prevalent in Latin America and other places where Spanish and Portuguese are spoken, historically and reductively translated into English as “transvestite.” It is more accurately defined as a feminine gender expression or identity claimed by people assigned male at birth who may or may not also identify as trans women, and who may or may not seek out gender reassignment procedures. Travestis have a long history of cultural (mis)representation, organization, and politicization in Brazil, where they are widely present in popular culture and often maligned through association with criminality. Although at times the terms *travesti*, *transgender*, and *transsexual*—now less frequently used in English-language contexts but still found in Brazilian and Portuguese-language mediums—are referred to in media or academic scholarship under a trans or trans* rubric, *travesti* is readily claimed as a distinct identity with a long history.
21. For more on *cuir*, see Pierce et al., “Introduction,” 321–27.
22. Pelúcio, “Viadagens e transviadagens,” 12–30.
23. For colonial accounts of same-sex practices in Brazil and Latin America, see Trevisan, *Perverts in Paradise*; Tortorici, “Against Nature,” 161–78; and Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen*. For more on carnival and homosexuality, see J. Green, *Beyond Carnival*. For non-normative gender and sexuality expressed in Afro-Brazilian and Afro-diasporic spiritual practices, see Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions*; Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*; Sweet, “Male Homosexuality and Spiritism in the African Diaspora,” 184–202; and Landes, *City of Women*.

24. Brazilian trans man Tarso Brant starred in the popular soap opera *A força do querer* (2017) and the Angolan drama *Jikulumessu: Abre o olho*, which aired from 2014 to 2015 and featured two men kissing, a scene for which the show was canceled and then reinstated after a social media campaign. See Mario Lopes, “Angola: Telenovela suspensa por causa de beijo gay volta a ser exibida,” *Global Voices*, February 12, 2015, <https://pt.globalvoices.org/2015/02/12/angola-telenovela-suspensa-por-causa-de-beijo-gay-volta-a-ser-exibido/>.

25. In 2022 Erika Hilton (São Paulo) and Duda Salabert (Minas Gerais) became the first transgender women ever elected to the Brazilian Congress, while the number of queer and trans people running for office in Brazil increased, with more than seventy candidates that same year.

26. Homosexual acts were decriminalized in Angola in October 2018, joining Mozambique (2015), São Tomé and Príncipe (2012), and Cape Verde (2004).

27. “Presidente da República promulga lei da autodeterminação da identidade de gênero,” *El Observador*, July 31, 2018.

28. Black Brazilians represent 75 percent of murder victims overall and over 65 percent of LGBTQ+ murders specifically. See Malta, “Exploring Intersectionality and Its Deadly Impact.”

29. Recent investigations have shown involvement and obstruction by the civil police and political opponents in the assassinations. See “A Rio Councilwoman’s Killing Was a Mystery,” Associated Press, April 1, 2024.

30. “Trans Murder Monitoring,” TGEU, accessed February 19, 2026, <https://tgeu.org>.

31. ANTRA (@antra.official), Instagram, accessed January 24, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/antra.official/>.

32. In 2023 the Brazilian population in Portugal was 368,449; that of Angolans was 55,589; Cape Verdeans numbered 48,885. See Lopes and Sousa, *Relatório de Migrações e Asilo 2023*.

33. Mamede Filho, “A brasileira que virou símbolo LGBT,” *BBC Brasil*, February 23, 2016.

34. *ILGA Portugal* shows verbal harassment as the most common complaint. See “Dados da discriminação,” ILGA, accessed February 19, 2026, <https://ilga-portugal.pt/denunciar-a-discriminacao/observatorio-da-discriminacao/>.

35. Ochoa, *Queen for a Day*, 211.

36. Titze, “Voice Research and Technology,” 59–61.

37. Benjamin, *Craft of Tonal Counterpoint*, 28.

38. Stryker, *Transgender History*, 19.

39. Colebrook, “What Is It Like to Be a Human?,” 229.

40. Chao, “Trans Formations of Male Falsetto,” 456–63.

41. Green, “Troubling the Waters,” 66.

42. For the video, see Jup do Bairro, “Sinfonia do Corpo (Official Music Video),” YouTube, premiered May 20, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTI8iGxaoCo>. The track was later included on the album *in.corpo.ração* (2024).

43. Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 90.

44. Cusick, “On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex,” 29–30.

45. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35.

46. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
47. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 5.
48. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 1.
49. Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*, 2.
50. Anastasia, "Voice," 262.
51. Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 88.
52. Kapchan, "Body," 42.
53. Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*, 130.
54. Taylor, *Archive and the Repertoire*, 20.
55. For an analysis of the tensions between area demarcations for Luso-Afro-Brazilian cultural studies, see Blackmore, "Locations and Relocations of Lusophone Studies," 17–25. Pedro Schacht Pereira suggests this academic divide mirrors a cultural schism; see P. S. Pereira, "Portuguese and the Emergence of Iberian Studies," 25.
56. For transatlantic potentials and problems for Lusophone studies, see Blackmore, "Locations and Relocations of Lusophone Studies," 21.
57. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 3, 186.
58. Roach, *Cities of the Dead*.
59. Almeida, *Earth-Colored Sea*, 109.
60. Schneider, "Iberismo e luso-tropicalismo na obra de Gilberto Freyre," 87. Gilberto Freyre developed his theory of Lusotropicalism more directly in Freyre, *O mundo que o português criou*. Freyre published several works after his travels to Portuguese colonies; see Freyre, *Aventura e rotina* (1953); Freyre, *Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas* (1953); and Freyre, *O luso e o trópico* (1961).
61. Almeida, *Earth-Colored Sea*, 63.
62. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 186.
63. Arenas and Quinlan, *Lusosex*, xiv–xv.
64. Owen and Klobucka, *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony*, 6.
65. P. P. Pereira, *Queer in the Tropics*, 48.
66. Naro et al., *Cultures of the Lusophone Black Atlantic*, 8. See also Brookshaw, "Understanding the Lusophone Atlantic," 37–49.
67. Arenas, *Utopias of Otherness*, 98. For critiques of Lusophony, see Lourenço, *A nau de Ícaro* (1999); and Margarido, *A lusofonia e os lusófonos* (2000). For Lusophony as homogenizing, see Fonseca, "Em português nos entendemos?," 105–16; and Falconi, "Literaturas africanas, língua portuguesa e narrativas da Lusofonia," 203–18.
68. For the role of music in and as Lusophony, see La Barre and Vanspauwen, "A Musical Lusofonia?," 119–46; Sieber, "Composing Lusophonia," 163–88; and Alge, "Lusofonia, a (R)Evolução."
69. Sieber, "Composing Lusophonia," 216–18.
70. Barthes and Heath, *Image, Music, Text*, 185–87.
71. Macharia, *Frottage* (2019).
72. Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 5–6.
73. Silva Santana, "Transitionings and Returnings," 183.
74. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 4–5.
75. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 13.

76. Santiago, "Wily Homosexual," 15, 18.
77. Lugarinho, "Al Berto, in Memoriam," 276–299.
78. Jossianna Arroyo describes this remaking as cultural transvestisms, in Arroyo, *Travestismos culturales* (2003).
79. Andrade, "The Cannibalist Manifesto (Manifesto Antropófago)," 300–308.
80. For a study of Indigeneity in Brazil, see Guzmán, *Native and National in Brazil* (2013).
81. Santos, "Between Prospero and Caliban."
82. Lugarinho, "Al Berto, in Memoriam," 284–85.
83. The Trans Murder Monitoring Project records 321 trans and gender diverse people murdered in 2023. "Trans Murder Monitoring," TGEU, accessed February 19, 2026, <https://tgeu.org/trans-murder-monitoring-2023/>.
84. Santos, "Between Prospero and Caliban," 17.
85. See Neto, "Anthropophagic Queer," 240–54.
86. Miskolci, foreword to P. P. Pereira, *Queer in the Tropics*, xi.
87. Brazilian writer and artist Jota Mombaça has criticized the cisgender nature of queer theory as it has developed in Brazil through an elite network of cisgender theorists that erase South-South tensions. See Mombaça, "Para desaprender o queer dos trópicos."
88. Berlant and Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable*, 110.
89. Larson, "Composition Versus Improvisation?" 272.
90. Adler, *Study of Orchestration*, 3.
91. For queer worldmaking, see Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 195–98.
92. Berlant and Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable*, 110.
93. Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 9.
94. Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 10.
95. Robinson, *Hungry Listening*, 16, 17.
96. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "Confound," accessed February 20, 2026, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/confound>.
97. *Oxford English Dictionary*, "Confounding," accessed February 20, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1847625107>.
98. *Priberam Dicionário*, "Confundir," accessed February 20, 2026, <https://dicionario.priberam.org/confundir>.
99. Berlant and Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable*, 116–17.
100. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 14.
101. Nyong'o, *Afro-fabulations*, 4.
102. Hankins, "Queer Relationships with Music," 88.
103. Oliveros, *Deep Listening*, xxii.
104. James, *Sonic Episteme*, 6.

CHAPTER ONE. AN ABUNDANT DRAG

1. Vittar, *Vai passar mal* (2017).
2. *Transfeminine* refers to gender identities and expressions that align with femininity, not necessarily with woman as understood in a cisgender binary. I use it to account for