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Blackness, Polyamory, and Rural Sexualities in *The City of the Future*

JOSHUA K. REASON 

Trouble in the “Queer Friendly” City

On March 6, 2019, Brazil’s former right-wing president broke the internet with an unexpected question: *O que é golden shower?* (What’s a golden shower?). The question was in response to a video he posted on his Twitter account earlier that week, which portrays “one man urinating on another” during Carnival in São Paulo.¹ The president used this video as evidence for how far the country has fallen, an assertion he would use months later to prevent the change of Article 226 of the Brazilian Constitution which—due to its use of binary language—only extends legal protections to heteronormative families.² Following the president’s viral tweet, the two performance artists featured in the video became metonyms for the gender–sexual threat that his conservative political crusade vowed to eradicate.

Jeffe and Paulx—the artists captured in the viral video—engage kink, fetish, and other transgressive forms of play as a part of their performance practice. When interviewed about the video, the artists commented on the violation of what they had assumed to be a safe space, “Our audience was exclusively there. 150 people were there at that LGBT Carnival block... The person who took it out of that context was Bolsonaro.”³

The somber tone of the interview elucidates the social and political implications of the president’s tweet. As with other right-wing politicians throughout the Americas, Bolsonaro weaponized social media to distract his constituents from pressing issues, positioning the artists and other LGBTQIA + individuals as sexual perverts whose vulgar acts degrade the evangelical nation.⁴ After a social media hiatus—purging any identifiable trace of themselves on the internet—and briefly leaving São Paulo, the artists launched EdiyPorn, an audiovisual platform that specializes in experimental erotic content.⁵ Their website upends the normative logics of sexual conquest⁶ by eschewing binary correlations between identity and practice (e.g., masculine top, feminine bottom), further troubling the president’s heteronormative vision for the Brazilian nation.

This encounter with conservatism is both part and parcel of contemporary Brazilian society and exceptional in its treatment as a subversive political act. The notion that queers are engaging in public sex—corrupting the youth and destroying the traditional family—is a common fearmongering tactic among religious conservatives. Sex workers, drag queens, and others engaged in nocturnal economies are routinely subjected to verbal, physical, and psychological violence for their assumed threat to Christian morality. This performance stands out, however, for the international attention it received and its codification in national media outlets as an activist intervention. Beyond the novelty of a country’s president tweeting a pornographic video, the artists articulate the golden shower as a political act through which they open a dialogue about

“counterhegemonic sexual practices.”⁷ As an ongoing project in corporeal dissidence catalyzed by the golden shower, EdiyPorn represents a space—both digital and physical—of radical gender–sexual possibility.

Though they offer a generative critique of the previous government and its constituency, Jeffe and Paulx also reveal the limitations of the urban, cosmopolitan city. In their social media hiatus and flight from São Paulo, the artists demonstrate the double bind of the “queer friendly” city. While São Paulo possesses the physical and economic infrastructure to fulfill an array of sexual and relational desires—via gayborhoods, saunas, and pride celebrations—the safety experienced in those spaces is conditional. When expressions of gender–sexual euphoria (like the golden shower) seep into daily social and political life, LGBTQIA+ individuals become targets of cyberbullying, death threats, and other forms of violence. Tethering LGBTQIA+ liberation to urbanity runs the risk of perpetuating the consumptive logics of global gay capitalism, whereby the good gay citizen (read: white, male, cisgender, middle class, able-bodied) is desired over—and often at the expense of—those whose identities, practices, and modes of relation threaten normativity.⁸

Similarly, the focus on Southeastern Brazil—namely São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro—in public gender and sexuality discourse mirrors the history of (under)development in the nation. In his discussion of *instruments of labor*—man-made tools that make production, and its resulting modernization, possible—Bahian geographer Milton Santos argues that present orders of labor (living labor) are conditioned by previous

ones (dead labor). He uses Salvador and Recife, two capital cities in Northeastern Brazil, as examples of how labor regimes inform the incorporation of a city (or region) into the nation.⁹ It is by these logics, for example, that Brazil has two narratives around its independence: a more amicable parting from the Portuguese crown in São Paulo on September 7, 1822 and the expulsion of Portuguese troops from Salvador da Bahia on July 2, 1823. The latter, colloquially referred to as *Dois de Julho* (Second of July), is notable for the importance of Black soldiers—enslaved and free—in the fight against the Portuguese.¹⁰ One might argue that the dead labor of enslavement was transposed into the living labor of the Northern-Northeastern working class who—though written out of the national narrative of independence—built the current capital city, travel from urban peripheries to work for wealthy families in city centers, and are routinely displaced by public works projects meant to benefit all Brazilian citizens.

In this sense, the erasure of Northern-Northeastern labor in building the Brazilian nation is explicitly a racialized one. As a result of subsidized European immigration post-abolition, the incorporation of a new workforce that was considered more skilled than recently freed Black and Indigenous laborers, Southern and Southeastern Brazil have become regions of economic prosperity. This lays in stark contrast with the intentional underdevelopment of the North and Northeast, predominately Black and Indigenous regions of Brazil where resources, cultures, and bodies are continually exploited for the wealth of the rest of the nation.¹¹ The association of gender–sexual diversity with

modernity and urbanity—two concepts formulated in relation to whiteness¹²—overlaps with these regional histories, erasing the relational epistemes of Black and Indigenous communities from less prosperous areas of Brazil. The same logics that render the performance legible as radical and transformative in the metropolis position polyamory, non-monogamy, and gender–sexual fluidity as unimaginable in a non-urban context.

The present manuscript maps a different genealogy of radical gender–sexual expression, one where Black relational networks undermine histories of displacement, familial separation, and environmental degradation. Engaging *The City of the Future*,¹³ an independent film following a queer triad from the hinterlands of Bahia, this manuscript challenges the spatiality of radical relationality. Though never explicitly named, polyamory is staged in this film as a corrective to sexual conservatism, homonormativity, and regional prejudice.¹⁴ In doing so, the film offers non-urban spaces—the interior(s) of the country—as alternative geographies of radical Black pleasure and intimacy.

Staging Black Queer Relations in Brazil

Today, here and now, I invoke the Madame Satãs, the Rainha Diabas, the Bicha Largas, the Vitórias, the Marquesas, and all the other Black LGBT people that have and continue to contribute to the construction of Brazil’s national identity.¹⁵

An excerpt from the opening monologue of *Xica*—the first in a trilogy of plays that critically reimagine the persecution of

gender–sexual dissidence during the Portuguese Inquisition—the epigraph indexes a genealogy of Black femmes throughout Brazilian history. Created by *Coletivo das Liliths*, a collective of multimodal LGBTQIA+ artists based in Salvador da Bahia, *Xica* details the life and persecution of an enslaved person from present-day Congo who, according to a report from the Portuguese Holy Office, wore feminine clothing in her daily life and was known among the men of Salvador—free and unfree—as a “passive sodomite.”¹⁶ The monologue, recited by the actor who plays *Xica*, conjures this genealogy of Black femmes—known and unknown—who have played a central role in the construction of the Brazilian nation. Throughout the play, that role takes the shape of physical, emotional, and sexual labors for *Xica*’s master and the Black men of the city with whom she supposedly had sex. The speculative work of this play—the feminized renaming of *Xica*, the racial–gender–sexual euphoria she experiences from communing with her ancestors, and her refusal of the relational norms instituted by the Catholic church—unearths an underrecognized legacy of Black LGBTQIA+ life in Brazil.¹⁷

In positioning these Black femme ancestors as architects of the Brazilian nation, *Coletivo das Liliths* also reclaims the representational economy of Black LGBTQIA+ Brazilian life from the litany of cultural producers who have reduced these figures to caricatures. To understand *The City of the Future* as a transformative intervention within the visualization of Black LGBTQIA+ intimacies, one must attend to this ancestral genealogy. In the paragraphs that follow, I discuss the pivotal role of

Madame Satã (2002)¹⁸ in perpetuating a controlling image¹⁹ of Black LGBTQIA + identity: the *afeminado* (effeminate; femme). While often cited as an early example of Black gay representation, the film is rife with stereotypes that position Black femmes as rogues and aggressors, characteristics mobilized by right-winged conservatives to discriminate against Black trans and gender non-conforming folks.²⁰ After briefly reviewing the context and critique of the film, I describe the life of Jorge Lafond—popularly known as Vera Verão—as a contemporary example of how representations like *Madame Satã* limit the social imagination regarding the shape of Black LGBTQIA + sexualities and relationships.

Though less remarked upon in the genealogy of controlling images within Brazil—the domestic worker, the *mulata*, the favela resident—the *afeminado* is a recurring figure in the national media landscape. Drag queens, travestis, and *bichas* (fags) are some of the identities evoked under this term. While not all *afeminados* are Black, the representation of Black *afeminados* has consistently been that of impersonation and comic relief. In addition to the iconography of television, music, and tourism, cinema is a space where these identities are staged for (inter)national consumption.

Madame Satã—a biopic about the legacy of performer and capoeirista João Francisco dos Santos—is one such film where the hunger for representation obscures the complexity of its production. Scholars of Black Studies, Queer Studies, and Film Studies often turn to this film for its novel representation of a Black, low-income, “gay” criminal who uses everything at her disposal to

survive. Though the filmmaker characterizes her infamous *malandragem* (roguery) as an expression of gay empowerment, this interpretation does not attend to the slippage between cunning-as-survival and cunning-as-stereotype.²¹ This is evinced by the inconsistent naming of *Madame Satã* across scholarship; while most scholars agree that she was a *malandro*, they are less decided about her gender identity—drag queen, cross-dresser, non-binary—and its relationship to her gender presentation.²² I make sense of this inconsistency by considering how, when read alongside the *malandro*, these identities coalesce around individuals socially read-as-male who desire feminine recognition: *afeminados*.

Though the film honors a life and legacy that—due to the international acclaim of the film—has circulated throughout the Black LGBTQIA + diaspora, one must also acknowledge its limitations as a representation of race, gender, and sexuality in Brazil. After praising *Madame Satã* for its humanizing ending and overall synergy of storytelling (acting, sound design, visual composition), Ari Lima points to the uneven treatment of identity throughout the film:

A third and final aspect that I would like to emphasize is with respect to a rarity in Brazilian cinema, which is the interesting intersection of race, gender and sexuality presented in *Madame Satã*. Through what we hear and see in the film, we perceive the adversities of the [Black] race in Brazil, though we also perceive that white expectations regarding Black genders and sexualities generate modalities of managing and experiencing race and racism at once such

that the masculine body and homosexual that we encounter in *Madame Satã* disarticulates certainties about the male, while also reinforcing ideas and certainties about the Black body.²³

In other words, the film continues to fix race in its exploration of gender and sexuality. Though the white director and cinematographer—as well as the heterosexual Black actor interpreting the role of Madame Satã—are partially responsible for this fixity, the film reflects longstanding figurations of the Black Brazilian body. Traveling from the Northeastern hinterlands of Brazil to Rio de Janeiro at the peak of post-abolition internal migrations, *Madame Satã* reveals the impacts of colonialism and capitalism on Black relationality beyond biological families.²⁴ The film, however, eschews these complexities by distilling her legacy into an archetype of Black gender–sexual representation.

The life and legacy of Jorge Lafond—actor and television personality—reveals the stakes of depicting Black afeminados as a representational model rather than individuals with unique identities and desires. Most popular for his regular appearance on *A Praça É Nossa* (*The Plaza is Ours*) as Vera Verão, Lafond would don himself with gaudy clothing, bright makeup, and shiny accessories to perform skits for the comedy program. Despite his nationwide popularity, Lafond was physically and verbally attacked by religious conservatives such as Father Marcelo Rossi, a famous Catholic priest who told him to change into men’s clothing before his appearance on *Programa do Gugu* in 2002. This occurred months before his

passing on January 11, 2003, a result of health complications that began the week following this incident.²⁵ Given that Brazil has the highest reported murder rate of trans-femmes worldwide, it is no surprise that Lafond was subjected to femmephobic violence by the Catholic priest. This incident further demonstrates how singular, monolithic representations of marginalized communities can perpetuate harmful logics that exacerbate racial–gender–sexual violence. Though *Madame Satã* premiered towards the end of Lafond’s life, her legacy is coeval to the chorus of Black afeminados conjured in the epigraph, and many others—past and present—who continue to be misremembered as malevolent tricksters in lieu of architects of the Brazilian nation.

The current moment in Brazilian media, however, is more capacious in its treatment of Black genders, sexualities, and relations. From Liniker’s acting debut in *September Mornings* (2021) to independent producers that mobilize *satirical antiracism*²⁶ in response to mainstream caricatures of marginalized communities, the past two decades mark a notable shift in who has the power to stage—on screen and behind the camera—Black LGBTQIA+ stories. *The City of the Future* continues to unsettle earlier portrayals of Black LGBTQIA+ identities by transporting audiences to an overlooked geography of Brazilian life: the hinterlands. A fictionalized retelling of events that happened to the three protagonists, *The City of the Future* traces their polyamorous relationship alongside unfulfilled promises that the Brazilian government made to their families in the 1970s. Their love—romantic, platonic, sexual—for one another becomes a space of

refuge throughout the film, reconfiguring a zone of social abandonment²⁷ into an alternative geography for Black queer relationalities. Engaging in what Amber Jamilla Musser has called an *empathetic reading practice*,²⁸ I analyze several scenes from *The City of the Future* in which relational intimacies intervene in the structural violence experienced by the protagonists. By attending to their relationship as a loophole within the ongoing colonial project, I position polyamory as one of many radical relationalities that map routes towards more liberatory futures for Black folks across the diaspora.

An Alternative Geography for Black Queer Relationalities

The film opens with a mid-close shot of a Black couple—Gilmar Araújo and Milla Suzart—riding on a black motorcycle. Surrounded by lush green underbrush on both sides of the black gravel road, the scene conjures familiar imagery of the Brazilian hinterlands—nature accompanied by tinges of urban infrastructure. The scene then cuts to the public school where both protagonists teach, Milla in the arts and Gilmar in history. Their lessons for the day coalesce around the history of the hinterlands, the displacement of their families from settlements along the San Francisco River beginning in the 1970s. While Gilmar screens a black-and-white documentary—the jovial music and omniscient narration eerily reminiscent of government-sponsored propaganda—about migrations to their community, Milla coaches a student sharing a monologue about the realities of those migrations. Lack of electricity, potable water, and suitable

housing underscore the student's story, leading to the separation of her family.²⁹ Foregrounded by the intimacy shared between Gilmar and Milla, these scenes establish a textured sense of place that holds audiences accountable to both the natural beauty of the Bahian interior—a popular vacation destination for Brazilians living in urban environments—and its overwhelming lack of resources.

A few scenes later, after a conversation over lunch with his mom, Gilmar is picked up by Igor Santos, a local ranch hand and his boyfriend. Riding a red motorcycle on an unpaved dirt road, Igor takes Gilmar to a secluded area with slender white trees, a staple of the semi-arid forests that make up the hinterlands. Entering a cavern with prehistoric paintings, Igor asks Gilmar if he remembers the first time they came to this spot. Gilmar responds by shining the flashlight on Igor's face and pulling him closer, sharing a kiss in the near pitch darkness of the cavern. The moist, crisp sound design of the scene draws us into the sensual textures of the hinterlands, dark spaces where queer intimacies become possible. The scene is interspersed with footage of Milla kissing her friend—a white girl with red hair—by the San Francisco River.³⁰ The mirroring of their relationships—to one another, to their students, to their lovers, to the landscape—establishes *The City of the Future* as a film about Black queer relationalities. In the first 10 minutes of the film, we are introduced to the Northeastern hinterlands as a geography where Black folks—in the company of one another and other loving partners—steal moments of intimacy in forests, caverns, rivers, hallways, and other architectures of rural life.

Amid the structural violence of urbanization, Gilmar, Milla, and Igor find refuge in each other. *The City of the Future* focuses on their attempts at building a home—physical and affective—with one another in the hinterlands, a feat complicated by sexual conservatism and economic precarity. Their love story is told alongside the history of Serra do Ramalho, an interior city of Bahia created to relocate more than 20,000 families during the construction of the Sobradinho Dam (1971–1982). Given the nickname the “city of the future” by the military dictatorship, Serra do Ramalho was built to fulfill the government’s promise of sustainable infrastructure, economic prosperity, and easy access to the river. However, these families were relocated 20 kilometers away from the river, and 800 kilometers away from their original homes.³¹ It is in this context that the queer intimacies throughout this film are forged and foregrounded, modes of surviving and coping with the precarity brought on by displacement, environmental racism, and social abandonment.

While the threats of homophobic and misogynistic violence are palpable throughout the film, they are by no means exceptional. The filmmakers demonstrate that just like in urban environments, LGBTQIA+ individuals from the hinterlands find spaces and moments for intimacy right where they are. This is salient towards the middle of the film when Igor asks Milla if the baby is his as well. Milla responds affirmatively, telling him that “it’s mine, Gilmar’s, and yours.” The first of few intimacies shared between the two, Igor responds to this news by giving Milla a prolonged kiss on her stomach.³² What differentiates this scene from other

cinematic stagings of Black relationships is that the unborn child is neither described as illegitimate nor a failing of the Black family structure.³³ As an audience, we are not called to question whether this pregnancy was planned, nor are we led to believe that biological parentage is the only way to properly raise or love a child. The nurturing gesture of Igor kissing Milla on the stomach is instead a symbol of mutual recognition, a non-hierarchical legitimization of the various affections that draw this triad together. Relationality—the soon-to-be responsibilities of child rearing and homemaking—exceeds the blood logics of heteronormativity,³⁴ shifting instead to the overlapping intimacies of chosen family, sexual desire, and romance. Their labeling as *viados* (fags) and *vagabunda* (whore) by members of their community fails to undermine the affections they exchange in public and private.

In their interactions with friends, family, and other residents of Serra do Ramalho, the triad finds both prejudice and acceptance. Immediately following the conversation between Igor and Milla, the film transitions to the triad at a pool party with other queer youths. A mutual, unnamed friend emerges from the pool and offers a toast to them: “To the beautiful child on its way, and to these three crazies who are going to blow people’s minds in Serra do Ramalho.”³⁵ Though the toast reveals the difficulty of maintaining a polyamorous relationship in the hinterlands, it also demonstrates that there are people and spaces in which the triad can seek refuge beyond the fleeting intimacies and architectures that open the film. Even in the tenser moments of their

story—Milla’s family ignoring her, Igor’s mother chastising him, someone breaking the mirror on Gilmar’s motorcycle—there are those who come to the triad’s defense. After Gilmar breaks up a fight between two of his male students, for example, one of them—Jean—explains that he only fought because his peer spoke ill of Gilmar and Milla. Though the film does not highlight any older adults who support their relationship—potentially reproducing a conflation of queerness and youth culture that is characteristic of urban environments—we are given a glimpse of where, with whom, and under what circumstances the triad is able to experience support right where they are. Whether a congratulatory toast from a supportive friend or a student who—even if misguided in his approach—defends two teachers that he knows to be deserving of respect, the community members who choose to support the triad unearth the possibilities for radical relationalities in the hinterlands.

The home space becomes the final frontier of the triad’s relationship within Serra do Ramalho. Due to the gossip surrounding her pregnancy, Milla is fired from her job at the school and kicked out of her family’s home. With tensions heightened, the triad convenes to determine a course of action. Having lost the most out of all of them, Milla asks Gilmar if they can leave Serra do Ramalho. In a tender tone, Gilmar urges her to reconsider: “I don’t want to be thrown out of the place where we were born. That’s what happened to our parents.”³⁶ The military dictatorship took more than resources and opportunities from the residents of Serra do Ramalho. In conjunction with the monologue that Milla’s student recites towards the

beginning of the film, Gilmar’s words serve as a reminder that the separation and deterioration of families is also a consequence of forced displacement. In insisting that they stay, Gilmar maintains that he, Milla, and Igor are a family who, like their parents, call Serra do Ramalho their home. Rather than leaving, Milla moves into the house that Gilmar has been building for the three of them.

As Gilmar and Milla put the finishing touches on their home—assembling the baby’s crib and painting the house—Igor distances himself from them. After a conversation on Halloween in which Milla reminds Igor that she is only interested in Gilmar as a father and friend, Igor reaffirms his commitment to raising their child together. Later that same evening, Igor goes out for a drink alone and is brutalized by four men from the ranch. Black-eyed and caked in blood, he arrives at the triad’s home the following morning; Milla offers him a glass of water while Gilmar prepares a washcloth and antibiotics to clean him up. The triad then lays together in their full-sized bed, Igor and Gilmar cuddled up on one side while Milla lays face up on the other, stretching and caressing the baby. It is in this moment that Igor asks Gilmar to get married, stating that he no longer fears the consequences that may come from living in their truth. As the baby starts to kick, Milla invites Gilmar and Igor to feel her stomach. The film ends with a close-up shot of their hands on Milla’s stomach, a tender reminder that their child is coming into a world with three parents who love them. This moment of intimacy—Gilmar and Igor’s romance, Igor and Milla’s friendship—reminds us that in the wake of

multivalent expressions of violence, all that is left are the radical practices in pleasure and care that transform the hinterlands from a desert wasteland into an alternative geography for Black queer relationalities.

Black Relational Autonomy: Writing Ourselves Back into Existence

Black actors, writers, and other creatives in the Americas are continuing to author their own stories of love, lust, and longing. Emerging Brazilian filmmakers and playwrights disidentify³⁷ with the controlling images of Black Brazilians—malandros, mulatas, empregadas, afeminados—by simultaneously eschewing and nuancing these stereotypical portrayals. Recent productions such as *Bixa Travesty* (2018), *Kissing Game* (2020), *Jorge Pra Sempre Verão* (2022), and *Rule 34* (2022) continue the work of *The City of the Future* by locating alternate geographies and temporalities for Black relationalities.³⁸ The hinterlands, nightclub, and home space reappear throughout these works as Black queer geographies, spaces that are built to sustain marginalized communities beyond the constitutive limits of social and political conservatism. In these narratives, queer intimacies continue to be forged in unexpected places, offering a genealogy of radical Black relations that transcends the linear progress narratives of modernity, capitalism, and white supremacy.

The City of the Future is also representative of a broader creative turn towards rural geographies as spaces of Black and Indigenous LGBTQIA+ liberation in Brazil. Artists such as Uýra Sodoma and Ventura Profana have engaged the Amazon rainforest and

Northeastern *quilombos*, respectively, as laboratories for experimenting with alternative modes of LGBTQIA+ living. Rather than continue the work of making urban environments more habitable for folks whose relations, practices, and desires will never fully align with those of the “good gay citizen,” these artists transform spaces protected by and for their racial communities into ones that inform their gender–sexual identities and expressions. Using found materials and rural architectures in their arts practices, Sodoma and Profana draw further attention to the ways that environmental degradation and displacement acutely impact LGBTQIA+ communities. The stakes of this creative work, including *The City of the Future*, is the proliferation of radical relationalities that exceed the limits of urbanity.

As Black LGBTQIA+ folks continue to seek conditions under which their identities, expressions, and relations might find fuller articulation, Black Studies scholars would do well to engage with those strivings. Too often the study of genders and sexualities within the field still falls short of Rinaldo Walcott’s call for a diasporic and heterogeneous Black Studies.³⁹ *The City of the Future* demonstrates that an attention to unthought geographies of Blackness can generate critical perspectives on polyamory, non-monogamy, and chosen family. In moving away from the modern city and the Global North—spaces that routinely commercialize racial–gender–sexual diversity—scholars can attune themselves to alternate modalities of Black liberation. A more holistic politics of relationality and pleasure will ensure that queers, trans and gender non-conforming folks, sex workers, polyamorists, and others

at the fringes of Black communities will no longer be left by the wayside.

The promise and protection of Black respectability has run its course, and as such Black folks across the diaspora are moving towards more capacious and audacious relational practices that make alternate forms of freedom possible, ones not dependent upon systems—capitalism, colonialism, white supremacy, urbanism—that exploit Black genders and sexualities for their own reproduction. Contemporary Brazilian cinema and television map these new horizons by reorienting us towards other spaces for Black relational autonomy. Even in our arduous attempts at pleasurable, sustainable, and loving relations, there is beauty and possibility.

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Notes

1. Gabriel Stargardter, “President Bolsonaro Shocks with Brazil ‘Golden Shower’ Tweet,” *Reuters*, March 6, 2019, sec. Emerging Markets, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-politics-idUSKCN1QN24X>.

2. Bernardo Caram, “Ideologia de gênero é coisa do capeta, diz Bolsonaro na Marcha para Jesus,” *Folha de São Paulo*, August 10, 2019, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2019/08/ideologia-de-genero-e-coisa-do-capeta-diz-bolsonaro-na-marcha-para-jesus.shtml>.

3. *Dupla Golden Shower*, directed by Thiago Jock. São Paulo, Brazil: 232 Filmes, 2019. 2:08–2:30.

4. Though Brazil was founded as a Catholic nation, Evangelicals are increasingly becoming a religious majority in the country: see Alejandro Roig, “The Rise in Political Power of Brazil’s Evangelicals: A Case Study,” in *Volume II Religious Communities and Civil Society in Europe* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 41–60.

5. Jeffe G. et al., “EdiyPorn–Pornografia Desviante,” *EdiyPorn*, EdiyPorn Collective, <https://www.ediyporn.com/sobre/> (accessed May 15, 2023).

6. Vanessa Agard-Jones, “What the Sands Remember,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18, nos 2–3 (January 1, 2012): 325–46.

7. Tati Bernardi, “Foi ato político, diz dupla do ‘golden shower’ criticado por Bolsonaro,” *Folha de São Paulo*, March 7, 2019.

8. The concept of homonationalism helps us parse out the logics of global gay capitalism by demonstrating that good, well-adjusted queers are fundamental to the modern nation state. While the golden shower is disruptive of that, I argue that limiting visions for radical gender–sexual expression to the city renders other genealogies of queer liberation invisible: see Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2007).

9. Milton Santos and Archie Davies, *For a New Geography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 134–5.

10. Hendrik Kraay, “Between Brazil and Bahia: Celebrating Dois de Julho in Nineteenth-Century Salvador,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 31, no. 2 (May 1999): 255–86.

11. Sales Augusto dos Santos, “Historical Roots of the ‘Whitening’ of Brazil,” *Latin American Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (January 2002): 61–82.

12. Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

13. *The City of the Future*. Directed by Marília Hughes and Cláudio Marques. Brooklyn, NY: Pragda, 2016 [streaming].

14. I offer this caveat to distinguish naming from practice. While the popularization of polyamory is often traced back to Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart, "A Bouquet of Lovers: Strategies for Responsible Open Relationships," *Green Egg* 23, no. 89 (1990): 12-13, its practice exceeds this discourse. In the notes for *The City of the Future*, the filmmakers evince the importance of this distinction when discussing the relational practices of young people in the Bahian hinterlands: "Younger people want to establish themselves as whole individuals, which includes breaking patterns regarding sexuality. Many of the questions being asked by these young men and women are often thought of as pertaining to the residents of large metropolises": Marília Hughes and Cláudio Marques, "Notes on Film," Pragda Films, <https://pragda.com/film/the-city-of-the-future/>.

15. Coletivo das Liliths and Francisco André, Xica (unpublished play 2017), 1, translation mine, <https://www.instagram.com/dasililiths.ba/>.

16. Luiz Mott, *Homosexuals of Bahia: Biographic Dictionary (XVI–XIX Centuries)* (Salvador: Editora Grupo Gay da Bahia, 1999), 17.

17. In Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2018), the author cautions against a reading of the Portuguese Inquisition cases as evidence of gender-sexual diversity in Brazil. In alignment with this politic, I have avoided naming Xica's gender identity and sexuality while honoring the details of her gender expression.

18. *Madame Satã*. Directed by Karim Aïnouz. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: VideoFilmes, 2002 [DVD].

19. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

20. The ongoing debates surrounding "bathroom bills" in Brazil and the United States are a popular example of this discrimination. Many political conservatives and trans exclusive radical feminists (TERFS) make unfounded claims about trans women being rapists for wanting to use the bathroom that matches their gender.

21. For more context on the characterization of Madame Satã as a model for gay empowerment, see Marcus D. Welsh, "Cross-Dressing and Transgressing: The Queer Body in *Madame Satã*," *Latin American Perspectives* 48, no. 2 (March 2021): 123–36.

22. These terms appear across scholarship about the film—Gilmar Rocha, *O Rei da Lapa: Madame Satã e a Malandragem Carioca* (Rio de Janeiro: 7letras, 2004); Sarita Naa Akuye Addy and David Mongor-Lizarrabengoa, "Gender Fluidity and Yoruba Religion in the Construction of an Afro-Brazilian Identity: Karim Aïnouz's *Madame Satã*" *MARLAS* 3, no. 1 (2019): 53–80; Bruno Guaraná, "Twenty Queers of *Madame Satã*," *Film Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (2022): 45–53. I opt for afeminado not to collapse these readings into one another, but to note the historical erasures of Black genders and sexualities that make it impossible to know exactly how Madame Satã identified.

23. Ari Lima, "Da Vida Rasgada: Imagens e representações sobre o negro em *Madame Satã*," *Crítica Cultural* 10, no. 1 (2015): 106, translation mine.

24. James N. Green, "Madame Satã (1900–1976)," in *Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) History*, ed. Howard Chiang et al., vol. 2 (Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2019), 981–3.

25. Barbara Gancia, "Jorge Lafond Morreu Magoado Com Padre Marcelo," *Folha de São Paulo*, January 17, 2003, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff1701200307.htm>.

26. Reighan Gillam, "Satirical Antiracism: Digital Protest Images in Afro-Brazilian Media," *Visual Anthropology Review* 37, no. 1 (2021): 31–51.

27. João Biehl and Torben Eskerod, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*, 47160th edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

28. Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 17.

29. *The City of the Future*, 2:57–3:36.

30. While this is the only moment where Milla is shown sharing sexual intimacy with someone on screen, towards the end of the film Milla does disclose to Gilmar that she has been seeing other men and women throughout her pregnancy: *The City of the Future*, 57:45–58:12.

31. Mariana Peixoto, “Inspirado em história real, ‘A cidade do futuro’ mostra a família pouco convencional,” Portal Uai Entretenimento, April 26, 2018, <https://www.uai.com.br/app/noticia/cinema/2018/04/26/noticias-cinema,226175/historia-real-a-cidade-do-futuro-mostra-familia-pouco-convencional.shtml>.

32. *The City of the Future*, 34:40–34:59.

33. Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81.

34. Ana-Maurine Lara, *Queer Freedom: Black Sovereignty* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021).

35. *The City of the Future*, 36:03–36:15.

36. *Ibid.*, 48:16–49:01

37. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

38. *Bixa Travesty*. Directed by Kiko Goifman and Claudia Priscilla. São Paulo, Brazil: Válvula Produções, 2018 [streaming].; *Kissing Game*. Directed by Esmir Filho. São Paulo, Brazil: Netflix, 2020 [streaming].; *Jorge Pra Sempre Verão*. Script by Aline Mohammed and Diego do Subúrbio, directed by Rodrigo França, Teatro Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, July 24, 2022; *Rule 34*. Directed by Júlia Murat. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Esquina Filmes, 2022 [streaming].

39. Rinaldo Walcott, “Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora,” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 90–105.

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