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Performing Counter-Colonial Queer: Pablllo Vittar and the Reconfiguration of Regional Identity

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Performing Counter-Colonial Queer: *Pabllo Vittar and the Reconfiguration of Regional Identity*

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Introduction: Pablo Vittar and Counter-Colonial Praxis

At the inauguration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on January 1, 2023, Pablo Vittar—a *Nordestino* and one of the country's most prominent queer pop figures—became the first drag queen to perform at a Brazilian presidential inauguration. Dressed in a rhinestone-studded black motorcycle jacket with structured shoulders and sheer mesh leggings—a high-cut black thong accentuating the contours of his exposed buttocks beneath—the look was completed by twin platinum pigtails and blunt-cut bangs styled into a long, silver-blond wig. Vittar's look fused Cher's hypersexualized glam-rock styling from her *If I Could Turn Back Time* (1989) video—leather jacket, sheer mesh, and a high-cut thong that foregrounds the hips and buttocks—with Xuxa's infantilized pop-femininity, evoked through the silver-blond wig and its pigtails and bangs. The result was a deliberate clash of erotic spectacle and girlish artifice, made more disruptive by the intersection of his racialized coding as *pardo* and his regional identity as *Nordestino*—categories that carry different social meanings and degrees of stigmatization across Brazil's territorial hierarchies.

He sang live in his countertenor voice, performing in the Northern and Northeastern music genres of *brega* and *forró* with full choreographed backing. The performance refused the decorum typically associated with state ritual by mobilizing sonic and visual forms long marked as vulgar or backward within Brazil's dominant aesthetic hierarchies. Regional identity—particularly that of the Northeast—is not a neutral geography, but a stigmatized positionality shaped by racialization and exclusion. In this context, *forró* and *brega* operate both as signs of cultural marginalization and as vehicles of territorial memory and epistemic agency—forms historically devalued yet mobilized as sources of cultural knowledge. It was not only an unprecedented act—a drag queen from the Northeastern state of Maranhão on the presidential stage—but a

dissonant one, foregrounding the regional, racialized, and gendered codes historically rendered as incompatible with national representation.

Yet the significance of this event lies not in symbolic inclusion, but in the structural contradiction it revealed. A *pardo*, queer, *Nordestino* figure was momentarily centered by the state, while the structures that render such bodies illegible, disposable, or threatening remained firmly in place. Brazil has recorded the world's highest number of LGBTQIA+ murders for fourteen consecutive years—many concentrated in the Northeast, where Vittar is from—underscoring how queer public life continues to be structured by violence (Agência Brasil, 2024; AP News, 2024; Brasil de Fato, 2024). Vittar's rise to prominence, moreover, unfolded alongside the Bolsonaro era's openly anti-queer, anti-Northeastern politics, demonstrating that spectacular visibility emerges from the same classificatory instabilities that enable both hypervisibility and structural violence.

This tension—between spectacular visibility and everyday expendability—frames the central analytic problem of this thesis: How does a queer artist shaped by regional exclusion, racial ambiguity, anti-queer violence, and gender nonconformity come to occupy the center of national recognition? And how do modes of performance intervene from within—rather than outside—the classificatory systems that continue to organize legitimacy in Brazilian popular culture? Vittar occupied the center of state spectacle not despite his regional, racialized, and gendered excess, but because these forms of incoherence were momentarily legible within a system that requires incoherence to register difference. Rather than stepping outside dominant classificatory logics, his performance inhabited their thresholds—where visibility is granted through the traits that make his body structurally expendable.

Although Pablllo Vittar's cultural prominence—consolidated since his national breakout in 2015—has generated sustained scholarly attention, much of this literature remains oriented toward visibility. His queerness is often framed as an index of cultural transformation, and his appearances in media or political rituals treated as signs of progressive inclusion. Yet such accounts rarely interrogate how visibility itself depends on the fiction that coherent categories exist—or how the violence of maintaining these fictions is displaced onto bodies that reveal their impossibility. This thesis instead examines how recognition operates through the frameworks that render it volatile—structured by the logics it appears to interrupt, and sustained through the conditions it cannot fully undo. While existing studies highlight Vittar's visibility in LGBTQIA+ representation and digital culture, few examine the colonial legacies through which region, race, and gender become legible—or remain structurally obscured—in Brazilian popular culture (e.g. Barbosa & Zolin-Vesz, 2020; Bianchi & Lima, 2020; Brennan & Gudelunas, 2022; Wasser, 2020). Costa et al. (2017) focus on Vittar's Instagram narratives to analyze visual disruptions of gender binarism, while Duarte Bueno de Godoi and da Rosa (2023) interpret his use of the Lula towel at Lollapalooza as a gesture of political identification. Mourão (2022) frames his work as “artivism”—a fusion of activism and artistry—aligned with Colling's (2021) theorization of collective queer resistance. However, in emphasizing intention, visibility, and affective rupture, these readings equate symbolic appearance with transformation, obscuring how visibility depends on—and reaffirms—the classificatory systems it seems to disrupt.

In response, this thesis asks: How does Pablllo Vittar's queer performance function as counter-colonial praxis, challenging colonial constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and territory in Brazilian popular culture? Although Vittar occupies a uniquely prominent position, his visibility remains embedded within frameworks that delimit

which bodies and forms are granted cultural legitimacy. These are not neutral frameworks but historical structures that continue to order value through racial, gendered, and regional exclusions—the afterlives of colonial taxonomies. Addressing this contradiction requires moving beyond representational readings to examine how performance reveals the instabilities these classificatory systems work to contain. It proceeds from the premise that recognition—whether institutional or mediated—does not dismantle the classificatory order, but may be disturbed and refracted through performance. This disturbance creates openings for alternative modes of existence, in which bodies denied coherent legibility within colonial taxonomies produce cultural presence precisely through the contradictions that render them illegible. Visibility is not the endpoint of liberation, but the mechanism through which dominant systems recognize what they simultaneously disqualify.

In this framework, classificatory coherence emerges not as a stable condition but as a colonial fiction—sustained through repetition, enforced through violence, and exposed by the bodies it attempts to discipline. Vittar’s categorical “failure” discloses not a lack, but the impossibility of legibility within Brazil’s classificatory logic: a system that renders queer and regional bodies legible only through terms that code them as incoherent, excessive, or disposable.

Within this contradictory space—where visibility and expendability converge—Vittar’s Brazilian queer performance intervenes through what this thesis theorizes as counter-colonial praxis. Rather than a gesture of symbolic disruption, this praxis emerges from classificatory breakdown—where the demand to appear collides with the impossibility of coherent appearance. It names aesthetic, corporeal, and territorial operations that arise from epistemic forms never fully absorbed by colonial logic. These operations do not rupture the system from outside; they generate internal friction by

activating embodied and regional knowledges that disorganize hierarchies from within. Performance, in this account, becomes the terrain where colonial regimes of legibility are rendered visible as unstable constructions.

Analyzing these specifically Brazilian dynamics of race, region, and gender requires epistemological frameworks grounded in—rather than imposed onto—Brazil's colonial histories. This thesis draws from Brazilian theorists whose concepts are embedded in these histories, including Antônio Bispo dos Santos's (2015a) *confluência*, Lélia Gonzalez's (1988) *corporeidade*, and Milton Santos's (2006) *território*. These theorists provide more than context: they offer analytic frameworks for understanding performance as an embodied and territorial intervention within Brazil's systems of recognition. Their concepts enable a reading of Vittar's Brazilian queer performance not as refusal from outside, but as situated redirection from within.

Brazilian queer performance names a historically situated field shaped by visibility regimes, containment, and conditional legitimacy within Brazil's classificatory hierarchies. This approach departs from Anglo-American models of queer theory by recontextualizing foundational queer theoretical insights through Brazil's colonial and regional hierarchies—foregrounding aesthetic traditions, racial codings, and territorial exclusions specific to the national context. Within this field, Vittar's work is framed as counter-colonial praxis—a situated enactment informed by in the epistemologies of *confluência*, *corporeidade*, and *território*. Vittar's Brazilian queer performance demonstrates how he operates within classificatory breakdown—engaging regional forms and embodied dissonance to register presence within systems that simultaneously recognize and disqualify his presence. The legibility of Vittar's performance stems not from intentional subversion but from structural incoherence produced through these same regimes; his dissonance emerges less from deliberate choice than from the unstable

coherence generated by his effeminacy, countertenor vocality, and embodied ambiguity—traits not simply expressed but structured through classificatory regimes. Rather than clarifying his identity, his performance dramatizes the contradiction of being recognized through what is structurally disavowed.

While decolonial, postcolonial, and intersectional frameworks have diagnosed the violence of classification and the limits of liberal recognition, they often underdevelop how intervention occurs within still-operational classificatory systems. Theories of media representation, meanwhile, tend to overstate the political significance of appearance without interrogating how appearance is structured. By centering counter-colonial praxis, this thesis does not reject recognition outright—it reorients attention to how recognition is organized, conditional, and always already implicated in systems of colonial legibility. This thesis contributes to ongoing debates in queer theory, decolonial studies, performance studies, and Brazilian cultural analysis by advancing a situated analytic of recognition and embodied disruption. It addresses the limits of representation-based politics in queer theory, the methodological challenges of theorizing agency under colonial legibility, and the political force of embodied practice within regional and national regimes of value.

These contributions unfold through a systematic analysis that begins by establishing the theoretical and methodological frameworks for understanding performance as counter-colonial praxis. Working through Brazilian epistemologies that frame performance as relational, embodied, and territorially embedded, the analysis defines Brazilian queer performance as a field historically shaped by regimes of recognition that render queerness legible through racial, gendered, and regional exclusions. Within this field, Vittar's performance is approached as an intervention that

does not seek coherence or integration, but mobilizes dissonant modalities to engage classificatory instability from within.

This analytic is operationalized through a combination of performance analysis, close reading, and ethnographic fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted from June to August 2024 during Vittar's *Batidão Tropical* tour, spanning five cities across Brazil's Southeast, Northeast, and Central-West: São Paulo (SP), São Luís (MA), Teresina (PI), Araraquara (SP), and Brasília (DF). The research draws on semi-structured interviews—including with Vittar—and participant observation at concerts, examining how live performance engages and redirects dominant regimes of recognition through aesthetic, corporeal, and territorial dynamics.

This focus on live performance marks a methodological intervention within existing Vittar scholarship. Despite nearly a decade of academic attention, no sustained analysis has yet addressed his concert practice. However, it is through these live enactments—where sound, movement, and bodily presence converge in contingent relation—that his counter-colonial praxis becomes materially legible as a mode of cultural engagement. The thesis reads these moments as ephemeral encounters that both expose and strain the classificatory systems through which race, gender, and regional value are distributed—mobilizing instability not as breakdown, but as condition.

Live performance in Brazil is not simply situated in geographic space—it reconfigures territory through sonic occupation, affective density, and choreographic assertion. Vernacular genres such as *forró* and *brega* enact these dynamics across the North and Northeast, where regionally situated forms contest dominant grammars of value. In these contexts, performance generates temporary disturbances that mobilize

marginalized cultural forms as epistemic force—disorganizing colonial hierarchies not through direct rupture, but through the dissonance of partial legibility.

The analysis integrates these observations with close readings of two music videos—*Então Vai* (2017) and *Seu Crime* (2019)—through which the paradigmatic elements of Vittar's counter-colonial praxis become analytically legible. These works condense recurring modalities of dissonance, ambiguity, and vernacular reoccupation that function as situated interventions into dominant aesthetic codes rather than identity claims. In live performance, these modalities extend into embodied relations with publics and territory, producing shifts in how legibility and authority are spatially organized. Vittar's appearance at Lula's 2023 inauguration exemplifies this dynamic: it did not symbolize inclusion, but activated the contradictions of national visibility through forms long marked as incompatible with state decorum. These recurring modalities—developed in this thesis as original analytic terms—are conceptualized as *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy*.

The following chapters develop this analytic of counter-colonial praxis by tracing how Pabllo Vittar's Brazilian queer performance emerges from and reconfigures colonial hierarchies of race, gender, and regional legitimacy. This structure is cumulative and methodologically deliberate: because counter-colonial praxis develops through situated, relational modes of engagement, the analysis moves from theoretical foundation to structural logics, then to genealogical accumulation and formal consolidation. Each chapter addresses a distinct analytic need—conceptual grounding, material condition, genealogical inheritance, and aesthetic consolidation—to clarify how performance operates not as representational display, but as engagement within systems of classification and value.

Chapter 1 establishes the theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing Vittar's performance as counter-colonial praxis. It distinguishes this analytic from decolonial critique and symbolic resistance by moving through Pereira's (2019) critique of queer theory's universalizing tendencies, then integrating epistemologies of territory (Santos, 2006), racialized embodiment (Gonzalez, 1988), and relational knowledge (Bispo dos Santos, 2015a). The chapter defines performance as a materially embedded and territorially situated intervention in regimes of recognition.

Chapter 2 grounds this framework in the structural conditions that shaped Vittar's formation. It examines how intersecting exclusions—racial, regional, gendered, and economic—produced the terrain from which his queer performance emerges, framing it as a response to historically sedimented regimes of marginalization and regional containment rather than spontaneous expression.

Chapter 3 constructs a genealogical account of Brazilian queer performance as a field structured by containment and conditional legitimacy. It traces how earlier forms of queer performance engaged classificatory breakdown through embodied interventions that exposed—without resolving—instabilities within Brazil's regimes of recognition. Rather than developing strategies of resistance, these figures generated accumulated conditions of classificatory instability that would later enable Vittar's consolidation of *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy*. Situating Vittar within this genealogy clarifies how his counter-colonial praxis emerges from the convergence of classificatory conditions rather than inherited tactics.

Chapter 4 analyzes music video as a medium through which *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* are formalized. It reads *Então Vai* (2017) and *Seu Crime* (2019) as dense sites where regional aesthetics and queer embodiment are asserted as

engagements embedded within the classificatory systems that structure legibility in Brazilian popular culture.

Chapter 5 traces how these modalities materialize in live performance through affective and territorial dynamics. It argues that live performance constitutes a site of counter-colonial inscription—where subordinated publics and aesthetics momentarily reorganize dominant structures of recognition through embodied encounter. The chapter contrasts nationally mediatized and regionally embedded contexts to trace how affect, movement, and sonic force function as situated engagements.

Together, these chapters demonstrate that counter-colonial praxis offers a method for reading Vittar's Brazilian queer performance not as cultural inclusion, but as a relational reordering of the classificatory systems that structure race, gender, and regional legitimacy. Vittar's appearance at the center of state spectacle on January 1, 2023, serves as this project's point of departure—not as resolution, but as rupture. The performance did not negate the structural exclusions it temporarily punctured; instead, it exposed the entanglement of visibility and violence within the national order, where recognition remains tethered to colonial systems of classification. In this framework, performance becomes the site where legibility is actively contested rather than simply achieved. Counter-colonial praxis names not the refusal of dominant regimes, but their internal disturbance—where performance renders value unstable by moving through the forms that recognition both demands and disqualifies. Vittar's staging on the Esplanada exemplifies this disturbance: a drag queen commanding the national imaginary not through assimilation, but by reconfiguring what state visibility can signify. The following chapters examine how classificatory instabilities are generated when marginalized cultural forms—including regional musical genres and queer corporeal practices—encounter dominant frameworks of cultural validation. This framework is developed

through analysis of Vittar's Brazilian queer performance across the modalities of *drag* *dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy*.

Chapter 1. Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for Analyzing Pablo Vittar's Counter-Colonial Praxis

This chapter develops the theoretical and methodological foundations for analyzing Pablo Vittar's Brazilian queer performance as counter-colonial praxis. Within Brazil's classificatory hierarchies, queer performance is mediated through systems of recognition that simultaneously legitimize and disqualify presence—a structural contradiction that demands analytic models grounded in colonial formations rather than universalizing accounts of queer subversion. To meet this demand, the chapter moves beyond the symbolic emphasis of Anglo-American queer theory¹ to foreground frameworks attuned to how recognition functions through structural disavowal. It outlines a set of conceptual tools for examining classificatory breakdown, emphasizing how the territorial, embodied, and epistemic dimensions of performance arise not from strategic intent but from the incoherence produced by Brazil's colonial order.

The chapter proceeds through three theoretical moves that reposition performance from symbolic disruption to structurally embedded counter-colonial praxis². First, it reconsiders Butler's concept of performativity and its limitations for analyzing queer performance under colonial conditions. Second, it draws on Pereira's (2019) reorientation of queer theory, which emphasizes embodied, territorial, and linguistic specificity within Brazil's colonial formations. Third, it elaborates counter-colonial praxis through the work of Bispo dos Santos (2015a, 2023b), Gonzalez (1988), and

¹ See Butler (1990), Warner (1993), and Sedgwick (1990) for foundational articulations of queer theory's focus on identity instability, anti-normativity, and binary critique. While formative for queer studies, these frameworks have historically abstracted gender and sexuality from the colonial and racialized structures of territory, embodiment, and knowledge production—gaps addressed by counter-colonial approaches developed by Bispo dos Santos (2015a), Gonzalez (1988), and Santos (2006).

² Following Latin American and counter-colonial traditions, *praxis* here refers not to symbolic resistance but to historically situated, embodied modes of intervention within systems of classification and exclusion. See Freire (1970) on praxis as the unity of reflection and action, and Bispo dos Santos (2015a) on *confluência* and *tecnologias de resistência* as territorial and epistemic practices of reordering imposed hierarchies.

Santos (2006), articulating performance as the enactment of alternative modes of existence that intervene in classificatory orders through epistemic, corporeal, and territorial means.

Drawing on these theorists, the chapter frames performance as a situated, structurally embedded, and epistemically informed intervention that contests colonial organization from within. Rather than functioning as representation, performance becomes the site where classificatory coherence is disorganized through embodied contradiction—where forms long disqualified by dominant regimes reappear as unstable yet enduring presences. These frameworks establish the basis for analyzing performance as counter-colonial enactment.

The chapter concludes by outlining the methodological strategies through which this analytic is operationalized. Combining fieldwork, close reading, and performance analysis, the thesis traces how Vittar's Brazilian queer performance mobilizes instability as a condition of visibility—one that exposes the classificatory violence underlying cultural legitimacy in Brazil's contemporary popular culture.

Performativity and Colonial Conditions

Since the law must be repeated to remain an authoritative law, the law perpetually reinstitutes the possibility of its own failure.

— Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (1993, p. 109)

This insight into performativity's constitutive instability has reshaped queer theory's understanding of gender and subversion. Butler's framework recasts gender not as innate identity but as a discursive process constituted through repetition. While this approach illuminates how norms constrain and produce subjects, it often presumes a universal structure of legibility and subversion, detached from colonial history.

Performativity describes how gender is materialized through reiteration—a process that simultaneously consolidates normative authority and exposes its fragility. Yet this lens remains limited in accounting for the racialized and territorial conditions that determine which reiterations are rendered legible and which are foreclosed.

In *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler writes that performative acts “contribute to that field of discourse and power that orchestrates, delimits, and sustains that which qualifies as ‘the human’” (p. 8). These acts unfold within the heterosexual matrix, where gender is constituted through “exclusionary means” that produce the normative subject by foreclosing alternatives. Deviations from these norms may expose their instability, but subversion is never guaranteed. Even drag performance—often cited as exemplary of gender trouble—can replicate the structures it seeks to parody, staging what Butler calls “an allegorization of heterosexuality and its constitutive melancholia” (1993, p. 257).

In Brazil, these asymmetries are shaped by colonial histories that condition not only gender performance but also the racial and territorial distribution of cultural legitimacy. Performativity theory, developed in Anglo-American contexts, often fails to account for how those histories continue to structure the terms of recognition. As Pereira (2019) argues, queer practices in colonial and postcolonial contexts must be understood in relation to geography, language, and cultural history. Gender and sexuality are not performed in abstract space, but through bodies already marked by the legacies of territorial dispossession, racial exclusion, and epistemic violence.

This thesis repositions performativity as insufficient for theorizing performance under colonial conditions. While it may expose the instability of gender norms, it cannot, on its own, account for the material systems through which difference is managed, suppressed, or legitimized. Without attending to these colonial structures,

queer theory risks reproducing the exclusions it seeks to critique—treating performance as universally legible while ignoring how recognition itself is structured by race, gender, and geography.

Territorial and Embodied Specificity

Pereira's (2019) intervention in queer theory provides a framework that addresses performativity's limitations within Brazil's colonial formations. His critique targets the global trajectory of queer theory, questioning whether its dominant paradigms function as center-to-periphery exports that obscure locally embedded forms of epistemic survival and embodied cultural practice. Rather than discarding queer theory, Pereira reorients it toward the embodied, linguistic, and geographic mediators through which dissident subjectivities are produced. He argues that "queer bodies are constituted according to colonial difference" and cannot be separated "from geographic location, from language, from history, and from culture" (p. 53). This reorientation demands a shift from symbolic disruption to an analytic grounded in territory, embodiment, and structures of colonial legibility—a shift this thesis develops through the concept of counter-colonial praxis.

Pereira emphasizes praxis not as critique, but as a lived condition in which theory and action are inseparable. Cultural persistence, in this account, is structurally situated, sustained through "other mediators and other bodies" (p. 62). Practices such as those embodied by Brazilian travestis illustrate how gender and sexuality are constituted through corporeal, spiritual, and relational acts of negotiation, rather than through identitarian coherence or formal subversion.

This emphasis on territorial specificity, embodied practice, and inseparability of theory and action establishes the foundation for analyzing performance as situated intervention. Yet Pereira's account also points to the need for an analytic attuned to how

performance emerges from—rather than seeks to recover—forms of life that persist in contesting colonial organization through continuous enactment.

Frameworks for Counter-Colonial Praxis

Building on Pereira's (2019) reorientation, this analysis develops counter-colonial praxis through Brazilian theorists whose concepts emerge directly from the colonial conditions he identifies. Counter-colonial praxis foregrounds performance as a situated intervention into systems of colonial ordering—an enactment of bodily presence, territorial reconfiguration, and epistemic survival, rather than symbolic rupture or epistemological critique alone. More precisely, counter-colonial praxis operates at the intersection where maintained epistemic forms encounter contemporary classificatory systems, producing interventions through structural friction rather than intentional disruption. This framework positions performance as the site where *saberes orgânicos* interact with dominant regimes of recognition, generating the instabilities through which colonial hierarchies are reconfigured. Drawing together the work of Bispo dos Santos (2015a, 2023b), Gonzalez (1988), and Santos (2006), this analysis develops counter-colonial praxis across three interdependent dimensions: relational epistemology, racialized embodiment, and contested territory.

Bispo dos Santos (2015a) theorizes epistemic persistence through the concepts of *confluência* and *transfluência*, which reject hegemonic models of hybridity premised on absorption and assimilation. *Confluência* governs “the coexistence of elements in nature,” teaching that “not everything that comes together mixes, that is, nothing is identical” (p. 89, translation mine)³—co-presence without homogenization, an epistemology of relationality in which difference remains legible without being subsumed. *Transfluência*

³ “a lei que rege a relação de convivência entres os elementos da natureza e nos ensina que nem tudo que se ajunta se mistura, ou seja, nada é igual” (Bispo dos Santos, 2015a, p. 89)

governs “the relationships of transformation of the elements of nature,” where “not everything that mixes comes together” (p. 89, translation mine)⁴—indicating processes of transformation that do not result in unity or coherence. Together, these concepts articulate a relational epistemological framework that refuses colonial logics of integration and instead situates cultural production as a negotiation of difference across historical, embodied, and territorial lines.

Bispo dos Santos (2015a) provides critical grounding for this concept:

“The successive resignifications of our identities amid the most perverse contexts of racism, discrimination, and stigma; the readaptation of our ways of life within fragmented, decharacterized, and degraded territories” (p. 126, translation mine)⁵.

He formalizes the concept elsewhere:

“I propose to conceptualize the processes of confrontation between peoples, races, and ethnicities in direct dispute over the same physical geographic space as colonization and counter-colonization” (p. 20, translation mine)⁶.

These formulations position counter-colonization as a grounded practice of sustaining alternative modes of life in the face of dispossession. This formulation gains further clarity through Bispo dos Santos’s (2023b) distinction between decoloniality and counter-coloniality as ontologically distinct orientations:

⁴ “as relações de transformação dos elementos da natureza e nos ensina que nem tudo que se mistura se junta” (Bispo dos Santos, 2015a, p. 89)

⁵ “as sucessivas resignificações das nossas identidades em meio aos mais perversos contextos de racismo, discriminação e estigmas; a readaptação dos nossos modos de vida em territórios retalhados, descaracterizados e degradados” (Bispo dos Santos, 2015a, p. 126)

⁶ “contra colonização e colonização é como pretendo conceituar os processos de enfrentamento entre povos, raças e etnias em confronto direto no mesmo espaço físico geográfico” (Bispo dos Santos, 2015a, p. 20)

“Counter-colonialism is simple: it’s you wanting to colonize me and me refusing to let you colonize me—it’s me defending myself. Counter-colonialism is a way of life distinct from colonialism” (2023b, p. 36, translation mine)⁷.

Importantly, Bispo dos Santos (2023b) does not frame *contracolonialidade* as a return to a pre-colonial past or a gesture of symbolic critique, but as the defense of an existing mode of life that colonialism never fully absorbed. He positions himself not as a subject in need of decolonization, but as a *quilombola*, a *ente do cosmos* who refuses identification with Euro-Christian humanism (pp. 16–18). This refusal is not oppositional in the binary sense, but grounded in *fronteiras*—ontological boundaries that safeguard *saberes orgânicos* without seeking assimilation or eradication. Counter-colonial praxis is thus not a recovery of lost autonomy, but a refusal that sustains alternative ways of living through enduring enactment. This orientation is maintained by *povos afropindorâmicos*—Indigenous, Black, and quilombola populations—whose epistemic forms were never fully captured by colonial logic.

Counter-colonialism, in this framework, emerges from what Bispo dos Santos (2023b) terms “a way of life different from colonialism”—a fundamentally distinct mode of existence that contradicts colonial organization through sustained practice rather than theoretical critique (p. 36)⁸. These alternative modes of life are not preserved in isolation but maintained through lived friction with colonial systems. This sustained practice occurs precisely through these encounters, where *saberes orgânicos* generate instability within contemporary classificatory systems—producing the conditions for cultural persistence and systemic reconfiguration. These modes of life are rooted in knowledge systems preserved within *quilombola* and *afropindorâmico* communities that maintained

⁷ “O contracolonialismo é simples: é você querer me colonizar e eu não aceitar que você me colonize, é eu me defender. O contracolonialismo é um modo de vida diferente do colonialismo.” (Bispo dos Santos, 2023b, p. 36)

⁸ “um modo de vida diferente do colonialismo” (Bispo dos Santos, 2023b, p.36)

epistemic autonomy despite colonial violence, representing a continuum of cultural transmission that persists without requiring recuperation or reinvention.

This distinction grounds the analysis's emphasis on performance as a spatially embedded, ontologically oppositional practice that intervenes in colonial organization through corporeal and territorial means.

While Bispo dos Santos articulates the epistemological structure of coexistence, Lélia Gonzalez (1988) locates cultural survival in the racialized body. Her concept of *corporeidade* emphasizes that the Black body in Brazil is simultaneously erased and hypervisible within colonial-modern systems—a dynamic she names *denegação*. *Amefricanidade*, as she formulates it, names the persistent Afro-diasporic cultural matrix that endures despite state-sponsored whitening and erasure. This includes linguistic formations such as *pretuguês*, rhythmic and embodied practices labeled as folklore, and everyday strategies that assert Black presence within formations of cultural negation. As she writes:

“All this is covered by the ideological veil of whitening, repressed by Eurocentric classifications such as ‘popular culture’ and ‘national folklore,’ which minimize the importance of Black contribution” (1988, p. 69, translation mine)⁹

Gonzalez reframes survival not only as epistemological but also as affective and bodily—insisting that cultural persistence must be understood as a corporeal practice of resignification within racialized regimes of value.

Santos (2006) articulates the spatial logic of counter-colonial praxis. His concept of *espaço geográfico* reconceives territory as a dynamic field of relations constituted by the interaction between systems of objects and systems of actions. In this framework,

⁹ “Tudo isso é encoberto pelo véu ideológico do branqueamento, reprimido por classificações eurocêtricas como ‘cultura popular’ e ‘folclore nacional’, que minimizam a importância da contribuição negra.” (Gonzalez, 1988, p. 69)

território is not passive geography but a historically produced and materially contested site through which power circulates and is redistributed. Santos enables this study to frame live performance not merely as cultural representation, but as spatial intervention—where normative distributions of bodies, voices, and value are made and unmade through collective action. Territory, in this formulation, is never fixed; it is continually reconfigured through acts of presence, movement, and cultural assertion.

Together, these three theorists provide the conceptual structure for counter-colonial praxis as developed in this thesis. Bispo dos Santos (2015a, 2023b) theorizes the epistemological conditions of coexistence rooted in *afropindorâmica* communities whose knowledge systems remained outside colonial capture; Gonzalez (1988) locates the sensorial and affective dimensions of this cultural persistence in the racialized body that enacts survival through ongoing resignification; and Santos (2006) articulates the spatial materiality through which alternative modes of life intervene in territorial organization and disrupt colonial arrangements. This triadic framework underpins the analytic modalities elaborated across the empirical chapters—*drag dissonance*, *vocal indeterminacy*, and *genre inhabitation*—each providing a method for analyzing how Pablio Vittar’s Brazilian queer performance destabilizes colonial regimes of legibility through ambiguity, friction, and territorial practice. Performance is framed here not as symbolic expression or representational excess, but as a continuation of the counter-colonial “defense” Bispo dos Santos articulates—one that contests affiliation, recognition, and value from within disqualifying structures, while emerging from a position never fully colonized.

These theoretical commitments shape the qualitative methodology that follows, including fieldwork in diverse regional settings, close readings of music videos and live performances, and attention to the mobilization of bodies, genres, and geographies

within stratified cultural regimes. The next section outlines how this framework is operationalized across the thesis.

Methodology: Fieldwork and Analytical Strategies

This thesis employs a qualitative methodology that integrates fieldwork and critical analysis to examine how Pabllo Vittar's queer performance functions as counter-colonial praxis—challenging colonial constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and territory in Brazilian popular culture. The analysis is grounded in the frameworks of *confluência* (Bispo dos Santos, 2015), *corporeidade* (Gonzalez, 1988), and *território* (Santos, 2006). These theoretical commitments require methodological approaches attentive to the situated, embodied, and territorial dimensions of performance. Rather than treating methodology as separable from theory, this thesis operationalizes counter-colonial praxis through qualitative methods that foreground the material conditions of performance: regional fieldwork, embodied analysis, and interpretive strategies grounded in the epistemological frameworks outlined above.

This research combines semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation of live performances, and digital media analysis, producing a multimodal account of performance, reception, and the resignification of racial, gendered, and regional identities. These methods enable corporeal and territorial readings of affect and persistence within the counter-colonial framework.

Fieldwork followed Pabllo Vittar's *Batidão Tropical* tour across five Brazilian cities—São Paulo (SP), São Luís (MA), Teresina (PI), Araraquara (SP), and Brasília (DF)—from June to August 2024, employing two principal data collection methods: semi-structured interviews with Pabllo Vittar, LGBTQIA+ activists, queer performers, cultural critics, and other figures in Brazil's queer cultural sphere, alongside ethnographic observation of

Vittar's concerts. Interviews focused on regional identity, class stratification, race, and queer cultural production, attending to how performance is understood as a site of negotiation, intervention, and contestation. Ethnographic observations documented the spatial, affective, and aesthetic dimensions of audience engagement and performance practice. These observations emphasized the auditory, material, and corporeal elements of each show, foregrounding how performance reconfigures cultural hierarchies. Public figures cited by name provided explicit consent or occupied public-facing roles; all other interlocutors are anonymized in accordance with research ethics protocols.

Analytical strategies were developed inductively, responding to patterns observed during fieldwork concerning regional stigma, racial ambiguity, and aesthetic value. These dynamics were analyzed through three interrelated dimensions: (1) racialized embodiment and corporeal persistence (Gonzalez, 1988); (2) territorial inequality and spatial hierarchies of cultural legitimacy (Santos, 2006); and (3) performance as epistemic and affective intervention (Bispo dos Santos, 2015a; Pereira, 2019).

These axes operate as mutually constitutive forces, operationalizing counter-colonial praxis by attending to how performance reconfigures the structural conditions of race, region, and gender in Brazil's stratified cultural field. This methodological approach treats performance as a site where value, legibility, and affiliation are reorganized through embodied contradiction. In this framework, performance functions as a situated negotiation—inhabiting classificatory systems, straining their coherence, and reworking the terms through which recognition is granted.

Data were analyzed through close readings of music videos, live performances, and interview narratives, applying a critical interpretive approach that situates Vittar's queer performance within broader colonial formations and counter-colonial interventions. The

analysis of music videos, particularly *Então Vai* (2017) and *Seu Crime* (2019), examines how *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* operate within controlled audiovisual compositions, while the live performance analysis traces how these modalities function in embodied, territorial contexts. Fieldwork is treated not just as empirical observation but as a form of counter-colonial witnessing—attuned to the interplay of territory, embodiment, and collective experience.

Preliminary adjustments to the analytical framework, based on field insights, foreground the ambivalent ways Vittar's visibility both challenges and recodes hegemonic racial and class norms. These refinements clarify the empirical stakes of the study while maintaining alignment with its theoretical foundation in counter-colonial praxis—examining how subjects positioned as marginal within regimes of cultural authority and recognition draw on modes of existence never fully captured by colonial logic, refusing normative coherence and reorganizing cultural authority from within classificatory breakdown.

Chapter 2. Background: Formative Margins and the Conditions of Becoming

This chapter examines Pabllo Vittar's early life, migration, and musical influences to situate territorial and embodied precarity as foundational to the legibility of his Brazilian queer performance. It traces his formation across intersecting terrains of class, race, gender, and region that structure cultural exclusion in Brazil's North and Northeast. Vittar's emergence as a national and transnational queer figure unfolded through a historically grounded negotiation with material insecurity, racial liminality, gendered violence, and regional disqualification. These exclusions operated not merely as barriers but as structuring conditions—constraints that he reworked through performance, converting marginalization into forms that expose and destabilize dominant regimes of race, region, gender, and genre. Rather than treating identity as expressive or self-evident, this analysis foregrounds performance as a response to overlapping systems of constraint, emphasizing how embodied repertoires emerge from exclusion itself. These repertoires shape the modalities through which figures like Vittar contest and recast cultural legitimacy from within the margins they are compelled to inhabit.

Gendered Violence and Regional Exclusion

Pabllo Vittar's trajectory as a queer public figure must be understood through the material conditions of his early life and the contested classifications through which race, gender, region, and sexuality are negotiated in Brazil. Born Phabullo Rodrigues da Silva in 1993 in São Luís, Maranhão, he came of age within interlocking regimes of economic deprivation, territorial marginalization, and social exclusion. As Brazil's poorest state, Maranhão exemplifies how the Northeast has been relegated to the periphery of national development—economically, symbolically, and culturally. Raised by his mother, Verônica, a nurse technician and sole provider for him and his two sisters, Vittar experienced the gendered dimensions of precarity that disproportionately burden single-mother

households in Brazil (Dessen & Torres, 2019). For working-class women like Verônica, financial vulnerability manifested not only as material constraint but also as chronic, embodied strain. Vernacular terms such as *nervoso* capture the convergence of economic instability, domestic responsibility, and the persistent inability to alter one's social position (Rabelo & Souza, 2003, p. 115). This intergenerational labor of survival structured the familial context through which Vittar first encountered the social logics of gender, class, and visibility. His early environment was shaped by the daily negotiations of working-class life under a national system that persistently cast the Northeast as peripheral. These forces did not operate in isolation: economic and regional dispossession compounded racial and gendered hierarchies, structuring the exclusions through which his formation unfolded.

Pardismo and Racial Ambiguity: Fragmenting Blackness in Regional Context

One of the classificatory systems shaping Vittar's formation is *pardismo*—a mechanism through which racial ambiguity produces unstable and shifting identifications. In Brazil, *pardo* refers to individuals commonly described as mixed race, though the term bears colonial legacies that both racialize for exclusion and deny recognition as Black in contexts of racial justice (Lago, Montibeler, & Miguel, 2023). *Pardismo* functions as a technology of deracialization, fragmenting Black identity by situating *pardos* in a liminal position: marked as racially different yet denied full recognition as Black. This proximity to whiteness can afford conditional privilege—offering marginal gains in mobility over *pretos* (Black Brazilians)—but remains contingent and does not dismantle structural barriers (Lago, Montibeler, & Miguel, 2023). For *Nordestinos*, already burdened by entrenched stereotypes of backwardness, such ambiguity compounds their exclusion from dominant visions of modernity and national belonging.

The Northeast's association with underdevelopment and mixed ancestry intensifies these effects. While *pardismo* operates nationally, the region exhibits distinct modes of racial negotiation. Aureliano and Santana's (2021) analysis of Northeastern *morenidade* highlights a system of *trânsito racial*—in which race is fluid, context-dependent, and shaped by class, phenotype, and geography. In contrast to the relative fixity of racial identity in the Southeast, the Northeast produces “conflicts and negotiations around color” and sustains “a vast range of classifications possible in regions that are predominantly mixed-race” (p. 98). Classificatory terms such as *moreno*, *sarará*, *caboclo*, and *mameluco* exemplify a regime that enables racial mobility while reproducing social stratification. For individuals like Vittar, racial legibility shifts across settings—coded as other in local contexts, yet rendered more flexible in national media through tactical oscillation between whitening and regionalization (Aureliano & Santana, 2021, p. 99).

Gender transgression further destabilizes this classificatory terrain. Haynes's (2023) ethnography of police-community relations in Rio de Janeiro shows how racial and gender ideologies converge to code “trust” as white and female, and “danger” as Black and male (p. 15). For *pardos* like Vittar, gender nonconformity produces fluctuating legibility: effeminacy may be perceived as either threatening or acceptable depending on the racial reading emphasized in a given encounter. Haynes's concept of “situational whiteness”—a provisional racial positioning that improves access to respect or employment without conferring identification as white (p. 17)—clarifies how *pardismo* can afford partial privilege while maintaining racialization. In Vittar's case, these dynamics intersect with normative masculinity, generating what Aureliano and Santana (2021) identify as heightened vulnerability when gender performance exceeds dominant expectations.

Yet despite its structuring force, Vitar's *pardo* identity is often erased in national media, where focus shifts instead to regional "authenticity" or associations with Northeastern culture. This rhetorical displacement obscures the specific racial dynamics he navigates, exemplifying a central paradox of *pardismo*: the hypervisibility of racial difference coupled with the erasure of distinct racialized experiences in dominant narratives.

Homophobia, Structural Neglect, and Racialized Violence

These interlocking exclusions unfolded within a broader national landscape of violence and upheaval in 1990s Brazil. Rising homicide rates disproportionately affected young, Black, and low-income individuals, as economic exclusion, inadequate public services, and state neglect reinforced structural inequality (Minayo, 1994). State-sanctioned violence was endemic, exemplified by the 1993 Candelária massacre, in which police murdered eight street children in Rio de Janeiro (RJ) (Gumucio & Schmidt, 2018). In this hostile climate, LGBTQ+ individuals faced intensified precarity: while formal criminalization had receded, systemic violence persisted, sustained by religious conservatism and biomedical discourse (Itaborahy, 2012). Legal protections remained limited, and homophobic attacks continued to rise.

From the 1980s, Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB) documented anti-LGBTQ+ violence, forcing national attention onto crimes otherwise ignored. High-profile cases—such as the 1988 murder of theater director Luiz Antônio Martinez Corrêa—exposed the systemic nature of this violence, while O Globo's first use of the term homophobia in 1992 signaled delayed public acknowledgment (Ramos & Carrara, 2013). Research in Rio de Janeiro (RJ) revealed legal stratification: violence against middle-class gay men was more likely to result in convictions, while cases involving travestis were often dismissed

—demonstrating how race and class shaped access to justice (Ramos & Carrara, 2013). This exclusion was compounded by the stigma of HIV/AIDS, which positioned queer subjects as vectors of contamination. Vittar’s personal trajectory unfolded within this broader terrain of structural violence and social abandonment.

Migration, Effeminacy, and the Conditions of Precarity and Visibility

Amid overlapping forms of displacement, Vittar’s early life mapped a geography of precarity across Brazil’s margins. His family’s migrations—from São Luís to Santa Inês and Caxias (MA), then to Santa Izabel (PA), followed by Indaiatuba (SP) and Uberlândia (MG)—exposed him to contrasting cultural terrains while underscoring persistent economic uncertainty. This reality resurfaced in 2021 during TV Globo’s *Visitando o Passado*, when he encountered a replica of his childhood home in Santa Izabel. Confronted with its familiarity, he reflected: “No matter how humble or simple our home was, love was never lacking... we always helped each other” (Gshow, 2021).

His family’s economic precarity eventually led them to seek support through the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST), situating them within a long genealogy of structurally excluded Brazilians mobilizing for land and livelihood. Living in an MST *acampamento* in Uberlândia, Minas Gerais exposed him to collective survival as epistemic practice. “I learned a sense of collectivity there,” he recalled (Brêda, 2023). This encounter embedded him in maintained epistemic forms that interpret exclusion not as individual failure but as systemic condition—forms preserved through popular struggle and sustained despite state abandonment. While Vittar’s later performance does not explicitly invoke activism, it retains an MST-informed ethic: visibility as a form of allegiance rather than detachment. That ethic reframes his rise not as an escape from marginality, but as persistence within it. State programs like Bolsa Família also shaped

this formation, illustrating how public policy and grassroots mobilization co-constitute everyday survival. “(Lula) doesn’t know, but he was part of my childhood and my life,” Vittar recalled. “I grew up with Bolsa Família, in the MST, and with projects he made possible” (Palomares, 2021).

Throughout these transitions, music remained a structuring force. Vittar began singing in a Presbyterian church choir at five: “I remember asking my mother to take me along and let me sing. I used to sing in every church party—Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Easter, or Christmas. Eventually, I realized I preferred the musical part of mass” (Canale, 2021). “I just wanted to sing,” he later added, “and I wanted people to see me sing” (Nicas, 2024).

The choir provided foundational training—an early space where performance merged vocal discipline with collective ritual. This liturgical setting shaped his sense of aesthetic presence, where voice became both expressive act and social practice. His attraction to the “musical part of mass” reflects an intuitive grasp of how form mediates relation. These experiments with visibility—“wanting people to see me sing”—prefigured the participatory spectacle of his later performance.

Yet outside such sanctuaries, he was persistently bullied for his voice and feminine appearance. “I suffered a lot in school for having this high-pitched voice,” he recalled (Coutinho, 2017). In one incident, a boy in the lunch line told him to “act like a man” and threw hot soup in his face. “I cried, but I held my head up high,” he later said—adding that he and his friends often laughed off the abuse to cope (Finco, 2017). His refusal of invisibility under such conditions reflects not defiance but learned survival, foreshadowing a performative practice grounded in endurance rather than assimilation.

Vittar's vocal register—ambiguous and feminized—has remained unchanged since childhood: untrained, unmodified, and unperformed. This sonic dissidence predates drag and musical stardom, marking his body as other before he ever named it as such. What provoked ridicule became a primary site of artistic legibility—anchoring his performance in lived effeminacy while refracting normative masculinity through the timbre of persistence.

As an effeminate boy, Vittar was frequently singled out for harassment, experiencing firsthand the stigmatization of *homens gays afeminados*—a culturally marked figure in Brazil that connotes both gender deviance and heightened vulnerability within normative masculinities. “It’s like we carry a mark on our foreheads,” he said, “always on the front lines, taking the worst of it” (Gómez Cascales, 2019). In Brazil’s Northeast, where masculinity is historically constructed around strength, stoicism, and patriarchal authority, effeminacy becomes a visible breach (Albuquerque Júnior, 2013). This gender transgression is treated not merely as deviation but as threat—policed through social codes that assign respectability based on bodily appearance (Rebhun, 2008). In schools, these norms manifest violently. Research confirms that effeminate boys face disproportionate aggression and institutional neglect, with homophobic violence producing lasting psychological distress (Quirino et al., 2022). Vittar’s strategy—“holding his head up high”—mirrors what Quirino et al. describe as emotional endurance and self-monitoring. Though his mother affirmed him when he came out at 14—“She already knew,” he said, “so the opinions of others didn’t matter” (Finco, 2017)—that affirmation did not negate the formative weight of being marked for correction.

Peripheral Sounds: Regional Genres and Classed Aesthetic Hierarchies

Beyond the church, Vittar's musical identity was shaped by Northern and Northeastern Brazilian genres, particularly *brega* and *forró*—regional styles that would later anchor his counter-colonial performance practice. He encountered these genres through *festas*, radio broadcasts, and family gatherings, developing an embodied musical vocabulary rooted in rhythmic repetition, vocal inflection, and melodic ornamentation. Rather than treating *forró* and *brega* as external influences, Vittar engaged them as maintained epistemic forms—expressive traditions that preserve alternative frameworks of aesthetic value and territorial embeddedness. When later exposed to pop production techniques and drag aesthetics, these regional genres became generative resources for reconfiguration rather than residues to overcome. His ability to integrate *forró* rhythms with electronic pop structures or to inflect mainstream melodies with *brega*'s emotional excess emerged through cumulative and often unconscious musical absorption within everyday sonic environments. This fusion developed not as eclectic pastiche, but as a synthesis of internalized regional forms with emergent performative vocabularies.

Although distinct in origin, *forró* and *brega* share entangled histories shaped by regional inequality, classed aesthetic hierarchies, and evolving media ecologies. *Forró*, rooted in Northeastern rural traditions, gained national visibility through mid-century figures like Luiz Gonzaga, whose stylized *baião* helped position the genre as emblematic of popular nationalism (Fernandes, 2005). Yet even at its peak, *forró* remained marginal to Brazil's dominant musical canon, which privileged genres such as *MPB* and *bossa nova* (Costa, 2015). Commercial success broadened *forró*'s audience while reinforcing gendered labor divisions, as female vocalists were often hyper-feminized and denied artistic authorship (Freire, 2017; Trotta, 2009).

In parallel, *brega* became a defining genre of Northern Brazil, particularly in Pará, where it remains central to the region's musical identity. Despite its widespread

popularity, *brega* has long been dismissed by elite discourse as “cheap,” “sloppy,” or “mundane,” reinforcing classed exclusions that discredit certain forms of cultural production (Bahia, 2015). Middle-class critics have rejected its sentimental excess and overt romanticism, even as the genre sustains deep cultural resonance for its audiences. Like *forró*, *brega* encompasses multiple substyles shaped by changing technological and cultural conditions. In Pará, this culminated in *brega calypso*—a style that integrated Caribbean influences such as merengue, cumbia, and calypso, transmitted through transnational radio circulation and historical trade routes (Farias, 2008).

These genres have long been excluded from Brazil’s cultural core, as the music industry remains concentrated in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. These exclusions mirror broader hierarchies that frame the Northeast as a site of *saudade*, *tradição*, and *rusticidade*, in contrast to the Southeast’s self-image of cosmopolitan modernity (Freire, 2012). Cultural arbiters routinely dismissed *forró* and *brega* as folkloric or kitsch, devaluing their aesthetic legitimacy and excluding them from dominant narratives of cultural citizenship. This persistent marginalization formed the institutional terrain Vittar would later navigate in asserting Northern and Northeastern cultural forms within Brazilian pop.

To resist this exclusion, Northern and Northeastern artists developed parallel infrastructures outside Brazil’s dominant music industry. As Trotta (2009) shows, media entrepreneurs created alternative radio circuits, while groups like Mastruz com Leite and Aviões do Forró built careers around live performance economies—what he terms *a mercado da performance*—that circumvented the Southeast’s distribution monopoly (p. 104). These infrastructures emerged not from lack of demand, but from systemic gatekeeping that limited access to recording, promotion, and national circulation. They became sites where regional musical forms could confront and reconfigure dominant

cultural circuits, setting precedents that Vittar would later activate under different media conditions.

This alternative ecosystem also produced iconic figures whose presence extended far beyond regional circuits. Among them, Joelma Mendes emerged as a pivotal force in asserting the legitimacy of Northern expressive forms within dominant recognition systems. As frontwoman of Banda Calypso, Joelma popularized *brega calypso* while affirming a performance style grounded in expressive excess and territorial aesthetics. Rejecting industry pressures to obscure her regional identity, she consistently introduced herself on national broadcasts as “Joelma, from Belém do Pará” (Procópio & Vieira Filho, 2024). Over three decades, she became one of Brazil’s most commercially successful regional artists, proving that Northern performers could achieve national prominence without disavowing their territorial origins (Procópio & Vieira Filho, 2024; Freitas, 2016).

Joelma’s public image was defined not only by her sound but also by her costuming and choreography. Designs incorporating Marajoara motifs and Amazonian references operated as aesthetic counterpoints to Eurocentric norms, while thigh-high boots, sequined bodysuits, and voluminous skirts extended her movement across the stage—performing a visual politics of Northern presence (Freitas, 2016). Her influence is evident in Vittar’s choreography, vocal technique, and visual styling, marking a shared commitment to embedding regional forms within the architecture of Brazilian pop. Joelma’s performances functioned as counter-normative inscriptions of territory and excess—dynamics Vittar would later activate through drag, genre hybridity, and sonic embodiment.

Vittar affirms Joelma's foundational role. "Those rhythms are a very Northern sound, and they were a very big part of my childhood," he reflects. "Artists like Companhia do Calypso, Joelma, and Aviões do Forró—my mother was always listening to their music, so they were a very big inspiration to me" (Schaffer, 2022). He has praised Joelma's endurance and theatricality, noting her ability to "sing and dance at the same time in high-heeled platform boots without losing her breath," and calling her "our national treasure" (Pinotti, 2024). In his performance practice, these influences persist not as nostalgic reference but as constitutive tactics—where regional aesthetics of stamina, spectacle, and sonic intensity reappear as sites of counter-colonial enactment.

Conclusion: Brazilian Queer Performance and Regional Identity

The displacements structuring Vittar's early life reveal that his emergence within Brazilian queer performance is not incidental but forged through the convergence of Northeastern identity, classed embodiment, and effeminate gender expression—an unstable formation that contests the territorial, gendered, and racial hierarchies delimiting who may appear within national pop culture.

These intersecting exclusions—regional marginalization, economic precarity, racial ambiguity, and gendered violence—did not merely constrain his formation; they composed the terrain from which counter-colonial praxis could emerge. Rather than seeking visibility through assimilation, Vittar engaged situated and maintained cultural forms: regional musical traditions that preserved alternative regimes of value, embodied repertoires forged through gendered violence, and collective principles learned through MST participation. These epistemic resources became the conditions through which Vittar generated friction within dominant classificatory systems.

Yet structural location alone does not explain the specific modalities of his performance or how they achieved legibility within Brazilian popular culture. The following chapter maps the genealogical foundations of Brazilian queer performance, tracing how earlier figures fractured classificatory regimes in ways that would later allow Vittar to consolidate *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* as modes of counter-colonial praxis.

Chapter 3. Genealogy: Situating Pabllo Vittar within Brazilian Queer Performance (1930–2024)

This chapter argues that Brazilian queer performance constitutes a historically structured field shaped by colonial, racial, and regional exclusions. Tracing its development from the 1930s to 2024, it contends that practices of visibility—the capacity to appear in public; containment—the framing limits imposed on appearances; and conditional legitimacy—the selective acceptance granted to queer and racialized bodies—have been continually renegotiated across shifting political, media, and cultural regimes. Rather than subordinating Brazilian queer performance to the assumptions of global queer theory, this analysis foregrounds its historically specific modes of engagement, corporeal intervention, and classificatory breakdown. This distinction underscores the racialized, regional, and classed dynamics that structure queer legibility and survival in Brazil. Rather than seeking to establish a canon or linear progression, this genealogy foregrounds the aesthetic, political, and structural constraints that shape the conditions of appearance. It is within these conditions that Vittar's counter-colonial praxis emerges and intervenes.

The chapter constructs a genealogical arc that spans the insurgent embodiment of Madame Satã, the theatrical provocations of Dzi Croquettes, the androgynous aesthetics of Ney Matogrosso, the mediated spectacle of Roberta Close, the racialized containment of Jorge Lafond, and the marginal visibility of Lacreia—tracing how these engagements persist, mutate, and are reorganized through Pabllo Vittar's artistic, political, and cultural interventions under new technological and political conditions. These figures are not selected to represent a canon of queer icons or a progressive lineage of intervention; rather, each marks a distinct negotiation in which classificatory

breakdown becomes visible under shifting relations of media, state power, and cultural legitimacy.

The scope of this genealogy begins in the 1930s and concentrates on figures whose visibility was shaped through mass media infrastructures and urban cultural circuits, reflecting the emergence of queer performance as a publicly negotiated field in modern Brazil. While earlier forms of non-normative embodiment certainly exist, this temporal framing reflects the analytic aim: to trace the structural conditions under which queer legibility became mediated, regulated, and contested in ways that inform Vittar's contemporary navigation of visibility. Operating within a media ecosystem structured by digital platform logics and far-right reaction, Vittar's emergence unfolds through these same conditions—amplifying regional queer performance while navigating the intensified demands of contemporary media capture and classificatory exposure.

Early Negotiations of Visibility (1930–1980s)

Brazilian queer performance emerged through fragmented, insurgent acts that engaged regimes of visibility, containment, and conditional legitimacy under authoritarian and racialized control. Figures such as Madame Satã, Dzi Croquettes, and Ney Matogrosso enacted classificatory breakdown through embodied interventions that exposed—without resolving—the instabilities within Brazil's systems of racial, gendered, and regional legibility. These accumulated exposures generated the conditions under which Pabllo Vittar's counter-colonial praxis would later become possible. Each figure's negotiation with the terms of visibility, containment, and legitimacy produced forms of classificatory instability that Vittar reconfigures under contemporary digital and political conditions.

The figure of Madame Satã emerged in 1930s Rio de Janeiro through a convergence of racialized criminalization and queer subcultural formation in the city's bohemian underworld. A Black *malandro*—the archetype of cunning, masculine-coded marginality—Satã fused street virility with an unapologetic embrace of effeminacy, flamboyant comportment, and public identification as a *bicha*, a stigmatized term for effeminate homosexual men perceived as sexually passive (Green, 2003). His visibility was not staged through theatrical impersonation or commodified drag but asserted through everyday confrontations: with police, rival *malandros*, and in performative acts across Lapa's nightlife and Carnaval circuits. Satã did not alternate between masculine and feminine personas, but destabilized the binary itself—refusing the alignment of male honor with sexual or gendered positionality (Green, 2003). These acts of embodied defiance operated within broader systems of social control. His negotiation of urban space—through sartorial excess, strategic violence, and refusal of subordination—drew from maintained *malandro* knowledge to generate friction within the entwined logics of policing and sexual discipline. Satã's interventions exposed how racialized and gendered legibility operated through carceral containment, revealing forms of classificatory instability that outlasted the individual and required new modes of engagement.

While Madame Satã's insurgency was individual and corporeal, Dzi Croquettes marked a shift toward collective, theatricalized queer performance in the 1970s, adapting embodied intervention to the aesthetic and political constraints of military dictatorship. Founded in 1972, the troupe fused camp aesthetics, choreographed sensuality, and improvisational humor—mobilizing classificatory contradictions of gender and state regulation (Fernandes, 2025; Mendonça & Machado, 2019). Their shows—marked by exaggerated femininity, glittering makeup, and participatory spectacle—circulated through Brazil's *submundo* cultural circuits, activating carnivalesque knowledge to

generate friction within mechanisms of state surveillance. Their motto, “With the strength of the male and the grace of the female,” articulated a tactical oscillation between gendered signifiers embedded in collective performance. Fernandes (2025) describes their porous relation to the audience as “cultural contagion,” extending their theatrical ethos into everyday life and heightening their threat to the regime. Their 1974 exile to Paris—where they received support from figures like Liza Minnelli and Josephine Baker—revealed both the reach and limits of embodied ambiguity: capable of disrupting domestic norms, yet vulnerable to displacement when visibility exceeded institutional tolerances. Their mode of performative ambiguity established a model of aesthetic resistance that, while potent, remained exposed to the risk of capture.

Ney Matogrosso’s emergence as lead vocalist of Secos & Molhados in 1973 marked a shift from theatrical collectivity to sonic and visual destabilization. His countertenor vocality subverted masculine norms in Brazilian rock and *MPB*, generating sonic indeterminacy that destabilized gendered legibility (Queiroz, 2009; Rodrigues, 2017). Paired with androgynous costuming and choreographed movement, his performances rendered both body and voice as sites of queer disruption. Yet this visibility was partially contained through aesthetic abstraction. As Godoi and Almeida (2023) note, Matogrosso’s mass media circulation revealed the paradoxes of queer legibility under authoritarianism: while his presence subverted heteronormative codes, his image was selectively sanitized to uphold dominant moral frameworks (p. 223). The instability his voice produced—where gender became audibly uncertain—established a precedent for vocal ambiguity as a site of classificatory breakdown within mass media infrastructures, creating conditions Vittar would later activate under intensified digital mediation.

Together, these figures generated foundational precedents in Brazilian queer performance: insurgent embodiment through Satã's corporeal defiance, theatrical collectivity through Dzi Croquettes' participatory ambiguity, and androgynous disruption through Matogrosso's sonic and visual destabilization. Each articulated a mode of presence shaped by the aesthetic and political constraints of their moment, negotiating visibility amid shifting regimes of surveillance, containment, and cultural valuation. Vittar does not replicate this history, but reframes its stakes: mobilizing regional specificity, confronting containment through different strategies than humor or eroticized ambiguity, and asserting political presence within digital infrastructures shaped by far-right backlash and algorithmic governance. As the next sections show, his Brazilian queer performance operates through heightened visibility and new forms of surveillance—requiring modes of navigation attuned to contemporary structures of racialization, capture, and classificatory control.

Conditional Inclusion and Structural Constraints (1980s–2000s)

With the groundwork laid by earlier figures, the 1980s and 1990s ushered in new negotiations of media presence, constraint, and conditional legitimacy. Figures such as Roberta Close, Jorge Lafond, and Lacreia navigated expanding visibility under regimes still structured by aesthetic normativity, racialized spectacle, and classificatory violence. While mainstream media began to incorporate queer figures, it did so by intensifying mechanisms of containment.

Roberta Close's rise in the 1980s marked a shift in how gender transgression was publicly framed in Brazilian media. A transgender woman from Rio de Janeiro, Close gained national attention through fashion, television, and film, but her identity was mediated through cisnormative beauty ideals and erotic spectacle (Veras, 2016; Bento,

2011). In 1984, *Notícias Populares* headlined “The most beautiful woman in Brazil is a man,” exposing her transness in sensationalist terms and igniting a wave of invasive, medicalized scrutiny (Bento, 2011, p. 549, translation mine)¹⁰. Her historic appearance in *Playboy Brasil*—the first by a trans woman—signaled the terms of trans inclusion: visible through eroticization, yet denied recognition. Talk shows like *Programa Silvio Santos* positioned her as spectacle, praising her beauty while casting her gender as controversial, forcing public defense of her womanhood (Vieira et al., 2016; Martha et al., 2013).

Close’s legal struggles further illustrate institutional resistance to trans recognition. Courts denied her name and gender marker changes, citing biological essentialism and reinforcing juridical exclusions (Bento, 2011). These cumulative constraints led Close to emigrate in search of safety (Veras, 2016). In contrast, a 2023 interview on *Conversa com Bial* highlights a different dynamic. When asked, “On stage, are you a woman or an ideal of a woman?” Pabllo Vittar replied: “I don’t consider myself a woman. I am a gay boy who does drag. If we don’t talk about this, many people will still think that I am something else. And that’s unfair, because it takes up space from so many trans girls and boys who suffer from prejudice” (TV Globo, 2023). Whereas Close was framed through misrecognition and spectacle, Vittar navigates shifting infrastructures that allow strategic self-definition—though still within frameworks of containment.

While Matogrosso, Close, and several Dzi Croquettes members benefited from proximity to whiteness, Black queer artists faced intensified constraints. Their access to media visibility was frequently mediated through racialized expectations of comic relief, criminality, or hypersexualization.

¹⁰ “A mulher mais bonita do Brasil é um homem.” (Bento, 2011, p. 549)

Jorge Lafond's trajectory illustrates this double bind. Spanning from the 1970s to the early 2000s, his career marked both a breakthrough for drag visibility and a case study in racialized containment. He gained recognition through drag persona Vera Verão on *A Praça é Nossa*, becoming Brazil's most visible drag performer from 1992 until his death (Sena, 2023). Yet this visibility was circumscribed: permitted only within comedic frames. Lafond's exaggerated femininity and catchphrases, like "Epa! Bicha não! Eu sou uma quase...", made him hyper-visible, but not as a complex artist (Juliano, 2020; Fagundes, 2022). Structural racism confined his roles, and efforts to stage theatrical works like *O Sassarico da Nega* were blocked on LGBTQ+ grounds (Silva, 2019). He was unable to escape association with Vera Verão, exemplifying the reduction of Black drag artists to comic types.

The dynamic of constrained visibility reappeared in funk carioca with Lacreia. A Black travesti from Jacarezinho, Rio de Janeiro, Lacreia gained national attention as MC Serginho's dance partner. Her performances in hits like *Vai Lacreia* and *Eguinha Pocotó* disrupted the genre's hypermasculine codes (Medeiros, 2023). She became a visible queer figure in funk, drawing on embodied repertoires from Black working-class communities. Yet her appearances on mainstream programs (*Domingo Legal*, *Sabadoço*, *Turma do Didi*) framed her as novelty, not artistry. Her contributions to funk's visual lexicon—especially in shaping *passinho*—remain largely unacknowledged in official histories (Francisco, 2019; Medeiros, 2023).

Though each performer challenged normative systems, their legibility was constrained through distinct mechanisms: criminalization and policing (Satã), aesthetic abstraction (Matogrosso), medicalized spectacle (Close), comedic containment (Lafond), and novelty framing (Lacreia). These dynamics were racialized and classed, especially for Satã, Lafond, and Lacreia, whose practices emerged from favelas and urban peripheries.

Their visibility remained concentrated in metropolitan media circuits that effaced regional specificity.

Pablo Vittar, by contrast, positions regional identity as a site of aesthetic and political assertion. Drawing from *forró* and *brega*, he builds his performance practice through sonic and visual traditions historically excluded from dominant cultural frameworks. Rather than working through spectacle or abstraction, he mobilizes regional codes to generate friction within contemporary media infrastructures.

Vittar's emergence draws from this lineage, but also reconfigures its terms. Like Satã, he asserts queer embodiment under surveillance; like Matogrosso, he destabilizes gendered vocal norms; like Lafond, he negotiates drag's legibility in mass media; and like Lacraia, he inserts queer embodiment into regional musical forms. These accumulated acts of classificatory breakdown laid the groundwork for Vittar's Brazilian queer performance under digital conditions.

Digital Visibility and Contested Legitimacy (2010s–2024)

The emergence of digital infrastructures in the 2000s and 2010s fundamentally reshaped the conditions under which accumulated forms of classificatory breakdown could be reengaged. Building on a Brazilian tradition of media intervention that reframes mass platforms as sites of contestation, Pablo Vittar navigates these infrastructures not through rejection or compliance but through strategic reappropriation. Yet unlike earlier generations regulated by broadcast gatekeeping, Vittar's visibility is produced through algorithmic exposure—where legibility is contingent on persistent circulation, affective intensity, and classification within volatile economies of attention. This section examines how Vittar's trajectory—from regional digital obscurity to national and global prominence—reorganized the terms of queer cultural production in the 2010s and 2020s.

While he emerged alongside a broader cohort of LGBTQ+ artists whose visibility was facilitated by new platforms (Wasser, 2018), his case is not treated as representative. Rather, it is analyzed as the culmination of historically situated negotiations over visibility, containment, and legitimacy—mediated through infrastructural, regional, and classificatory dynamics that continue to shape Brazilian queer performance. Digital platforms did not merely expand access; they restructured the architectures of recognition, embedding queer visibility within algorithmic logics that mutate rather than dissolve colonial hierarchies. Within this terrain, Vittar engaged classificatory systems through embodied intervention, generating friction that disorganized normative regimes of gender, race, and region.

By 2014, as Brazil's traditional media curators—particularly TV Globo—began to lose control over content distribution and audience formation, platform dynamics introduced new terms of mediated presence. The representational logics that once framed queer figures through containment or spectacle gave way to user-directed visibility, marked by viral amplification and public interactivity. This shift enabled expanded forms of queer self-articulation, but did so within uneven and racialized infrastructures of circulation. That same year, Brazilians averaged 3 hours and 47 minutes of daily social media use—well above the global average (Comscore, 2014)—while internet penetration surpassed 58% (World Bank, 2024), driven largely by digital inclusion among low-income users through internet cafés and installment-based device access (Spyer, 2017). Yet increased exposure also produced new vulnerabilities: digital traction became inseparable from algorithmic capture, and heightened presence exposed artists to intensifying reactionary response. These emerging risks would escalate in the years that followed, particularly as Vittar's visibility expanded beyond digital subcultures into mainstream recognition.

The expansion of digital platforms did not dismantle existing systems of exclusion; it rearticulated them. Racial hierarchies, gender normativity, and regional erasure persisted, but were now negotiated through different protocols of visibility. Whereas curators had once filtered queer presence through selective editorial control, digital infrastructures redistributed exposure through viral logics that privileged controversy, speed, and affective legibility. This marked not the collapse of containment but its mutation: presence became conditional upon performance within algorithmic regimes. In this restructured media landscape, digital infrastructures introduced new terms of visibility that demanded distinct navigations. Vittar's emergence exemplifies how regional artists accessed national prominence by engaging algorithmic demands for sustained presence, affective circulation, and classificatory legibility.

Bypassing the Center: Digital Platforms and Regional Queer Emergence

These dynamics of exclusion and conditional visibility were not new. In 2015, for instance, broadcast media continued to regulate queer representation through containment and sanitization. Maldonado et al. (2017) found that when a lesbian couple appeared in TV Globo's *Babilônia*, viewer focus groups accepted their presence only within narrow limits—approving narrative inclusion while rejecting displays of affection. This dynamic produced what the authors term an “intense negotiation” between commercial imperatives and audience sensibilities, whereby networks included marginalized groups through sanitized portrayals designed to avoid alienating conservative viewers (p. 123). Conservative parliamentarians and religious groups launched formal repudiation campaigns against same-sex depictions—highlighting that public affection between women was perceived as more scandalous than telenovela staples such as “bribery, betrayal, racism, gold-digging, premeditated ‘accidents,’ and murder” (p. 121).

Against this backdrop of constrained visibility in mainstream television, the rise of digital platforms in the early 2010s introduced new possibilities for circumventing broadcast control. This shift did not eliminate exclusion but reorganized the terms of media presence, enabling maintained cultural forms to enter new circuits of recognition under altered infrastructural conditions. Regional artists had long devised alternatives to centralized media—Bahia (2015) traces how *tecnobrega* musicians in Belém, Pará created independent distribution infrastructures using digital tools and *aparelhagem* systems (pp. 38–40). Vittar’s early digital trajectory reflects this broader lineage, wherein artists from Brazil’s geographic and economic peripheries used platformed media not merely to gain visibility, but to confront systemic exclusion from dominant cultural circuits. Having experienced economic precarity and multiple relocations in his youth, he forged a self-directed path through Brazil’s music industry. His viral cover of Whitney Houston’s *I Have Nothing* exemplifies how artists from marginalized regions bypassed centralized gatekeepers in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. By 2014, his YouTube performances—especially *I Have Nothing*—had gained over 2.3 million views (Canale, 2021), catalyzing his first televised appearance on *Carona* and signaling a shift from digital traction to national visibility. Unlike earlier LGBTQ+ performers whose media exposure was filtered through industry-imposed constraints, Vittar’s emergence was shaped through direct engagement with platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram—enabling him to build an audience outside television’s curatorial control (Wasser, 2020). These platforms became sites of encounter where regional queer embodiment engaged national visibility systems directly, producing new forms of classificatory instability and reorganizing the terms through which Vittar’s counter-colonial praxis took shape.

Drag, Voice, and the Formation of a Counter-Normative Aesthetic

Building on the reorganized dynamics of media presence enabled by digital infrastructure, Vittar's artistic development was shaped by encounters with global drag culture, marking a pivotal moment in his understanding of gender performance as both an aesthetic practice and a form of self-articulation. His initial experiment with drag occurred at age 17 in Uberlândia, Minas Gerais, when he assembled a look for a friend's party using a long T-shirt, a belt, borrowed shoes, and pharmacy-bought makeup (Finco, 2017)—a DIY approach that reflected the resourcefulness shaped by economic precarity. Vittar later described the experience as a “powerful sensation of freedom” (Nicas, 2024), signaling an early recognition that drag could operate as a site of self-expression outside normative frames of gender and performance. While his initial exposure to drag was limited to *bater cabelo* (hair-whipping) in nightclub settings, his perspective shifted when a boyfriend introduced him to *RuPaul's Drag Race*. “It was a surprise, I didn't know this side of drag art. I fell in love! I said: I can be that” (Finco, 2017). This moment coincided with the show's growing reach in Brazil via Netflix, where it introduced audiences to expanded models of drag beyond the comedic tropes that had historically structured its portrayal in Brazilian media. Vittar later reflected, “A drag queen on stage is already a political act” (Nicas, 2024), indicating how *Drag Race* shaped his understanding of drag not only as aesthetic resource but also as a mode of embodied contestation.

As Joséylson Fagner dos Santos, a scholar of gender, sexuality, and digital media at the State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN), notes, RuPaul's *Drag Race* not only reintroduced drag queens to Brazilian audiences after the death of Jorge Lafond—the last drag queen to achieve national visibility—but also illuminated “the multiplicity of styles, visuals, identities, and stories” within the form. The show's influence extended beyond LGBTQ+ publics, generating contagious dialogue with heterosexual viewers through memes and popular references (Finco, 2017). Vittar's early embrace of this

expanded drag imaginary, coupled with his strategic use of digital platforms, repositioned queer cultural production in Brazil not as novelty or spectacle, but as a viable mode of cultural authorship. His initial performances—circulated primarily through YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram—already unsettled prevailing expectations: he was an openly queer artist, singing original songs, attaining national airplay, and performing in hyperfeminine drag. This configuration disrupted the segmented logics that had long confined queer visibility to nightlife or comic relief. Within the reorganized media field of the 2010s, Vittar did not appear as a drag performer who sings, but as a pop singer who performs in drag—redefining the genre boundary from within its structural margins.

This shift in cultural positioning was reinforced by Vittar's distinctive visual and sonic style. His drag unsettles dominant visual regimes: rather than concealing the constructedness of femininity, it foregrounds the labor required to produce it. Voice, movement, and costuming do not naturalize gender but expose the iterative processes that render it legible within pop and drag conventions. The illusion he presents is persuasive enough to provoke speculation about his "true" gender, yet remains deliberately incomplete—its artifice always visible. Beyond wigs, makeup, and tucking, his body is largely unmodified, yet public discourse persistently subjects him to scrutiny, questioning whether he is a drag queen, a trans woman, or a cis woman. This reveals the unstable criteria through which gender is recognized in Brazilian cultural frameworks. If femininity is already projected onto his body, why is his drag perceived as such a dramatic transformation? And if this illusion is achieved with minimal intervention, what does that suggest about the construction of gender legibility? Rather than relying on heavy feminization, Vittar's performance exposes the instability of gender perception by operating in the ambiguous zone where femininity is both apparent and visibly constructed. His drag shows that gender recognition is not anchored in bodily

modification, but in classificatory systems that secure normativity through visual coherence. By staging femininity as a labor of citation rather than essence, Vittar's drag disorients the visual logics that police legibility—reframing ambiguity not as failure, but as an enacted disruption of classificatory coherence.

This visual dissonance coincides with a vocal presence that similarly unsettles norms of gendered legibility. Unlike most drag performers—who lip-sync or maintain masculine registers when singing—Vittar's high countertenor is perceived as feminine whether in or out of drag. This vocal quality, intrinsic rather than stylized, produces what Neves and Machado (2017) term “sonic indeterminacy”: a set of acoustic operations—including nasal resonance, modal register shifts, and strategic tessitura placement—that interrupt presumed alignments between voice, gender, and embodiment. Such indeterminacy disrupts dominant logics not only in Brazilian pop but also in regionally coded genres like *brega* and *forró*, where vocal aesthetics are tightly tethered to heteronormative scripts. Da Silva (2019) situates Vittar within a broader lineage of transgressive Brazilian vocalities, including Ney Matogrosso, and introduces the concept of “trans tessitura” to describe voices that defy cisnormative pitch expectations and become subject to cultural policing (p. 112). Vittar's voice—unchanged since childhood and unmodified by hormonal or surgical intervention—has frequently been misrecognized as artificially feminized, revealing the cultural discomfort with gender-nonconforming vocalities. This dissonance is not theatrical but lived, emerging from a body persistently misread through the instability of its sonic and embodied expression. As da Silva notes, this ambiguity does not merely challenge norms about who may sing in which register; it exposes the contingency and enforcement of gendered vocal norms themselves (2019, p. 119).

Drag, Voice, and the Formation of a Counter-Normative Aesthetic

Beyond voice and drag, Vittar's body itself contributes to the frequent confusion surrounding his gender, as underscored in his *Conversa com Bial* interview. Even without body padding—a standard drag technique to simulate breasts or hips—his naturally slender frame, delicate facial features, and prominent buttocks generate repeated misrecognitions as a trans woman. In Brazilian popular culture, buttocks remain a heavily codified feature, particularly as a racialized marker of Black and mulata femininity (Borba & Milani, 2019). This misidentification reveals how raced and gendered embodiment remains a central site through which normative visibility is both enforced and negotiated. These physical characteristics intersect with Brazilian racial hierarchies, as noted in an interview conducted for this study with Senhorita Bira—a YouTuber, sociologist, and cultural commentator whose work addresses race, gender, and media in Brazil¹¹. Bira emphasized that Vittar's racial ambiguity complicates public discourse on race and representation, particularly with regard to colorism and alignment with whitening ideals. While Vittar is *pardo*, his lighter skin, phenotypic proximity to whiteness, and adherence to commercial beauty standards afford him a conditional legitimacy within mainstream circuits—one often inaccessible to Black or darker-skinned queer artists. As Bira framed it: “Pabllo Vittar, she’s brown. So Pabllo Vittar is Black, but she has white passability. That’s the point. All right? White aesthetics, yes” (Senhorita Bira, personal communication, 2024, translation mine).

Bira further noted that Vittar's beauty, vocal femininity, and commercial appeal shape his reception by audiences and the industry. Unlike other queer artists who foreground political critique, Vittar's visibility is partially secured through his marketability. “Pabllo Vittar is beautiful, she looks like a woman, she has a woman's voice,

¹¹ Personal interview conducted by the author with Senhorita Bira, June, 2024, in São Paulo, Brazil. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Portuguese are the author's own.

she has a sellable body and she's not a *militant*¹², which is very important. She doesn't make music that attacks the capitalist system, as she does in the *quebrada*¹³. [...] It's a beautiful package that, because it's a drag queen, gets to that place of 'I'm representing you'" (Senhorita Bira, personal communication, 2024, translation mine).

This dynamic aligns with Moreira's (2021) analysis of Vittar's racialized gender performance, which underscores how his public image oscillates between hyperfemininity, racial ambiguity, and conditional whiteness. While Vittar may appear to embody white feminine beauty norms, Moreira argues that his engagement with them is neither fully conformist nor wholly subversive: "Vittar's ability to pass as white can be interpreted as a cultural transgression because passing affords those who can access the privileges and freedom associated with normativity" (p. 84). Drawing on Ginsburg (1996), Moreira further emphasizes that this ambiguity is not simply self-staged but publicly regulated: "Passing is about specularity: the visible and the invisible, the seen and the unseen" (p. 2). Vittar's trajectory thus clarifies the ongoing conditions under which visibility is allocated or withdrawn in Brazilian popular culture, revealing how normativity is not dismantled by queer presence, but often resecured through selective inclusion. At the same time, Vittar's body becomes a site of both fascination and misrecognition, further destabilizing his legibility within media discourse. In Brazil, where buttocks remain overdetermined as racialized signs of femininity, Vittar's

¹² In Brazilian Portuguese, *militante* (militant) refers broadly to individuals actively engaged in political activism, particularly in leftist, anti-capitalist, or social justice movements. In this context, Bira uses *militante* to distinguish artists who explicitly embed radical political critique in their work from those, like Vittar, whose art remains commercially oriented and less directly confrontational toward systemic structures.

¹³ In this context, *quebrada* refers to Brazil's marginalized, working-class urban peripheries, often associated with Black cultural resistance and politically engaged music genres like funk and rap. While Vittar's music does not originate from these specific genres, their musical roots in *brega*, *forró*, and *tecnobrega*—styles long excluded from Brazil's mainstream music industry—similarly challenge dominant cultural hierarchies. The North and Northeast have historically been positioned as culturally peripheral in relation to the commercial pop industries centered in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, making Vittar's success within national and global pop circuits a partial disruption of this structure.

corporeal presentation reconfigures hypervisibility as a form of epistemic instability. Rather than resolve gendered legibility, the interplay of vocal register and embodied ambiguity reanimates the classificatory frictions through which recognition is organized.

***Open Bar* and the Sonic Rewriting of Cultural Authority**

The release of *Open Bar* (2015) on YouTube in late 2015 marked a decisive turning point in Vittar's artistic trajectory. Building on the momentum of his viral Whitney Houston cover and expanding digital presence, Pedro D'Eyrot—a musician associated with Curitiba's music scene and co-founder of the then-emerging *Movimento Brasil Livre* (MBL)—discovered Vittar's Instagram profile. At the time, MBL had not yet consolidated into the far-right political force it would later become, but D'Eyrot's involvement nonetheless introduced an unexpected link between Brazil's nascent LGBTQ+ pop scene and an incipient neoliberal movement. Impressed by Vittar's aesthetic and vocal ability, D'Eyrot introduced him to producer Rodrigo Gorky. Both were members of Bonde do Rolê, a group known for blending Brazilian funk with global electronic influences (BBC News Brasil, 2018). Initially hesitant, Gorky was ultimately drawn to Vittar's artistry and agreed to produce *Open Bar*, Vittar's debut song. The track was a Portuguese-language reinterpretation of *Lean On*—the most-streamed song of 2015 (BBC, 2015)—originally performed by Major Lazer, the electronic dance music project led by Diplo. Vittar's version reconfigured the song into a *samba*-electronic dance pop hybrid, blending global pop elements with Brazilian musical sensibilities. This fusion was not merely stylistic but constituted a systemic intervention in Brazilian pop, asserting queer, racialized, and regionally inflected authorship within a format historically dominated by whiteness and heteronormativity. Gorky's ties to Diplo's label Mad Decent—through Bonde do Rolê's earlier signing—likely facilitated the clearance for Major Lazer's track to be used in *Open Bar* (FADER, 2007). The music video, filmed at a

friend's house on a modest budget of R\$500, featured Vittar in drag and contributed to the track's viral appeal (TOCA UOL, 2025). Once released on YouTube, *Open Bar* rapidly gained traction, surpassing one million views within four months.

The song's success positioned Vittar as a rising digital pop act at a moment when Brazil's traditional music industry was still grappling with television's declining influence over mass culture. Following the viral impact of *Open Bar*, Vittar's growing media presence led to a record deal with Sony Music Entertainment Brazil in 2017 (Pepe, 2022). That same year, he solidified his commercial breakthrough with the Carnaval hit *Todo Dia*, a funk carioca-electronic dance track and standout single from his debut album, *Vai Passar Mal* (2017). The album fused popular Brazilian genres with global dance music sensibilities, consolidating a defining moment in which a *pardo*, openly gay drag queen from Maranhão with a countertenor voice entered Brazil's mainstream pop industry on unprecedented terms.

Reflecting on his artistic identity, Vittar later remarked, "A drag queen on stage, in the country that kills the most LGBTQ+ people in the world: that says it all ... That's who I am, you know? A *forró* or *arrocha* mixed with techno, a more forward-thinking pop" (Brêda, 2018). This self-definition combines stylistic eclecticism with a politicized understanding of genre hybridity as both navigation and disruption within a hostile cultural field. The *Vai Passar Mal* (2017) album extended this articulation through its embrace of international soundscapes, most notably in the *rasteirinha*-influenced *Então Vai*, produced by Diplo. The track's music video garnered widespread attention for its closing scene, which featured a prolonged open-mouth kiss between Vittar and the producer.

By the second half of the 2010s, even before securing high-profile collaborations and performing on global stages, Vitar had surpassed RuPaul as the world's most-followed drag queen on Instagram, amassing 8.7 million followers compared to RuPaul's 3.4 million (Costa et al., 2017). This milestone underscored Brazil's shifting media landscape and the rise of social media as a primary site for queer exposure. Unlike television, which historically mediated LGBTQ+ representation through heteronormative frameworks, digital platforms enabled Vitar to craft a self-directed public image, engaging directly with audiences while maintaining control over his narrative. In the years that followed, he expanded his international presence—remixing Lady Gaga's *Fun Tonight* into *forró eletrônico*, collaborating with Charli XCX, and performing on global stages including *Coachella* and the United Nations (Castellano et al., 2022; Correia, 2021; Martinez, 2021). However, his subsequent work marked a decisive shift: refusing the industry's push for mainstream assimilation through the dilution of regional identity, wherein Northeastern and Northern genres would be subsumed under broader pop frameworks to appeal to national or global audiences. This refusal, paired with his growing digital presence, positioned Vitar not only as a cultural innovator but as a politically charged figure—rendering his visibility increasingly volatile amid Brazil's polarized public sphere.

By 2018, the visibility that had propelled Vitar's commercial success also exposed him to intensified reactionary backlash. During Brazil's polarizing election cycle, he became a central target of far-right disinformation campaigns, which disseminated fabricated claims—including that his image would appear on Brazil's currency and that he intended to leave the country if Bolsonaro were elected. Vitar directly refuted the latter, asserting, "No Black person will go back to the slave quarters and no gay person to the closet" (Wasser & Lins França, 2020; Pepe, 2022). Circulated through social media

algorithms that prioritized sensationalist content, these falsehoods reframed queer cultural presence as a political threat—transforming visibility into a site of moral panic and ideological warfare (Castellano et al., 2022). The R\$50 bill hoax employed visual manipulation and emotional triggers to falsely suggest his face would appear on national currency, while other narratives framed him as a political candidate or emblem of “gender ideology.” His inclusion in Coca-Cola’s 2018 advertising campaign further escalated backlash, prompting calls for boycotts and acts of vandalism targeting promotional materials (Pereira, 2018; Rolling Stone Brasil, 2017). As Pepe (2022) observes, these campaigns sought to destabilize Vitar’s public image by turning him into “a catalytic discursive mechanism for confusion” (p. 43), positioning LGBTQ+ figures as existential threats to national moral order.

***Batidão Tropical* and the Refusal of Assimilation**

In the aftermath of intensified backlash and growing international visibility, Vitar turned more decisively toward regional affirmation as both aesthetic strategy and structural refusal. This shift culminated in the *Batidão Tropical* project with the release of *Batidão Tropical Vol. 1* in 2021, an album composed entirely of *forró* and *brega* through which, as Ribeiro (2024) notes, “Vitar reveals her DNA, making it clear that her roots and biggest musical references are from Brazil’s historically erased North and Northeast regions.” The artist from Maranhão, who first gained national attention through a fusion of regional and global sounds, now rejected industry pressures toward mainstream assimilation—refusing to treat regional forms as ornamental or supplementary, and instead centering them as the foundation of his sonic and political authorship. The album articulated a systemic refusal to repackage regional codes within dominant pop frameworks, positioning *forró* and *brega* not as nostalgic references but as epistemic

interventions grounded in lived territorial experience. The release of *Batidão Tropical Vol. 2* in 2024 and its subsequent tour—the first opportunity Vittar had to bring this project to live audiences after pandemic-related constraints prevented a tour for *Vol. 1*—intensified its reception and nationwide impact (Bonder, 2024). Black trans singer, DJ, and YouTuber Fuega, a ludovicense who opened for Vittar’s *Batidão Tropical Vol. 2* tour stop in São Luís do Maranhão in July 2024, contextualized the significance of this shift in an interview conducted for this study¹⁴. “Pabllo broke everything. She was the first drag queen in the mainstream, the first to reach number one on national charts, both on radio and streaming platforms. And now she is singing more music from the North and Northeast. That, in the context of pop, is incredibly transgressive. She’s showing where she comes from, she’s showing her roots. She’s showing where Brazilian music comes from. Brazilian music is also Northeastern. Brazilian music is also Northern” (Fuega, personal communication, 2024, translation mine).

Rather than a singular artistic pivot, Vittar’s *Batidão Tropical* project emerged as a sustained assertion of Northeastern and Northern musical traditions within Brazilian pop. As Ribeiro (2024) observes, “within the album framework, it shouts: Pabllo Vittar has always made *forró* and *brega*, and *forró* and *brega* have always been a part of pop culture.” This reengagement affirms regional genres not as peripheral influences but as foundational to Brazilian pop’s cultural and political structure. That same commitment shaped his live performance at President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s 2023 inauguration—an unprecedented national platform for a drag queen—where Vittar drew explicitly from the *Batidão Tropical* repertoire to assert the centrality of queer *Nordestino* identity within Brazil’s reconfigured public sphere. The following section analyzes that performance as a

¹⁴ Personal interview conducted by the author with Fuega, August, 2024, in São Paulo, Brazil. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Portuguese are the author’s own.

culminating moment in Vittar's counter-colonial trajectory, where regional genre, embodied ambiguity, and popular memory converge in a live, nationally broadcast event.

Queer Visibility and Structural Recognition: From Cultural Defiance to National Ritual

This nationally broadcast event did not emerge in isolation, but marked a culmination of politicized appearances through which Vittar progressively asserted queer and regional presence within Brazilian public life. His trajectory from digital virality to state-recognized performer reveals how visibility, once marginal and precarious, became a medium through which national legibility was contested and redefined. Vittar's engagement extended beyond digital visibility into high-profile performances that enacted politicized interventions within national media circuits. At the 2018 *Prêmio Multishow* awards, he chanted "Ele Não!" live on television, publicly aligning himself with the anti-Bolsonaro movement (Young, 2022). This act was echoed in the digital sphere, where his "Ele Não" Instagram post during election week garnered over 500,000 likes and 30,000 comments—demonstrating how algorithmic legibility can emerge from, and reinscribe, structural precarity. These gestures continue a lineage of queer media intervention in Brazil, where spectacle becomes a vehicle for dissent; yet in Vittar's case, this lineage is amplified by digital circulation and mass interactivity. His politicized visibility became even more pronounced during his 2022 Lollapalooza performance, when he held up a towel emblazoned with President Lula's face and shouted "Fora Bolsonaro!" This moment provoked legal threats from Bolsonaro's campaign and underscored the antagonism between queer cultural presence and conservative state power (Castellano et al., 2022). While earlier queer artists, such as Dzi Croquettes and Ney Matogrosso, often deployed coded forms of aesthetic dissent, Vittar's digitally mediated presence enabled more direct confrontation. His public defiance reactivated

the tactics of previous generations, transforming visibility into a politically charged aesthetic that contests the terms of national legibility.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was re-elected for a third term in October 2022, with inauguration ceremonies following in January 2023. His narrow victory came despite the destabilizing effects of Bolsonaro's presidency and the turbulence of an antagonistic far-right reelection campaign. Held on January 1, the *Festival do Futuro* transformed Brasília into a site of cultural and political reclamation, featuring performances by major Brazilian artists including Pablo Vittar, Gaby Amarantos, Margareth Menezes, and Johnny Hooker (Germano, 2022). Nicknamed "Lulapalooza," the event foregrounded queer and regional presence at the center of national ritual, less as symbolic inclusion than as a dramatization of structural possibility. Vittar's inclusion did not merely signify representational advancement; it staged a contested reordering of cultural legitimacy, asserting *Nordestino* queer artistry within a historically exclusionary national frame. His appearance exemplified the instability of Brazil's classificatory order, where regional, queer, and racialized communities press claims to institutional recognition without guaranteed permanence.

Vittar's performance marked the culmination of a trajectory rooted in Maranhão, now publicly amplified through national ritual. His setlist blended *forró eletrônico*, *brega*, and global pop, emphasizing a sonic vernacular shaped by regional histories and diasporic flows. Between songs, Vittar addressed the crowd, affirming the moment's historical stakes: "I'm very proud to be one of the first artists to raise Lula's banner and to say 'not him.' In front of the cameras, without fear of losing work, without fear of losing sponsorships. In the world of digital influencers, where advertising and good manners are preserved, I'm here saying: Lula! Lula for the people, for the doormen, for the teachers, for the people who have no voice, for the LGBTQs who are killed every day without

public protection. Today, I, Pabllo Vittar, am proud to be here as part of the inauguration of my president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva!” (Meia Hora, 2023, translation mine)¹⁵. His speech reorganized the inauguration stage—not as a space of state legitimation alone, but as a platform where queer and regional communities could assert presence and articulate political demands within the national frame. This moment transcended celebrity endorsement; it reflected a political consciousness forged through redistributive policies, grassroots networks, and sustained social marginalization. Vittar, who once relied on Bolsa Família and MST settlements for community and support, reframed his appearance not as personal triumph but as situated return. His appearance rejected any separation between visibility and the structural conditions that render it precarious. His trajectory—from beneficiary of redistributive policy to representative on a national stage—converted lived precarity into political speech. The eruption of applause marked not only queer visibility, but the reassertion of collective stakes in democratic renewal.

Visibility Without Protection: Transnational Recognition and Local Precarity

Beyond national politics, Vittar’s trajectory—from marginalization to international acclaim—has shaped his understanding of queer solidarity. In an interview I conducted with him before his concert in Brasília on August 17, 2024, Vittar reflected on the significance of representing Brazil as a queer artist on a global scale¹⁶. Emphasizing the resilience and unity he observed within the international queer community, he remarked,

¹⁵ Original in Portuguese: “Eu tenho muito orgulho de ser uma das primeiras artistas a levantar a bandeira do Lula e a falar ‘ele não.’ Na frente das câmeras, sem medo de perder trabalho, sem medo de perder publicidade. No mundo do digital influencer, onde a publicidade e os bons modos preservam-se, eu estou aqui dizendo: ‘Lula! Lula pelo povo, pelos porteiros, pelos professores, pelas pessoas que não têm voz. Pelos LGBTQs que são mortos todos os dias sem proteção pública. Hoje eu, Pabllo Vittar, tenho orgulho de estar aqui fazendo parte da posse do meu presidente, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.” Source: Meia Hora (2023, January 2).

¹⁶ Personal interview conducted by the author with Pabllo Vittar, August 17, 2024, in Brasília, Brazil. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Portuguese are the author’s own.

“For me, it’s really cool to be from Brazil and to be able to take this message to other countries, because while many people see differences in the queer community, I see a lot of equality and a lot of determination in what we want to do, especially in the artists I know from other countries” (P. Vittar, personal communication, August 17, 2024, translation mine). This global orientation does not displace his regional formation but extends it—recasting structural marginalization as the foundation for cross-border solidarity. His perspective draws on earlier navigation strategies: his mother’s determination, the mutual aid of MST settlements, and community-based resilience, now refracted into a transnational ethic of collective strength. As he added, “It’s really good to be a spokesperson for Brazil in this environment.” This emphasis on shared determination over perceived division affirms how formative exclusions continue to shape his articulation of queer solidarity across borders.

Yet the optimism of transnational recognition stands in stark contrast to persistent local realities. Even as Vittar performed for the jubilant crowd at the *Festival do Futuro*, his cultural prominence unfolded against escalating violence targeting Brazil’s LGBTQ+ population. In 2023 alone, 257 LGBTQIA+ people were murdered—one every 34 hours—including 100 transgender victims, the majority Black and from the Northeast. This marked the fourteenth consecutive year in which Brazil recorded the world’s highest number of LGBTQ+ murders (Agência Brasil, 2024; AP News, 2024; Brasil de Fato, 2024). Vittar’s visibility does not resolve this violence; it sharpens its contradictions. While mainstream media platforms celebrate his achievements, far-right rhetoric emboldens hate crimes. As Wasser (2020) observes, the “fact that drag queens and transvestites now occupy a space in popular music means that traditional gender arrangements are publicly faltering, or at least being fundamentally questioned”—a

disruption that provokes backlash from those invested in patriarchal and binary gender systems (p. 64).

This dynamic is not new. The persistence of anti-LGBTQ+ violence reflects long-standing mechanisms of constraint, exclusion, and reprisal in Brazilian media and political life. Where Dzi Croquettes faced exile and Jorge Lafond systemic erasure, Vittar must navigate an era in which greater visibility coexists with intensified precarity. His experience illustrates that Brazilian queer performance is not shaped by linear progress but by volatile regimes of regulation—where recognition and risk remain inseparable. Emerging from the Northeast, where anti-LGBTQ+ violence is most acute, Vittar's prominence reveals both the transformative potential and structural limits of cultural recognition as a mode of engagement with oppression.

These tensions surface starkly in Vittar's ascent through Brazilian popular culture. In under a decade, this queer *Nordestino* became one of the country's most influential cultural figures—headlining Carnaval, dominating digital platforms, collaborating with international artists, and performing at a presidential inauguration—while Brazil remains one of the deadliest countries in the world for trans and gender-diverse people. His rise does not mark an escape from precarity but a heightened form of it: queer acknowledgment becomes conditional legitimacy, continually negotiated with the systems that render it unstable. His cultural authority signals both symbolic progress and its limits—visibility can challenge dominant norms but remains a precarious currency, vulnerable to weaponization as much as celebration. The stakes are not recognition alone, but survival. As the cheers from the *Festival do Futuro* faded, the reality persisted: queer lives in Brazil remain contested, exposed, and under siege.

Brazilian queer performance today remains structured by tensions that have long defined its conditions of existence: between presence and constraint, acknowledgment and erasure, navigation and spectacle. Digital infrastructures may have expanded the circuits of self-representation, but they have also intensified commodification, surveillance, and political backlash. These platforms do not dismantle exclusion; they reorganize its terms, embedding visibility within volatile economies of legibility and threat. Vittar's trajectory—from viral fame to coordinated disinformation, from local musical idioms to global stages—demonstrates how infrastructures of recognition both enable and delimit the presence of queer, racialized bodies. His resignifications of gender, race, and regional identity reorganize earlier insurgent repertoires for a contemporary political and digital landscape. These dynamics do not resolve historical contradictions—they materialize them, marking Vittar's performance not as a triumph of inclusion but as a situated negotiation with the forces that continue to delimit who can appear, and at what cost.

Conclusion: Precarious Recognition and the Field of Brazilian Queer Performance

Brazilian queer performance remains shaped by the tensions that have historically defined its conditions of existence: between visibility and erasure, containment and engagement, conditional legitimacy and structural exclusion. While digital platforms have expanded the circuits through which marginalized artists like Vittar assert presence and self-representation, they have also intensified commodification, surveillance, and political backlash. These infrastructures do not resolve exclusion—they reconfigure its terms, embedding mediated appearances within volatile economies of legibility and risk.

Across the period traced in this chapter, visibility has operated not as stable recognition but as ongoing contestation—enabling selective inclusion while heightening vulnerability. For Madame Satã, presence emerged through embodied defiance in criminalized urban space; for Lafond and Lacraia, through comedic or regional spectacle. Vittar’s cultural presence becomes an embodied assertion of *Nordestino* queerness in spaces that have long excluded it—reshaping what becomes intelligible, desirable, and nationally validated. Vittar extends a lineage structured by Satã’s insurgent embodiment, Dzi Croquettes’ theatrical disruptions, Matogrosso’s sonic transgressions, Close’s mediated ambiguity, and the racialized containment negotiated by Lafond and Lacraia. His prominence—foregrounding Northeastern cultural forms and engaging digital infrastructures—translates these precedents into the terms of algorithmic circulation and nationalist reaction. Far from signaling resolution, his visibility underscores how exposure today amplifies risk as much as it enables authority. In a country where LGBTQ+ lives—particularly Black and trans lives—remain systematically endangered, recognition offers neither protection nor stable inclusion.

This genealogical analysis reveals how Brazilian queer performance has accrued classificatory instabilities—across visibility, containment, and conditional legitimacy—that shape the terrain within which counter-colonial praxis can emerge. Each figure examined intervened within historically situated constraints, generating friction at the boundaries of media circulation, cultural validation, and state control. Vittar’s rise channels this accumulated force through a digital and political landscape that recalibrates the metrics of legibility, embedding visibility within volatile regimes of exposure and risk. He does not merely inherit this lineage; he reworks it through genre hybridity, algorithmic fluency, and the foregrounding of regional cultural forms. The following chapters examine how Vittar’s Brazilian queer performance engages these

inherited conditions—activating modalities that unsettle and reconfigure the classificatory systems through which race, gender, and regional identity are rendered knowable.

Chapter 4. Empirical Analysis I: Dissonant Modalities and Regional Counterclaims in Pablo Vittar's Music Videos

This chapter analyzes two key works from Pablo Vittar's videography—*Então Vai* (2017) and *Seu Crime* (2019)—selected for their methodological value in tracing how his Brazilian queer performance intervenes in dominant regimes of cultural recognition. These videos most fully integrate the performance modalities that are paradigmatic of Vittar's counter-colonial praxis—*drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy*—each enacted as a sustained intervention within a single work. They also bracket a formative moment in Vittar's national consolidation, when these modalities emerged independently of institutional recognition. Finally, they trace a coherent arc from embedded friction to insurgent reordering, revealing how his counter-colonial praxis begins to assert its own forms of cultural intelligibility. This period marks a phase of relative autonomy in Vittar's performance trajectory, before his entanglement with state recognition—most visibly dramatized at the 2023 inauguration—exposed the structural contradictions such recognition entails.

Pablo Vittar's emergence in Brazilian popular culture shifts the terms through which queer and regional bodies are made legible, as his Brazilian queer performance exposes and reworks the classificatory instabilities that structure cultural recognition. The incoherence that rendered his 2023 inaugural appearance both unprecedented and contradictory—a *Nordestino*, *pardo*, drag-performing *forró/brega* singer occupying the symbolic center of national visibility—also constitutes the enabling condition for the performances examined here. Where Chapter 3 traced how Brazilian queer performance negotiated visibility, containment, and conditional legitimacy under historically specific constraints, this chapter examines how Vittar gathers and intensifies those negotiations through the music video form as an epistemic intervention into classificatory regimes.

Rather than treating these videos as symbolic gestures of queer visibility—a framing that risks reducing performance to representation—this analysis approaches them as sites through which Vittar’s counter-colonial praxis becomes analytically legible.

If *Então Vai* and *Seu Crime* articulate distinct aesthetic logics, they also map a shared set of refusals. *Então Vai* centers queer intimacy within a hybridized soundscape, blending *rasteirinha* and *brega* to foreground affective legibility without spectacle. *Seu Crime* mobilizes *forró* instrumentation and visual codes associated with *travestilidade* to stage a reterritorialization of gender and region. These are not simply stylistic contrasts but differentiated engagements with power: whereas *Então Vai* inhabits marginal forms to test the thresholds of recognition, *Seu Crime* intensifies that logic through aesthetic dissonance that unsettles dominant codes. Together, the works displace containment—as camp, spectacle, or regional curiosity—and recast erotic ambiguity as a site of popular charge. Their stakes lie in how Vittar’s Brazilian queer performance mobilizes drag, genre, race, and region to destabilize the visual economies governing desire and cultural legitimacy—reorganizing how queer and peripheral bodies are rendered legible within the national imaginary.

This arc—from inhabiting marginal visibility to staging insurgent reordering—manifests across multiple registers. *Então Vai* demonstrates how peripheral forms can inhabit recognition without assimilation, while *Seu Crime* extends this logic toward the reconfiguration of authority itself. Both works position Vittar in moments of physical and affective intimacy with cisnormative men, legible as heterosexual yet shown erotically engaging with gender-nonconforming bodies. This recurring visual trope

initially contributed to his virality: the disruptive *gag*¹⁷ of a visibly queer, drag-marked body embraced by heteronormatively desirable men became a site of fascination, destabilizing dominant expectations of gender and desire (Pepe 2021, 54–55). These images retain sexual tension precisely because of what Vittar does not conceal—his *drag dissonance*, which foregrounds the constructedness and instability of gender even in moments of erotic fantasy. Unlike dominant drag paradigms—particularly those shaped by Anglo-American traditions such as pageant drag or *RuPaul's Drag Race*—which prioritize visual illusion and often render the queen untouchable or desexualized, Vittar's drag is deliberately sexualized. This queers not only gender legibility but also erotic address, inviting desire where drag typically forecloses it.

That erotic legibility is mediated by the cultural codes Vittar's aesthetic invokes. While he does not identify as a travesti, the interplay of visual femininity and persistent masculine legibility evokes the visual logics of *travestilidade* within Brazilian imaginaries. *Drag dissonance* thus functions both as a formal operation and as an incidental invocation of the travesti figure, whose social and sexual legibility remains fraught—particularly through state discourse, mainstream media, and heteronormative publics. These moments of erotic tension implicate viewers in affective attachments shaped by Brazilian cultural imaginaries, especially those structured by the ambivalences of *travestilidade*. By making visible forms of attraction that are often disavowed, stigmatized, or fetishized, the videos compel confrontation with desire's instability, exposing how classificatory regimes preserve authority through simultaneous recognition

¹⁷ *Gag* is a term rooted in mid-to-late 20th-century U.S. queer vernacular, particularly within Black and Latinx ballroom and drag culture, used to describe a moment of astonishment, disbelief, or overwhelmed excitement—often in response to a dramatic or subversive gesture. While originally situated in specific cultural contexts, the term has since circulated globally through transnational queer networks and digital media. In this thesis, it signals the viral spectacle and destabilizing charge of Vittar's visibly queer embodiment within scenes of heteronormative intimacy.

and repudiation—the very mechanism that enables structurally marginalized figures to occupy sites of spectacular visibility.

Então Vai centers queer intimacy as an ordinary affective register; *Seu Crime*, by contrast, reframes this intimacy through regional aesthetics and iconography, mounting a more confrontational counter-colonial claim. This is not generic queer intimacy made ordinary, but specifically Brazilian intimacy—shaped by race, regionality, and class—that might otherwise be rendered excessive, yet here becomes coherent through Vittar's control over gesture, vocality, and framing. In *Seu Crime*, this intensifies: *forró* instrumentation, traces of *travestilidade* and *cangaço* iconography materialize within aesthetic form to reorder colonial hierarchies of gender, territory, and punishment. Across both works, it is not queerness alone that unsettles dominant logics, but Vittar's capacity to inhabit culturally disqualified forms from within, reactivating their aesthetic and epistemic force in ways that cannot be detached from the conditions that mark his body, voice, and trajectory.

The performance modalities of *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* serve as analytic lenses for apprehending how Vittar's counter-colonial praxis materializes in *Então Vai* and *Seu Crime*. *Drag dissonance* names the refusal of seamless gender illusion through a visibly unstable femininity that foregrounds the constructedness and fragility of gendered embodiment. *Genre inhabitation* refers to the reoccupation of marginalized regional music as a situated site of epistemic and aesthetic authority, enacted through embedded and insurgent performance. *Vocal indeterminacy* designates the sonic ambiguity that destabilizes normative alignments between voice, gender, and body, fracturing the auditory assumptions through which gender coherence is secured. These modalities function as forms of situated disruption: they recast disqualified forms through the instabilities dominant systems disavow.

Drawing on Bispo dos Santos's (2015a) relational epistemology of *confluência*, Gonzalez's (1988) theory of embodied resistance through *corporeidade*, and Milton Santos's (2006) conception of *território* as materially and epistemically contested, the analysis demonstrates how Vittar's interventions confront the classificatory regimes that structure cultural legitimacy in Brazilian popular culture. Paired methodologically with the following chapter, this analysis traces how these modalities operate across two distinct modes of encounter: the formal discipline of music video and the contingent, territorial dynamics of live performance.

Dissonant Embodiment and Peripheral Reoccupation in *Então Vai* (2017)

Então Vai (2017) stages counter-colonial performance through the coordinated activation of territorial positioning, embodied ambiguity, and sonic intervention. Set in a visually peripheral coastal zone—marked by mangroves, dirt roads, and modest riverside dwellings—the video situates itself outside the tropicalized coastal imaginary that organizes Brazil's tourist iconography. In doing so, it mobilizes territory as a contested field of queer reoccupation, displacing dominant queer imaginaries still tethered to urban nightlife, cosmopolitan aesthetics, and elite consumption.

Against this terrain, Vittar appears in a sequence of stylized and unstylized looks: a Pride flag-themed one-piece swimsuit (Figure 1), black athletic shorts, a pastel wig, a multi-colored crop top, and moments out of drag in gender-neutral clothing that suspend femininity altogether (Figure 2). His unpadded frame, visible tucking, and minimal makeup do not produce seamless gender illusion but foreground the constructedness of femininity, rendering ambiguity a structuring aesthetic—an instance of *drag dissonance*.

This combination of territorial and embodied tactics materializes what Bispo dos Santos (2015a) theorizes as *confluência*—a relational mode of coexistence that resists



Figure 1. Vittar in drag, wearing a Pride flag bathing suit and pastel wig, Então Vai, 2017



Figure 2. Vittar (right) out of drag, Então Vai, 2017

absorption, embraces tension, and suspends normative legibility. The analysis that follows traces how Vittar's counter-colonial intervention operates across three interconnected registers: sonic practices that destabilize gendered and cultural hierarchies; spatial configurations that transform marginalized territory through collective embodiment; and visual techniques that disrupt both gender coherence and racialized erotic codes. His performance modalities do not operate in isolation but interact to produce what the video's conclusion stages: an unresolved encounter with

transnational power that renders recognition structurally incoherent rather than achieved.

Voice, Genre, and Vernacular Refusal

The territorial and embodied positioning shaped by the video's peripheral setting extends into its sonic architecture, where Vittar's vocal performance intensifies the aesthetic logic of dissonance and ambiguity. *Então Vai* (2017) advances its counter-colonial intervention across vocal and sonic registers, where Vittar's situated performance destabilizes normative mappings between voice, gender, and cultural hierarchy. The song's vernacular language signals this refusal from the opening verse—"Em queda livre você me fez cair" registers affective rupture, followed by "Mas não vou descer do salto," a phrase drawn from queer and travesti vernaculars that encodes poise, defiance, and refusal to yield. The chorus—"Então vai / Me arrastei no seu mundo / E no fim eu aprendi"—shifts toward retrospective clarity and strategic detachment.

Vittar's articulation of this vernacular refusal—delivered in a high-pitched, unmodulated countertenor—materializes what this thesis identifies as *vocal indeterminacy*. His register resists binary expectations that align vocal pitch with gendered embodiment, disrupting normative conventions that regulate voice as a stable index of identity. This sonic ambiguity operates alongside the video's *drag dissonance*, reinforcing instability across registers of sight and sound.

The song's sonic architecture deepens this intervention through *genre inhabitation*. Layered over a beat that fuses *brega* instrumentation with *rasteirinha*—a slower style of funk carioca blending influences from *samba*, *axé*, reggaeton, and dancehall marked by Caribbean-inflected grooves—Vittar's queer performance functions not as nostalgic reference or surface appropriation, but as an embedded enactment within peripheral

genres devalued in Brazil's prestige economy through regional and classed associations. His inhabitation affirms their epistemic and affective force, challenging the marginalization of peripheral musical traditions through a situated aesthetic practice. Rather than resolving contradictions—between gendered legibility and embodied ambiguity, cultural marginalization and aesthetic authority, or regional erasure and territorial assertion—Vittar's performance in *Então Vai* materializes a counter-colonial intervention in which regional sound, indeterminate vocality, and embodied language cohere through tension.

Relational Space and Peripheral Embodiments

This sonic disruption of cultural hierarchies finds its spatial counterpart in the video's choreography of collective presence. Vittar's counter-colonial intervention extends beyond his individual performance to encompass the spatial and relational dynamics of *território* itself. *Então Vai* interweaves scenes of Vittar among a racially and gender-diverse group of local residents—predominantly Black and brown women—who dance, embrace, and move alongside him at the edge of an estuary. These gestures—casual, affective, unspectacular—transform the semi-rural coastal setting from a marginal backdrop into what Santos (2006) theorizes as *território*: a space reconfigured through bodily presence and mutual visibility, rather than erased through structural marginalization.

The visual contrast between Vittar's drag styling and the women's casual femininity—natural hair, shorts, bikini tops—does not assert hierarchy but exemplifies *confluência*: proximity without absorption, coexistence without erasure. This configuration shows how *drag dissonance* functions not as an isolated aesthetic, but as a collaborative

disruption that unsettles colonial visual economies by refusing fixed roles of spectacle or subordination.

In this enactment, territory is not a passive backdrop but an active field of counter-colonial affiliation among bodies marked by racial, regional, and gendered precarity. Through this interplay of material setting and collective embodiment, the video resignifies historically devalued margins as sites of epistemic and political force—where queer and racialized bodies affirm *território* through co-presence rather than domination.

Drag Dissonance and Gendered Incoherence

The relational dynamics shaping the video's spatial politics reflect the same instability that underlies Vittar's approach to gender performance. At the core of *Então Vai* is a performance grounded in ambiguity that resists assimilation into normative visual codes. Vittar's drag neither emulates Anglo-American hyperfemininity nor aspires to androgyny or gender neutrality. His presentation—a lightly made-up face, lean unpadded body, visibly tucked swimsuit, and pastel wig—resists both cisnormative and drag-normative aesthetic demands. Through *drag dissonance*, his unpadded frame and minimal makeup expose the constructedness of femininity, rendering ambiguity not as absence but as a generative aesthetic.

This aesthetic stance enacts what Gonzalez (1988) theorizes as *corporeidade*, where the body becomes a site of racialized and gendered tension rather than spectacle. Unlike conventional gender nonconformity, often framed as individual subversion, *drag dissonance* operates relationally—sustaining ambiguity not as failure but as a refusal to consolidate visibility into legibility. This relational logic is reinforced by the video's riverine setting, where the estuary—where saltwater and freshwater meet without assimilation—figures

território as a counter-colonial formation that mirrors the incoherent mode of being enacted through Vittar's drag.

As the video moves toward the water's edge, Vittar's gestures—dancing, embracing, coexisting with others—enact *confluência* not only spatially but somatically. Just as *drag dissonance* resists stabilization into coherent gender categories, these interactions reject hierarchical ordering, demonstrating how queer and racialized embodiments reconfigure colonial spatial grammars while preserving their constitutive difference. The riverbank becomes a site where drag's relational logic expands beyond individual performance into collective territorial affirmation.

Erotic Legibility and the Racialized Gaze

The gendered ambiguity structuring Vittar's drag is further intensified when read through Brazil's racialized systems of erotic classification. Vittar's embodiment in *Então Vai* operates within this erotic economy while simultaneously disrupting its terms. His high-cut swimsuit draws attention to the buttocks (Figure 3)—a bodily zone that, as Borba and Milani (2019) argue, has been central to the colonial construction of Brazilian national identity, where the eroticization of racialized femininity operates as a sedimented visual logic of coloniality. This visual economy, they contend, renders the



Figure 3. The bathing suit's style emphasizing and accentuating the buttocks, Então Vai, 2017

buttocks a privileged site where racialized bodies become legible as national icons, but only through the aestheticized containment of erotic display. Gonzalez (1988) diagnoses this same logic as *denegação*—a mechanism of capture that produces hypervisibility while erasing cultural and political agency. Both readings illuminate how erotic legibility functions as a colonial script: visibility is permitted only where it reinforces racial and gender hierarchies. Vittar's performance disrupts this script, not through withdrawal, but by staging what Gonzalez theorizes as *corporeidade*: an embodied mode of resistance that refuses the translation of visibility into legibility.

This colonial script is epitomized in the figure of the mulata—central to Brazilian national identity yet, as Gonzalez (1988) argues, produced through *denegação*, which renders Black and Indigenous women hypervisible as erotic icons while erasing their subjectivity. The buttocks functions here as a racialized focal point through which femininity and national belonging are constructed and commodified, reinforcing what Gonzalez identifies as aesthetic subjugation through spectacle. Vittar's racial classification as *pardo* complicates this dynamic further, as racial ambiguity operates through the same mechanism of selective inclusion that upholds whiteness as the invisible norm. *Pardismo* grants conditional legibility without disrupting the colonial order.

Vittar's embodiment gestures toward the visual economy of the mulata through high-cut styling and the framing of his buttocks as a focal point—cues historically associated with racialized erotic legibility. Yet his refusal of hyperfeminization and gender fixity resists incorporation into this archetype. His drag also evokes, without claiming, the visual grammar of *travestilidade*—where femininity coexists with visible markers of masculinity, and erotic legibility is structured through ambivalence rather than resolution. This figuration introduces another register of racialized and gendered

incoherence: as Ribeiro (2019) argues, the travesti body occupies a space of spectacular visibility that is never divorced from structural abandonment. Vittar's presentation aligns with this visual logic while remaining outside its social category, refracting the codes of *travestilidade* through the lens of *drag dissonance*, producing misalignment and symbolic friction rather than gender illusion.

By sustaining ambiguity without resolving it, Vittar contests an aesthetic economy in which racialized femininity becomes consumable only through excess, spectacle, or erotic submission. This intervention extends into the song's sonic architecture, where *rasteirinha* rhythms and *brega* horns destabilize the prestige hierarchies of Brazilian pop. *Genre inhabitation* functions here as a structurally embedded mode of counter-colonial affiliation: Vittar performs from within peripheral forms, activating their emotional and rhythmic vocabularies without neutralizing their cultural specificity. His unaltered countertenor—an instance of *vocal indeterminacy*—moves through these genres without smoothing over their contradictions, intensifying dissonance as a structuring method.

In sonic and visual fields alike, Vittar's performance enacts *corporeidade* as embodied knowledge—intervening in colonial aesthetic regimes through opacity, relationality, and friction. *Drag dissonance* functions here not as a denial of erotic legibility, but as its disruption from within, exposing the operations of colonial desire without reproducing them.

Neutralizing Asymmetry: Eroticism and Power

Vittar's sustained ambiguity—across *território*, vocal performance, gender presentation, and erotic legibility—culminates in the video's staging of erotic encounter as a site of power negotiation. The final scene—a prolonged, affectless kiss between Vittar and Diplo—crystallizes Vittar's counter-colonial praxis operating throughout

Então Vai (Figure 4). As a white U.S. American producer, Diplo embodies transnational capital and cultural appropriation, particularly through his commercial engagement with funk carioca (McNally, 2017). His presence encodes the dynamics through which Brazilian subcultural forms are racialized, circulated, and commodified in the global music economy. Yet the kiss refuses both fetishization and resolution. It unfolds slowly, without spectacle or emotional cue, and notably extends beyond the end of the song, holding the final moment in silence. The silence holds the scene in suspension, flattening narrative climax and exposing the asymmetrical erotic economy without staging it as drama. Within the relational logic of *confluência*, Diplo's presence is absorbed without being centered—demonstrating how Vittar's performance sustains aesthetic sovereignty while inhabiting structures of spectacular visibility.



Figure 4. Vittar and Diplo's (right) kiss, *Então Vai*, 2017

Vittar does not appear as a tokenized object of desire, nor as an exoticized counterpart to whiteness, but as a drag subject whose dissonance renders erotic coherence inoperative. The kiss neither reverses nor resolves the asymmetry it indexes—

it renders it inert. In doing so, *Então Vai* reframes queer intimacy as ordinary and self-possessed presence—one that neither seeks nor performs recognition through the gaze of transnational whiteness and heteronormativity. This affective refusal exemplifies the counter-colonial logic structuring Vittar's broader trajectory: rather than seeking validation through proximity to whiteness and heteronormativity, his Brazilian queer performance asserts authorship over the terms of engagement. By staging an intimate encounter between a visibly dissonant subject and a heteronormatively legible man, *Então Vai* confronts the viewer with a form of embodiment that refuses erotic coherence—where queerness, drag, and *travestilidade* converge without collapsing into legibility. Vittar's presentation foregrounds ambiguity as structure rather than exception—compelling recognition of how desire is organized, distributed, and disavowed across bodies that resist containment within dominant frames of legibility.

By centering bodies and sounds historically cast as peripheral, *Então Vai* materializes a counter-colonial terrain structured by *corporeidade*, *confluência*, and *território*. Refusing aesthetic coherence, the video reorganizes visibility not as recognition but as tension—affirming dissonant embodiment as a situated practice of counter-colonial world-making, grounded in ambiguity as both epistemic and aesthetic method.

***Seu Crime* (2019) and the Insurgent Geometry of Travesti Desire**

Seu Crime (2019) opens with Vittar behind the wheel of a yellow pickup truck in pursuit of a man on horseback (Figure 5, 6), before cutting to sequences that fuse regional outlaw codes with fetish-inflected drag—his look pairing a cropped, high-collared blue and white top adorned with a police-style badge, black leather shorts laced in silver chains, thigh-high boots, a beret bearing similar insignia, and exposed buttocks (Figure 7). These opening cuts are overlaid with bold typographic titles that directly



Figure 5. Man on horseback, *Seu Crime*, 2019



Figure 6. Vittar in pursuit, *Seu Crime*, 2019

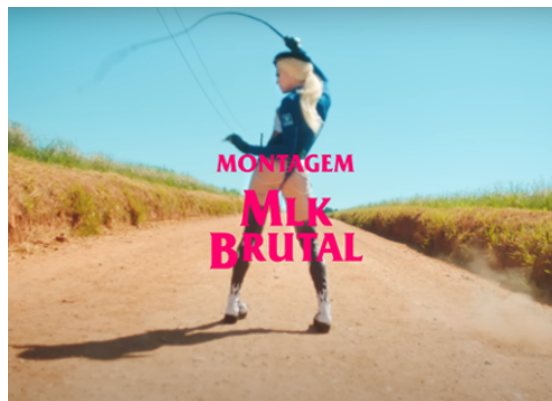


Figure 7. Vittar in fetish-inflected drag, wielding whip, *Seu Crime*, 2019

recall Tarantino's editing style and visual design in *Pulp Fiction* (1994)—layering cinematic outlaw codes and genre citation onto the video's aesthetic logic from the outset (Figure 8, 9). A distant police siren is audible in the background, but its referent remains unclear—whether Vittar, the man on horseback, or both are being pursued is never resolved.

This ambiguity amplifies the instability of the scene, extending the dissonance beyond

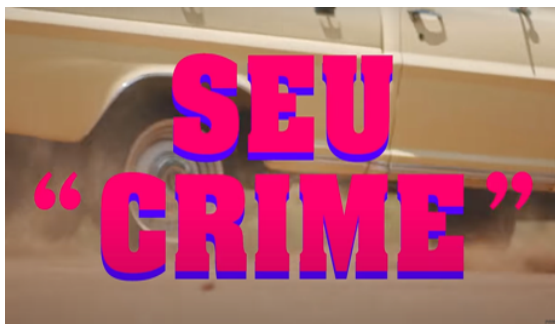


Figure 8. *Seu Crime* opening titles, *Seu Crime*, 2019



Figure 9. *Pulp Fiction* opening titles, 1994

visual styling into the auditory field. Mobilizing whip gestures and volatile ornamentation, this sequence stages an eroticism charged with symbolic and regional dissonance, where even the suggestion of state authority becomes part of a drag grammar that disorganizes coherence rather than affirming legibility. Set against arid terrain, sugarcane fields, and roadside compositions that evoke Brazil's interior Northeast, the video does not frame territory as neutral backdrop, but reactivates it as a field of aesthetic friction and counter-colonial reordering.

Where *Então Vai* (2017) engages peripheral queer legibility by reframing intimacy through embedded sound and territory, *Seu Crime* (2019) intensifies this intervention through a reconfiguration of outlaw iconography and the relational force of *travestilidade*—not claimed by Vittar, but activated through proximity to its visual and epistemic logics. The video accumulates regional, erotic, and disciplinary codes that disorganize gendered and territorial legibility. What emerges is not recognition, but epistemic inversion: a performative field in which ambiguity becomes generative, and *travestilidade* structures the instability through which bodies become visible, desirable, or criminal. This shift does not supersede *Então Vai* but deepens Vittar's counter-colonial trajectory—where *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* no longer operate through friction alone, but constitute the very grammar of the work.

In *Seu Crime*, these modalities are not simply sustained—they are intensified. *Drag dissonance* fractures not only gender illusion but also narrative coherence; *genre inhabitation* exceeds citation to reconstitute territory as unstable ground; and *vocal indeterminacy* refracts sonic legibility into affective instability. Grounded in *corporeidade*, *confluência*, and *território*, these modalities operate relationally to reorganize mappings of power, desire, and region. As in *Então Vai*, *travestilidade* does not appear as identity or visual styling, but as a relational force refracted through Vittar's performance without

being reduced to positionality or claimed as identification. This arc—from pursuit to erotic inversion—does not resolve instability, but sustains it as the operative condition of Vittar’s counter-colonial performance. Instability, in this frame, is not a lack of coherence to be overcome but a structuring force through which performance becomes epistemically charged and territorially reconfigurative.

This instability extends beyond the screen. *Seu Crime* is analytically significant because Vittar’s performance does not offer clarity—it suspends it. The video accumulates figures—travestis, *cangaceiras*, eroticized *vaqueiros*—whose dissonant presence resists containment within dominant visual grammars. These figures do not cohere into narrative; instead, they activate ambiguity, friction, and delay. Drawing from Quentin Tarantino’s stylized criminal excess without parody, invoking the mutable spatial logic of Gabriel Mascaro’s *Boi Neon* (2015), and staging the Northeast through dissonance rather than affirmation, the video constructs a grammar of region and desire that is charged, affectively unstable, and formally unresolved. The affective instability it generates—disorientation, attraction, hesitation—anchors the operational logic of Vittar’s performance rather than ornamenting it. What the viewer feels enters the work not as consequence, but as method. These sensations mark the conditions through which Vittar’s counter-colonial praxis becomes legible—not by resolving ambiguity, but by inhabiting it. The following analysis examines how *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* unfold across *Seu Crime*’s visual composition, outlaw femininity, and sonic form—intensifying the epistemic instability through which Vittar’s counter-colonial praxis takes shape.

Outlaw Femininity and Visual Grammar

The visual grammar of *Seu Crime* concentrates this epistemic instability into form, formalizing *drag dissonance* through the fracture of gendered legibility and the inhabitation of outlaw codes as volatile aesthetic ground. Where dominant pop femininity depends on visual cohesion, here it emerges through instability and friction. The video does not reference outlaw aesthetics for citation or subversion; it inhabits them through a drag grammar that centers volatility and excess. The *cangaço* motif—historically aligned with masculinist resistance—reappears in fragmented form, animated by gestures and embellishments that charge femininity with unpredictability rather than softness. The figure of Maria Bonita—positioned as a historical exception within the hypermasculine *cangaço* imaginary—functions here less as character than as associative trace, a spectral referent embedded within the visual field through dissonant allusion.

Among several drag configurations in the video, one ensemble—comprising body-hugging straps, thigh-high leather boots, S&M metal ornamentation, and exposed buttocks—emerges as a central visual anchor. Its fusion of *cangaço* iconography with global fetish aesthetics sustains drag dissonance through prolonged ambiguity: femininity becomes perceptible but never coherent. Rather than invoking nostalgia or consolidating cultural inheritance, *Seu Crime* resignifies outlaw femininity as an embodied form of disruption—destabilizing the frames through which regional and gendered embodiment become intelligible. Outlaw femininity here is not recuperated as heritage but enacted as rupture, exceeding both national iconography and transnational drag legibility. This escalation enacts outlaw femininity as a counter-colonial modality—*drag dissonance* becomes a volatile grammar of disruption that disorganizes the visual and symbolic regimes through which gender and region are made legible. This volatility is not confined to visual form: the same relational ambiguity that animates outlaw femininity extends

into the sonic register, where *genre inhabitation* disorganizes the classificatory frameworks that stabilize region and embodiment.

Genre Inhabitation and Forró Reclamation

Seu Crime reorganizes the terms of genre through situated reoccupation rather than explicit citation. Whereas *Então Vai* hybridizes *rasteirinha* and *brega* to render peripheral sound emotionally legible, *Seu Crime* centers *forró* not as a fixed heritage but as a contested terrain—a historically racialized and regionalized form reactivated through queer embodiment. The instrumentation—accordion, horns, and guitar—prioritizes traditional sonorities, favoring analog texture over synthetic polish. This sonic grain structures *genre inhabitation* as a situated claim, rather than nostalgia or preservation—shaping how sound circulates through bodies, regions, and histories. *Forró* is not rendered queer by external grafting, but reactivated through latent queer intensities historically embedded and now reinhabited.

Within this soundscape, Vittar's performance neither mimics nor modernizes *forró*; it inhabits the genre through drag and movement that refuse normative gendered alignments. Group scenes revise the traditional *grudadinha* through queer proximity and solo gestures, suspending couple formation in favor of affective dispersion. The dance becomes a mode of epistemic reordering, where embodiment displaces the genre's heteronormative foundations without disavowing its form. This intervention extends to visual elements: the *vaqueiro* figure, invoked through equestrian imagery and rural attire, is neither parodied nor discarded but resignified through queer relationality. The nighttime sequences, populated by racially diverse dancers and set against rural infrastructure, further embed this inhabitation within territory—eschewing both urban

fantasy and folkloric realism in favor of a relational configuration that grounds genre in *confluência*.

Here, *genre inhabitation* operates as a structuring modality: a material engagement with forró that reactivates its epistemic force through bodies historically excluded from its dominant representations. The analog texture, unruly choreography, and queer relationality do not polish the genre for inclusion—they preserve its friction. Rather than staging difference as aesthetic flourish, *Seu Crime* draws out the latent intensities forró has been structured to contain, recasting regional sound as a site of embodied reordering. This activation reconfigures genre as embodied tension—sustained through bodies that neither resolve nor assimilate its contradictions. It is this condition of embodied friction that carries forward into the next site of instability: vocality, where sound no longer indexes coherent embodiment, but exposes the fragility of its alignment.

Vocal Indeterminacy and Sonic Disruption

If *genre inhabitation* reorganizes how sound maps onto region and history, *vocal indeterminacy* unsettles how sound aligns with the body—extending the dissonance into vocal form itself. The instability structuring *Seu Crime* extends into Vittar's vocal performance, where sound no longer corresponds to stable embodiment but intensifies the dissonance already marked in the visual field. The verses—"Você chegou e me envolveu / E o meu corpo estremeceu / Me machucou, enfraqueceu / E o tempo que passou, quem perdeu fui eu"—are delivered in a lower register initially aligned with forró's gendered conventions. Yet the lyrical content unsettles those conventions. His vocality, which sonically codes as feminine but originates from a body that unsettles the genre's gendered norms, fractures the coherence expected between sound and

embodiment. The speaker voices emotional disintegration and abandonment in terms that resist gendered assignment: neither the jilted female lover nor the remorseful male subject is clearly marked. This affective ambiguity compounds the dissonance between Vittar's visibly drag-marked body and vocal modulation, fracturing the genre's normative alignment between narrative, embodiment, and sound. When the chorus—"Seu crime foi me amar!"—breaks into higher pitch, it does not feminize the speaker but further destabilizes the coherence of voice, gender, and desire, propelled by frenetic accordion flourishes that intensify the track's emotional velocity.

This dislocation defines *vocal indeterminacy*—not as illusion but as dissonance sustained to expose the instability of gendered audibility. The modulation between verse and chorus refuses sonic coherence: the voice neither secures femininity nor confirms masculinity. Like *drag dissonance* in the visual field, *vocal indeterminacy* operates through unresolved oscillation, withholding the legibility typically demanded by popular vocal performance.

This ambiguity functions relationally. It does not perform aesthetic play but enacts a counter-colonial operation: reframing vocality as a site where classificatory regimes falter. *Forró's* historical alignment of voice and gender—reinforced through romantic duets, lyrical scripts, and timbral expectation—is disarranged by a subject whose sonic presence cannot be reconciled with normative embodiment. Rather than queering the genre through irony or deviation, Vittar performs from within, intensifying its contradictions until they lose structural coherence. *Vocal indeterminacy* is not an expressive flourish but a structuring force—disordering the colonial linkage between voice, body, and gender within *forró*, and making sonic legibility itself the terrain of counter-colonial intervention. Through *corporeidade*, this vocal presence becomes not a representation of gendered identity but a material unfolding of its instability; through

confluência, it activates a relational field in which *forró's* sonic and affective forms are reorganized by bodies historically excluded from their articulation. This reorganization does not remain sonic—it activates a broader reordering of how space and embodiment intersect, as *Seu Crime* relocates its instability onto territorial form.

Symbolic Geography and Territorial Queering

The territorial dimension of *Seu Crime* (2019) is not a scenic backdrop but a relational grammar through which queer embodiment reconfigures territorial form. Though unnamed, the video's setting evokes Brazil's interior Northeast through arid terrain, sugarcane fields, and roadside compositions—not to illustrate regional authenticity, but to reactivate a region rendered territorially illegible by national visual regimes.

Group dance scenes unfold against expansive agricultural backdrops, yet refuse folkloric staging or urban projection (Figure 10, 11). These scenes do not anchor territory in fixed visual codes; they configure it as a field of corporeal encounter and movement, where ambiguity displaces coherence. This unstable relationality echoes the suspended realism of *Boi Neon* (2015), where rural labor, gender ambiguity, and aesthetic aspiration converge without narrative resolution. Similarly, *Seu Crime* sustains *território* not as place, but as mode: an inhabited configuration shaped by friction between dominant spatial orders and embodied counter-presence.



Figure 10. Vittar and dancers framed by sugarcane field, *Seu Crime*, 2019



Figure 11. Vittar and dancers framed by structures wreathed in flames, *Seu Crime*, 2019

This instability extends into architectural thresholds. The nighttime bar scenes—illuminated by crisscrossed party lights beneath corrugated metal roofing—stage a site neither fully interior nor exterior, neither enclosed nor open. These structures refuse territorial coherence, operating as material analogues to *drag dissonance*: while Vittar's performance destabilizes gender legibility, these architectural thresholds disorganize the classificatory codes that structure territorial recognition. Just as *Então Vai* figures the estuary as a relational site between river and sea, *Seu Crime* locates its intervention in the interstices of urban and rural, mobility and stasis, visibility and enclosure. These configurations do not resolve regional identity into coherent form; they activate *território* as a relational process, sustained through dissonance rather than alignment.

The stakes of this disorganization are not merely visual but spatial and epistemic. In Brazil, territorial legibility is structured by colonial hierarchies that cast the Northeast as folkloric, peripheral, or regressive. *Seu Crime* refuses these terms by displacing representational coherence: arid landscapes, sugarcane fields, roadside bars, and corrugated thresholds do not function as backdrop but as unstable sites activated through *drag dissonance* and choreographic presence. The group dance scenes beneath strung party lights and the pursuit across open rural terrain do not stabilize region—they render it volatile. In this frame, *território* functions not as inherited geography but as method: a relational operation sustained through *confluência*, where bodies, settings, and gestures remain in tension without resolution. Through *corporeidade*, territory is not depicted but inhabited—reconfigured by the movements and presences that exceed imposed spatial classifications. Rather than affirming regional identity as coherent form, the video disarranges the classificatory systems through which region, identity, and value cohere. This territorial instability sets the conditions for the pursuit sequence, where

these destabilized regional signs—horseback riding, barroom currency, rural masculinity—become grounds for affective and cinematic disruption.

Cinematic Pursuit and Regional Masculinity

The pursuit sequence in *Seu Crime* (2019) activates *drag dissonance* at the level of cinematic form, disorganizing the visual grammar of outlaw justice through relational ambiguity. Rather than functioning as parody, Vittar's yellow truck—evocative of the Pussy Wagon from *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2004), already queered through Lady Gaga and Beyoncé's *Telephone* (2010)—circulates as a visual residue, charged with camp, spectacle, and erotic potential (Figure 12, 13). The man on horseback resists fixed narrative function: he is neither antagonist nor romantic object, but a surface through which rural



Figure 12. Beyoncé driving the yellow truck, *Telephone*, 2010



Figure 13. Vittar driving the yellow truck, *Seu Crime*, 2019

masculinity is rendered affectively available. At the bar, he is seen throwing bills bearing Vittar's face into the air—a direct visual appropriation of the R\$50 bill hoax, a far-right disinformation campaign during the 2018 election cycle that falsely claimed his image would appear on national currency (Figure 14). By restaging this fabricated symbol of moral panic within a scene of choreographed apprehension, the video reframes a classificatory attack as an aesthetic and affective citation—transforming disinformation into a performative inversion of the very legibility it once sought to disqualify. In this



Figure 14. Man at bar throwing R\$ bills with Vittar's face in the air, *Seu Crime*, 2019

frame, *Seu Crime* does not resolve the terms of pursuit, punishment, or jurisdiction—it disorganizes them through relational ambiguity, staging the very panic that sought to criminalize Vittar as the site through which classification is not restored, but rendered structurally incoherent.

The visual logic of affective masculinity resonates with *Boi Neon's* (2015) figuration of *vaqueiro* embodiment—poised, tactile, and non-verbal—which recasts masculinity as form, not assertion. *Seu Crime* extends this figuration, aligning regional maleness with erotic legibility without absorbing it into a heterosexual frame. The pursued man remains affectively opaque—his desirability marked, but his role unresolved. Vittar's *drag dissonance*—articulated through off-center camera angles, shifting eyelines, and restrained expressive movement—disrupts the logic of cinematic legibility, even as the camera persistently centers his exposed buttocks as a site of erotic excess and gendered ambiguity.

This disorientation escalates *genre inhabitation* beyond music, queering cinematic grammar through symbolic misalignment. In drawing from both Global North genre cinema and Brazilian regional cinematic traditions, the video reconfigures the antiheroic chase by queering its terms of legibility—making regional male embodiment the site of erotic tension, aesthetic projection, and epistemic reversal. Where Tarantino's films

often position stylized violence and retributive agency within a framework of spectacle—whether through hypermasculine antiheroes (*Pulp Fiction*, 1994) or hyperfeminine assassins (*Kill Bill*, 2004)—*Seu Crime* queers this structure: the outlaw is now the one being pursued, with Vittar shaping the contours of the scene. The video's initial typographic homage to *Pulp Fiction* (1994) signals this citation explicitly, but what follows is not genre mimicry—it is a reordering of cinematic grammar through *drag dissonance* and regional embodiment, where gender, narrative, and territorial codes are held in suspension rather than resolved. The exaggerated cuts and stylized action sequences evoke Tarantino's aesthetic, yet the pursuit is not repetition—it is a resignification of Global North cinematic codes through the relational force of *travestilidade*, inhabiting cinematic grammar only to disorganize its assumptions. The outlaw becomes the pursued, and justice is no longer resolved through retaliation, but suspended in the ambiguity of desire. In this configuration, regional aesthetics—horseback riding, dirt roads, physical labor—become the grounds of epistemic reordering, where masculine legibility is rendered incomplete. Rather than reframing masculinity as an object of queer desire, *Seu Crime* enacts masculinity and queerness as co-constituted through visual instability.

Travesti Power and the Incoherence of Closure

The final sequence of *Seu Crime* recasts resolution as suspension, neither resolving the video's instability nor subsuming it within erotic closure. The setting—read variously as prison, stable, or enclosure—refuses semantic coherence, functioning as a carceral threshold where classificatory regimes are not inverted but undone. A kiss—deliberately staged between Vittar and the pursued man—reworks the specter of travesti criminalization into a direct confrontation with power, desire, and historical erasure (Figure 15, 16). Yet this confrontation does not culminate in defiance or triumph. The act

is not symbolic reparation or transgressive climax; it is a suspended gesture that refuses containment, evoking not recognition or resolution but ambiguity intensified to the point of structural fracture. Straddling him in extended gestures of proximity—



Figure 15. Vittar engaged in a kiss with their captive, *Seu Crime*, 2019



Figure 16. Vittar dominating in the cell, *Seu Crime*, 2019

alternating between assertive stillness, solitary dance, and domination—Vittar reframes the cell not as a site of confinement but as a scene of affective and epistemic disorganization. This ambiguous contact displaces both juridical punishment and erotic narrative into a choreography of instability. Here, the three modalities converge not as aesthetic flourishes but as structuring operations. *Drag dissonance* fractures gender legibility across scenes of dominance and stillness; *vocal indeterminacy* disorients the sonic codes through which erotic and disciplinary authority are typically stabilized; and *genre inhabitation* inflects the visual narrative with outlaw resonance, undoing the coherence of justice as institutional form. The kiss does not resolve these tensions—it sustains them. *Seu Crime's* opening titles place “crime” in quotation marks, prefiguring the final sequence’s epistemic disorganization by framing the category itself as unstable and contested. Staged without affective climax or reconciliation, it asserts neither triumph nor punishment, but holds erotic legibility in suspension, foregrounding desire as a force that resists consolidation. This gesture retroactively reframes the earlier bar scene not only as a parody of juridical pursuit, but as a reactivation of the R\$50 bill hoax’s central

provocation: whose love is cast as criminal? In this formulation, *Seu Crime* names not just erotic misalignment, but a political disordering—where queerness, regionality, and anti-normative desire converge as structural threats to national legibility. The performance transforms classificatory panic into aesthetic ambiguity, rendering the crime not as an act, but as a relational condition disqualified by normative order.

Travestilidade operates here as the suspension of the coordinates through which criminality, gender, and desire are rendered intelligible. The kiss is not a subversive declaration—it is a refusal to resolve the very instabilities the video has sustained. Its duration, affective charge, and setting compose a grammar of ambiguity through which the modalities of *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* converge—not to conclude, but to suspend. Travesti desire is not presented as a crime, but as that which destabilizes the terms of criminalization itself—not as exception, but as epistemic force. This refusal of disciplinary resolution does not restore coherence; it intensifies the aesthetic, affective, and political instability through which Vittar enacts counter-colonial praxis.

This convergence aligns with what *confluência* names: the coexistence of elements that remain in tension—proximity without absorption, relation without synthesis. *Travestilidade* structures the scene as epistemic charge: a visual and affective grammar through which discipline, eroticism, and spectacle are disarranged. The travesti-coded body no longer appears as the object of containment, but as the relational force that holds the scene in instability without resolving it. This is not representation; it is embodiment as refusal.

Seu Crime does not reclaim the cell as queer space, nor does it stage a counter-heroic reversal. It renders the threshold incoherent. Through the sustained interplay of

modalities, the scene enacts a counter-colonial praxis in which recognition is neither sought nor rejected, but rendered structurally impossible. Power circulates not through dominance, but through friction; not through visibility, but through misalignment. Unlike *Pulp Fiction* (1994), where power and submission are violently negotiated through the spectacle of violation, *Seu Crime* refuses to reinstate patriarchal control, framing travesti-coded embodiment as the force that disorganizes authority without reproducing its terms. This refusal—to resolve desire, to stabilize gender, to naturalize territory—activates *confluência* not as harmony, but as persistent dissonance. It is in this condition of suspended legibility that the insurgent force of Vittar's Brazilian queer performance becomes intelligible.

Conclusion: Refusal as Praxis, Dissonance as Method

This chapter has argued that *Então Vai* (2017) and *Seu Crime* (2019) enact a situated counter-colonial praxis that emerges from the historical field of Brazilian queer performance—not as a demand for visibility, but as a disarticulation of the frameworks that govern its terms. Through *genre inhabitation*, *vocal indeterminacy*, and *drag dissonance*, Pabllo Vittar does not seek legitimacy within dominant cultural regimes but renders their authority contingent—refusing the gendered, racialized, and regional grammars that have historically structured desirability and exclusion. These performance modalities, far from abstract aesthetic choices, extend a lineage of embodied incoherence established by figures such as Madame Satã, Ney Matogrosso, and Lacreia, who negotiated public space, sonic codes, and spectacle under regimes of containment and risk.

Vittar's Brazilian queer performance activates these modalities through the curated form of music video. His reconfiguration of Northeastern territory and musical

form unsettles genre hierarchies that render regional aesthetics peripheral. His refusal of seamless gender illusion—performed through visual and sonic dissonance—positions incoherence not as deficiency, but as method. In doing so, it does not merely disrupt norms; it compels viewers to confront the instability and labor through which gender is produced, suspending the certainties demanded by classificatory coherence. Yet these acts do not resolve the structural conditions they expose: dissonance remains a racialized and gendered site of misrecognition, particularly where *pardo* embodiment and *travestilidade* disorganize normative codes of visibility, erotic legibility, and cultural legitimacy. Inhabiting dissonance deliberately, Vittar makes visible how indeterminacy itself is regulated—fetishized, constrained, and disqualified within Brazilian cultural imaginaries.

In *Seu Crime*, this logic intensifies: the video stages classificatory panic itself—figured through the R\$50 bill hoax and the suspended grammar of pursuit—as an aesthetic site of epistemic disorganization, where region, desire, and juridical legibility are rendered structurally unstable. What emerges is not a reassertion of political coherence through spectacular subversion, but a sustained tension that holds contradiction as form—mobilizing ambiguity as a disarranging force within dominant visual, sonic, and territorial codes.

Vittar's work does not project a sovereign queer futurity. Instead, it sustains historical dissonance as a mode of world-making—a refusal of containment that reopens the question of who may appear, sound, and be legitimized in Brazilian popular culture, and on what terms. This sustained dissonance establishes the aesthetic groundwork for the classificatory encounters that would later enable his unprecedented occupation of national symbolic space. The modalities analyzed here—*drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy*—function as technologies of relational disruption that prepare

the ground for the more volatile territorial negotiations of live performance. By withholding resolution into either marginality or legitimacy, these videos demonstrate how Vittar's counter-colonial praxis generates recognition not by escaping classificatory systems, but by disarranging the political, erotic, and territorial logics through which they sustain authority.

Chapter 5. Empirical Analysis II: Territorial Occupation and Embodied Intervention in Pablllo Vittar's Live Performances

If *Então Vai* (2018) and *Seu Crime* (2019) articulated Pablllo Vittar's counter-colonial praxis within the visual economy of the music video—where *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* exposed and resignified colonial constructions of gender, race, and regionality—then it is in live performance that these performance modalities are territorially embedded and relationally enacted. Unlike the semiotic containment of curated audiovisual formats, live performance enacts a relational and affective inhabitation of space, generating ephemeral but potent *territórios* in Santos's (2006) sense—where movement, sound, and collective presence reorganize dominant spatial and symbolic hierarchies. Live performance marks the most materially grounded dimension of this praxis, engaging sound, body, and region not as representation but as embodied spatial force. Where Chapter 4 analyzed these performance modalities within music video economies, this chapter turns to their most spatially embedded form: live performance as territorial and relational reordering.

This enactment is historically situated within Brazilian music's territorial infrastructures, particularly across the North and Northeast. As Bahia (2015), Marques (2011a, 2012b), and Oliveira (2020) show, vernacular genres such as *brega*, *forró eletrônico*, and *tecnobrega* have long functioned as affective and epistemic systems—resignifying space through sonic saturation, choreographic intimacy, and localized infrastructures. Bahia's analysis of aparelhagem culture in Pará, Marques's account of sensorial forró practices in Ceará, and Oliveira's theorization of independent festivals as territorial resignification assemblages in Bahia foreground how regional publics generate relational modes of inhabiting space. These performances are not decorative expressions but territorial acts—producing alternative grammars of presence, affiliation, and spatial

legibility through sound, movement, and collective embodiment. As Nicholus (2020) shows in the context of queer engagements with *festas juninas* in Rio Grande do Norte, these practices also foreground embodied ways of knowing through which racialized and gendered bodies reorganize the affective and territorial orders that structure Brazilian public life.

The 2024 *Batidão Tropical* tour constitutes a consequential moment in Vittar's trajectory—occurring in the year following his historic appearance at Lula's inauguration and immediately after his collaboration with Madonna before an audience of 1.6 million at her Copacabana concert (BBC Newsround, 2024), arguably the height of his national and international visibility. At this apex of mainstream recognition, he toured Brazil performing an album composed almost entirely of *forró* and *brega* classics from the 1990s and 2000s—genres marked by affective excess, vocal theatricality, and histories of classed and regional exclusion, which Vittar reconfigures through openly queer articulation as the organizing logic of performance. Rather than receiving institutional validation, these forms persist through vernacular infrastructures that resignify public space through rhythm, proximity, and relational intensity. As Bahia (2015) and Marques (2011a, 2012b) show, they function not as aesthetic supplements but as epistemic and territorial systems—where working-class publics, travestis, and gender-dissident figures reconfigure dominant frameworks of value and legibility. These case studies are not isolated events, but enactments of Vittar's counter-colonial praxis in which *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy*—materialized through vernacular sound and embodied presence—reorganize the dominant spatial grammars structuring Brazilian territorial recognition.

Understanding live performance as epistemic method requires a shift from representational readings to a treatment of performance as material enactment through

which identity, affiliation, and memory are constituted. This chapter mobilizes a counter-colonial framework to treat live performance not only as affective encounter but as a territorial and epistemic intervention grounded in Brazil's racialized and regional histories. Such an approach foregrounds how live performance produces knowledge through sound, embodiment, and presence—especially when enacted by bodies rendered illegible or disposable within colonial spatial regimes. Addressing a key methodological gap, this comparative ethnographic analysis moves beyond existing scholarship on Vittar's symbolic media presence to examine how his performance modalities operate across Brazil's stark regional and economic disparities. By contrasting São Paulo—Brazil's most affluent and cosmopolitan city—with Teresina—the capital of one of its most marginalized states—this chapter traces how Vittar's counter-colonial praxis engages and reconfigures divergent territorial conditions and cultural infrastructures.

Dissident embodiments—including Vittar's own—generate knowledge not through discursivity but through situated, affective, and territorial enactment. In this frame, performance is epistemically generative: not a representation of identity, but a relational act that produces knowability and affirms historical legibility. *Território* deepens this account by articulating space as a dialectical formation of systems of objects and systems of actions. Vittar's concerts, understood in these terms, constitute counter-colonial spatial acts: they resignify dominant territorial formations—structured by whiteness, cisheteronormativity, and regional marginalization—through the activation of vernacular genres and spatial reordering via corporeal excess, amplified sound, and queer collectivity.

As Reason (2006) argues, live performance is not apprehended solely in the moment but persists through traces—photographs, fieldnotes, audience memory—that shape its afterlife and social legibility. For minoritized publics, whose presence is

continually deferred or misrecognized, these mediated traces function not as documentation but as fragments through which alternative knowledge practices circulate, resignify, and endure beyond institutional frames of intelligibility. The ephemeral nature of live performance becomes part of its enactment—its inability to be fully contained or archived within institutional regimes of meaning. For marginalized publics—particularly those whose queer, racialized, or regional embodiments have been historically rendered illegible—this transience is not a limitation but a mode of sustained enactment: a way of asserting presence through forms that elude containment and endure beyond institutional legibility.

São Paulo and Teresina: Comparative Territories of Counter-Colonial Articulation

The São Paulo–Teresina pairing traces Vittar’s counter-colonial praxis across two distinct registers of territorial engagement: São Paulo’s hyper-mediated urban platform tests how regional aesthetics function within spaces of national spectacle and metropolitan visibility, while Teresina’s festa junina setting examines how those same aesthetics operate within their originating cultural contexts—where forró and brega signify not as exotic markers of regional difference but as lived vernacular forms embedded in Northeastern territorial life. This comparison illuminates how authenticity, cultural authority, and territorial affiliation are differently constructed and contested across Brazil’s uneven geographical and economic landscape. The two live performances analyzed in this chapter took place during the winter of 2024, selected from five concerts attended as part of ethnographic fieldwork in São Paulo (SP), São Luís (MA), Teresina (PI), Araraquara (SP), and Brasília (DF). They also exemplify divergent modes of engagement: hypervisible national staging versus embedded regional festivity. These events clarify how Vittar’s counter-colonial praxis responds to distinct infrastructural and

symbolic conditions, from metropolitan Pride platforms to vernacular festa junina circuits. While São Paulo's performance unfolded at the 28th Parada do Orgulho LGBTQ+, a nationalized site of queer recognition, Teresina's was situated within the XLVI Encontro Nacional de Folguedos, rooted in Northeastern expressive tradition. Though aligned in musical repertoire, each performance enacted counter-colonial reconfigurations of public space through *corporeidade*, *confluência*, and embodied sound—activating different configurations of *território*, from São Paulo's resignified national legibility to Teresina's dense affirmation of regional presence.

At the 28th Parada do Orgulho LGBTQ+ in São Paulo, Vittar's live performance intervention enacted territorial reordering through genre, choreography, visual citation, and amplified inhabitation of public space. The 25-song setlist drew entirely from *Batidão Tropical* and *Batidão Tropical Vol. 2*, placing regional popular culture from Brazil's North and Northeast at the center of one of the country's most mediatized public events. The concert unfolded atop a *trio elétrico* moving through the city's central avenues under cloudless bright blue skies—recalling institutionalized festivities such as Carnaval—and was shared with other members of the public, including federal deputy Erika Hilton, one of the first two transgender women elected to Brazil's Chamber of Deputies, who currently represents São Paulo (Figure 17). Vittar's countertenor voice cut through the corridor of skyscrapers, carried by frenetic accordion riffs, horns, drums, and tecnobrega synthesizers. The sonic field—urgent, nostalgic, and excessive—resignified Avenida Paulista's corporate spatial order with rhythmic saturation and affective density. This enactment operates as a temporary reconfiguration of *território*: an inhabited space produced through specific actions, in this case, through embodied sound and queer regional visibility within a historically financial and heteronormative urban corridor.



Figure 17. Vittar, dancers atop *trio elétrico*. Photo by author, 2024

Vittar wore a long wavy blonde wig, rhinestone-encrusted denim shorts ripped to expose his buttocks, and a glittering green-and-yellow Brazilian football jersey bearing his name and *Batidão Tropical Vol. 2*—reminiscent of the one worn by him and Madonna at her Copacabana concert weeks earlier, where the two performed together draped in the Pride flag. Once signifying far-right nationalism through its adoption by Bolsonaro and his supporters, the jersey here signaled a shifting terrain: resignified in Pride and pop spectacle, it circulated anew as a symbol of inclusive *Brasildade*. Rather than referencing a fixed identity or national unity, this gesture reconfigured the visual grammar of national legibility through Brazilian queer performance—aligning regional genre and gender dissidence with a reimagined public symbol. Yet this moment of spectacular state recognition unfolded within the same structural conditions that render queer and regional bodies systematically expendable—the contradiction that enabled Vittar’s ascent while preserving the classificatory violence structuring Brazilian public life.

Vittar’s performance staged a deliberate inhabitation of regional genre, not merely as homage but as territorial resignification: the references to Joelma Mendes and

Mylla Karvalho—icons of *brega calypso*—inflected his choreography with embodied memory and visual excess. Solo choreographies, vibrant costuming, and his shouted invocation of Karvalho's "E o quê?" reactivated Northern and Northeastern popular vocabularies in a context of national visibility. His vocal performance oscillated between melodic registers and affective intensities, resisting gendered legibility and foregrounding *vocal indeterminacy* as a technique of *drag dissonance*. These practices engage corporeidade: forms of embodied knowledge generated through bodily performance, affective relationality, and spatial disidentification. Rather than explaining or narrating these genres, Vittar draws on them as epistemic gestures—producing affective knowledge through the performance itself. This engagement builds on what *forró* and *brega* already make possible: genres marked by dramatic expressivity, embodied vulnerability, and rhythmic excess—qualities that exceed normative containment and have long encoded queer potential even when not explicitly framed as such.

Eight male ensemble dancers of mixed racial backgrounds in sleeveless, color-coordinated tops amplified this aesthetic grammar, enacting sensual synchrony without engaging normative masculinity. A moment of aesthetic convergence occurred when Vittar performed a cover of Forró do Muído's brassy early 2000s hit *São Amores* directly in front of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), its facade draped in a massive Pride flag. At the apex of the parade route, this scene crystallized how genre, voice, and body aligned in an act of affective presence (Figure 18).

As Reason (2006) notes, performance leaves behind traces—visual, sonic, and mnemonic—that structure its ongoing reception and afterlife. The convergence of these elements in this moment—queer embodiment, regional genre, and national symbolism—extends the performance's territorial effect beyond the ephemeral event. The crowd—diverse across age, race, and gender—surged around the *trio*, singing, dancing, shouting,

and consuming. Pride flags, balloons, clacking handheld fans, and red Brahma beer umbrellas turned Avenida Paulista into a fugitive sensorial field (Figure 19). This was more than a Pride performance; it was a territorial intervention—resignifying dominant



Figure 18. Vittar, the crowd, and MASP. *Brazil News*, Patrícia Devorae, 2024



Figure 19. Crowd level, Avenida Paulista. *Photo by author*, 2024

spatial and national symbols through queer embodiment, regional genre, and the performative force of dissonance. Such interventions, following Santos (2006), are not symbolic alone but materially rearrange *território* through action, transforming who is seen, heard, and felt within urban public space. In doing so, Vittar exposed queer regional presence to forms of national spectacle that have historically marginalized both—asserting not only aesthetic legitimacy but cultural centrality in a space where neither is presumed to belong.

Although Vittar does not consistently frame his musical decisions in explicitly political terms, the context and structure of those choices enact a deliberate intervention within Brazil's cultural hierarchies. Projects such as *Batidão Tropical*, his refusal to whiten regional genres, and his performance of *forró* and *brega* at Lula's inauguration articulate a sustained effort to elevate historically devalued sonic traditions.

As Chapter 2 outlined, regional exclusion in Brazil operates through more than economic marginalization—it enacts epistemic violence by disqualifying certain cultural forms from being recognized as knowledge. Vittar’s re-centering of Northeastern and Northern sounds positions them as legitimate within national pop, not through appeal or representation, but through embedded performance. His actions reflect a form of agency grounded in performance rather than proclamation. Earlier queer figures often worked within metropolitan circuits where regional identity was not foregrounded; in contrast, Vittar affirms it as the condition of his visibility.

In Teresina, Pablio Vittar’s performance at the XLVI Encontro Nacional de Folguedos enacted a different territorial register—shaped not by national hypervisibility but by communal festivity and public cultural infrastructure. Like the São Paulo show, the setlist consisted entirely of tracks from *Batidão Tropical* and *Batidão Tropical Vol. 2*. *Forró* and *brega*—already embedded in the everyday sonic and affective landscape of Brazil’s North and Northeast—were here engaged not as nostalgic citations but as living, relational forms. Staged during a week of *feita junina* celebrations at a state-funded, open-air venue adjacent to a large *quadrilha junina*, the concert unfolded amid food stalls, a ferris wheel, and regional décor—affirming its embedment in popular festivity rather than pop-cultural exceptionality. The riverside setting of Teresina—located at the confluence of the Parnaíba and Poti rivers in Bispo dos Santos’s native Piauí—echoes the spatial grammar of *Então Vai* (2017), where riverbanks become territórios of relationality, ritual, and shared presence. In this setting, live performance materializes not on neutral ground but within a cosmology of *confluência*, where historically entangled knowledges and bodies reshape space through embodied co-presence. Unlike in metropolitan contexts where Northeastern genres risk being framed as ironic or appropriative, here Vittar’s performance was received as a continuation—his legitimacy as a *forró* and *brega*

artist assumed rather than contested, grounded in regional intimacy and shared aesthetic memory.

Early in the performance, Vittar addressed the crowd directly: “Here from Piauí, which I love so much. Please, everyone, don’t let me go so long without seeing you. Where’s the LGBTQIAN+ community? Remember that our place is wherever we want to be. And today, I’m in Teresina!” (P. Vittar, personal communication, July, 2024, translation mine)¹⁸. This invocation was not rhetorical but territorial: a performative articulation of situated presence that transformed affective attachment into spatial presence. In Santos’s (2006) terms, this constituted an *ação*—a situated act that, combined with the sonic *objetos* of *brega* and *forró*, reconfigured the site as an inhabited *território*. Such acts enact *confluência* to make dissident presence knowable within historically exclusionary cultural forms. The queer call to presence did not override the *feita junina*—it resignified its spatial grammar through embodied excess and affective resonance. Here, the stakes lay in the quiet radicalism of reorienting *território* without spectacle—affirming that regional queerness requires no exceptional framing to transform collective memory, affiliation, and cultural meaning from within.

Vittar appeared in a striking two-piece outfit: a high-cut pink sequined skirt, a yellow belt with a circular buckle, and a sparkly pink and yellow asymmetrical halter top adorned with satin bows—outfitted to reveal more skin than even his São Paulo look, exposing his buttocks with only a visible string in back. A light magenta wig and iridescent fabrics catching the stage lights amplified the Y2K doll-like aesthetic, stylized through brega-pop visuality. The performance drew heavily from Joelma Mendes and Mylla Karvalho’s iconography, again engaging exaggerated textures, pastel palettes, and

¹⁸ “Aqui do Piauí, que eu tanto amo. Por favor, gente, não me deixem ficar sem tanto tempo sem vocês. Cadê a comunidade LGBTQIAN+? Lembrem-se que o nosso lugar é onde a gente quiser estar. E hoje, eu tô em Teresina!” (P. Vittar, 2024, as translated by the author)

choreographic excess. Vittar was flanked by the same set of dancers from the São Paulo show, now dressed in color-coordinated looks that extended the aesthetic coherence of the performance. These visual and choreographic citations did not register as ironic, but as situated expressions of *brega* and *forró*'s intertwined genealogies—genres whose circulation across the North and Northeast reflects both regional fluidity and cultural specificity.

Yet within this scene of continuity, Vittar's performance resignified the gendered scripts historically embedded in these genres' dominant performance traditions. As Ferreira and Pinheiro (2022) show, *forró eletrônico* has long circulated *masculinidades hegemônicas* in Northeastern performance circuits—particularly through the figure of the *playboy pegador*, whose presence affirms virility through sexual conquest and emotional detachment. Rather than moving beyond the genre's affective codes, Vittar engaged them on different terms: reworking their sensory and relational logics through *drag dissonance*, choreographic softness, and unscripted intimacy. This live articulation of *drag dissonance* refracted the aesthetic codes of *travestilidade* without appropriating them—sustaining the visual and affective ambiguity through which normative gender legibility becomes structurally incoherent. Where in music video form this ambiguity was curated through cinematic control, here it emerged through the contingencies of gesture, drag, and audience response, foregrounding how *drag dissonance* in live performance amplifies *travestilidade*'s epistemic force without claiming its social category.

During his cover of Banda Magníficos's ballad *Me Usa*, a young girl perched on an adult's shoulders was brought onstage, where Vittar briefly held and danced with her before gently returning her to the crowd (Figure 20). Later, during *Falta Coragem*—a duet recorded with cearense *forró eletrônico* artist Taty Girl—a gender non-conforming teenager rushed the stage, singing along breathlessly before security intervened. Vittar

allowed them to remain, singing and dancing alongside them in a moment of visible queer recognition, with the brightly lit and colorfully adorned quadrilha junina visible through the stage's scaffolding (Figure 21). In its immediacy and generosity, the gesture conjured a counterfactual: what it might have meant for Vittar, as a young queer gender non-conforming person in Maranhão or Pará, to have been offered that same experience of public softness, safety, and affirmation. It was a reversal as much as a repetition: Vittar, who once found in Joelma a model of ecstatic femininity and regional strength, now inhabited that role for another queer, gender non-conforming youth, transmitting not



Figure 20. Vittar and young girl.
Photo by author, 2024



Figure 21. Vittar and gender non-conforming fan. Photo by author, 2024

only admiration but a moment of mutual recognition shaped by parallel histories. These moments recall the affective and relational politics of presence established in travestis' participation in Northeastern party circuits, as discussed by Marques (2011a, 2012b), where bodies marked as non-normative do not merely occupy space but reconstitute it through pleasure, improvisation, and dissonant legibility. Vittar's performance refracts aesthetic codes associated with *travestilidade* as relational tension—resignifying

normative gender order through a grammar of embodied practice shaped by Northern and Northeastern queer performance.

The crowd—estimated at around three thousand and demographically varied—responded with the same ecstatic affect as in São Paulo. Vittar’s vocal performance in Teresina sustained the instability of embodiment already marked in gesture and drag. His countertenor voice—resonant, unmodulated, and emotionally exposed—did not resolve into feminine or masculine coding, but floated between registers, intensifying the affective dissonance that structured both musical expression and gendered audibility. This *vocal indeterminacy* mirrored the relational ambiguity of the performance space itself, where queer presence unsettled the normative terms of *forró’s* sonic tradition. Vittar’s live band filled the open-air space with layered instrumentation, while the ambient sounds of the surrounding *feita junina*—vendors, music, conversation—bled into the performance’s sonic field. If, as Ferreira and Pinheiro (2022) argue, *forró eletrônico* operates through situated “language games” that naturalize gender intelligibility through repetition, Vittar’s performance rerouted those games—inhabiting the codes of *forró* without reproducing their normative gendered frameworks. The concert did not stand apart from the *feita junina* context but reconfigured its affective and aesthetic coordinates from within. If the São Paulo performance intervened in a nationally visible symbolic order, the Teresina show affirmed and subtly reframed regional cultural practices by rendering them hospitable to queer visibility, public tenderness, and forms of identification that exceed the masculinist terms historically staged on *forró eletrônico* stages. This performance reclaimed a cultural terrain long shaped by hegemonic masculinity—not by rejecting its forms, but by inhabiting and queering them from within—asserting that regional memory and queer embodiment are not antithetical, but co-constitutive forces in the making of Northeastern public life.

Rather than constituting performance in the representational sense, these enactments operate as embodied interventions into territorial form. In São Paulo, the reconfiguration operated through symbolic density, genre dissonance, and the resignifying of national iconography. In Teresina, the intervention was quieter yet no less radical: the subtle redirection of festivity's affective and aesthetic terms through gestures of queer recognition and regional continuity. Both instances demonstrate how Vittar's counter-colonial praxis operates not through opposition alone but through relational reordering—enacting *confluência*, engaging *corporeidade*, and transforming concert space into *território* shaped through sound, memory, and presence. Rather than forming a unified performance logic, they enact a mode of *confluência*: a gathering of distinct territorial grammars and affective intensities that operate across divergent scales of visibility and infrastructural support—resignifying both the spectacular terms of national recognition and the localized terms of regional festivity. These variations do not dilute the political force of counter-colonial praxis; rather, they show how that force is conditioned and made legible within Brazil's uneven cultural topography. These concerts exemplify how *território* functions as a counter-colonial spatial method: through the dialectical encounter between systems of objects and systems of actions, marginalized cultural forms reconfigure institutional space and generate the friction through which colonial hierarchies are rendered unstable. Rather than signaling seamless integration into existing spatial orders, these performances demonstrate how *território* emerges from classificatory instabilities that reveal recognition systems' reliance on the very incoherence they claim to exclude.

**Conclusion: Live Performance Practice as
Counter-Colonial Territorial Method**

Pablo Vittar's São Paulo and Teresina concert stagings instantiate live performance not as spectacle or representation, but as counter-colonial territorial praxis. These events do not simply express queerness or regionality; they function as spatial and epistemic interventions that reorganize normative distributions of cultural value, legitimacy, and legibility. In São Paulo, Vittar reconfigured national iconography and urban space through the inhabitation of Avenida Paulista with amplified regional genre, *drag dissonance*, and gendered ambiguity—dislodging dominant associations of Brasília from their cisheteronormative and whitened coordinates. In Teresina, his performance reoriented the affective and aesthetic grammars of *feita junina* through unscripted gestures of recognition, activating the relational logics of *confluência* embedded in Northeastern territorial life.

Across both sites, Vittar's performance did not seek symbolic inclusion or enact formal transgression. These concerts mobilized *corporeidade*: knowledge production grounded in the spatial, affective, and relational capacities of racialized and gendered embodiment. In this frame, sound, gesture, and memory are not expressive supplements but structuring forces—techniques through which territory is reorganized in the immediacy of collective presence. By inhabiting regional genres historically disqualified by Brazil's prestige economy, and activating them through *vocal indeterminacy*, choreographic excess, and relational proximity, Vittar enacts *corporeidade* not as reference but as operative form. These performances do not impose queerness onto forró and brega, but draw out their latent affective intensities—qualities long marked by incoherence and disqualification. What emerges is not a staging of identity, but an activation of counter-colonial memory through sonic and embodied tension.

This chapter has shown that the performance modalities of *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, and *vocal indeterminacy* do not merely translate from video to stage, but

become structurally embedded in live performance practice—reconfiguring território not symbolically, but operationally. In both São Paulo and Teresina, these modalities functioned relationally to reorganize the epistemic and spatial coordinates of performance: generating fugitive zones of presence where dominant mappings of gender, race, and region were rendered unstable. These concerts do not recuperate erased identities; they activate a counter-epistemology grounded in affective persistence, situated sound, and embodied historical force.

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, regional exclusion in Brazil is not reducible to aesthetic marginality, but entails a form of epistemic violence that disqualifies certain bodies and genres from producing knowledge. Vittar's performance responds by refusing representation and instead reorganizing the terms of appearance themselves. His live sets do not invoke *forró* and *brega* as heritage but reaffirm them as operational grammars—transmitting memory, affiliation, and political charge through rhythm, gesture, and collective presence. These ephemeral collectivities—formed on Avenida Paulista and at the Encontro Nacional de Folguedos—did not operate as symbolic gatherings. They functioned as performative assemblages of *confluência*, remapping public space through friction, proximity, and sonic excess.

Live performance, in this context, is not a site of recovery but of structural reordering. Vittar's concerts do not stabilize queer or regional identity; they materialize the incoherence through which cultural authority is distributed and withheld. The concert stage becomes *território*: a contested formation in which relational movement, amplified sound, and dissident embodiment coalesce to disarrange classificatory regimes. As these case studies show, *território* is not inherited—it is enacted through situated action. The performances analyzed here clarify how Vittar's Brazilian queer performance, in its most materially grounded form, functions as a counter-colonial territorial method:

not by symbolizing resistance, but by reorganizing the spatial and epistemic architectures through which recognition is structured and denied.

Conclusion: Existence, Territory, and Cultural Refusal in Brazil

This thesis has shown that Pabllo Vittar's queer performance functions as counter-colonial praxis, challenging colonial constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and territory in Brazilian popular culture. Through music video and live performance—situated within the historically structured field of Brazilian queer performance—the thesis demonstrated that Vittar's work does not seek visibility within dominant regimes of recognition. Instead, it mobilizes *drag dissonance*, *vocal indeterminacy*, and *genre inhabitation* as structuring performance modalities that intervene in how legitimacy is distributed across aesthetic, territorial, and epistemic lines. These modalities do not express identity; they enact contradiction—by staging presence through gendered and sonic instability, inhabiting culturally subordinated genres as sites of intervention, and destabilizing the coherence on which recognition depends. This contradiction reveals classificatory coherence as an ongoing project requiring constant maintenance rather than a natural state. Vittar's Brazilian queer performance, shaped by lived conditions of racial ambiguity, regional exclusion, and gendered precarity, does not resolve marginality but works from within it—reordering the terms of legibility through practices that remain structurally unstable. This analysis ultimately discloses performance not as symbolic representation, but as the site in which legitimacy, affiliation, and value are produced through contradiction: where presence is enacted by inhabiting the very structures that render it untenable.

If the research question has oriented this project analytically, what has come into view across the process is a deeper, ontological horizon: not only how Pabllo Vittar performs counter-colonial praxis, but how someone like Pabllo Vittar comes to exist at all—as a cultural possibility within Brazil's contested cultural terrain. This is neither a biographical nor a metaphysical question, but a political one: what forms of life are

rendered possible or impossible under colonial-modern arrangements of territory, embodiment, and legitimacy? To ask how someone like Vittar comes to exist is to ask who is permitted to appear, under what conditions, and through what forms of territorial, aesthetic, and epistemic labor such appearances are made sustainable. This shift reveals that what appears as Vittar's particular struggle for legibility actually exposes the impossible demands that classificatory systems place on all embodied existence.

The analysis began by examining how this labor operates in music videos, focusing on *Então Vai* (2017) and *Seu Crime* (2019), which intensify the unstable negotiations of visibility, containment, and conditional legitimacy through their curated visual and sonic forms. Rather than symbolic affirmations of queer presence, these works function as epistemic interventions—structured dissonances that reconfigure dominant regimes of cultural value through instability rather than resolution. *Então Vai* (2017) foregrounds queer intimacy within a hybridized soundscape, blending *rasteirinha* and *brega* to assert affective legibility without spectacle, while refusing coherent gender illusion through deliberate visual and corporeal ambiguity. *Seu Crime* (2019) escalates this intervention by mobilizing *forró* instrumentation and travesti-informed embodiment to stage a more militant reterritorialization of gender, region, and intervention. Across both works, *drag dissonance*, *vocal indeterminacy*, and *genre inhabitation* operate as analytic modalities that disclose the instability through which presence is produced. The modalities inhabit peripheral genres through queer embodiment, sustain sonic ambiguity against normative gendered vocality, and foreground the labor of gender's construction rather than resolve it into illusion. Yet if the music videos formalize these strategies within tightly controlled visual economies, they also expose a contradiction central to this praxis: that legibility is always partial, and that the work of counter-colonial intervention exceeds its representational capture. This contradiction—that legibility is

always partial—suggests that the instability Vittar navigates is not exceptional, but endemic to classificatory systems themselves. While music videos assert presence, the epistemic and territorial labor they animate cannot be confined to symbolic form—persisting instead as tension, enacted most fully in live encounter.

It was through sustained engagement with these live encounters that the focus shifted from how performance operates to what it makes possible. What emerged through fieldwork at Vittar's live performances is that even for figures who achieve visibility like Vittar—and for many queer, racialized, and regionally marginalized people in Brazil—presence remains less a stable fact than a contingent achievement. The fieldwork revealed what the inaugural moment had intimated: recognition and exclusion as interdependent rather than opposing forces. This insight is grounded in a context where such bodies remain materially vulnerable to erasure—not just symbolically, but through ongoing violence that marks such lives as disposable. The concerts revealed how presence must be continuously materialized rather than simply expressed, requiring ongoing territorial, aesthetic, and epistemic labor to sustain visibility within systems designed to foreclose it. What became visible was not identity as representation, but existence as active reconfiguration—where legitimacy is neither granted nor refused, but contested through embodied practice that refuses the colonial demand for coherence.

In live performance, the modalities theorized in this thesis—*drag dissonance*, *vocal indeterminacy*, and *genre inhabitation*—acquire additional force as methods for reading how dissonant presence operates against the grain of cultural legibility. *Genre inhabitation* revealed itself not through symbolic affirmation but through volatile territorial contradiction: the sonic saturation of São Paulo's corporate corridor with *forró* and *brega*, and the unstable legitimacy claimed within Teresina's traditional *feita junina*, exemplify how these performances disorganized the coordinates of legitimacy rather than resolve

them. The convergence of *drag dissonance* and *vocal indeterminacy* with this territorial *genre inhabitation* became visible through *confluência*—in moments when a gender non-conforming teenager rushed the stage in Teresina to sing alongside Vittar, and when thousands surged around the *trio elétrico* as Vittar performed *São Amores* beside MASP draped in the Pride flag. These enactments functioned as embodied interventions, where bodies, songs, and collective knowledge produced *territórios* that remain in tension with colonial arrangements of value and visibility. They mobilized the dissonant force latent in forms long disqualified by dominant cultural frameworks, surfacing affective and sonic intensities that resist normative containment. They did not offer stable resolution; they sustained contradiction—marking Vittar’s Brazilian queer performance not as expressive identity, but as a method of epistemic and territorial labor enacted from within structures of disqualification.

What emerges across this thesis is a shift away from seeking recognition within existing systems of classification toward exposing and disrupting the violence these systems enact—proposing alternative ways of being and knowing through sound, embodiment, and territorial practice. What this analysis ultimately reveals is that the violence of classification cannot be reformed from within because coherent categories themselves require constant enforcement against the complexity of lived existence. Thus, understanding what makes figures like Vittar possible is inseparable from reconsidering what existence itself means under conditions of structural negation. This shift calls on queer theory to reconceive existence not as a matter of visibility or identity, but as a contingent mode of survival forged through engagement with systems of racialized and regional exclusion. It involves understanding existence as something continually enacted through territorial and embodied practice—in Vittar’s case, through

modalities like *drag dissonance*, *genre inhabitation*, *vocal indeterminacy*, and collective presence rooted in *território*—and as inherently precarious, always vulnerable to erasure.

Regional identity, through Vittar's counter-colonial praxis, becomes reconfigured—where forms of cultural knowledge historically dismissed as peripheral are activated as sources of epistemic and aesthetic authority. By mobilizing *forró* and *brega*—musical genres historically subordinated within Brazil's racialized, classed, and regional hierarchies—the reconfiguration operates through *genre inhabitation*, resignifying how cultural value is remade through regional form rather than simply expressed or represented. These interventions engage the historical conditions that have cast queerness and regionality as incompatible, drawing out submerged relational grammars that persist despite regimes of negation. Through this process, Vittar's praxis repositions queer Northeastern subjectivity not simply as seeking legitimacy, but as generative in shaping Brazilian cultural life. Yet this authority remains volatile and contested. Vittar's inclusion at Lula's 2023 inauguration exposed the friction at work: regional identity may be momentarily affirmed in official rituals while the structural conditions that mark such forms as peripheral remain actively in place. This contradiction does not resolve, but persists as the condition through which regional identity operates—where the authority achieved through performance exists in unstable tension with the systems that continue to disqualify it. This is how regional identity functions as a site of counter-colonial praxis: not through the resolution of marginalization, but through the ongoing friction between what Brazilian queer performance such as Vittar's makes possible and what structural arrangements continue to foreclose.

While centered on Pabllo Vittar, this thesis suggests the need to examine whether similar modes of world-making emerge in other Global South contexts where queer performance intersects with colonial legacies of territorial, racial, and embodied

hierarchy. Rather than offering a case study, it develops a methodological approach for reading queer performance as structurally embedded labor rather than expressive identity—particularly in contexts shaped by enduring colonial formations. This shift becomes necessary because Brazilian queer cultural production cannot be fully understood through frameworks calibrated to Global North liberal visibility politics or identity-based inclusion. By grounding analysis in Brazilian counter-colonial thought—through *confluência*, *corporeidade*, and *território*—this approach highlights forms of practice and relation that remain illegible within representational frameworks. It positions performance not as the expression of identity but as the site where legibility, affiliation, and value are produced through contradiction—where presence emerges by inhabiting the very structures that render it untenable. This framework shows how bodies marked by colonial exclusion do not transcend marginality but engage it as a site of epistemic labor—reworking systems of cultural authority from within their constraints. Such an approach invites queer theory and critical cultural analysis to reconceive agency not as freedom from constraint, but as the capacity to inhabit and disorganize the terms through which exclusion is maintained.

Future research might extend this analysis by placing Vittar in dialogue with other queer artists and gender-dissident performers across Latin America and the Global South, tracking how similar modalities of dissonance, ambiguity, and embodied refusal emerge in distinct but interconnected cultural fields. Such inquiries would examine not only how marginalized performers resist classification, but how all performance reveals the ongoing labor required to maintain categorical fictions. Others might explore how dominant media systems, digital platforms, and evolving regimes of cultural control continue to absorb or engage these gestures. But at the heart of these inquiries remains the same provocation: how do those denied legitimacy make existence for themselves

possible in regimes designed to contain or erase them—and what new configurations of existence become possible in that making?

If this analysis began by asking how Pabllo Vittar's Brazilian queer performance functions as counter-colonial praxis—challenging colonial constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and territory—it now arrives at a broader question, one that emerges through, rather than beyond, that very analysis. Read in reverse, the trajectory from the concerts in Teresina and São Paulo to Vittar's appearance at Lula's 2023 inauguration reveals the full stakes: his Brazilian queer performance does not merely scale upward—it reorganizes *território* from below, revealing the Northeast as the terrain through which queer and regional life is not only made visible, but made possible. It is here, at the intersection of dissonance, territory, and cultural labor, that existence itself is renegotiated against systems built to erase it. How does someone like Pabllo Vittar come to exist—not despite contradiction, but through it? And what does this reveal about the contradictions all bodies navigate within systems that demand impossible coherence? The answer, this thesis suggests, is never singular. It is a convergence of territories, histories, and forms of knowing long dismissed. It is an identity continuously composed in relation to the margins. It is not the resolution of tension, but its sustained performance. It is a refusal to be silent. It is a song, a gesture—a dissonant voice, echoed through a crowd that sings back.

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