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Bob on the Tracks: Analyzing Vitor Ramil's transcreations of Bob Dylan's lyrics

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Bob Dylan's lyrics

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the Portuguese versions created by Brazilian composer Vitor Ramil of four songs by the North-American songwriter Bob Dylan: “Joey,” “Gotta Serve Somebody,” “You’re a Big Girl Now,” and “Sara”. Vitor Ramil respectively transformed them into “Joquim,” “Um dia você vai servir a alguém,” “Só você manda em você,” and “Ana.” The practice of song translation imposes various constraints that the translator must navigate in order to achieve a satisfactory result. Even keeping this in mind while collating the song lyrics, it becomes clear that the Brazilian versions were not produced with a consistent concern for fidelity at the level of individual words or expressions from the source text. My hypothesis is that these songs could not be considered entirely new texts either, devoid of strong connections to their source texts. Imbued with the concepts of transcreation (after Haroldo de Campos), refraction (after André Lefevere) and song translation (after Peter Low) and considering the context of life and work of the artists involved, this thesis investigates the ways in which these translations diverge from the originals – but, more importantly, the ways in which they converge. What emerges here is not only the presence of the phenomenon of refraction but also the practice of transcreation.

Keywords: Bob Dylan; Vitor Ramil; Song Translation; Transcreation.

RESUMO

Esta dissertação trata das versões para o português que o compositor brasileiro Vitor Ramil fez de quatro canções do compositor estadunidense Bob Dylan: “Joey”, “Gotta Serve Somebody”, “You’re a Big Girl Now” e “Sara”, transformando-as em “Joquim”, “Um dia você vai servir a alguém”, “Só você manda em você” e “Ana”. A prática de tradução de canção impõe diversas restrições e limitadores que o tradutor precisa contornar para obter um resultado satisfatório. Mesmo tendo isso em mente durante o cotejo das letras das canções, nota-se que as versões brasileiras não foram feitas com a constante preocupação com uma fidelidade no nível das palavras ou das expressões do texto original. A hipótese desse trabalho é de que essas canções tampouco poderiam ser consideradas textos novos, sem fortes conexões com os textos de origem. Munido dos conceitos de transcrição (conforme entendido por Haroldo de Campos), refração (conforme teorizado por André Lefevere) e de tradução de canção (conforme conceitualizado por Peter Low), e tendo em mente o contexto de vida e obra dos artistas, este trabalho investiga de que formas essas traduções se distanciam dos originais, mas, principalmente, de que formas elas se aproximam. Nota-se aqui não apenas a presença do fenômeno de refração, como também a prática da transcrição.

Palavras-chave: Bob Dylan; Vitor Ramil; Tradução de canção; Transcrição.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L – Line

R - Rhyme

SC – Source culture

SL – Source language

ST – Source text

Sy - Syllables

TC – Target culture

TL – Target language

TT – Target text

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about how song lyrics change when translated, especially under a transcreationist approach. And to get there, it seems the beginning would be a good place to start, but one might ask what the beginning would be in this case, or if it is indeed a good place to start. What we are going to notice in Vitor Ramil's translations – or, as the title of this thesis suggests, transcreations – is that the commonly applied rule of thumb for translations in the literary world, for instance, does not really apply as much to that of song translation, and such slavish need for faithfulness was not exercised in his effort to bridge experiences and expressions. Margherita Laera (2019) reminds us that the meaning of “translation” in Latin (*translatio*) denotes the idea of “carrying across”, while the Japanese definition is closer to that of “changing meaning” or “changing situations” – the latter of which being a relevant definition for what happens here in the objects of the present study.

When reading these lyrics or listening to them in their final form (the song) it is as if these Bob Dylan songs are being retold, like an oral story of olden times, by Vitor Ramil and much is changed in the process. In a way, a song survives through orality. The songwriter who translates a song is not a translator per se, especially one like Vitor Ramil, who is known for being an *auteur*, as I explain in Chapter 1.2 when writing about his life and work. Songwriters like him are often bound to imprint their contributions onto someone else's songs. These adaptations are often called “versions”, and that is how I will call them from now on, as opposed to “covers”, which are a reproduction of the original using the same words and often the same melody, even if it is in a different rhythm or musical language.

Yet Bob Dylan, perhaps more than any other singer-songwriter in the 20th century, carries a certain aura and weight to his name, noticeably being the only songwriter yet to receive a Nobel Prize in Literature “for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”¹ and one of the most studied names in popular music in academia since the 1970s, according to Maiaty Ferraz (2020) and Lee Marshall (2009). With this in mind, how careful should one be when making versions of songs by a songwriter whose lyrics are regarded so highly? In

¹ Bob Dylan – Facts. NobelPrize.org. **Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2022**. Retrieved from: <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2016/dylan/facts/>>. Access on 20 Jul. 2022.

Chapter 1.1 I write about Bob Dylan's journey as a songwriter, a recording artist and a cult figure.

Vitor Ramil, while clearly admiring Bob Dylan's work enough to re-create four of his songs, did not act in a manner as showing excessive worry to be faithful to the source text, while still being true to the idea of the original songs, through varying degrees of detachment from Bob Dylan's lyrics. As suggested in the previously mentioned metaphor, he does not change the tale told, but he adds and subtracts as he sees fit.

The reason why I came to be interested in this topic lies, ultimately, in my melomaniac disposition. In my undergraduate program in Film Studies my final paper was, tellingly, on sound: on the acousmatic voice in the films *Blue*, directed by Derek Jarman, and *Container*, directed by Lukas Moodysson. After spending almost a decade off academia, I knew that if I was going to return, I would have to study something related to one of the songwriters of my musical holy trinity: Morrissey, Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. Since I ended up choosing to study Song Translation, the choice for Bob Dylan was clear, as there have not been many versions of Morrissey's or Cohen's songs in Brazilian Portuguese, to the best of my knowledge. The translations in Brazil, for the latter, were mostly his poems and novels. As for Morrissey, Luciana Kaross (2013) has done research into the fan-made translations of his lyrics. That topic is, for now, well taken care of.

When studying research on Bob Dylan, however, I have found that I would not be the first investigating the topic of his songs' translations in Brazil. Demirse Ruffato (2012), Ferraz (2020), and José Rodrigues (2022) have been valuable assets and precedents for me in my journey, and my research will expand on what they have put forth. Ruffato, in fact, does not dwell on Vitor Ramil's translations but suggests that such research should be done in the future, and the invitation is now accepted. So, despite translations of Bob Dylan's songs in Brazil having been researched in the past, this topic still has some unexplored gaps, and this is one of them.

Initially my idea in this project was to include Caetano W. Galindo's translations of Bob Dylan's lyrics for Companhia das Letras (the first part, with lyrics written from 1961 to 1974, released in 2017 and the second part, with lyrics from 1975 to 2020, released in 2021) into account and triangulate the comparisons. However, Galindo's translations soon proved to

be unnecessary for my research because of his *skopos*², as the translator explains in an interview for Victor Simião (2017):

The option for a translation of sense, for a translation of WHAT is said more than that of HOW it is said. The option, therefore, of avoiding greater worries with metrics, rhyme, with those more strictly poetic features of the text, was from the beginning an editorial choice. (my translation)³

I did not see how I would benefit from including his translations here, since Galindo did not have any restraints (metrics, rhyme) that would require him to think more creatively and make choices that would necessarily deviate, however slightly, from the source text. Since his only objective was to transpose English to Portuguese in a literal way (what is said, but not how it is said), I found it would be redundant in my research since I am already dealing with the source text in English. I am, however, aware of his translations and of their importance for the listener who cannot comprehend the songs in their original language.

My objective is to investigate how Vitor Ramil has worked with the source texts in order to make his versions. That unfolds into looking at how well he dealt with the constraints of song translation, which are explained in Chapter 2.1. I also intend to argue in favor of his versions being a translation of Bob Dylan's originals and not a complete deviation (also known as a "replacement text", according to Peter Low, 2017), another song sharing the same melody, as could be said of at least one of his other Brazilian adaptations: "Frevoador", a version of "Hurricane" by Zé Ramalho. Whereas in "Hurricane" Bob Dylan tells his version of the story of what led to the real-life arrest of boxer Rubin Carter, Ramalho's version does not mention the boxer, an arrest or any crime altogether. There are no similarities in lyrical themes, only in the melody. I follow Ferraz (2020) in analyzing how refraction, a theory by Belgian translation theorist André Lefevere, can help us understand what happens with Vitor Ramil's transcreation.

² The term *skopos* refers to a term introduced by German linguist Hans J. Vermeer in the late 1970s. It is used to refer to the purpose of any given translation and is sometimes used as synonym to "functionalism" or "functionalist theory" in Translation Studies. Vermeer later tied this definition to the theory of "translational action" by Finnish scholar Justa Holz-Mänttari. With this alignment of theories, Vermeer states that every action has a purpose, and since translation is an action it must have a purpose, too, which is called *skopos*. The *skopos* depends on the addressees of this communication and it will determine the translator's decisions until they reach the final form of this translational action, called *translatum*. Christiane Nord is another scholar who helped develop and popularize the term and the theory behind it.

³ "A opção por uma tradução de sentido, por uma tradução do O QUE se diz mais do que do COMO se diz, a opção, portanto, por evitar preocupações maiores com métrica, rima, com aquelas características mais estritamente poéticas do texto, foi de início uma decisão editorial", in the original Portuguese.

This concept of “transcreation”, also present in my title, is further explained in Chapter 2, along with its relevance in being applied for these translations.

As to the method of the song analyses itself, I initially planned to use an approach such as that used by Rodrigues (2020), who utilizes the “Pentathlon Approach to Translating Song” by Low (2005) to judge the success of new song translations regarding their source text in five categories: singability, naturalness, rhyme, sense and rhythm. Rodrigues (2020) collates the texts and judges in which of these categories the stanzas have been successful in the stormy voyage from one language to another, then tagging each stanza according to the categories in which the translation scored highly. While still thinking of implementing the tagging system, I have then considered four extra categories proposed by Igor Santos (2020, p. 91), namely: “implicit meaning”, when a song adds or removes information not present in the source text; “rhythm: melody”, when there has been a slight change in relation to the melody, as in different pauses or number of syllables; “rhythm: tonicity”, when there is a different emphasis or stress, and finally “not translated”, when certain parts of the original song were not translated to Portuguese. However, I found most of my *corpus* did not respond well to this system. These song translations I analyze take significant liberties with the source texts and, had I used the tagging system, I would have to label them as not scoring in most of the categories. In other words, in applying this method, I would be doing a disservice to these song translations. By describing in which ways the songs have failed to score well in this system, I would not inform the reader of what does happen in each of them, which is the whole point of my research. These songs require a different approach. Therefore, I chose to collate the texts and describe what happens in each situation instead of using the tagging system, which would perhaps be better for quantitative research – or for different *corpora*.

My analyses of the songs are admittedly partial ones. For those interested in other aspects in the rich field of Song Studies, I would suggest looking into the multisemiotic analysis of song tetragram proposed by Roberto Baron, Marcos Baltar and Camila Fraga (2023), but the emphasis of the current research is to mainly analyze what happens to the lyrics of the songs. Even if that also requires some attention to rhythm and melody, I do not talk about arrangements nor musical choices, both for my lack of formal musical (theory) training and for the fact it is not the focus of this analysis, which is still anchored in Translation Studies, after all. Being a sub-division of Translation Studies, in itself a few decades old, the field of Song Translation Studies is very recent, with its most relevant publications coming in this century, namely those by Dinda L. Gorlée (2005), Low (2016) and Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman (2016).

The thesis structure is as follows: after the introduction, in Chapter 1, there is an overview of the life and work of both Bob Dylan and Vitor Ramil. I believe this proves to be important in understanding where these songs come from, since no piece of music is composed without a context. The second chapter deals with the theoretical aspects used to analyze the songs, mainly refraction, transcreation, as well as an overview of Song Translation Studies so far, which is just as important to my research as the other concepts.

After the historical context and theoretical framework are explained, it is the time to put all this into practice by analyzing what happens when Vitor Ramil transcreates “Joey” into “Joquim”, “Gotta Serve Somebody” into “Um dia você vai servir a alguém”, “You’re a Big Girl Now” into “Só você manda em você” and “Sara” into “Ana”. These are followed by a conclusion. This way of organizing my thesis is not unlike what those colleagues who have studied Bob Dylan song translations in Brazil have done, especially Ferraz (2020) and Rodrigues (2022).

1 SETTING THE SCENE: BOB DYLAN AND VITOR RAMIL

In this chapter I trace a brief outline of the life and especially the work of both the author of the original songs and that of their translator-transcreator, Bob Dylan and Vitor Ramil, respectively, especially in relation to the songs in my *corpus*. The reason for the inclusion of such biographical endeavor is not as much for a study of reception (for which there is little, especially in Vitor Ramil's case in relation to the Bob Dylan adaptations), but for a study of conception. Where do these songs appear in the artists' catalogues, at what point of the artists' careers? Are there any historical factors affecting the genesis and revisiting of these songs? What motivated the writing of these songs? What motivated their transcreations? These are some of the questions I hope to answer in the following subsections. Analysis of the songs themselves (lyrics and music) is featured in Chapter 3.

1.1 BOB DYLAN

The subject of Bob Dylan's early and personal life is the focus of much debate, as Bob Dylan himself seems, since his early career, to point everyone in any direction but one close to the truth, lying that he did not have a family, that he had foster parents, that he was from New Mexico (Heylin, 2021). Some biographers do not research enough or are misled by the misremembering and the lies of others close to him.

I do not, for lack of relevance for this study, delve too deeply in the goings-on of Bob Dylan's long career, which could become unnecessarily lengthy – even more than a shallow overview of his long career already is. Sometimes facts may seem to follow one another too quickly when they did not, and this is a result of such an approach. My attempt at an overview of Bob Dylan's decades will stick close to his music and the release of his albums, what musical paths were taken, and how they were received. These are, I believe, more relevant to the study of the songs themselves, which is my focus. I will, hopefully, make the reader understand where these songs exist in his long discography, as well as what came before and after the selection of four songs that are the focus of the analyses in Chapter 3. If the reader is interested in a more thorough account of Bob Dylan's life, plenty of options can be found. Most biographical appointments in the early years of his career will be based on Robert Shelton (2021), and what is not taken from his biography will be noted henceforth.

Robert Allen Zimmerman was born in a Jewish family in 1941 in Duluth, Minnesota, but only stayed there until he was six years old, then moving to Hibbing, in the same state. His musical origins lie in his Minnesota youth: reading everything he could get his hands on, writing

poems, getting a piano when he was ten years old (even if he could only endure one formal piano lesson, given by his cousin, according to Shelton, 2021) and then getting a guitar to play in the school band. He used to listen to the radio and looked up to musicians such as Hank Williams, Little Richard and Buddy Holly. The latter of whom, notably killed in a plane crash along with Richie Valens in what became known as “The Day Music Died” (February 3rd, 1959), is also present in what one could call a near spiritual story, and an origin story as well.

In his Nobel acceptance speech, Bob Dylan (2017) said: “If I was to go back to the dawning of it all, I guess I’d have to start with Buddy Holly.” (p. 1) He tells of the experience of watching his idol perform live only three nights before his death: “he looked me right straight dead in the eye, and he transmitted something. Something I didn’t know what. And it gave me the chills.” (p. 2). In an interview with Murray Engleheart, he would later say that Holly’s presence was felt during the recording of *Time out of Mind* from 1997:

[W]hile we were recording, every place I turned there was Buddy Holly. [...] And this would happen day after day after day. Phrases of Buddy Holly songs would just come out of nowhere. It was spooky. [...] Buddy Holly’s spirit must have been someplace, hastening this record. (Engleheart, 1999)

Still on the realm of his influences, I must once again pause the natural flow of time and address a widespread belief that Bob Dylan got this artistic name from poet Dylan Thomas, which does not seem to be the truth when held under closer scrutiny. Echo, an ex-girlfriend of Bob Dylan’s, tells Shelton (2021): “I remember when he decided what his name was going to be. It was 1958 [...] He came over [...] and said: ‘I know what I’m going to call myself, I’ve got this great name – Bob Dillon’” (p. 53).

Shelton (1997) goes further on the origins of the singer’s stage name:

Bob’s new name probably had two sources. Although Matt Dillon is thought to be a real frontier hero, he was the fictional invention of television writer John Meaton and producer Norman Macdonnell for the adventure series *Gunsmoke*. [...] Closer to Dylan’s home frontier was a pioneer Hibbing family named Dillion. A James Dillion was the town’s first drayman. Four families named Dillon were listed in the 1968 Hibbing phone book. Bob parried about the Dillions with a reporter from *The Chicago Daily News* in November 1965:

Q: What about the story that you changed your name from Bob Zimmerman to Bob Dylan because you admired the poetry of Dylan Thomas?

A: No, God, no. I took the Dylan because I have an uncle named Dillion. I changed the spelling but only because it looked better. I've read some of Dylan Thomas's stuff, and it's not the same as mine.

Dylan reiterated this popular misconception to me: 'Straighten out in your book that I did not take my name from Dylan Thomas.' (p. 49-50)

In the 2011 unabridged edition of the same biography, Bob Dylan adds: "Dylan Thomas's poetry is for people that aren't really satisfied in their bed, for people who dig masculine romance", lines edited out in the original edition published in 1985 (reprinted in 1997) and also in the abridged illustrated edition from 2021, which are cited here. As with any Bob Dylan story that is confirmed or discredited by the man himself, it is up to each of us to choose what to believe.

Going back many years to the end of the 1950s, Bob Dylan moved from Hibbing to Minneapolis to study Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota. He would sometimes go to Denver as well, always in search of what was happening in the local folk music scenes. In Minneapolis, he used to play in a district called Dinkytown. It was there he would learn about Woody Guthrie, a folk singer-songwriter who would become important in Bob Dylan's early career. He said he was going to New York to meet Guthrie, which he eventually did.

Bob Dylan moved to New York City and started playing in the folk music clubs, getting a name for himself until he was discovered by John Henry Hammond, a member of one of the richest families in the USA who chose a career in show business and became a champion of African-American music (jazz and blues). He was a man who "had a remarkable ear. He was capable of discerning talent, even in an embryonic stage" (Margotin and Guesdon, 2015, p. 11). Hammond was a legendary figure in Columbia Records, with which Bob Dylan signed and where he would stay for most of his career. Hammond was directly responsible for the signing of recording artists such as Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and later Aretha Franklin, Leonard Cohen and Bruce Springsteen, among many others.

Bob Dylan's first album, self-titled, released in March 1962, was not a great seller, selling only five thousand copies in its first year. He was then talked about in the halls as "Hammond's folly" (Sounes, 2011, p. 119), but he was not dismissed. His first LP includes only two of his own songs and is regarded as a display of his references in the folk music world. Released in May 1963, its follow-up *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* was a success. Margotin and Guesdon report that the album sold then thousand copies in four weeks, reaching the Billboard charts on the 22nd position. In 1964, it reached the top of the charts in the UK. This album went

Platinum in the US in 1999⁴ and was one of the first 50 recordings selected by the Library of Congress in 2002 for addition to the National Recording Registry in the US, which tries to gather the most significant pieces of recorded music in regard to their cultural, historical and/or aesthetic achievements.⁵

Eleven of the songs in *Freewheelin'* are his compositions, among them what remains one of his most well-known songs: "Blowin' in the Wind", which was initially a bigger hit for the folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary. Other than those, "Girl from the North Country", "Masters of War", "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" are also part of *Freewheelin'*. Albert Grossman, then Bob Dylan's manager, knew it was the time for Bob Dylan to get his big break, noticing that "if Newport [Folk Festival, an important festival in the folk music world] '59 could launch [Joan] Baez, Newport '63 could launch Dylan" (Shelton, 2021, p. 119). And it did.

Everything was in place, and even then, he got accolades from his peers such as Paul from aforementioned trio Peter, Paul and Mary, who said back then that "Bob Dylan is the most important songwriter in the country today. He has a finger on the pulse of America's youth" (Shelton, 2011, p. 120). Bob Dylan's manager booked an appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in May of 1963, one of the most watched TV shows in the US. However, this did not go as planned because, when singing "Talkin' John Birch Society Blues", CBS's censor said the song could not be used as "[h]e feared libel action because Dylan compared the right-wing Birchites to Hitler. [...] Sullivan asked Dylan if he wanted to substitute another song. Without hesitating, Dylan whirled around and said: 'If I can't sing that song, I won't sing *any* song'" (p. 122). This may have resulted in less exposure, but it sure also resulted in more credibility. From there followed *The Times They Are a-Changin'* (1964), one of his most politically charged albums, earning him a then rightful title of protest singer, which right then and there agreed with him, as Clinton Heylin (2021) explains. Bob Dylan wanted to press certain buttons and sing about these injustices. *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (1964), however, starts pushing into another direction, with songs that are not as socially conscious as before, as he was trying to move away from this label.

The year of 1965 witnesses landmarks in Bob Dylan's career, and that includes the release of *Bringing it All Back Home* in March, a title that suggests a reaction to the "British

⁴ RIAA. **Gold & Platinum**. Retrieved from: https://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=bob+dylan&col=highest_level&ord=desc#search_section. Access on: 05 sept. 2024.

⁵ LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. **Complete National Recording Registry Listing**. Retrieved from: <https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/recording-registry/complete-national-recording-registry-listing/>. Acces on: 05 sept. 2024.

Invasion” then in full power, with bands like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones achieving widespread chart success in the US. Despite being lauded as one of the most influential albums of the time and a familiar face in “Best albums of all time” lists, *Bringing* was a shock to many folk music fans, Bob Dylan’s original public. The first side on the vinyl, with seven songs, was known as the “electric side”. These songs were played with electric guitars, to varying degrees of prominence. As Shelton (2021) puts it: “his [Bob Dylan’s] creation of ‘folk rock’ was a turning point in popular culture” (p. 167).

These “electric songs” were played with a band, which was a big surprise to the purists, who rejected this Rock music flirtation. That was much like what happened in Brazil in July 1967 with the “March Against the Electric Guitar”, on this occasion against Jovem Guarda and a ‘colonized’ sound. Bob Dylan and his band would play in the Newport Folk Festival in July 1965, as well, after his crowning performance two years back. What would happen then, however, was not expected and it would become one of the key moments in this mythologizing going-electric year. Sounes (2011) tells that most of the audience in Newport Folk Festival 1965 was not aware that Bob Dylan would perform an electric set and that the festival sound structure was not ready for that kind of music. The sound mixing was terrible and extremely loud. The public could not hear the lyrics, the band could not hear themselves. Pete Seeger, one of the founders of the festival, said that if he had an axe, he would have cut the cables. Bob Dylan and his band would get booed offstage because of this performance, later in the evening being convinced to return to play a short acoustic set, which was what his audience wanted. These performances were released on home video in 2007 as *The Other Side of the Mirror: Bob Dylan Live at the Newport Folk Festival 1963-1965*.

By the next album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, released merely five months after *Bringing*, it was clear this electric phase was not a one-off experiment and he had not backed down after the bad reaction by a part of his public. Columbia released one of his best-known singles just a bit over a month before *Highway*: “Like a Rolling Stone”. In 2001, Greil Marcus would publish an entire book on the impact and influence of this one track.

Shelton (2021) points out that Bob Dylan’s tour in England in the Spring of 1965 changed him from a folk star into an international pop star. A little help from his friends from Liverpool was partially to blame for this newfound superstardom in the UK, which then fed into his popularity in the US. Music magazine *Melody Maker* would publish an article on January 9, 1965 testifying to The Beatles’ approval of Bob Dylan’s music, especially George Harrison and John Lennon. In a country overrun with Beatlemania, that’s all it took.

The most (in)famous moment of this “rock sound” rejection, and maybe one of the most iconic moments in popular music (as can be seen in Martin Scorsese’s film *No Direction Home*, from 2005), was when, in a Manchester Free Trade Hall gig in May 1966, someone in the crowd calls Bob Dylan “Judas!”. This fan was upset, as many of his old fans were, about the band their idol had behind him (later called The Band), about Bob Dylan having apparently abandoned his folk roots, abandoning the protest singer label and the obviously socially conscious songs. Bob Dylan, taken by surprise, can only say “I don’t believe you”, as he strums the chords for the next song (“Like a Rolling Stone”). “You’re a liar!”, he sneers. And then he turns to the band and gives only one command: “play it fucking loud!”. This is a moment that marked the history of pop music and has had an impact on the artist, who has rarely catered to what he imagined his public wants.

His most notorious studio output, a truly impressive six albums released between 1963 and 1966, ends with *Blonde on Blonde* (1966), a double LP release, one of rock’s first. Bob Dylan was such a household name by then that it was not a surprise this album topped the Billboard charts upon release and eventually received a double platinum certification in 2003⁶ in the US. Without going into much detail, it suffices to say this is also a fan favorite, with stellar reviews.

Sounes (2011) notes that the physical appearance of the artist around this time was worrying, as he seemed clearly exhausted, pale and gaunt. His speech, too, was affected, mumbled with uncompleted sentences. This was, perhaps, also due to substances used to withstand the intensive touring. What happened next is a mystery in part, but it is a fact that Bob Dylan was involved in a motorcycle accident in July 1966. The severity of this *incident* (as Sounes prefers to call the *accident*) is what is up for debate, with some saying Bob Dylan overstated its seriousness to get away from show business, at least for a while since no ambulances were called on the occasion, no hospitalization made (Sounes, 2011, p. 219-221). Bob Dylan (2004) weighs in: “I had been in a motorcycle accident and I’d been hurt, but I recovered. Truth was that I wanted to get out of the rat race” (p. 114). In an interview for Scott Cohen (1985), he admits he “probably would have died if I had kept on going the way I had been.” He would not tour again for almost eight years after that.

⁶ A double platinum certification in the US is equivalent to the sales of more than two million copies. The number for silver, platinum, gold and diamond certifications are different for each country. Information about sales numbers at: RIAA. **Gold & Platinum**. Retrieved from: https://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=bob+dylan&col=highest_level&ord=desc#search_section. Access on: 05 set. 2024.

When the *incident* happened, he had been married to Sara Lowndes in November 1965 and was already a father. For months he stayed in his house in Woodstock, where Bob Dylan (2004) complains they were constantly harassed after their location became known. People from all over the country invaded their property, went through their trash, climbed on their roof. “Woodstock had about three cops”, Bob Dylan (2004, p. 117) writes, and they advised *he* would be found guilty if anything happened to these trespassers, even if they happened to fall from his roof.

From recordings he made around this time while trying to stay away from the public eye came *The Basement Tapes*, a down-to-earth, lo-fi album released years later in 1975 after these recordings were somehow leaked sold in many different bootlegs, most notably what is considered rock’s first bootleg (Heylin, 1995): *The Great White Wonder* (1969). The complete recordings were only released in 2014 as part of the ongoing The Bootleg Series, a curation of Bob Dylan’s unreleased songs, outtakes and live performances that have already spawned 17 volumes. In 1997, Greil Marcus released *Invisible Republic* (now called *The Old, Weird America* in a revised edition), a book about the creation, the cultural background and importance of this project.

Columbia hastily released *Bob Dylan’s Greatest Hits* in March 1967 to cash in on the momentum. When Bob Dylan next set foot in a proper studio, however, it was to record *John Wesley Harding* (1968), an album whose legacy proved to be one of cautious wonder – these songs, the first released after the accident, had many Bible references (Gilmour, 2004) and also Old West allusions starting with the cover featuring the artist accompanied by two Native American musicians (Hinton, 2006), and the title, a misspelling of John Wesley Hardin, one of the deadliest gunslingers in the Old West. It features “All Along the Watchtower”, soon after covered by Jimi Hendrix.

Yet another unexpected turn was made next, when Bob Dylan went down to Tennessee to the home of country music so he would eventually release a country album: *Nashville Skyline* (1969). This album features “Lay, Lady, Lay” and a version of “Girl From the North Country”, originally released in *Freewheelin’* (1963) but now sung in a duet with Johnny Cash. Many songs were recorded with Cash, and they were later released in their entirety in *The Bootleg Series Vol. 15: Travelin’ Thru, 1967–1969*, in 2019.

It is around this time that Bob Dylan slowly starts to become a subject of study in academia. In a chapter in the book *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan*, Marshall (2009) writes about the higher education professors’ relationship with Bob Dylan’s work, which is not as straightforward as one would imagine. A landmark in his recognition is an honorary

doctorate awarded to him by Princeton University in June 1970. Since then, Marshall reveals, Bob Dylan's management has been very generous in giving copyright permissions to print his lyrics in published materials, only making one requirement: that a copy of said publication must be sent to Bob Dylan's office. "It seems that Dylan is rather interested in what people say about him" (p. 100), as Marshall comments. If not interested in what the general public has to say, after the "Judas" incident, then maybe interested in what the academics seek and find in his songs.

Marshall (2009) explains that most of the academic work published on Bob Dylan is from English Literature departments (and this thesis is no exception), which he sees as a potential problem because of how Bob Dylan is then viewed as a poet, which is not the same as a songwriter. Marshall adds that "[s]ongs gain their emotional and artistic power not merely from the semantic meaning of the lyrics but from a constellation of *sound*" (p. 101). He sees a problem in analyzing Bob Dylan as Literature for another reason, too: "[h]igh culture and low culture have different qualities and achieve different things. Embedded within high and low cultural spheres are very different attitudes towards criticism, participation and relevance that will make them qualitatively different things" (p. 106-107).

But Marshall is not the only one who writes about Bob Dylan's place in this conundrum. Perry Meisel (2010) also touches on Bob Dylan's place in this highbrow/lowbrow debate. Reminding readers that these very terms come from phrenology, Meisel argues that "[this] nineteenth-century science [regards] the shape of the skull as a key to intelligence. A "high" forehead meant intelligence; a "low" one meant stupidity" (2010, p. 3). Meisel, a professor in the New York University, traces this disdain of pop culture notably to Theodor W. Adorno, who sees "the difference between high and low art [...] [as] the difference between a dialectical art in conversation with its past [...] and a non-dialectical or formulaic artisanship" (p. ix) – those being, respectively, "high culture" and "pop culture". Meisel even makes the bold statement that "[n]o single cultural figure since Shakespeare, except perhaps for Freud, is as 'dialectical' a figure as Dylan". (p. xi)

Not only is Bob Dylan's work dialectical but also hybrid, as Meisel also points out that most interpretative books about Bob Dylan's work are "reductive" (2010, p. 153) for not seeing the artist as a whole. Meisel sees that every researcher brings some sort of bias ("For Dylan's political observers, everything is social allegory" [p. 154]). Another researcher worthy of mention is Christopher Ricks, whose *Dylan's Visions of Sin* (2004) is lauded as one of the greatest books on the artist's poetry, therefore rooted in English Literature, as well. Meisel writes that Ricks, who was once a Professor of Poetry at Oxford, sees Dylan "[as] not only a

genuine English poet [...], but as major a poet as Shakespeare or Milton". On that claim, Meisel expands and also explains his own 'dialectical' labeling mentioned above:

Ricks never explains why he believes Dylan to be comparable to Shakespeare or Milton – he thinks that showing the often astonishing patterns in Dylan's writing is proof enough – but the reasons for the comparison reside in a simple assumption. It is an assumption to which Ricks himself may or may not adhere because it takes one well beyond the study of poetry itself, and makes any claim for Dylan as poet alone inexact in conception. However stunning his verse may be, Dylan's own highly organized materials come from a quantitatively larger and denser database than that of literature alone. They include musical and literary tradition as well as the iconography of the singer/star, a very different and expanded kind of achievement compared to that of the traditional poet, playwright, actor, or musician. With the exception of Freud, who mixes literature with science and philosophy rather than with music and iconography, Dylan's only technical counterpart in this quantitative respect is Shakespeare, who recombines more received knowledge than any writer before Freud. That Dylan combines musical and literary achievements might lead a critic less modest than Ricks to even more grandiose conclusions. (2010, p. 159-160)

But how did Bob Dylan become part of the literary canon in the first place? Marshall (2009) drafts a likely explanation, albeit in contrast to the praise read above:

It would be nice to argue that Dylan's appearance in scholarly circles was the result of the strength of his work – his songs were just of too high a quality to ignore. There are, however, more deep-seated explanations for the acceptance of a rock songwriter into literary life. Some of these refer to the wider social changes occurring in the 1960s, particularly the increasing challenge to intellectual authority and the changing role of universities in light of an expansion of higher education. (p. 104-105)

The emergence of rock music in the 1960s, Marshall argues, debunked the previously mentioned absolute high (classical music)/low (pop music) culture. "Rock emerged to differentiate between serious, worthwhile popular music (rock) and trivial, lightweight popular music (pop)" (2009, p. 105), he writes. Bob Dylan took the prestige he had as a socially conscious protest singer into rock, when he went electric. One could say he is one of the names responsible for this higher respectability of rock. Or, as Gill and Odegard (2004, p. 3) put it, "he had almost single-handedly dragged pop music through its troubled adolescence to a new maturity".

And why has Bob Dylan not been as popular in cultural studies as he was in Literature departments? Marshall thinks it is because of this discipline's emergence in the 1980s being the lowest point in Bob Dylan's career, which is in consonance with my proposition that Bob Dylan would not be as studied today if he had not remained relevant after his heyday. Also, rock's

predominantly white, male and middle-class nature “tended to be overlooked in favor of more diverse, local, subcultural and minority genres.” (Marshall, 2009, p. 107).

Going back to his music in the beginning of the 1970s, his first release – *Self Portrait* (1970) – is another double album probably conceived to defy expectations. Bob Dylan opens this album with telling lines denoting a lack of inspiration: “all the tired horses in the sun / how am I supposed to get any writing done?”, the entire lyrics to “All The Tired Horses”. Hinton (2006) informs that this album consisted of assorted selections of recordings made in Nashville and in his house in New York. It was poorly received, an album that seemed to lack identity, which is especially telling given the album’s title: self-portrait, which would make one think it would be a personal, revealing journey. Fans did not know what to make of it, and Marcus (1970) famously began his Rolling Stone magazine review of this album with the blunt question: “What is this shit?”.

New Morning (1970) followed four months later and was better received. Only in 1973 did the public hear a new Bob Dylan LP, that being *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* (1973), the soundtrack to a Western film directed by Sam Peckinpah, featuring Bob Dylan in his debut acting role. Surprisingly, this album features what is Bob Dylan’s most listened to song in the music streaming platforms Spotify and Apple Music both at the time of this writing: “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door”, a song with multiple cover versions, most notably one by hard rock group Guns N’ Roses, in 1992.

Released in the same year, *Dylan* (1973) is an album that should not be. Margotin and Guesdon (2015) explain the imbroglio as Columbia Records’s revenge after Bob Dylan left the label to join Asylum Records, which would be his first and only time out of Columbia. The songs here were rehearsals and outtakes recorded mostly from the *New Morning* sessions and none of them were meant to be released. Hinton (2006) writes that when Bob Dylan returned to Columbia some years later, he asked the distribution of this album to be discontinued.

Planet Waves (1974), his only studio LP not released by Columbia, was recorded with The Band, with whom Bob Dylan would soon tour for the first time in years. It features “Forever Young” and is generally considered a good album. 1974 also marked what Sounes (2011) calls the first major stadium tour for a rock group, with The Band. It seemed to have been a big event for US concertgoers, being the first proper tour Bob Dylan had made since 1966, before the aforementioned motorcycle accident. The reported numbers presented are impressive: more than 7% of the US population applied for tickets, roughly 15 million citizens (Sounes, 2011, p. 276).

In the next year he started a different tour called Rolling Thunder Revue, which was active until May 1976. It was not a solo tour, as artists such as Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell and Ramblin' Jack Elliott were part of the lineup as well. The tour went on to become iconic because of Bob Dylan's costumes at the time and the fact that he played with his face painted white. The documentary *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story*, by director Martin Scorsese, gives an account of this memorable tour, as does the live album *Before the Flood* (1974) in audio form.

The years of 1975-1976 were an inspiring period for the singer-songwriter in recording and composing, because in this time frame the public was able to hear two classics in his discography: *Blood on the Tracks* (1975) and *Desire* (1976). I now write about both albums in a little more detail than I did the previous ones, for the sole reason that both *Blood* and *Desire* are home to songs in my *corpus* and, before I analyze them, I intend to contextualize them. I have done it in giving a timeline of what happened thus far, but how did these albums come to be?

Starting with *Blood on the Tracks* (1975), often considered his best album in the 1970s and beyond. It marked his return to Columbia Records, which gave Bob Dylan a royal welcome, with a renegotiated contract and more money towards marketing. The album shares a special place in Bob Dylan's discography for many fans, and specific attention is given to it on books by Andy Gill and Kevin Odegard⁷ (2004) and Doc Pasquale (2015), both of which helped me trace the main (and many) events that surround the genesis of this LP. In a review for music website Pitchfork, Jesse Jarnow (2016) writes that this is "[p]erhaps the least dated of Dylan's recordings [...]. Untainted by the politics and cool of the '60s or the gated drums and overdubbed productions of the '80s, *Blood on the Tracks* hits with the same immediacy in the 21st century as it did in 1975."

A surprising element that has helped Bob create the lyrics to *Blood on the Tracks* is the painter Norman Raebe, with whom Bob Dylan studied in early 1974. As Sounes (2011) explains, the painter did not know who the singer was, and in fact thought he had no money, proposing therefore an exchange: "Bob could sleep in the studio in return for cleaning up." (p. 280). It would not be the last time something similar happened, as Bob Dylan would be detained by police in 2009, being mistaken for a wandering hobo by homeowners in New Jersey.⁸ The

⁷ Kevin Odegard played guitar on the last day of recordings for *Blood on the Tracks*, according to Brian Hinton (2006).

⁸ CLARKE, Daniel. **Bob Dylan Mistaken for Hobo**. 2009. Retrieved from: <https://musicfeeds.com.au/news/bob-dylan-mistaken-for-hobo/>. Access on: 10 set. 2024.

fact that Raeben was not only not starstruck but also did not know who Bob Dylan was at all made the singer “infatuated” with him, a word Sounes uses. Heylin (2011) helps paint the picture of Raeben’s influence on the album. In cubism, for instance, one could see the same object in different perspectives, and Bob Dylan was inspired by this notion of past, present and future coexisting. Such approach, I think, is more clearly exemplified in the album opener “Tangled Up in Blue”, a story in which one cannot quite point out the chronology, or even if the events are related. Or even if the characters are the same, at all. Reality unfolds in different snapshots of time. In Bob Dylan’s words, as he told journalist and filmmaker Cameron Crowe for the liner notes accompanying the release of *Biograph* in 1985, a 53-track boxset spanning the singer’s career: he was playing “with the concept of time, and the way the characters change from the first person to the third person, and you’re never quite sure if the third person is talking or the first person is talking. But as you look at the whole thing it doesn’t really matter.”⁹

Bob Dylan would tell his wife Sara about Raeben, but Sara would not understand what he was talking about. That was named by Bob Dylan as when his marriage started breaking up. It may have begun a bit earlier when the couple moved to Malibu in 1973, as Margotin and Guesdon (2015) point out.

It is widely believed (if not a general consensus) that the lyrics in *Blood on the Tracks* are autobiographical, even if the singer denies so. Once again, it is a case of questioning the artist’s myth about his own work. Bob Dylan (2004) alludes to another companion in the writing of *Blood on the Tracks*: “[e]ventually I would even record an entire album based on Chekhov short stories —critics thought it was autobiographical —that was fine.” (p. 122). It is a documented fact, however, that the singer’s marriage was not as stable as it once was. Even their son Jakob Dylan, now also a musician, told Rolling Stone magazine in June 1997 that these songs are “[his] parents talking”.¹⁰ Bob Dylan sounds even more defensive in his aforementioned interview for Cameron Crowe in the *Biograph* liner notes when talking about the song “You’re a Big Girl Now”, one of the songs in my *corpus*:

I read that this was supposed to be about my wife. I wish somebody would ask me first before they go ahead and print stuff like that. I mean it couldn’t be about anybody else but my wife, right? Stupid and misleading jerks sometimes these interpreters are [...] I don’t write confessional songs. Emotion’s got nothing to do with it. It only seems so, like it seems that Laurence Olivier is Hamlet...¹¹

⁹ BOB, Dylan. **Biograph**. USA: Columbia Records, 1985, 5 LPs.

¹⁰ JAKOB’S Ladder. 1997. Retrieved from: <https://www.angelfire.com/music2/wallflowers725/rsarticle.html>. Access on: 11 sept. 2024.

¹¹ BOB, Dylan. **Biograph**. USA: Columbia Records, 1985, 5 LPs.

Bob Dylan then mentions “confessional songs”, which was at the time of writing and recording this album a new trend for singer-songwriters. Gill and Odegard (2004) mark the genesis of this approach in albums and songs by Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell, whose album *Blue* (1971) is a zenith of this style, with vulnerable personal lyrics. Other singer-songwriters who followed suit are, according to Gill and Odegard, Carole King, James Taylor and Jackson Browne, whose 1972 track “Song for Adam” movingly narrates the aftermath of the suicide of his own friend Adam Saylor. Bob Dylan, by then very reserved regarding his personal life, did not intend to carry this tradition on, but circumstances (and the emotions he claims have nothing to do with it) might have forced him to write the pain away.

Gill and Odegard (2004) give a general overview of this marriage with Sara Lownds Dylan. They first got involved in late 1964 and got married on November 22, 1965. Unlike in his previous and very public relationship with singer Joan Baez, this time Bob Dylan tried to maintain this relationship private, even telling an interviewer of the *Chicago Daily News* that he had no hope of marrying and having kids. This interview took place a few days after his marriage (Gill and Odegard, p. 4). Sara was a former model and a *Playboy* bunny and had already been married to (and divorced) a fashion photographer. Gill and Odegard point out that what probably drew Bob Dylan to her was something similar to what drew him to the painter Norman Raebe: she did not care who he was, and in fact did not care about music (a fact also pointed out by Sounes, 2011). She had, however, a “Zen-like equanimity” (Gill and Odegard, 2004, p. 4), which brings to mind a verse of Bob Dylan’s song “Sara”, obviously dedicated to her: “Radiant jewel, mystical wife”. A friend of the couple, Al Aronowitz, tells Gill and Odegard (2004) that she made Bob Dylan a better, more tender human being. Gill and Odegard also propose that this period of personal stability as a father and happily married man might have led to a stagnation in his music, which could, after 1967, be deemed as “middle-of-the-road” (p. 11).

When Bob Dylan got back on the aforementioned tour with The Band, however, the excesses of the road (drugs, alcohol and even women) shook his marriage. They separated some time in 1974. Sounes (2011) tells that much of Bob Dylan’s summer that year was spent on a farm in Minnesota without Sara, and instead with his brother David Zimmerman. That would be around July, after the tour with The Band ended in February, according to Margotin and Guesdon (2015). With the impending doom of the Bob and Sara Dylan marriage, it is not unreasonable that Bob Dylan had fears and feelings in him that were not there before, feelings which had often been translated into poignant art in the past.

Blood on the Tracks has a unique gestation process in the sense that the album had already been recorded during four sessions in New York City from 16th to the 19th of September 1974. The album was mastered and it was getting ready for a release later that year, perhaps for Christmas. Sounes (2011) narrates that Bob Dylan was not happy with the sound of his new album, however, even though the album jackets had already been printed. He went home to his farm and played the record to his brother David Zimmerman, who said “the recording lacked commercial appeal and might not attract radio airplay in its current state” (Gill and Odegard, 2004, p. 93). Following his brother’s input, which confirmed a dissatisfaction he was already feeling with these recordings, Bob Dylan would re-record the songs in two sessions in Minneapolis (27th and 30th December) with a band to spice up the sound and also to mask some autobiographical traits in the lyrics that might have been too obvious as relating to his marriage struggles, notably in “Idiot Wind”, “turning it from being ‘right on target, so direct’ into an allegory on contemporary America seen through the eyes of two star-crossed lovers caught up in forces beyond their control”, according to Heylin (2011, p. 374). This song was put aside on the early part of the Rolling Thunder Revue tour, but as it became clear there was probably no way to save the marriage, this song was the one in which Bob Dylan distilled all his rage. A notable performance from one of these concerts can be heard in the live album *Hard Rain* (1976).

The *Blood on the Tracks* album was released on January 20th, 1975 straight to #1 in the US charts¹², albeit with mixed reviews, which is surprising given its cult status with music critics in the years that followed. It was included into the Grammy Hall of Fame¹³ in 2015, it was placed on the 16th position in the Rolling Stone magazine’s 500 greatest albums of all time¹⁴, it achieved 5th position on the website Pitchfork’s “100 best album of the 1970s” list in 2004¹⁵. It is also highly esteemed by music fans, as at the time of writing it is tied with *Highway 61 Revisited* as the highest rated Bob Dylan album in the Rate Your Music website, with an average of 4.15 out of 5 stars, with almost 26,500 ratings. This result ranks it as the 84th highest rated album of all time, according to music fans who rate albums and singles at the website.¹⁶

¹² BOB Dylan: Biography, Music & News - Billboard. Biography, Music & News - Billboard. 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.billboard.com/artist/bob-dylan/chart-history/tlp/>. Access on: 11 sept. 2024.

¹³ GRAMMY Hall of Fame Awards. 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.grammy.com/awards/hall-of-fame-award#b>. Access on: 10 sept. 2024.

¹⁴ LEVY, Joe (org.). **Rolling Stone: The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time**. New York: Wenner Books, 2005.

¹⁵ PITCHFORK. **The 100 Best Albums of the 1970s**. 2004. Retrieved from: <https://pitchfork.com/features/lists-and-guides/5932-top-100-albums-of-the-1970s/>. Access on: 10 sept. 2024.

¹⁶ BOB Dylan Albums- songs, discography, biography, and listening guide - Rate Your Music. 2024. Retrieved from: <https://rateyourmusic.com/artist/bob-dylan>. Access on: 10 sept. 2024.

It is also my favorite Bob Dylan album. Jarnow (2016) writes that *Blood on the Tracks* “is arguably the last Dylan album on which a majority of the songs became standards of their own, part of the invisible canon shared at coffee houses, college campuses, or anywhere bright-eyed young pickers might congregate.” It went on to receive a double platinum certification in the US in 1994¹⁷. Bob Dylan himself, in a 1975 radio interview with Mary Travers (of Peter, Paul & Mary, the folk group who first made “Blowin’ in the Wind” a hit), did not understand why people enjoyed this album so much: “It’s hard for me to relate to that [...]. I mean, people enjoying that type of pain”. His interviewer replies that “[p]erhaps ‘enjoy’ is a wrong word, maybe a better word is to say that you’re ‘moved’”.¹⁸ And many certainly were moved.

A few of the unreleased recordings from both sessions were made available in different compilations throughout the years, but the complete recordings from both New York and Minneapolis sessions were released (in their entirety) in November 2018 for *The Bootleg Series Vol. 14: More Blood, More Tracks* as a 6-CD or digital deluxe version. An abridged selection of the recordings is also available on one CD or 2-LPs standard versions, as well as a Sampler version in streaming services. The version that Bob Dylan played to his brother was released on vinyl in a limited edition of 7,500 copies for the Record Store Day in 2019.¹⁹

Desire (1976) was the follow-up to *Blood on the Tracks*, and it may be his album with a most distinctive sound – a fact that is undoubtedly owed primarily to the presence of violinist Scarlet Rivera, who notably played in a gypsy style. The story goes, according to Margotin and Guesdon (2015), that Bob Dylan was riding in an “ugly green car” (p. 432) and pulled up next to this random woman who was carrying a violin case. He asked a female riding with him to ask this woman for her number, but the violinist said she did not give her number to someone stopping her on the street. Bob Dylan asked her to rehearse with him and she accepted, in a most unusual event since Bob Dylan did not know who she was. Another unique presence in *Desire* is that of Jacques Levy, an author, playwright and theater director he met through Roger McGuinn, singer and guitarist for the American group The Byrds, according to Margotin and Guesdon. Bob Dylan reached out to Jacques Levy in order to, for the first time, share lyrical duties on the next album. This had not happened before and has not happened since.

¹⁷ RIAA. **Gold & Platinum**. Retrieved from: https://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=bob+dylan&col=highest_level&ord=desc#search_section. Access on: 05 sept. 2024.

¹⁸ BOB Dylan Interview | Mary Travers and Friend Radio Show. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smDt4wT1Qk0>. Access on: 11 sept. 2024.

¹⁹ SPECIALRELEASE - Record Store Day. Retrieved from: <https://recordstoreday.com/SpecialRelease/10564>. Access on: 10 sept. 2024.

Soon after the release of *Blood on the Tracks*, Sounes (2011) points out that there was an attempt at a reconciliation between Sara and Bob Dylan, but it was a fragile one. Hinton (2006) recalls Sara Dylan did not spend her husband's 34th birthday (May 24th, 1975) in France with him, a telling sign of a fragile state of personal affairs. Bob Dylan made the trip with painter David Oppenheim, who had helped providing visuals for the back cover of *Blood on the Tracks*. Sounes claims Oppenheim and Bob Dylan went to a gypsy festival, and from there came the first song composed for the album ("One More Cup of Coffee") and the genesis for a new one that is in my *corpus*: "Sara", to show her how he missed her, as Sounes suggests. Also, given how the album sounds, it probably guided the singer's decision making from then on, including perhaps the need for a (gypsy) violinist.

Bob Dylan showed playwright Jacques Levy "One More Cup of Cofffee" and "Sara", the two songs he had already composed and the only songs on *Desire* that would not be written in co-authorship with Jacques Levy. The playwright, according to Sounes (2011), was surprised to hear the lyrics of this clearly confessional song, which claimed the song "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands", an 11-minute track that finished *Blonde on Blonde* (1966), had actually been written for Sara. "People had always thought it was [for] Joan Baez", Jacques Levy tells Sounes (p. 287).

Hinton (2006) writes that Bob Dylan tried recording with many musicians on this album before settling down for a bass/drums/violin combo that also accompanied him on the Rolling Thunder Revue tour. Bob Dylan's preference of recording songs with as few overdubs and takes as possible did not change here, which was a problem for backing vocals singer Emmylou Harris, who was not familiar with the songs nor provided with the written lyrics. Hinton also mentions how cinematic the album seems, and that may be, too, because of Levy's input – many of his songs with Bob Dylan lean into storytelling, something he was familiar with, as a playwright.

On July 31, 1975²⁰ Bob Dylan recorded "Sara" in studio and Sara, his wife, was watching through the glass in the studio. This moment is captured by Sounes (2011) as a touching one that made the two get back together for a while. Of course, Bob Dylan would once again not admit to it being a necessarily autobiographical song, saying in an interview to Jonathan Cott in 1978: "when people say 'Sara' was written for 'his wife Sara'—it doesn't necessarily have to be about her just because my wife's name happened to be Sara. Anyway, was it the real Sara or the Sara in the dream? I still don't know." (Cott, 2006, p; 259). Sara

²⁰ Date provided by Margotin and Guesdon, 2015, p. 445

accompanied Bob Dylan on most of the Rolling Thunder Revue and appears on the film *Renaldo and Clara* (1978).

The album's greatest hit was the opening track "Hurricane", a return to his protest song days. I write about this song and its Brazilian version briefly in the following section. Another song that is important in this album is "Joey", the longest song in *Desire*, clocking in at 11 minutes with 12 verses. This song gives an account of the real-life story of Joe Gallo, also known as Crazy Joe, a member of the Mafia in New York. The approach taken by the song when telling events of the mobster's life was controversial. Hinton (2006) writes about the character of "Joey":

He beat his wife, abused his children, was a well-known racist, and took part in a brutal gang rape of a young boy in prison. After he connived in the killing of fellow hood Joe Columbo, there was a contract out on him. He was gunned down at Umberto's Clam House in Little Italy, in 1972 as he celebrated his 43rd birthday. A long way from the secular saint portrayed here. (p. 145)

Bob Dylan tells Larry Sloman (1978) that he sees the story of Joe Gallo differently, however:

I never considered him a gangster, I always thought of him as some kind of a hero in some kind of a way. An underdog fighting against the elements. He retained a certain amount of his freedom and he went out the way he had to. [...] [I]t was like listening to a story about Billy the Kid, so we went ahead and wrote that up in one night. I was living around Little Italy so I was always walking around there [...] (p. 49)

Heylin (2010) sheds light on the fact Jacques Levy, the album's lyrics co-writer, spent time with Joe Gallo sometime during the gangster's last year. Bob Dylan would say that the lyrics to this song were Jacques Levy's and that he just sang it, but even Heylin claims this is not a trustworthy account. Also, when talking about the song in an interview with Paul Zollo in 1991, reprinted in Cott (2006), Bob Dylan says:

Of course, it's a long song. But, to me, not to blow my own horn, [...] the song is like a Homer ballad. Much more so than "A Hard Rain," which is a long song, too. But, to me, "Joey" has a Homeric quality to it that you don't hear every day. Especially in popular music. (p. 388)

Released on January 5, 1976, *Desire* was another hit, reaching the top of the Billboard charts in the U.S. and remaining there for 5 weeks, eventually reaching double platinum certification in 1999²¹, as *Blood on the Tracks* did before. All the attempts at making his marriage work again failed, and in March 1st 1977 Sara filed for divorce, followed by a fight

²¹ RIAA. **Gold & Platinum**. Retrieved from: https://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=bob+dylan&col=highest_level&ord=desc#search_section. Access on: 16 sept. 2024.

for the custody of their five children (Sounes, 2011, p; 308). The singer never sang the song “Sara” again after January 25th 1976.²²

The follow-up *Street Legal* (1978) would be his last secular album until 1983, because what happened next was a conversion: Bob Dylan became a born-again Christian. Scott M. Marshall (2017) writes about this process in detail in his book *Bob Dylan: A Spiritual Life*, and claims that throughout the 1970s it would seem Dylan was searching for *something* he could not find in his life at that point.

Marshall (2017, Chapter 3) mentions a moment in a San Diego concert in November 1978 in which someone in the audience tossed a small silver cross onstage, which Bob Dylan retrieved for himself, and he would remember it as a turning point in the events that were about to happen. In the same month, Ian Bell (2013, p. 173) tells of an even stranger story, which has since become one of the crucial moments in the artist’s life story: Bob Dylan claims to have felt a presence in a hotel room who touched him and could only have been, according to him, Jesus Christ – and that sealed the deal.

Bob Dylan started going to Bible classes and was eventually baptized, accepting Jesus as his Messiah (Marshall, 2017, Chapter 3). This news leaked, and suddenly Marshall (2017, Chapter 3) writes that Dylan’s publicist Paul Wasserman, who also had The Rolling Stones and U2 as clients, was having trouble justifying it, that everyone (including members of said bands) was talking about it, calling him to get more information. Some fans were reportedly throwing their albums out or abandoned their once-idol, in an inverse situation as the one The Beatles faced in 1966 when John Lennon said the band was more popular than Jesus (Chapter 3).

Bob Dylan’s next step was to release his first gospel record: *Slow Train Coming* (1979), from which we get one of the songs in my *corpus*: “Gotta Serve Somebody”. Even though the openly Christian lyrics in the entire album might have caused some confusion in listeners at the time, Francis J. Beckwith (2006) convincingly suggests that

Bob Dylan’s conversion to Christianity is consistent with the deeper metaphysical and moral commitments that have always percolated beneath the surface of his art. Unlike the nihilism and historicism that one finds in other artists both in rock and folk, Dylan’s call to moral or spiritual reformation is a call back to those unchanging truths – those first principles – that we have forgotten, either out of negligence, human weakness, or a willful disdain for the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Beckwith (2006) gives some examples to strengthen his claim. Take songs in the past such as “With God on Our Side” (1964), which deals with the fact that horrible actions have

²² SARA. Retrieved from: <https://www.bobdylan.com/songs/sara/>. Access on: 16 sept. 2024.

been committed using the name of God, and “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll” (also from 1964), a song based on true events in which Bob Dylan wonders if a six-month sentence for the son of an aristocrat who killed a kitchen maid with a cane is just. They are examples in his early song catalogue of this worldview in which there is one correct path we are not following for some reason. Beckwith states that Bob Dylan’s moral judgements (that is, if we are to take his lyrics as an expression of his beliefs), which are present in some of his songs before the Christian years, do not make sense unless he believes in an unchanging moral law. Petrusich (2017) also makes the claim that “Dylan has always performed devotional material – work that suggests an unyielding allegiance to a certain worldview” (p. 15). Michael J. Gilmour’s (2004) *Tangled Up in The Bible: Bob Dylan & Scripture* would find allusions to the Bible in Bob Dylan songs since some of his very first lyrics and a whopping thirty-five indirect mentions to it in “*Love and Theft*” (2001), his last studio album released by the time the book was published.

Following this claim of the echoes of the Bible in Bob Dylan’s lyrics, Beckwith (2006) links the many questions heard on the 1962 classic “Blowin’ in the Wind” (how many roads a man must walk down before he’s called a man, how many deaths until a man knows too many have died, etc.) with 1989’s “What Good Am I?”, in which Bob Dylan turns those questions inwards:

What good am I then to others and me
If I've had every chance and yet still fail to see
If my hands are tied must I not wonder within
Who tied them and why and where must I have been

What good am I if I say foolish things
And I laugh in the face of what sorrow brings
And I just turn my back while you silently die,
What good am I? ²³

Beckwith (2006) compares these wonderings with those present in James 2:14-17, SRV:

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ²⁴

²³ DYLAN, Bob. What Good Am I?. In: DYLAN, Bob. **Oh mercy**. USA: Columbia, 1989. CD, track 07.

²⁴ BIBLE. **Holy Bible**. Retrieved from: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%202%3A14-26&version=RSV>. Access on: 17 sept. 2024.

According to Hinton (2006), Bob Dylan strongly believed in a second coming of Christ and took the Bible literally. His position in a song such as “Gotta Serve Somebody”, in my *corpus*, is indeed that Christ is coming and there will be hell to pay for those who do not follow His word. Hinton recounts that Bob Dylan tried to convert *Slow Train Coming* producer Jerry Wexler to his newfound faith, but the producer claimed Bob Dylan was dealing with a 62-year-old hopeless atheist, so his efforts would not be fruitful.

Margotin and Guesdon (2015) tell that “Gotta Serve Somebody” was the first song recorded for this album, and they cite two Bible quotes as possible inspiration for the words contained therein. They are, firstly:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15 – KJV) ²⁵

And secondly

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24 – KJV) ²⁶

Margotin and Guesdon clarify that “mammon”, on the last quoted verse, stands for wealth and greed, and that indeed some of the lines in this song are aimed towards Bob Dylan himself, in allusions to wealth, fame, lust. Bob Dylan would win a Grammy Award for Best Male Rock Performance in 1980 for this recording.

Amanda Petrusich’s (2017) thesis on a greater context for this conversion is found on the liner notes for *The Bootleg Series Vol. 13: Trouble No More (1979-1981)*, featuring live concerts from this era (sermons, one could say, as Bob Dylan would cease playing his secular songs live at this time and would alienate a part of his audience who would walk out of his performances):

If we think of Evangelicalism, like every religion, as a kind of sense-making rubric – a stern and unambiguous system in which hopelessness and existential worry are addressed and corrected for – it makes sense that Dylan would have been drawn to it, especially at the end of the 1970s, a decade in which Americans came to embrace a particular [...] brand of atomized individualism [...]. (p. 9)

²⁵ BIBLE. **Holy Bible**. Retrieved from:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua%2024%3A15&version=KJV>. Access on: 17 sept. 2024.

²⁶ BIBLE. **Holy Bible**. Retrieved from:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%206%3A24&version=KJV>. Access on: 17 sept. 2024.

This connection with Christianity has certainly been exacerbated at this point of his career, but it is not entirely new, nor did it go away. If the albums in the Christian trilogy are for Beckwith (2006) affirmations of a New Testament faith, then his later-years classic *Time Out of Mind* (1997) is his Book of Ecclesiastes, which features songs by a man perhaps too wise and therefore mostly hopeless. Beckwith recalls “Like a Rolling Stone” and the line “when you ain’t got nothing, you got nothing to lose” – now the old man, like the narrator in Ecclesiastes might have written, sings in “Tryin’ to Get to Heaven” (a telling title):

When you think that you’ve lost everything
You find out you can always lose a little more
I’m just going down the road feeling bad
Trying to get to heaven before they close the door ²⁷

This train came and it is still going, slowly but surely.

Slow Train Coming was not a commercial disappointment like the subsequent albums in the Christian trilogy. Margotin and Guesdon (2015) recall that the album was recorded in one of the best studios in the USA: Muscle Shoals, in Alabama, in which artists such as Aretha Franklin, Paul Simon and The Rolling Stones had recorded in the past. Bob Dylan surrounded himself with great musicians, including the guitarist and singer from band Dire Straits Mark Knopfler, who gives a distinct guitar sound in this album, and back-up singers who strengthen the gospel feel of this collection of songs. Margotin and Guesdon remind us that Bob Dylan originally intended to give these songs to one of his back-up singers and maybe produce her record. Luckily for him he did not, because Margotin and Guesdon testify that the album achieved Platinum certificate in the USA and it hit the 3rd position in the Billboard charts, as well as the second place in British charts and a surprising 430,000 copies sold in France alone. Hinton (2006) alludes to the fact that this album inspired Irish artist Sinéad O’Connor to start singing. And it has inspired, of course, Vitor Ramil to transcreate “Gotta Serve Somebody”.

What follows now is a somewhat brief contextualization of this later work until the present moment. It is not part of the time span of my *corpus*, but I also believe that whatever twists and turns Bob’s legacy has endured are part of the reason why someone would choose today (or even some decades back, as in the first adaptation in my *corpus* from 1986) to cover, to translate or to want to read about his songs. If something had been done differently, perhaps

²⁷ DYLAN, Bob. Tryin’ to Get to Heaven. In: DYLAN, Bob. **Time Out of Mind**. USA: Columbia, 1997. CD, track 05.

even what happened this far would have become less remembered, less relevant. His legacy has been maintained, to a certain degree.

Following *Slow Train*, Bob Dylan would release *Saved* and *Shot of Love* in 1980 and 1981, therefore wrapping up the Christian Trilogy. At this time, the artist would only perform his Christian songs in concert, while also talking about Scripture, God and His Laws. Live recordings of some of these performances can be found in *The Bootleg Series Vol. 13: Trouble No More 1979–1981*.

Infidels (1983) sees him returning to secular music, which is followed by three albums between 1985 and 1988 (*Empire Burlesque*, *Knocked Out Loaded* and *Down in the Groove*). All these albums suffer from now dated 1980s production and often uninspired songwriting. Bob Dylan (2004) writes that he thought he did not have it in him anymore, having lost whatever it took to make songs: “I never expected to write anything ever again. Didn't need any more songs anyway” (p. 165). But then he felt something once more. He was not visited by Jesus this time, but by another force about which he writes in his memoir:

One night when everyone was asleep and I was sitting at the kitchen table, nothing on the hillside but a shiny bed of lights—all that changed. I wrote about twenty verses for a song called “Political World” and this was about the first of twenty songs I would write in the next month or so. They came from out of the blue. Maybe I wouldn't have written them if I wasn't laid up like I was. [...] They were easy to write, seemed to float downstream with the current. It's not like they'd been faint or far away—they were right there in my face, but if you'd look too steady at them, they'd be gone. (p. 165)

And those songs lead up to another highlight: *Oh Mercy* (1989). Unfortunately, its follow-up is once again disappointing (*Under a Red Sky*, 1990), and after that Bob Dylan returns to his folk roots for two albums revisiting some traditional songs in a low-key production, just an acoustic guitar and his aging voice.

No one could have foreseen *Time Out of Mind* (1997), either. By then he had not released new material in seven years. He reunited with producer Daniel Lanois, who had worked with him in *Oh Mercy*, and recorded another masterpiece. It is a somber record, often reflecting on death and disillusionment. In the following Grammy ceremony, Bob Dylan got the Album of the Year Award and a couple others, and his son Jakob Dylan's band, The Wallflowers, got two Grammys, as well. After the release of the album, Bob Dylan suffered from a near-fatal heart fungal infection (histoplasmosis).

From then on, Bob Dylan would never again release a poorly received album, but it would begin an era in which some well-read Dylanologists would start catching Bob Dylan

“stealing”, adapting other people’s ideas here and there. His aptly titled album “*Love and Theft*” is the beginning of this new “Old Dylan” phase, and it was released in September 11th, 2001 to great reviews. *Modern Times* (2006), perhaps partly because of his title which invites an interpretation that the old master would now speak of the current, went Platinum in the US, UK, Canada and Australia, followed by *Together Through Life* (2009).

The year 2009 also witnesses a most curious release: a Christmas album (*Christmas in the Heart*), which makes it all the stranger given Bob Dylan’s nasal voice, dilapidated by time. *Tempest* (2012), causing discussions at the time of release as to whether this would be his last because of the possible Shakespearian reference, was also well-reviewed. Next, Bob Dylan released another unexpected trilogy of albums with songs once sung by Frank Sinatra. Despite never having a voice like Sinatra’s, Bob Dylan and his band performed the songs well, resulting in good reviews, despite having unimpressive commercial results. The third album of which, *Triplicate* (2017), was a triple album – which made sense only for vinyl, which can only store so many songs until the grooves on the record start getting compressed, resulting in sound quality loss. It was, however, needlessly released on triple CD, perhaps to mark his first triple album release, after *Blonde on Blonde* (1966) having been one of the first double albums in rock.

Bob Dylan’s latest recordings at the time of this writing are *Rough and Rowdy Ways* (2020), an album composed of original songs including his lengthiest yet: “Murder Most Foul”²⁸, a song about the times and cultural climate in America at the time of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in November 1963, clocking at almost 17 minutes. In January 2022 he sells his entire song catalogue to Sony Music Entertainment for an undisclosed sum north of 200 million US dollars.²⁹ After that he has only released a reimagining of some of his early 1960s songs, called *Shadow Kingdom* – in a way, going full circle.

Even if his cultural relevance has changed immensely since his breakthrough in the 1960s, Bob Dylan the name is indeed even bigger than his songs for the public who has not paid much attention to his music. His 1960s persona remains in the collective unconscious, and a new biopic called *A Complete Unknown*, based on the “going electric” days, was released in

²⁸ The song title appears to be a reference to a line in *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare. It is spoken by the ghost of Hamlet’s father in Act 1, Scene 5 and reads as follows: “Murder most foul, as in the best it is, / But this most foul, strange and unnatural”.

²⁹ LENTHANG, Marlene; CRADDUCK, Josh. Bob Dylan sells his entire catalog of recorded music to Sony. **NBC News, 2022**. Retrieved from: < <https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/pop-culture-news/bob-dylan-sells-entire-catalog-recorded-music-sony-music-rcna13434>>. Access on 15 Oct. 2022.

December 2024, starring Timothée Chalamet as Bob Dylan. The film was nominated for eight Oscars, including Best Picture. The legend remains.

1.2 VITOR RAMIL

Vitor Ramil was born in 1962 in the city of Pelotas, in Rio Grande do Sul. He was born in a family of musicians, being cited as always having siblings playing musical instruments around the house (as heard in *Sarau Elétrico*, 2024). His brothers Kleiton and Kledir were members of Almôndegas, a pop/rock group with influences from traditional Rio Grande do Sul music, active throughout the 1970s, later disbanding. His brothers Kleiton and Kledir carried on as a duo with even bigger recognition in the 1980s onwards.

Vitor Ramil started recording very early in that decade, releasing his debut album *Estrela, Estrela* in 1981 when he was only 18 years old, an album composed of songs he wrote as early as when he was 14. The title track would be recorded by Gal Costa in the following year and by Milton Nascimento many years later. The album had arrangements by heavyweights such as Egberto Gismonti and Wagner Tiso. Those were surprising feats for a freshman in the music business.

His second album, *A paixão de V segundo ele próprio* (1984), was noticeably different from its predecessor, revealing a restless musician going into experimental territory while gathering inspiration from a myriad of sources, such as the São Paulo avant-garde (Arrigo Barnabé and Itamar Assumpção, for example), concretism, Russian futurism and formalism, as author Marco Lacerda explains in *Sarau Elétrico* (2024). Lacerda also reminds us that after this album Vitor Ramil started to get featured in newspaper articles and critical essays in many regions in Brazil, not only in the south. There was a nationwide interest in his work.

His repertoire in *A paixão de V* consisted not only of what would be expected of a singer-songwriter (what he did in “Satolep”), but carnival music (“A luta”), opera (“Sangue ruim”), *milongas* (a rhythm Vitor Ramil would return to often, common in a region encompassing the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Argentina and Uruguay), electronic instrumentation, lyrical surrealism, humor and orchestral arrangements (“Noigandres”). Many songs were micro-songs called *musiquetas* by the songwriter, as short as eight seconds long in the CD release. It was a critical success. The song “Satolep”, Vitor Ramil tells Lacerda (2024, p. 40), was written in a period of over a year: “for example, my father was alive in the first stanza and further on his absence is ‘heavy’, that is, he had already died”.³⁰

³⁰ “Por exemplo, meu pai está vivo na primeira estrofe e mais adiante sua falta ‘é dura’, ou seja, ele já havia morrido” in the original Portuguese quote.

Several concerts took place between this and the release of *Tango* in 1987, and in the midst of these concerts is where the first song in my *corpus* has its genesis: “Joquim”, based on the original “Joey”, by Bob Dylan. Vitor Ramil tells Junior Maicá (2022) that record executives were furious at the song’s length, claiming that it would never play on the radio. He says, however, that it was his song that got played on the radio the most, despite being over eight minutes long – still shorter than the Bob Dylan original, which clocks in at over eleven minutes. On the same podcast, Vitor Ramil also says that “Joquim” was created out of what he perceived as a necessity to fill a specific space in his concerts after the *A paixão de V*, an experimental album that resulted in some difficulty when trying to create a coherent concert experience, since it was only his second LP, and he did not have that many songs with which to build a prime setlist.

Vitor Ramil said the following about the genesis of “Joquim”: “I wanted a song with basic chords and such, and I was listening to *Desire* a lot at that time, Dylan’s record that has this song, and I was determined to adapt ‘Joey’”³¹ (my translation, calling attention to the fact Vitor Ramil used the word ‘versionar’ in Portuguese). This is not, as is explained more in depth in Chapter 3, just an adaptation for the song in Portuguese, and the very existence of this research is owed to this fact, to how unorthodox Vitor Ramil’s choices are. The main ingredient put into the cauldron that would result in “Joquim” is not only the original “Joey” but, according to Vitor Ramil in multiple interviews and in Lacerda (2024), the story of Joaquim Fonseca, grandfather to his then drummer Alexandre Fonseca.

The story of Joaquim Fonseca, which ended up inspiring not only the lyrics to the song but the very title “Joquim” – a fusion of Joey and Joaquim, according to Vitor Ramil in an interview with Ricardo Barberena (2020b), is a peculiar one. As suggested in the second half of the song, Joaquim was a well-known aviator in Pelotas. According to Lacerda (2024), Joaquim built a plane in 1942 and traveled to the then capital Rio de Janeiro in order to get a license so he could hopefully receive funding to build some airplanes. Even though this was the likely outcome, the desired result did not come, and he received a document saying the government was not interested in the manufacturing of planes such as his. This decision is attributed by some to an international lobby that allegedly wanted to have a monopoly of airplane manufacturing in Brazil, according to Lacerda (2024). Joaquim was considered by

³¹ Originally in Portuguese: “Eu queria fazer uma música, assim, com acordes básicos, e tal, e eu tava ouvindo muito o *Desire* naquela época, o disco do Dylan que tem essa musica, né? E eu tava determinado a versionar o ‘Joey’”.

detractors a communist, a subversive character for “insisting in the creation of a national airplane industry”³² (Lacerda, 2024, p. 64, my translation).

The third ingredient for this character Joaquim whose story we hear in the song is the film *Memoirs of Prison* (1984, originally titled *Memórias do cárcere*), directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos and based on a book by Graciliano Ramos. In this film (and book) we follow the story of a political prisoner, who happens to be the author Graciliano Ramos himself, this being a book based on personal experience – a memoir. In this film, Graciliano Ramos (played by Carlos Vereza) is imprisoned in 1935 during the Getúlio Vargas government for being an alleged communist (similarly to Joaquim Fonseca). He tells of his experiences during the ten months of imprisonment, and one can see how the trope of a free spirit whose wings are cut by those in power may have fit with the ingredients Vitor Ramil already had – and, as can be read in the section on Bob Dylan, it is not too different from how the original writer saw the original character Joe Gallo.

In both Maicá (2022) and Barberena (2020b) Vitor Ramil says he purposely did not want this story to be tied down to a specific time frame, with inconclusive elements like the mention of a baroness in the beginning of the lyrics and more modern elements in later parts of the song. The date of December of 1937 is mentioned, but back then Pelotas no longer had a baroness, Vitor Ramil himself explains to Maicá (2022), in which he also says this is something he did in his novel *Satolep* (2008), too: “I mixed people from different times, everyone together in the same moment”.³³

There is a strange synchronicity regarding “Joaquim”: Vitor Ramil tells Ricardo Barberena (2020a) that he was recording *Tango* at the same time the Brazilian rock group Legião Urbana was recording right in the next studio at the record label EMI Brasil’s headquarters. By a quick deduction on the dates, the rock group fronted by singer and songwriter Renato Russo was recording their *Que país é este: 1978-1987* album, which included “Faroeste Caboclo”, a song which was also long (9 minutes long, specifically) and also deemed highly unlikely for broadcasting despite ending up being one of the most successful songs by the group, its 169 verses (with no chorus) often easily declaimed by fans. The similarities do not stop there, for here is the most noteworthy one which justifies this paragraph: “Faroeste Caboclo” was composed by Russo in 1979 (but never released until then), according to both Villa-Lobos, Demier and Mattos (2015) and Marcelo (2016), and was often compared

³² “[...] por conta da sua insistência na criação de uma indústria nacional de aviação no país”, in the original Portuguese.

³³ “[...] juntei pessoas de épocas distintas, todo mundo no mesmo momento”, in the original Portuguese.

to (and in fact was openly inspired by) Bob Dylan's "Hurricane", the opening track in the album *Desire* (1976) – the very same album which features "Joey", whose version "Joquim" was being recorded by Vitor Ramil and his band likely at the same time, in the same facilities.

Both songs have protagonists who are defiant towards authority figures and, perhaps because of this, apparently have death often looming around their dangerous crusades. There is a sense they are flirting with danger, which increases as the songs unravel their characters' destinies. Both protagonists die by getting shot while outdoors, on a public space. On a lyrical level, both songs have curse words, which are unusual in both Legião's and Vitor Ramil's catalogues. In the case of Legião Urbana these curse words led to censorship of either entire verses where they occur or just a bleep or silence on the words themselves. My sources have not mentioned any such measures being taken in relation to "Joquim", in which there is only one such moment. Both songs heavily drift away lyrically from their inspirations, and if Russo had borrowed the melody from "Hurricane" we could have had another transcreation on our hands.

A strange phenomenon can be noticed around 1986-1987, the year of both recordings. They were not, in fact, the only songs being recorded in Brazil during this two-year period that were based on songs off *Desire* (1976). As catalogued in Ruffato (2012), in 1986 there is a version of "Hurricane" named "Furacão" written by Miguel Paiva and sung by Cida Moreira. In 1987, songwriter Fausto Nilo wrote "Romance no deserto", based on "Romance in Durango", both translations that stick somewhat close to the originals. On Ruffato's catalogue one can notice that the only other Brazilian versions of songs from *Desire* were in 1992 when Zé Ramalho wrote and sang "Frevoador", a version whose lyrics are entirely different from the source text, and the version of "Sara" by Vitor Ramil, in 2017, after Ruffato's dissertation. To my present knowledge, there is no explanation as to why *Desire* had this revival just then.

It would take seven years for Vitor Ramil to release a follow-up, which would be *Á beça*, in 1995. It presented the artist being more comfortable with writing within the MPB (música popular brasileira – Brazilian popular music) genre. His most revered album came two years after, in 1997, with the release of *Ramilonga: a estética do frio*. Its subtitle, meaning "aesthetic of the cold", was also the title of a lecture delivered by Vitor Ramil in Geneva in French (original title: *L'esthétique du froid*) in the year of 2003 (later published in 2004). This lecture was, in sum, about the way inhabitants from Rio Grande do Sul find themselves in a different position as does the rest of Brazil, since they are surrounded by Spanish-speaking countries (Uruguay and Argentina) whose culture seems to be more akin to their own. He contrasts this to the typical notions of what it is to be Brazilian and how Tropicália, one of the

most famous musical movements to come out of Brazil, is a reflex of this Brazilian-ness. This very idea, Vitor Ramil tells Lacerda (2024), came when he was having *chimarrão* during a hot day in Copacabana and on the television the news was about an out-of-season carnival going on somewhere in the country. From this clash of values came this concept. Vitor Ramil's music, his reality, is not that of the carnival, of happiness and warmth – it is that of the cold, the introspection, the melancholy. His music has, even before the publication of this lecture many years later, been characterized as a symbol of this “aesthetic of the cold”, since the concept had been mentioned by him in interviews as early as the early 1990s, suggests Lacerda (2024). Arine Coelho and Lucas Serafim (2021) develop this idea of Rio Grande do Sul having, throughout its history, a tendency both to autonomy and integration in relation to the rest of Brazil. As Lacerda (2024, p. 196) puts it, it is so that the *gaúcho* condition “is not marginal in relation to a center, but at the center of another story” (my translation).³⁴

The album *Ramilonga: a estética do frio* was instantly acclaimed by both public and critics alike as a reimagining of the *milonga* and other traditional rhythms from the state of Rio Grande do Sul and its neighboring regions of Uruguay and Argentina. Some of the album's lyrics were poems from traditional *gaúcho* poets, with a heavy use of dialect. The musical aspect, however, was not necessarily traditional, containing foreign elements such as sitar and a contemporary sound not entirely rooted in folk music.

Next comes the album in which one finds half of the songs in my *corpus*: *Tambong* (2000). In an interview with Barberena (2020c), Vitor Ramil claims the album's title came in a dream, because it had the sound of “tango, samba, bossa, candombe” and *milonga*. It was his first album to be recorded in Buenos Aires and also the first album to be released in a Spanish version as well, with seven out of its fourteen tracks receiving a Spanish-lyrics version by Vitor Ramil. Neither of the two Bob Dylan transcreations (“Um dia você vai servir a alguém” and “Só você manda em você”) received this treatment. Lacerda (2024) points out this album's cosmopolitan nature, an urban counterpart in contrast to *Ramilonga's* *pampas* landscape. It has four re-recordings of previously released songs, the participation of respected Brazilian musicians (Lenine and Chico César), the Bob Dylan transcreations and poems by Allen Ginsberg (“Para Lindsey”) and Paulo Leminski (“O velho Leon e Natália em Coyoacán”) turned to music. The very last track, “Quiet Music”, is sung in English. A varied affair of multiple voices.

³⁴ “[...] não à margem de um centro, mas no centro de uma outra história”, in the original Portuguese.

Further albums after *Tambong* were *Longes* (2004) and *Satolep Sambatown* (2007), a certain yin-yang of dark and light respectively. *Délibab* (2010) has Vitor Ramil composing music to six Jorge Luis Borges poems and six João da Cunha Vargas poems. *Foi no mês que vem* (2013) is a re-recording of many highlights in his career and then five years later, in 2017, we have the final piece of our puzzle: *Campos neutrais*, which contains his version to “Sara”. Vitor Ramil gives an insight into his songwriting choices and the genesis of all these versions in the following interview for Barberena (2020a):

Every time I take Dylan and make a version out of a song of his, I go to the chorus and I check if I can find a correspondence in Portuguese which, rhythmically and poetically, has strength. For example, I did a version in the last record for his “Sara”. He sings “Sara, oh Sara...”, which he made to his wife. And I made this version for Ana. By sheer luck she’s called Ana, it fits, right? If it was another name (Francisca, Heloísa) it wouldn’t work. So I did it, I went there and said: well, I can make a version.

Right after, he adds to this by sharing something else about his process:

And I want to check if I can bring it to my reality, too. Bob Dylan starts saying, if I’m not mistaken, that they’re on a beach, they talk about the sand, the kids nearby and so on. So I transpose everything over here, to the south, we are by a river, I talk about other places, I talk about Punta del Diablo, places we went to at the time and stuff.³⁵

By means of these interviews, what was previously uncertain to me about his choices and approach became clearer. Vitor Ramil’s approach to making versions of Bob Dylan is not motivated by money, as I soon show. It seems instead to be motivated by an emotional connection to the songs and the necessary recognition of something there that must vibrate in a certain frequency from which he may echo and create something out of it too. Transposing to his reality, adding other references as is shown in Chapter 3.

And there is another aspect to be taken into consideration. In Maicá (2022), Vitor Ramil is asked about how difficult it was to get Bob Dylan’s authorization to record his versions, to which he answered: “Very easy. He authorizes everyone to do the version they want. You can make your version of ‘Joey’, for example, you know? But you will not get a cent

³⁵ “Sempre que eu pego o Dylan pra versionar alguma canção dele, eu vou lá no refrão e vou ver se eu tenho como encontrar um correspondente em português que, ritmicamente e poeticamente, tenha força. Por exemplo, eu versionei para o último disco a música Sara dele. Ele canta... “Sara, oh Sara”, que ele fez para a mulher dele. E eu fiz para a Ana essa versão. Por sorte, ela se chama Ana, cabe né? Se fosse outro nome (Francisca, Heloísa), já não daria certo. Então eu fiz, eu fui lá e disse, opa, posso versionar. [...] E quero ver se eu tenho como trazer pra minha realidade também O Bob Dylan [...] começa falando, se não me engano, que eles estão numa praia, falam na areia, as crianças ali por perto e tal. Aí eu passo tudo pra cá, pro sul, a gente tá na beira de um rio, vou falando de outros lugares, falo em Punta del Diablo, lugares onde a gente ia e tal na época, né” in the original Portuguese. This citation goes for both quotes on this page.

from that, I never earned anything from ‘Joquim’”.³⁶ I find such passage telling for two reasons: firstly, it is really not the case of making money by attaching oneself to Bob Dylan’s name. Secondly, Bob Dylan’s lenience towards versions of his songs welcomes this approach Ramil takes, to a different degree, in all his versions. Such an approach would not be possible if he were to make transcreations of songs by The Beatles, for instance, since they are strict about the lyrical content of their songs in other languages and would not allow heavy diversions. Singer Rita Lee, recording Beatles originals and versions in her album *Aqui, ali, em qualquer lugar* (2001), ran into difficulties in getting authorizations for that very reason.³⁷ Vitor Ramil’s creativity could only fly higher because he was allowed to.

After that he released *Avenida Angélica* in 2022 and *Mantra concreto* in 2024, the latter being fifteen poems by Paulo Leminski with music by Vitor Ramil. The singer-songwriter(-author) has also published three works of fiction: *Pequod* (1995), *Satolep* (2008) and *A primavera da pontuação* (2014, rereleased in 2024), which are not analyzed in this thesis. Vitor Ramil performs live on occasion in many regions in Brazil and sometimes in Uruguay and Argentina, as well. His son Ian Ramil won a Latin Grammy for Best Rock Album in 2016 and they sometimes perform together (along with Vitor Ramil’s siblings Kleiton & Kledir and other members of this musical family) as Casa Ramil. Recently his album *Ramilonga* was released on vinyl for the first time through Noize Record Club and the entirety of the sales profit went towards aids for the Rio Grande do Sul music scene after the Porto Alegre floods in 2024.³⁸

It is worth noticing that Bob Dylan is mostly known for his 1960s recordings, most especially in the years between 1963 and 1966, before his motorcycle accident. Ruffato (2012) mentions that more than half of the Brazilian covers and versions of Bob Dylan songs are of Bob Dylan’s output from the 1960s, in this period. However, none of the four songs Vitor Ramil transcreated are from this period: all of which come from the 1970s, this time among his output between 1975 and 1979, which was soon after his conversion to Christianity. Is there a reason for this? Ramil has not, to the best of my knowledge, commented on any principle that unites these four choices, but he has spoken of his relationship with Bob Dylan’s music and also about

³⁶ “Facílimo. [...] Ele autoriza todo mundo a fazer a versão que quiser. Tu pode fazer a tua versão do ‘Joey’, por exemplo, entendeu? Mas tu não vai ganhar um centavo disso, eu nunca ganhei nada do ‘Joquim’”, in the original Portuguese.

³⁷ MAIATO, Gustavo. **O hit de Rita Lee que é versão dos Beatles com história do amor entre bode e cabra**. 2023. Disponível em: https://whiplash.net/materias/news_700/357394-beatles.html#:~:text=Seu%20plano%20original%20era%20registrar,n%C3%A3o%20deix%C3%A1%20de%20fora.. Acesso em: 31 jul. 2024.

³⁸ NRC apresenta “Ramilonga”, de Vitor Ramil, na campanha Juntos Pela Música no RS. 2024. Retrieved from: <https://noize.com.br/nrc-apresenta-ramilonga-de-vitor-ramil-na-campanha-juntos-pela-musica-do-rs/>. Access on: 17 sept. 2024.

his preference for the album *Desire*, from where two of the songs in my *corpus* come from (“Joey” and “Sara”). Vitor Ramil also mentions *Desire* was his introduction to Bob Dylan’s music, in Barberena (2020a). Lopez (2019) notes that this album seems to have been the best-selling LP by a foreign artist in Brazil in the year of 1976, despite not breaking into the Brazilian Top 10. The method used for achieving this data is questionable, but it still hints at the possibility this album may have been the most popular Bob Dylan release in Brazil, an artist who never had many pop hits or much radio/video play. The previously mentioned cases of songs which are versions from this album released in a matter of two years (1986-1987) are also indications of the popularity the 1976 album had in Brazil.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this chapter I explain the three theoretical concepts that are most useful for the analysis of my *corpus*. They are, in order of appearance, Song Translation, Refraction and Transcreation. The reason for this order lies in what I find to be a logical progression. I am, first and foremost, analyzing Song Translation, and therefore I must either enlighten or remind the reader how far this field of study (and practice), situated within the greater field of Translation Studies, has gone. I explore some of its most relevant books and papers as well as the analytical tools with which I peruse the song translations in Chapter 3.

The concept of Refraction, which has also been used before me by Ferraz (2020) to analyze the translations of Bob Dylan songs by Zé Ramalho, is one of the keys to understanding what is happening in the songs I investigate as well. This concept is not exclusive to the realm of Song Translation, as I explain further on, but is instead widespread in many artforms (Literature, Film, Painting, Theater, etc). By exploring this concept, I am inevitably led to the final concept: Transcreation. It is something one can see and hear as happening along with refraction in oral, performative texts.

What we find is not simply (although it is never simple) a translation, but a transcreation – a word Vitor Ramil (1996) used when referring to “Joquim”. In the liner notes for his album *Tango*, he identifies the songwriters, Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy, and follows up with two addenda: “Transcreation Vitor Ramil” and “Based on the life of Joaquim Fonseca”³⁹. This process is, therefore, a conscious effort. Vitor Ramil was purposeful in his use of the term, and thus I look into what it means in this review of literature.

2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF SONG TRANSLATION STUDIES

Although the act of translating and more specifically the act of translating songs is a long-time praxis, one cannot say the same about the establishment of an organized field of study encompassing these practices. The naming of the field of Translation Studies is usually traced back to a paper by James Holmes in 1972, along with an analysis of its sub-categories and areas of research. Song Translation as a field of study is much more recent than that and is still in its infancy, especially with regard to the translation of popular music as opposed to, for instance, opera, which had

³⁹ “Transcrição Vitor Ramil” and “Baseado na vida de Joaquim Fonseca”, in the original Portuguese liner notes. When rereleasing the song on the album *Foi no mês que vem* (2013), the liner notes use the word “version”, instead.

received some attention before by Dinda L. Gorlée (2005) and Ronnie Apter (2016), for instance.

It is not until the 21st century that popular music lyrics come into the radar of Translation Studies. Some reasons for that are brought into question by multiple authors. Johan Franzon (2008) points out that, whereas literary or poetic translations are usually the domain of the professional translator, the same cannot be said of song translation, a task often performed by singers, songwriters and playwrights. It is not clear, as Franzon contends, who these professionals are. Dai Griffiths (2020) argues that, while writers and translators may write about their craft, musicians (who are often song translators) “survive through a cycle of recording and concert performance and have no time for writing about music” (p. 664), which means that much of the reflection on this topic goes undocumented.

Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva (2008) writes that studying translation and music calls for a multidisciplinary approach, “otherwise, the immediate disciplinary background of the researcher would inevitably determine and even limit the perspective adopted and arguably the value of the study” (p. 189). Griffiths (2020) can help us identify what some of these approaches are when he argues that researchers tend to analyze songs in a word-led, music-led or a holistic approach, which also mimics song translation practices. Griffiths understands that word-led discussions are more common than the other practices in song lyrics studies, and my thesis also points in the direction of a word-led approach.

It is undeniable that song lyrics are at the top of their powers when they are sung to the music which was made for them (or when the lyrics are crafted after the music has already been composed, which is the other way around but also an amalgamation of words and music). Sociomusicologist Simon Frith (1998) seems to agree with this position when he writes that lyrics are “not words, but words in performance” (p. 166). In this sense, song lyrics are not poems, so a word-led approach would work here only to a certain point. Peter Low (2017) writes that song-texts are oral in nature and should not be reduced to what is printed on a page, just as sheet music is not the music itself, but instructions for its performance. Moreover, Lauro Wanderley Meller (2010) argues that analyzing song lyrics as poems is a prejudice, as if song lyrics needed to be viewed as a poem in order to have their (academic) worth, whereas those are “different genres, which must be assessed using their own tools” (p. 19).⁴⁰

Low (2003) adds that song-texts’ translators sometimes need to handle challenges resembling those of poetry, and sometimes those of drama. He groups this practice with other

⁴⁰ “gêneros diferentes, que têm de ser avaliados com ferramentas próprias”, in the original Portuguese text.

‘special translation tasks’, alongside oddities like subtitling films and adapting cartoon strips – tasks in which unusual constraints must be met to achieve functionality” (p. 87). It is a lot to tackle. Later, Low (2017) categorizes songs as “expressive texts” in contrast to informative or operative ones, using terms coined by Katharina Reiss, co-creator of *skopos* theory. Therefore, song lyrics must be grouped alongside other means of personal expression such as letters, diaries and poems, in which the informative content is not the most important.

Susam-Sarajeva (2008) notices a lack of clarity in the very definitions of what a translation, an adaptation, a version and/or a rewriting are. The author states that “it is often impossible – and in my opinion, undesirable – to pinpoint where translation ends and adaptation begins” (p. 189), calling for a more flexible view of translation. This is a point later addressed by Low (2013), who reads in this statement a lack of interest to analyze the very object of study in the field: “is it not always desirable for scholars to seek and retain great precision in the use of terminology that defines and distinguishes?” (p. 237). What separates adaptation from translation as well as entirely new texts written for the same music is a topic discussed by both Low (2013) and Janin Laurer (2019). I shed light on this debate after I set up the main terms and theories of my thesis so it can be understood more clearly.

In my research the spotlight on the field of Song Translation falls on author Peter Low. He, in the early 2000s, developed a method called the Pentathlon Approach. It is a toolkit for song translators (as well as those who study the topic) to more easily identify what areas need to be worked on (or analyzed) as they translate. As pointed out by Susam-Sarajeva (2008) when referring to the field in general, one often reads more about *how* to make good song translations (a prescriptive approach) instead of *why* certain translations have been done a certain way (a descriptive approach). The prescriptive approach is also chosen by Low.

The Pentathlon Approach has been visited and revisited many times and as early as 2003 in Low’s paper “Singable translations of songs”, which was reprinted in Gorlée’s (2005) pioneering collection of essays *Song and Significance: Virtues and Vices of Vocal Translation*. From then, Low has revisited this model in “The pentathlon approach to translating songs” (2005). The final piece of the puzzle when writing on the subject is *Translating Song* (Low, 2017), in which Low further develops and details what he had written before on the topic.

Before translation even takes place, the ones tasked with performing this interlingual voyage must ask themselves what the translation is for and why. Is it to make the song accessible in another language, to make a new audience feel included and connected? Where will this translation be found? Will it be used as surtitles for an opera, or perhaps subtitles for a film? It could be a translation to be published as a book, like the Bob Dylan complete lyrics translated by Caetano Galindo. And even thinking solely of a translation written to be published and read, will it attempt to keep the prosody similar or not? Will it keep the rhyming patterns of the original or not?

These are all translational decisions, a force in every translation according to the *skopos* theory by Hans J. Vermeer which focuses on the target text, on the specific goal of each translation. In fact, Vermeer (2021) states that *skopos* is nothing but the name for the purpose of a translation. The *skopos* of a singable translation is to sing it, and that translation will have failed if it does not achieve that goal. Not all song translations are meant to be sung, however, and these will not have the specific constraints of the singable kind. They may be published; they may feature in CD booklets or websites. Each of these *skopoi* will inevitably result in different final products. Although the functionalist approach to translation is not the focus of this thesis, its premise is acknowledged here as fundamental to all translations.

Another factor which should be addressed as the very beginning of a song translation process (much like its *skopos*) is the cliché that music is a universal language. If that is so, then why should it need translating? Low (2017) writes that this is true of instrumental music, which can indeed cross language barriers, but the same cannot be said of vocal music, for which knowledge of the meaning of the words sung is most commendable to a fuller appreciation of a song. In other words: music may be universal (which is a questionable statement, given how different cultures perceive it differently), but lyrics are not. That is the first step, then: to understand why one should translate songs. An answer is likely the following: to bring the song to a public that does not understand the original language of the song. After all, as Low (2017) points out, a song translation does not have those who already know the original language as the target audience, even if these are the only ones who can judge how successful the translation is.

If what one intends to do is a singable translation, there are clearer constraints. It must, by definition, be singable, otherwise the whole endeavor is for nothing. That is, this translation must follow the rhythm, notes, melody and stresses of the original song, and it must sound as if it was written in the target language (Low, 2003). Franzon (2008) realistically argues that in practice it is impossible to sound both completely natural in the target language under the many

constraints of song translation and also carry the meaning of all the original verses successfully with few deviations. Franzon steps back and lists the five choices a translator has when faced with this task: leaving the song untranslated (as is sometimes the case for some dubbed Disney films, which are only subtitled), translating only the lyrics without any thought on the music, making new lyrics for the original music (an apt choice for songs in which the music is more important than the lyrics), translating the lyrics and adapting the music, or adapting the translation to the music (which is what Low mostly writes about).

If a translator chooses the latter, the question of priorities then occurs, since one cannot, realistically, write a song translation that would sound completely natural in the target language, musically adequate with all the stresses and long vowels in the right places and all rhymes and meanings intact on a word-to-word level. What can and will be done depends on the *skopos* and, as Low (2017) argues, on the requirements of each song. But whatever the song, the Pentathlon Approach should be useful.

The use of the term ‘pentathlon’ refers to the ancient Olympic sport in which contestants compete in five categories and only by summing up their efforts in these different sports does one crown the winner. It would be no good to excel in one of these tasks and fail miserably in another. A balanced approach must be exercised for victory, as it is unlikely one will score perfectly on all criteria. This is precisely what happens in song translation, as Low (2003, 2017) suggests. If one tries to stick too close to the source text, for instance, it is likely that one will not be able to find rhymes and that the text will not sound natural for a target language native. It will not have the same prosody, neither will it be able to have even a similar number of syllables compared to the original, which is a necessity because the constraints of the song are strong and not much can be done to adjust them. One of the constraints is expressed by Paulo Henriques Britto (2019): “the downbeat on the melody must take place on stressed syllables on the lyrics [...] [and] no downbeat must coincide with an unstressed syllable in the lyrics” (p. 90).⁴¹

As an example for this rule, Britto (2019) attempts a translation of Leonard Cohen’s song “Take This Waltz”, which is itself a loose translation of a poem by Federico García Lorca. This song is in $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, as is common for waltzes, and the strongest beat is the first one (ONE, two, three, ONE, two, three...). In Figure

⁴¹ “os tempos fortes da canção devem incidir sobre sílabas acentuadas da letra. [...] nenhum tempo forte da canção deve incidir sobre uma sílaba átona da letra”, in the original Portuguese text.

1 below, I reproduce Britto’s analysis of the first line of the song (2019, p. 89). The darkest line on the top represents the time signature with the strong beat being // and the others being /. The line in the middle represents the stresses made on the syllables, / being a stressed syllable and – being an unstressed syllable. To help visualization, I have highlighted the stressed syllables in bold. Still, it is preferable to listen to the song for a better comprehension, if it is possible for the reader.

//	/	/	//	/	/	/	//	/	/	//	/	/	/	/
/	-	-	/	-	-	/	/	-	/	-	-	-	-	-
Now in Vi- en -na there’s ten pret -ty wo-men														

Figure 1: first verse of ‘Take This Waltz’

Britto (2019) proposes a close translation of the above verse as the following: “há em Viena dez mulheres lindas” (p. 90). If we were to put these lyrics to the original melody, we would get this:

//	/	/	//	/	/	/	//	/	/	//	/	/	/	/
/	-	-	/	-	/	-	/	-	/	-	/	-	-	-
Há em Vi- ena dez mu- lheres lin -das														

Figure 2: first verse of ‘Take This Waltz’ in Portuguese

As Britto demonstrates, even if the number of syllables is the same, the pairing of the stressed syllables and the beats of the song do not match in Portuguese. Britto (2019) notices that the source text has stresses on syllables 1-4-7-8-10 while the translated text has stresses on the syllables 1-4-6-8-10 and one of the unstressed syllables ends up falling on the upbeat of the third compass, which is the very situation pointed out before: a downbeat on the music coinciding with an unstressed syllable on the lyrics. The result is that the word in question would inevitably sound like “múlheres” instead of “mulheres”. Another example Britto gives us is that of the chorus of the song “É preciso saber viver” by Roberto Carlos and Erasmo Carlos, in which there is a downbeat on an unstressed syllable, which results in “é preciso sá-ber viver” (p. 94).

This is but an example of the unpredictability when translating a song, which is something Low was aware of when developing the Pentathlon Approach. The categories for the Pentathlon Approach are the following: singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme. I explain these categories in detail now. For the rest of this thesis, I refer to source text (the original version) as ST and target text as TT (the result of the translation), as well as source language as SL and target language as TL.

The first, singability, refers to how easy it is for a singer to perform the song. Low (2017) names this the “phonetic suitability of the TT for singing” (p. 79) Are there consonant clusters hindering the singer? Are there words in awkward places? Low (2003) gives the word “the” in a long note as an example. It has a short vowel, so ideally it should be replaced with a demonstrative with a long vowel such as “these” or “those”.

The question of vowels, syllable count and stresses are also taken into consideration when analyzing rhythm. Low (2017) stresses the importance of vowel placement, preferring open ended-syllables, no tongue twisters, favoring consonant-vowels at the end of words (such as “go”) instead of vowel-consonant or consonant-vowel-consonant for a better sound, being careful with plosives (T, D, P, B, K, G), etc. He also writes that the best judges for this category are singers who perform in the target language. This category is also referred to as “prosodic match” by Franzon (2008), whose definition seems to be broader than that of Low’s. Franzon elaborates that when defining singability he is not only referring to vocalization but to “a prosodic and poetic match, or even liberally, as a practical term to sum up everything that makes words and music function together in song.” (p. 397)

The criterion of sense is what is most associated with translation in general: was the meaning well transferred? Do the lyrics mean something similar in the TT as in the ST? The best judges for this one, Low (2017) writes, are bilingual people. As previously mentioned, they are not the target audience for a translation, and yet they are the ones who can best judge it. Low notes that in songs that have a greater emphasis on lyrics (called logocentric) the translator is likely to favor sense over singability or rhythm, and that sometimes, because of other constraints, sense must be transferred in ways that are less precise, such as near-synonyms or superordinates. Some translators, however, choose to ignore mostly or completely the criterion of sense (or “opt out” of it), and that results in what Low calls “replacement texts” (2017, p. 5).

Naturalness is the third criterion, and it can be understood as one byproduct of the transferring of sense. Low (2017) mentions the use of “translationese” and archaisms as enemies of naturalness in song translation. Inverting the word order is one example of “translationese”. For instance: adding an adjective before a noun in Portuguese, which is otherwise the rule in English grammar. It would sound forced, artificial, even if the meaning is understood. Sometimes, in Portuguese, the meaning could also change depending on where the adjective is, such as in “um grande homem” (a great man) and “um homem grande” (a big man), in which the first is a marked construction, and the second, unmarked. Low (2017) identifies archaism as a second enemy of naturalness and uses song translations from German to English before the 1940s as examples. According to Low, German pronouns ‘du’ and ‘dich’ were often translated as ‘thou’ and ‘thee’, which were not used in everyday life, only in church. “Thou”, Low argues, is a word that would distance the modern listener from a song instantly. Low emphasizes that a word that is common in the SL should be translated into a common word in the TL, even if the ST is perhaps centuries old and no longer sounds current or easily understood. Was the text using common language back when it was released?

Another facet of naturalness is the debate of foreignizing the text, making sure that whatever locations, names and cultural items remain intact, or instead domesticating it by changing names, places and situations to bring the text closer to the target audience’s experience. As Apter and Herman (2016) point out, there is an intricate dance between foreignization and domestication, which is a choice in any translation. As Theo Hermans (1996) puts it, “[...] written translations normally address an audience which is not only linguistically but also temporally and/or geographically removed from that addressed by the source text” (p. 28). Such notions are further discussed by many translation scholars such as Lawrence Venuti (2008), but they are not the focus of this thesis.

Rhythm refers to how well the words fit the music regarding the number of syllables and the melodic accents. Low (2017) mentions drummers or dancers as good judges for this category, as well as anyone with a good sense of rhythm. This encompasses syllable count, syllabic stress and the length of vowels. Both Low (2003) and Franzon (2008) suggest that the best place to add an extra syllable in the translation, if needed, is on a melisma (when the same syllable is sung continuously using more than one note), “and the best place to omit a syllable is on a repeated note” (Low, 2003, p. 97). Rhythm is a category in which ‘tweaks’ are often possible, but it cannot be ignored because all languages, and dialects for that matter, have rhythm, even when spoken.

Rhyme is considered by Low (2017) to be “the least important” (p. 79) among the five, as well as the easiest one to assess. Even if you do rhyme, the rhymes do not have to be perfect, they do not have to follow the same pattern as the original or even come up as often as they do in the original. A plausible reason for this is explained by Low himself (2003) when he writes that rhyme:

is indeed a good way to render the shape of the phrases; but there may be other verbal or musical ways of doing so. When poems are recited, rhyme is often a prominent sound-effect; but when they are sung, the rhyming words are more separated in time – rhyming words that are five seconds apart in recitation may be over ten seconds apart in a song. Besides, whereas in verse rhyme is often the most prominent phonic effect, in songs it is submerged in the musical effects of tune and harmony (p. 91)

Rhyming is perhaps the most important in rap music, which resembles recitation more than singing does. In rap, creative use of rhyming can generate an internal rhythm and move the performance forward in a way that sung performances do not necessarily have to. One of the reasons why Low wrote his book *Translating Song* is because of what he deems “a confusing freedom of practice and terminology in this area” (p. 4), which could be one more difficulty in approaching the field. However, Low does acknowledge that “differences between individual songs point to differing ‘pentathlon strategies’” (p. 80). This means that the importance of rhyming in songs can be judged on the basis of each song and not necessarily based on the song’s genre.

Sensibility is important and not all five categories must score perfectly – that is impossible. It is suggested that the very reason for the pentathlon principle to be thought of is that there are many criteria that should be balanced in the translator’s toolkit while translating songs. Reducing the focus to these five criteria seems therefore beneficial. Many are the tricks song translators may use even within the Pentathlon, such as:

replacement metaphors, compensation in place, calque, omission, explicitation, cultural adaptation, superordinates, stylistic equivalence, the suppression of difficult verses, the use of added words to solve rhythmical problems and the replacement of rhyme with assonance (Low, 2005, p. 189).

Other noteworthy guidelines suggested by Low (2003) are: to start with repeated sections of the songs such as the chorus or any words and phrases highlighted by the music, and not to consider anything sacrosanct *a priori*, for that may lead to great losses and unnecessary constraints along the way. As Low highlights, “In song translating, [...] compromises and trade-

offs are not optional but essential” (2013, p. 230). The translator’s toolkit is vast, and Low’s output can be of great value to anyone venturing into song translating.

In order to expand the song translation vocabulary, I now list a couple more terms relevant to my research. The first is that of musicocentric songs (ones in which the musical part is more important than the words) and logocentric songs (in which there is more attention to the lyrics than to the rhythm or melody). The importance of lyrics in a song is seen differently by different authors. Low (2013) even suggests that “[f]or musicocentric songs an elegant adaptation is often the best option” (p. 237), therefore not relying too much on the ST.

Apter and Herman (2016) go as far as to affirm that “the role of lyrics is indeed to offer scaffolding for music” (p. 8). As such, for them, song lyrics should be judged differently from poems. It makes sense, since lyrics require music to be complete, whereas poems can often only rely on themselves when experienced in printed form and may even lose strength when set to music. Apter and Herman also point out that musicocentrism and logocentrism may also refer to where the song stems from. Some artists, like the Swedish pop group ABBA, were known to have the musical part of a song ready before making lyrics for it⁴², whereas Bob Dylan, according to himself as expressed in a conference in December 1965⁴³, does it the other way around, while still stating that “the words are just as important as the music”.

Low (2017) invites those about to embark in this task of song translating to ask themselves how important the words are in the song in question. This avoids a binary yes-no answer, for the importance exists in a spectrum and not necessarily on extreme opposites. Low comments that musicocentric songs are “more numerous and certainly have less difficulty in crossing language borders” (p. 12). One could argue that most songs by Bob Dylan tilt towards logocentrism.

Some types of songs that tend to be logocentric are those whose nature is satirical, comic, narrative, or dramatic. Protest songs, songs that feature dialogue and “first person character songs” (Low, 2017, p. 12), perhaps a sub-division of dramatic songs. As a further example, Low (2013) suggests that “the words are much more important in narrative ballads, for example, than in lullabies” (p. 237). Two of the four songs transcreated by Vitor Ramil would fit well in the “first person character song” category (“Só você manda em você” and “Ana”), while another one (“Joquim”) is clearly a narrative song.

⁴² ABBASITE. **IN FOCUS**: in the studio: how the classic Abba songs were born. Retrieved from: <https://abbasite.com/articles/in-focus-in-the-studio-how-the-abba-songs-were-born/>. Access on: 25 Feb 2025.

⁴³ ROUTE TV. **Bob Dylan San Francisco Conference 1965**. YouTube, 2016. Retrieved from: https://youtu.be/wPIS257tvoA?si=gvrwYq8_719J_ec0

Another term used by Low (2017) and relevant for this thesis is that of a strophic song, in contrast with through-composed songs, “in which every phrase has new music” (p. 14). Bob Dylan’s music, upon inspection, could be largely categorized as consisting of strophic songs, and it is so in the four songs I analyze. In his songs, the verses are all sung to the same melody, with a different melody for the bridge and chorus.

Apter and Herman (2016), whose focus is mainly on musicals and opera, appear to have a shorter list of criteria for a good translation than does Low when they state that “a good singable translation must satisfy two criteria: it must work on stage, and it must be closely enough related to the source so that it is not an entirely new piece” (p. 4). There, once again, we have the question of limits, of when a translation becomes a new piece or an adaptation.

Low’s (2013) stance is that adaptations have chosen to deviate from the ST when they did not have to – willful modifications that could have been translated more closely:

[t]he cultural context may be different, names may be changed, substitute metaphors may be used, texts may be shortened or lengthened. Adapting is thus different from normal translating, though not necessarily inferior – it may be the best way to satisfy a given *skopos* (p. 230).

A way to identify a replacement text, if done honestly, is the mention of “English lyrics by...” instead of “Translation by”, as Low (2013) points out. In general, it seems Low has clear definitions of these concepts, especially if we take his etymological tangent when he writes that “‘adapt’ means ‘make suitable’ while ‘translate’ means ‘carry across’” (p. 236), but they do not hold much scrutiny if we take into account that different people will have different ideas of what could and could not have been translated more closely, or rather what constitutes as a complete deviation from the ST or not. Are there other methods that could provide clearer answers, or at least a look from another angle? Yes, there are.

Laurer (2019) writes about John Dryden’s triadic method of analysis, which divides all translations into three categories: metaphrase (literal, word-for-word and line-for-line translation, or close translation in Laurer’s terms); paraphrase (sense-for-sense translation, which Laurer sees as close to free translation, but which Low [2013] uses for ‘adaptation’); and imitation (disregard for both words and sense). Laurer notes that Franzon (2009) changes this last category to “additions” (*tillägg* in the original

Swedish) and adds a couple: omissions (*uteslutning*) and displacement (*omflyttning*, when a word or phrase is moved to a different line on the translation). The latter two are not deemed as important as the others and are therefore not that present in her analysis, although they are important in mine because a good deal of displacement occurs in the songs I analyze.

With these terms, Laurer (2019) makes this distinction easier to discern as she puts ST and TT side by side, divides the lines into smaller units and accordingly applies each tag as to what she notices is happening. In the end, using this method, one can calculate just how much each approach was exercised throughout the translation. This makes the analysis quantifiable even if “while the categories were clearly defined, some differences in opinion might occur when it comes to the classification of the individual units” (p. 16).

This is contrasted with Low’s classifications of texts as adaptations, translations or replacement texts, which she says is based on intuition. Also, Laurer (2019) writes that Low “fails to acknowledge that translators, researchers or analysts of translation products may differ in opinions on what constitutes as semantic fidelity or transfer of meaning” (p. 9). As to the limits of the definition when it comes to adaptations and translations, Laurer writes that translations that fit Low’s definition of adaptation should have a higher or at least an equal percentage of additions (or imitations) compared to the percentage of metaphrases and paraphrases combined.

As a word of help as to how one should operate when judging the faithfulness of a song translation, Franzon (2008) warns that “an assessment of the fidelity of a singable translation should be based not so much on word-by-word comparison, but on contextual appropriateness” (p. 388). Given the many constraints the authors have mentioned, this seems sensible.

Given that the importance of music in our lives is immense, it is a wonder that song translation is not more studied, as Susam-Sarajeva (2008) suggests. And though there are other ways of analyzing song translation, including that of Franzon (2008) with prosodic, poetic and semantic-reflexive match, I think the theoretical concepts in song translation mentioned thus far suffice for my analyses in Chapter 3.

Apter and Herman (2016, p. 15) give a good definition of what good song translation would be when they write that “all translation is a process of gain and loss”, and that the translator does not have “to preserve any particular aspect of the original”, but instead they should point to what is worthy in the original:

The translation should communicate to the target-language audience that the original work is worth its attention by revealing at least something of the special excellence of

the original. This does not necessarily mean preserving the sounds of the words at all times, though it could mean creating word–music sounds that re-create the overall beauty and pleasure of the original, while also, if possible, re-creating some of the original’s word–music interactions (p. 15).

That, however, is easier said than done, and the whole field of song translation studies is here to observe (describe) and also teach (prescribe) how this could be achieved.

2.2 REFRACTION, RETRANSLATION, REWRITING

The term ‘refraction’ was coined by Belgian translation theorist André Lefevere. The term derives from the physical phenomenon ‘refraction’ that can be observed when an object is dipped into a body of water and is seen from the side – a toothbrush entering a glass full of water, for example. Instead of forming a straight, predictable line crossing from one medium (air) to the other (water), the light refracts, thus creating a ‘broken’ image – the object has certainly crossed from one medium to the other, but it has seemingly changed its orientation. This is a metaphor that can be used not only for translation, but for other elements this subchapter discusses, which are present in what Lefevere calls the literary system of a given society. This theory of refraction has vast implications and, in many ways, encompasses other terms such as re-translation, rewriting, adaptation and the subject of the next sub-chapter, transcreation.

Just as the light refracts from one medium to the other, one cannot expect a text to cross without any changes (refractions) from source to target text. Lefevere (2021) writes that translators tend to almost always try to adapt to the target culture and that refraction “represents a compromise between two systems and is, as such, the perfect indicator of the dominant constraints in both systems” (p. 235). Before this phenomenon is explained, I find it important to clearly acknowledge that in this subchapter Lefevere is the key figure, much like Low was inescapable in the preceding subchapter, and therefore Lefevere is more featured than other authors in the following pages.

A quote from Lefevere can then serve well as a starting point for this explanation:

[...] let us accept that refractions—the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work—have always been with us in literature. Refractions are to be found in the obvious form of translation, or in the less obvious forms of criticism (the wholesale allegorization of the literature of Antiquity by the Church Fathers, e.g.), commentary,

historiography (of the plot summary of famous works cum evaluation type, in which the evaluation is unabashedly based on the current concept of what “good” literature should be), teaching, the collection of works in anthologies, the production of plays. (2021, p. 232-233)

Refraction, therefore, comes in many forms and is an ancient practice. Even film, videogame or musical adaptations can also be considered as refractions. One could even argue, ultimately, that responses to any work of art could be considered refractions, as well. Lefevere writes in the same essay that many writers achieve status through “misunderstandings and misconceptions”, which can be euphemisms for refraction, too. Taking these many forms into account, the scope and ubiquity of refraction start to become a bit clearer.

Fame is maintained across the decades (and centuries) not from the original text alone, but from indirect ways of approaching the text. The very act of choosing to translate a song is refraction *a priori*, even before the lyrics are analyzed to see what happened in the crossing of the different realities of SC and TC. Cyril Aslanov (2015) states that “the transfer from one language to another frequently resembles smuggling” (p. 40).⁴⁴ Adapting itself is an example or refraction.

Lefevere laments how little this phenomenon has been studied, despite it being a very old one. Rewriters of Literature, he states, have been with us since “the Greek slave who put together anthologies of the Greek classics to teach the children of his Roman masters, to the Renaissance scholar who collated various manuscripts” (1992, p. 2). Currently, each of us can also engage in refraction, through various degrees of influence and reach.

Part of the disregard in the study of refraction is attributed to the Romantic notion of the author whose originality is pristine, whose genius creates *ex nihilo*, which is almost never true. It was not true for William Shakespeare, and neither was it true for Bob Dylan. Ferraz (2020) uses the concept of refraction in analyzing the translation of some Bob Dylan songs into Brazilian Portuguese. She notices that refractions have already happened at an intralingual level when US rock group The Byrds rerecorded Bob Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man” and released it less than a month after the original in the first semester of 1965. The Byrds’ two-verse version sandwiched by two choruses was noticeably abridged when compared to the original’s four lengthy verses and five choruses. This abridgement of Bob Dylan’s original and the transposition of it to a more palatable folk rock/jangle pop sound compared to the original traditional folk recording proved successful. It made Mr. Tambourine Man a #1 chart success

⁴⁴ “A passagem de uma língua para outra se assemelha, com frequência, a um contrabando” in the original Portuguese.

for The Byrds in both the US and the UK, where the song stayed on #1 for two weeks, helping both artists achieve greater success in this intralingual refraction.⁴⁵ All of that happened before any interlinguistic translations were made.

Ferraz's research also takes notice that all four songs in her *corpus*⁴⁶ have been refracted in their Brazil(ian Portuguese) iterations, being either recorded in different historical-temporal contexts or translated in different ways by different songwriters (or even the same songwriter, Zé Ramalho, in a case of a retranslation many years later). Ferraz adds a layer to the notion of refraction when she writes that it does not only happen in the literary world, but in the music world as well. One could say it happens in any artform. In fact, she affirms that changes in the music world happen much faster than in the literary world. A quick mental exercise of mapping the dominant genres in western pop music in a period from the 1940s to the present day shall be proof of this affirmation, as this is an area of cultural output whose mainstream language changes, at most, every twenty years.

But just what is a literary system and how does it work? Lefevere writes that the term comes from Russian formalism and refers to one of the systems that compose culture with society as its environment. Literature, in this sense, is part of the greater "cultural" system and is embedded in society. Science and technology are other systems operating in societies. The literary system consists of the texts (objects) and the people who do the refracting by (re)writing, distributing and (re)reading the texts. Lefevere (1992) notes that, as far as his writing goes, "system" is a neutral descriptive term identifying similarities of what is in and out of said system and does not have any Kafkaesque, antagonistic undertones. The truthfulness of this statement may be deemed questionable when projected onto reality and how closed-off these systems can be. A thorough discussion of this is not under the scope of my research.

There is also the element of patronage, which may take the form of persons or institutions, and which tends to be more interested in ideology than poetics. The latter would fall under the competence of the critic or the Professor. Lefevere (2021) sees three components forming patronage: an ideological one (what is and what should

⁴⁵ Billboard. **Billboard Hot 100™**. Retrieved from: <<https://www.billboard.com/charts/billboard-hot-100/1965-06-26/>>. Access on 11 Feb. 2025 and Official Charts. **MR TAMBOURINE MAN – BYRDS - Official Charts**. Retrieved from: <<https://www.officialcharts.com/songs/byrds-mr-tambourine-man/>>. Access on 11 Feb 2025.

⁴⁶ "Mr. Tambourine Man", "Blowin' in the Wind", "Man Gave Names to All the Animals" and "Knockin' on Heaven's Door".

not be allowed), an economic one (providing the author's livelihood), and a status-related one (what position the writer will achieve in a society).

Financial success, however, is not a guarantee of status, as multiple best-selling authors will prove – they may not enter the great literary canon, no matter how successful they are. This is what Lefevere calls a differentiated system, because it is not the patrons themselves who fund the artist, but the public. He also states that the gap between “high” and “low” widens with commercialization increasing, and as a result of that some authors were known to even restrict access to their work in an attempt to maintain their cult status. Lefevere (1992) cites cases in the Tudors English literature, when patronage could be forfeited if an author's work was very popular with the masses.

This can also be noticed in the music world, but this time often by the artists themselves, as is the case with alternative rock bands Radiohead, from England, and Los Hermanos, from Brazil. Both bands achieved considerable mainstream success thanks to songs from their first albums (the songs being “Creep” and “Anna Julia” respectively). Later both bands proceeded to snub their most well-known songs because they reached (mainstream) audiences that were not their intended public.⁴⁷

On another occasion, in pre-eighteenth-century India one finds a suspiciously high number of royal writers, which is now assumed to be the case of poets allowing their patrons to claim authorship of their work. In the music business we can also find examples of this, including that of Samba artist Nelson Cavaquinho, who sold partnerships for many of the songs he wrote by himself in order to make a living after leaving his job in the police force.⁴⁸ The singer-songwriter is said to have composed more than 800 songs in six decades⁴⁹, so this might have become a significant source of immediate income for him, despite the fact that in the long run Cavaquinho might have earned less with royalties.

In the case of translations one must also take into account the existence (or lack thereof) of copyright laws. Aslanov (2015) mentions that these laws were promulgated in England in 1710, and that until then one could “take possession of the translated work with

⁴⁷ Articles on the relationship these bands had with these songs can be read at WHATLEY, Jack. **Why Radiohead hate their anthemic song ‘Creep’**. 2020. Retrieved from: <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/why-radiohead-hate-creep-song/>> Access in: 25 Feb 2025 and BLAZ, Leonardo. **Los Hermanos querem se 'libertar' de Ana Júlia**. 2000. Retrieved from: < <https://www.dgabc.com.br/Noticia/102993/los-hermanos-querem-se-libertar-de-ana-julia>>. Access on: 25 Feb. 2025.

⁴⁸ O Globo. **30 anos sem Nelson Cavaquinho**. Retrieved from <<https://infograficos.oglobo.globo.com/cultura/nelson-cavaquinho.html>>. Access on 11 Feb. 2025

⁴⁹ BARBIO, Luciana. **De bar em bar, Nelson Cavaquinho fez mais de 800 músicas em seis décadas**. Retrieved from < <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/em-destaque/de-bar-em-bar-nelson-cavaquinho-fez-mais-de-800-musicas-em-seis-decadas-18695244>>. Access on 25 Feb. 2025

impunity, concealing the name of the original author” (p. 49). Aslanov also mentions that this notion of literary paternity was not clear even in the Middle Ages,⁵⁰ as Massimiliano Morini (2012) shows in his study of theater translations through the centuries: many liberties were taken, and “borrowing” from various sources was common practice.

Either way, Lefevere (1992) states that patrons interact with the system less directly than critics do, for critics take a more hands-on approach by writing essays, teaching, and keeping the narrative going. Of course, one must also consider that not all literary systems are made equal. To illustrate this, Lefevere writes that, in traditional African literature, there is an emphasis on community and not on the individual fame, which is why many works remain anonymous.

A curious pattern on (re)translation was noticed by Lefevere: “[t]he degree of compromise in a refraction will depend on the reputation of the writer being translated within the system from which the translation is made” (2021, p. 235). In this sense, the more respected the author is in the target literary system, the closer translations will be to the original, in theory. Fewer liberties are taken. This phenomenon is also noticed by Andrew Chesterman (2000), who claims that “[l]ater translations (same ST, same TL) tend to be closer to the original than earlier ones” (p. 23). The way in which an author is accepted into a system depends on “the need that native system has of him in a certain phase of its evolution” (Lefevere, 2021, p. 235). In the case of Brecht’s plays in English, for instance, Lefevere writes that the need for them was greater in England than in the US, and as a result Brecht was more welcome there. The Brecht translators Lefevere cites are, chronologically, Hoffman Reynolds, who was from the U.S., Eric Bentley (a British-American) from a period when Brecht’s works were not yet canonical but were already becoming more famous in the West, and then Ralph Manheim and John Willett, American and British respectively, when Brecht was already canonical and they, therefore, translated the plays on the plays’ own terms and poetics. It is not clear if there was a noticeable difference in British and American translations from then on, but it is clear that greater prestige means fewer domesticating translations.

⁵⁰ “a tradução de uma língua para outra era ocasião para apropriar-se impunemente da obra traduzida, dissimulando o nome do autor original. Na Idade Média, a própria noção de paternidade literária não era bem definida” in the original Portuguese.

Sometimes rewriting can be quite abrasive towards the original. When mentioning Edward Fitzgerald's rewriting of *Rubayyat*, Lefevere noticed a heavily domesticating approach, likely because Fitzgerald considered his culture superior to the Persian culture and could therefore "improve" the source text, which is an approach he would not have taken with the more respected Greek classics, for example. A similar situation is also described by Lefevere (1992): when Antoine Houdar de La Motte translated *The Illiad*, he just happened to reduce the book's length in half on the basis of what he deemed to be the superiority of his poetics and his ideas of good taste. He "corrected" Homer then.

It is the case that in translations parts of the source texts may be carefully "omitted" because they do not fit the current tastes and ideologies of the target literary system. This happened in eighteenth-century France when translations were eventually called "belles infidèles". Aslanov (2015) describes that the current conception then "was that translation into another language (French, in this case) constituted a means of improving the original work that had the misfortune of being written in a language supposedly less noble than French"⁵¹. This form of heavy rewriting was also practiced by Saint Augustine who, according to Lefevere (1992), 'corrected' or 're-interpreted' the Bible in parts that did not seem to accommodate the teachings or expected behaviors chosen by a still young Christian Church.

Rewriting also has its own *skopos*, as one must ask why and to whom these texts are addressed. Sometimes it can be done for nefarious purposes. As Aslanov (2015) argues, a translation that is made wrong on purpose may be used to delegitimize a particular group – and the more peripheral their literature, the more vulnerable a group is to such actions.

Smaller literature systems need translations in order to fill gaps. Itamar Even-Zohar (2021) calls these systems "polysystems". He says that translations are needed:

when a polysystem has not yet been crystallized, that is to say, when a literature is "young," in the process of being established; (b) when a literature is either "peripheral" (within a large group of correlated literatures) or "weak," or both; and (c) when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature. (p. 192)

A curious case is presented by George C. Schoolfield (1998) as that of Finnish literature. Finland had been a country under Swedish rule for almost 700 years, and as a result of that some of the early Finnish writers wrote in Swedish and had to be translated back to their mother tongue. Whereas Norwegians and Swedes could understand each other's languages (even when Norwegians wrote in Dano-Norwegian), Finns were and still are isolated when it comes to their

⁵¹ "a concepção corrente era que a tradução para outra língua (o francês, nesse caso) constituía um meio de melhorar a obra original que tivera a infelicidade de ser escrita em um idioma supostamente menos nobre que o francês." in the original Portuguese.

mother tongue, which comes from a different family tree than those of the other Nordic countries. Whenever literature was originally written in Finnish (Elias Lönnrot's cosmogony *Kalevala* being a great example of an early work with the power to potentially consolidate a literature), it had to be translated to its neighboring countries' languages, and then, when being seen and read by others, the authors' and their works' domestic prestige increased as they gained recognition abroad. In addition to that, Even-Zohar (2021) clarifies that different sections of translated literature may occupy either a central or peripheral position; they do not have to be necessarily one or the other. Not all works are received with as much attention.

In his 1982 essay "Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Text, System and Refraction in a Theory of Literature", Lefevere analyzes just what happened when Brecht's works were translated into English at multiple points in time, as well as when they were included in (or excluded from) anthologies, which are a great tool for deciding which authors will be granted the most status, since many of us accept what the experts have compiled as the best, without questioning what had motivated these choices. Lefevere states that in some cases exclusion may even take place for economic reasons – perhaps the copyright of a specific text is too costly. Other times addition in such compilations would be poetically unsafe, discordant with the current values. Both situations were true when it came to Brecht's reception. Lefevere notices, however, that once Brecht was "canonized" he was then translated on his own terms, being less domesticated.

A question looms over the object of my research: how much of a canonized figure was Bob Dylan in the second half of the 1980s when Vitor Ramil first started making transcreations of Bob Dylan's songs? Does this work differently in song translation as it does in the literary world? It is a possibility, after all, that a foreign song transposed to a new language would be considered an original song by many, especially if the original was not a hit.

Luciana Kaross (2013) notes that in Brazil it is a common occurrence for translated songs to be considered original ones. Lefevere (2021) acknowledges this as well but in his case in relation to the literary world. A refraction is often perceived as an original in these cases:

The refraction, in other words, is the original to the great majority of people who are only tangentially exposed to literature. Indeed, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that this kind of reader is influenced by literature precisely through refractions, and little else. In the US, he or she will tell you that *Moby Dick* is a great novel, one of the masterpieces of American literature. He will tell you so because he has been told so in school, because she has read comic strips and extracts in anthologies, and

because Captain Ahab will forever look like Gregory Peck as far as he or she is concerned. [...] It is through translations combined with critical refractions (introductions, notes, commentary accompanying the translation, articles on it) that a work of literature produced outside a given system takes its place in that “new” system. It is through refractions in the social system’s educational set-up that canonization is achieved and, more importantly, maintained. (p. 244)

In relation to the musical consumption habits in Brazil, refractions (translations, in this case) take center stage because Brazilians favor music sung in Portuguese, likely due to the low levels of fluency in other languages. A recent study shows that 93.5% of the 200 most listened songs in Brazil on streaming services in 2023 are Brazilian songs⁵². The difference in percentage of fluent speakers of English in Brazil and Nordic countries is a topic I cite later when exploring a study of Norwegian translations of Bob Dylan’s songs and the translators’ voices in them.

It is worth noticing that most literary systems have a conservative nature. Some works may take a long time to become a classic, but once they are in the canon, it is likely that it will remain so. Another noticeable feature of refraction is that the same writers may prove useful to opposite ideologies and poetics as time goes on, as they will be seen with critical lenses that will accentuate different aspects of their work. Ideology is certainly an important aspect of refraction.

On the reception of Brecht’s work in English-speaking countries, Lefevere (2021) sees that Brecht’s poetics were a problem because they were alien to the literary systems of these countries. How could they be integrated? Some praised the plays while dismissing the poetics, some attempted to psychoanalyze the work and others tried to adapt the refraction to their system, integrating the new poetics “by translating its concepts into the more familiar terminology of the old poetics” (p. 236-237).

The role of the rewriter and refractor has changed because we are in a period in which, according to Lefevere (1992), we are in “the end of a period in at least Western civilization in which the book occupied a central position in both the teaching of writing and the transmission of values” (p. 2). Lefevere also reports that in 1986 literary critic J. Hillis Miller observed that culture then was less book-led, but more directed towards cinema, television and pop music. One can only wonder how this diagnosis would change were it made in the present day.

High literature, Lefevere (1992) writes, is more and more confined to high educational settings and is no longer the preferred reading for most. This change is also completely ignored by most people, whose worries lie elsewhere – in the cold harsh reality of everyday living, for

⁵² BRONZE, Giovanna. **Músicas brasileiras representam 93,5% das mais tocadas no país, diz pesquisa**. Retrieved from < <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/entretenimento/musicas-brasileiras-representam-935-das-mais-tocadas-no-pais-diz-pesquisa/>>. Access on 4 Mar 2025

example. Therefore, there is an isolation of this professional reader who must publish to advance in their professional life. The pressure leads to what Lefevere called “the progressive trivialization of topics” (p. 3) and the ever-growing separation of the academic and their bubble from the rest of society. In addition, Lefevere notices that what are deemed less prestigious rewriting activities in the academic setting (such as anthologization, compilation, editing and translation) are the ones that have a higher chance of reaching society.

The non-professional reader gets in contact with (high) literature: “not [...] as written by its writers, but as rewritten by its rewriters.” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 4). Or, in another example, one is left to wonder how many would read an original work of an author after being first introduced to their name, and how many of us would instead look for a refractory way of accessing this author’s work. At the time of publishing (1992), Lefevere pointed a common, popular source to access an author’s refractioned work as *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. One present-day possible source of rewriting would be man-made Wikipedia or one of the AI-powered services such as ChatGPT. The case of refractions being perceived as originals goes deeply. Many who have not read a classic feel like they *know* it because they have been exposed to a passage or to a film adaptation. For many, that will suffice.

As previously stated, refraction is not a restricted or restrictive term that only describes a very specific phenomenon. “Refraction”, then, serves as an umbrella term encompassing many other notions. The first of them is adaptation, which underlies refraction and is also briefly discussed in the next subchapter. Julie Sanders (2006) writes that “adaptation and appropriation are fundamental to the practice, and, indeed, to the enjoyment, of literature” (p. 1). Seeing how literature is consumed today it would seem difficult to disagree. It is true, as previously stated, that most readers first encounter an author through refractions, but that is not the end of it, for the original itself is not entirely original either, but instead it is in dialogue with what came before. Or, as Julia Kristeva (1980/2024) writes: any and every text is ““a permutation of texts, an intertextuality”” (p. 37). The very act of creating a work of art could be therefore seen as a refraction, as well.

Cecilia Alvstad and Alexandra Assis Rosa (2015) propose some categories that are helpful for my research as they analyze (re)translations in terms of textual voices and contextual voices. The first ones could be considered intra-textual, including the narrative voice, the voice of the characters, and even the translator’s

voice when manifested in text. Alvstad and Rosa affirm that the different narrative voices tend to get neutralized in translations, and that these differences are easy to detect in comparative studies. Contextual voices, on the other hand, “are related to the sociological translation process and hence to the multiple agents that produce, promote and write about translations” (p. 3-4). They can also be called extra-textual voices. These are two valid approaches in studying how a text refracts.

There are six questions to be asked about (re)translations, according to the work of Alvstad and Rosa (2015). They are the following: what, who, where, when, why, how. When one asks “what”, they may be asking if a translation is source or target-oriented, if it is assimilative or confrontational in relation to translations that might have come before, as well as what is worth (re)translating in the first place. “Who?” may inquire about the translator, his/her competence, his/her intended public. “Where” is it taking place? Sometimes a (re)translation’s location is relevant because of historical context. “When” asks if it is a hot translation, released soon after the original, or if it is a cold one, released long after the original (or long after an original’s other translations in the same language). “Why”, that is, the reason why a translation exists is an important question as well, and here Alvstad and Rosa also notice that later translations are in general closer to the original, and that could be a reason for their existence, following this idea of faithfulness (maybe because of an author’s increased influence in the system, for instance). Lastly there is “how”: is one dealing with overt or covert translations? Do they pose as originals? As Aslanov (2015) suggests, sometimes translators aim to fool the reader who does not have access to the original. That may indeed be true in some cases, especially if they pose as originals or are covert translations.

Annjo K. Greenall has conducted a study on Norwegian translators’ voices in Bob Dylan’s songs that applies these notions in ways akin to this study’s, only in a different “where” and therefore also a different “who”.⁵³ Greenall (2015) begins his research by stating that:

[i]n Norwegian there exists a synonym for translation, *gjendiktning*, which is not easily translatable into English. The most literal option is ‘re-poetization,’ broadly understood as ‘re-creation.’ The term is mostly used for the translation of poetry and songs. In these genres, linguistic form (e.g., rhyme and metre) is crucial for the

⁵³ There is a tradition of Bob Dylan versions in the Nordic countries, such as the 15-song album *Dylan på Svenska* (Dylan in Swedish) by Mikael Wiehe and Ebba Forsberg. Steffen Brandt released *Baby Blue: Bob Dylan Gendigtet* (Bob Dylan Rewritten) in Danish, a double album comprised of 18 versions. Finnish singer-songwriter Hector versed “Lay Lady Lay” (“Hei leidi hei”) and “When I Paint My Masterpiece” (“Kun tein suurteoksein”) also cited Bob Dylan in his 1973 song “Mystalgia”. The releases analyzed by Greenall in Norwegian are *Blod på spora* (a full translation of *Blood on the Tracks*), seventy translations of Bob Dylan’s songs by Jan Erik Vold and fifteen tracks translated by Håvard Rem in Trønder dialect and performed by Åge Aleksandersen on the album *Fredløs*.

identity and overall meaning of the text, and translators therefore often strive to preserve these aspects. The translation may thus drastically depart from the original on the semantic level. [...] The term *gjendiktning* captures these realities, and its use is possibly a way for translators and audiences alike to positively acknowledge the (co-)authorship and inevitable presence of the translator's voice in these genres. (p. 40)

As can be read in the subchapter on transcreation, it seems that these terms (transcreation, rewriting, refraction, re-poetization) are quite connected and are all referring to a certain approach to translation in the way I use them in my study.

There are some aspects of Norwegian and Nordic culture that are not like those of Brazilian culture. It is possible that more people have access to the original songs in English, if nothing else then for the fact there is a much greater percentage of (self-professed) English speakers: 96% in Sweden, 90.2% in Denmark, 89,6% in Finland and 88.8% in Norway, according to Catrin Norrby (2014), whereas in Brazil 5% of interviewees in a 2017 study by the British Council said they were able to communicate in English, and only 1% labeled themselves fluent.⁵⁴ In the Nordic context, there is no inherent need for run-of-the-mill translations of English songs because the majority of the population is perfectly able to understand the original songs in English as they are, and that means only certain types of translations would be required. It is curious to notice that this might have been counter-intuitive to Low (2017), who proposes that a song translation should be made for those who do not speak the original language of the song.

What Greenall notices instead is that local Nordic artists started translating and performing songs by respectable singer-songwriters such as Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell as what he names “*con amore* projects” that intend to pay tribute to the performers’ idols and introduce them to new audiences or using them as a way to promote the national language or a dialect. These are what Greenall (2015) calls “singer-translators” or “translator-artists” who are “judged precisely on their ability to make the song their own” (p. 41). What is expected of them is that they are authentic when refracting these songs, and it is likely that a good percentage of the people interested in these works are already fans of the originals. In this sense, it is an exception to the rule compared to what has been mentioned thus far.

⁵⁴ DINO. **Apenas 1% da população brasileira é fluente em inglês - Metrôpoles**. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.metropoles.com/dino/apenas-1-da-populacao-brasileira-e-fluente-em-ingles>. Access on: 11 fev. 2025.

Translation scholars usually look for deviations, departures or different solutions compared to the source text to identify voices in translation, and Greenall seeks to identify where the translators' voices come out and whether songs are identified as translations in album booklets (Alvstad and Rosa's "how"). In addition to that, Greenall (2015) proposes that every translational choice is a manifestation of voice or subjectivity: the question is how this voice is displayed. Greenall calls the overt cases "manifest voices". Translators who try to stick as close as possible to the original choose, instead, for non-manifest voices.

However, Greenall (2015) writes that "[t]he translator's voice is also non-manifest when a clear shift is not noticeable to the audience (because they do not have access to the original)" (p. 47). If no one is there when a tree falls, has it not fallen, then? On the other hand, Greenall also states that voices become manifest in difficult points in the source text, or even when formal parts are essential, such as in song translation. It is not clear to me which one takes precedence over the other: is it possible that voices are only manifest if one is familiar with source and target text? That might be the case. And, in the case of song, there is an extra layer: the physical, singing voice. This, however, is not relevant to the study of refraction and falls outside of the scope of this study.

Voice was a topic studied by Ferraz (2020) as a sub-topic of refraction, retranslation and rewriting and I find it relevant to what I am looking at in this research. For now, however, there is one last key-term I would like to explore. It is, as I perceive it, another among the many facets of refraction, but it is one that has been self-professed as the guiding principles of these translations I am studying. Its importance in the overall research and the fact it is a facet of transcreation are the reasons why "transcreation" follows this subchapter on refraction.

2.3 THE MANY FACETS OF TRANSCREATION

There are two writers most commonly associated with the genesis of the term 'transcreation': P. Lal and Haroldo de Campos. The first use of the term "transcreation" is attributed to poet, translator and scholar Purushottama Lal (mostly known as P. Lal) in 1957, in the acknowledgements to his book *Great Sanskrit Plays in Modern Translation*. Notwithstanding, he would only write about what he meant by this term much later, in the late 1960s. Only then did it become clearer that in the process of translating the *Mahabharata* and other classic Indian texts into English Lal coined this term to name what he attempted to do when translating: capturing the vitality and richness of the original. The second most widely recognized name when it comes to the genealogy of transcreation, chronologically, is that of

Brazilian poet and translator Haroldo de Campos, who, according to Viviana Gaballo (2012), as early as 1962 “used the term to characterize a new approach to creative literary translation that aimed at phonetic, syntactical, and morphological equivalence achieved by appropriating the best contemporary poetry and the existing local tradition” (p. 97).

Gaballo (2012) writes that status of “transcreation” as a buzzword, in its resurgence, began in the late 1990s. Thence the term was not present in dictionaries despite its first use in the 1960s. She writes that apart from India and Brazil, the term seemed as if forgotten for about 30 years. This timeframe appears to be confirmed by the quantitative study by Mar Díaz-Millón and María Dolores Olvera-Lobo (2023), in which the authors have noticed, after refined searches, that articles about transcreation began to appear more prevalent in 1995 and reached their peak between 2015-2019 – though it is important to remember that Díaz-Millón and Olvera-Lobo have only gathered data until July 2020.

In this subchapter, I write about both these two early usages of the term as well as how it is perceived today. The following questions guide this inquiry: how have P. Lal and Haroldo de Campos interpreted the term in its infancy? Is there an agreed usage among them that is still used today? As is usual in the field of Translation Studies, the probable answer would be “not entirely”.

Starting chronologically with Lal, one can comprehend transcreation mostly as a praxis instead of theory. The Indian scholar wrote on his experiences of translating texts from his classic national heritage into English as an attempt to rediscover the myths contained therein through the “intimacy that only translation can give” (Lal, 1972, p. 1). From this observation, one can conclude that Lal, like Walter Benjamin (1923/2021) before him, saw translation as an attentive form of reading and understanding texts.

In the essay “Myth, Literature and Transcreation”, originally read at a seminar in 1968, Lal finally delved into what he means by “transcreation”, and he cited Sri Aurobindo, who felt that his (that is, Aurobindo’s own) “transmogrifying” (meaning the act of changing into a different form, especially a strange one) when translating was not entirely moral. Lal, however, proposed that we should look at it another way: why not, for instance, translate Homer to please our contemporaries, if the Greek author has written to please his contemporaries, as well? It cannot be said that Lal’s idea of proper transcreation is a free-for-all endeavor in which everything goes, however. Lal mentions that sometimes inaccurate references may result not in transcreation, but in “transcorruption” (p. 5). Even if Lal does not explain what he means by that in his text, he is likely referring to a situation in which the translator ends up corrupting the meaning of the text, changing it to something unacceptable. Lal clarified that “accuracy of an

almost mathematical kind is of the essence in some cases—and I do not mean only in legal, political, and commercial translation” (p. 7). Since he was dealing with texts that have a religious significance, there was a lot at stake there. There are times in a sacred text in which the translator finds there is not a lot of room for transcreation. The question of the limits between what is acceptable within one concept and what then is ‘transmogrified’ or ‘transcorrupted’ into something else is one that goes unanswered, just as the limits between a song translation and an adaptation before, when I wrote about song translation studies. From my understanding, if one could sum up Lal’s definition of a transcreative practice, it would be that of editing, reconciling and transmuting in a respectful manner towards the source text. It is a shame that Lal’s writings are not more conclusive on the usage of his terms, perhaps for the very reason mentioned earlier: it was mostly a praxis, so reading his transcreations might be a good way of interpreting what this concept was to him.

It is suggested by Ricardo Gessner (2016) that such a *modus operandi* centered around praxis is also the one favored in the other key author in this present inquiry into transcreation: Haroldo de Campos. Gessner affirms, regarding transcreation that:

It is not a concept; the term was coined by Haroldo de Campos to designate a translation process, which is characterized by being creative. It therefore concerns itself more as a practice than as a theory, and as it does not have a pre-established conceptual delimitation, it easily becomes slippery, serving the most different purposes. (p. 144)⁵⁵

A reading of the literature on transcreation both then and now does show a general lack of accuracy and agreement on a definition for the term, as shown in this subchapter. Even if Gessner interprets Campos’s views of transcreation as not having conceptual delimitations, Campos still seems to be the translator whose views on transcreation are the most thorough. It is not simply being creative in translating, there is a theory behind it.

In order to present Campos’s theoretical references of transcreation, I first ask the question of how and when Campos started using this term. Gessner (2016) helps organize this timeline by explaining that, during the 1950s, brothers Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, as well as Décio Pignatari, published manifestos on the pillars of what they called Concretism (or the Movement of Concrete Poetry), out of which “Plano-piloto para poesia concreta”⁵⁶ (1958)

⁵⁵ “não se trata de um conceito; o termo foi cunhado por Haroldo de Campos para designar um processo de tradução, que se caracteriza por ser criativo. Diz mais respeito, portanto, a uma prática do que a uma teoria, e por não ter uma delimitação conceitual pré-estabelecida, facilmente torna-se escorregadio, servindo-se aos mais diferentes propósitos” in the original Portuguese.

⁵⁶ “Pilot plan for concrete poetry”, in English.

would be the highlight, synthesizing what the trio (later known as Noigandres) was looking for. And what were they looking for?

Gessner (2016) writes that the Noigandres trio was striving for a “linguistic materiality”⁵⁷ (p. 143) – that is, paying attention to the phonic aspects of the text, the spelling and especially the graphical disposition of the words on the page. The form, Guessner writes, would come first; and the semantic aspect would blossom afterwards, in the interaction between the reader and the poem. Each reader would make their own interpretation of what had been read.

The concretist trio was in charge of the translation of many poems previously inexistent in Portuguese, such as works by Ezra Pound, e.e. cummings, Vladimir Maiakovski, Stéphane Mallarmé and James Joyce. The realization of the difficulties of translating meaning, sense, effect and form resulted in the concept of transcreation.⁵⁸ It is worth noting that, like Lal, Campos was a poet, an author and a translator, so both early definitions of ‘transcreation’ are based on his translation practice.

It was in 1962 that Campos started using the term ‘transcreation’ in his writings. This is very likely the version of transcreation from where songwriter Vitor Ramil took the term he used in his *Tango* album booklet in 1987 to describe what “Joquim” was⁵⁹. What is, then, transcreation according to Campos? Gessner (2016) reported that three fields of knowledge could be seen as the basis for the theory of transcreation by Campos: Theory of Literature, especially according to the works of Albercht Fabri; Information Theory, mainly through Max Bense; and Translation Theory, especially inspired by Ezra Pound.

Fabri, as read by Campos (2011), defended a tautologic view of art. In other words, for him, works of art do not mean anything, they simply *are*. They do not point to something other than themselves. When writing about literary language, Fabri would think of the ‘absolute sentence’, which is nothing but itself, no content but that of its own structure. This ‘absolute sentence’ would not be translatable, because translation presupposes the possibility of separating word and meaning. How, indeed, can one translate a text in which you find a predominance of form? Those questions have been asked by Guessner (2016) and certainly Campos (2011), as well.

⁵⁷ “materialidade linguística” in the original Portuguese.

⁵⁸ The group would also go on to translate Homer (both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) as well as excerpts from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

⁵⁹ Another fact that points towards Vitor Ramil’s familiarity with Campos’s work is the track “Noigandres” in his 1984 album *A Paixão de V Segundo Ele Próprio*, the one prior to *Tango*. Noigandres, as previously mentioned, was a group formed by Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, as well as Décio Pignatari. It is through this group that concrete poetry has its start in Brazil.

Campos (2011) affirms that Bense's works helped delineate these murky lines of what was meant by Fabri. Bense differentiates documentary information, semantic information and aesthetic information. Campos explained that documentary information is observable, empirical. An example is the sentence "the spider weaves the web". The semantic information goes beyond that and includes something that is not directly observable, such as "'the spider weaves the web' is a true proposition". Aesthetic information, on the other hand, could be a part of a poem, it is where art lies; it is literary language.

Campos affirms that both documentary and semantic information can be said in different ways ("the web is weaved by the spider", "the spider makes the web"), but aesthetic information possesses this tautologic nature: it is only equal to how it is originally written. From this it would follow that aesthetic information is not fully translatable, even if it is semantically equal in the target text. The whole of it, however, is only equal to itself. As Gessner (2016) put it: "aesthetic information cannot be paraphrased. Any change in its structure would entail a change in information: it would no longer be aesthetic and would become something else – semantic or documentary"⁶⁰ (p. 148). And there is the 'fragility' of aesthetic information about which Bense writes, defined by Campos as "maximal". If the translation of aesthetic information is not fully translatable, then another concept of translation is necessary, writes Gessner (2016), and that concept is transcreation.

Faced with the theoretical impossibility of literary translation, Campos (2011) writes in "Da transcrição: poética e semiótica da operação tradutora" that:

the more difficult, the more elaborate a poetic text is, the more that trace of the impossibility of translation would be accentuated. In the case of *recreation*, the opposite would happen: 'the more filled with difficulties this text is, the more re-creatable it is, the more seductive it is as an open possibility of recreation' (p. 16)⁶¹

Seeing the seeming impossibility of translation as a seductive invitation for a recreation is an empowering sentiment for the translator, and it is something Campos noticed in Pound's own translations, in which Pound, by betraying the original to a certain extent,

almost always manages – through a kind of miraculous intuition or perhaps greater solidarity with diction, with the final *Gestalt* of the work to which he technically

⁶⁰ "a informação estética não pode ser parafraseada. Qualquer mudança em sua estrutura acarretaria uma mudança de informação: ela deixaria de ser estética e passaria a ser outra - semântica ou documentária." in the original Portuguese.

⁶¹ "quanto mais difícil ou mais elaborado o texto poético, mais se acentuaria aquele traço principal da impossibilidade da tradução. No caso da recriação, dar-se-ia exatamente o contrário: 'quanto mais inçado de dificuldades esse texto, mais recriável, mais sedutor enquanto possibilidade aberta de recriação'" in the original Portuguese. In the last part of the quote Campos quotes himself from the earlier 1962 essay "Da tradução como criação e como crítica".

adapted his instrument – to be faithful to the “spirit”, to the particular “mood” of the translated piece; he adds to it, as in a continuous sedimentation of creative strata, new or variant effects, which the original authorizes in its line of invention. (p. 36) ⁶²

This is to me a key concept in investigating my *corpus*. Before deeming the Vitor Ramil translations as not even worthy of this definition, one should ask themselves what the source text would *authorize* as part of its universe of meanings, what could flow from it and be drained into the new reality of the translated text. In a medium such as song translation this practice is often a necessity. Mohit K. Ray (1995) writes about this same concept of being true to the spirit of the source text using a different metaphor when speaking of poetic translations: “the seed of the original poem must be transplanted into the target language where it will develop into a new plant” (p. 246). It is something new; it cannot be or become whatever it was originally.

Hugh Kenner (1953), in an introduction to Pound’s *Translations*, noticed that Pound does not translate words per se, sometimes deviating from them “if the words blur or slide, or if his own language fails him” (p. 11). Also, and quite relevantly for my research, Kenner pointed out that “[i]f he doesn’t translate the words, the translator remains faithful to the original poet’s sequence of images, to his rhythms or the effect produced by his rhythms, and to his tone. [...] The Poundian homage consists in taking an earlier poet as guide to secret places of the imagination” (p. 12). This seems to me to be the path Vitor Ramil takes in his transcreations.

Campos (2011) points that Manuel Odorico Mendes was a notable early Brazilian translator that applied what Campos calls “creative translation” to his praxis. As a result, Mendes was heavily criticized, but it was for the very reasons why he is exalted by Campos: because Mendes was not afraid to change the ST in order to stay true to its spirit. Campos (2011) stated that, when translating Homer’s *Odyssey*, Mendes has reduced the original 12,016 verses in Greek to 9,302 in Portuguese. A reason for this decision is that Mendes thought a servile translation would make for a boring read in Portuguese, given Homer’s frequent repetition, whereas in the original Greek, it is not so. Therefore, translating in this servile manner would make it an unfaithful translation to its original spirit. That, too, is a facet of the practice of transcreation. It is also an example of what Eugene Nida calls dynamic equivalence, in which “the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (Nida, 2021, p. 174).

⁶² “consegue quase sempre – por uma espécie de milagrosa intuição ou talvez de solidariedade maior com a dicção, com a *Gestalt* final da obra à qual adequou tecnicamente seu instrumento – ser fiel ao “espírito”, ao “clima” particular da peça traduzida; acrescenta-lhe, como numa contínua sedimentação de estratos criativos, efeitos novos ou variantes, que o original autoriza em sua linha de invenção” in the original Portuguese.

Campos often discusses German philosopher Walter Benjamin in his writings, too. According to Campos (2011), Benjamin characterized poor translation (of poetry) as having two features: the inessentiality (when one is too concerned about the communicative content) and the inaccuracy (when one is unaware of what lies beyond the content being transmitted in a poem, what he calls the pure language contained therein). Therefore, Benjamin's (2021) definition of a poor translation is "an inaccurate transmission of inessential content" (p. 89). Campos further explains what Benjamin sees as the translator's task as:

to attest to the affinity between languages; an affinity that is not necessarily historical or etymological, but one that is projected onto the realm of the hidden intentionality in each of them and which makes them bend towards a reconciled convergence in the plenitude of pure language (2011, p. 50)⁶³

What Benjamin calls 'pure language' is this unattainable idea of the one human language, as it was in the Book of Genesis before the Tower of Babel. Every act of translation, Benjamin writes, should bring us closer to this pure language. The translator acts as a bridge, a negotiator between two different languages. They are bringing the related languages together, focusing on their relationship. They are producing a language that is purer and closer to the original language, a synthesis. In Benjamin's own words, "translation ultimately has as its purpose the expression of the most intimate relationships among languages" (2021, p. 91), albeit carrying a notion of what cannot be reconciled: translation is also "coming to terms with the foreignness of languages to each other" (p. 92).

How is the term used today? When it comes to quantitative research to answer this, we can look towards Díaz-Millón and Olvera-Lobo (2023). In their article, the authors have built what they call a systematic literature review, for which numerous scientific works on transcreation have been compiled. Díaz-Millón and Olvera-Lobo searched for all entries that included the word "transcreation" or similar derivations ("trans creation" and "trans-creation") in titles or keywords. The search was made on websites such as Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar. The works that were found were not limited by any timeframe, but the last time the databases were checked was on July 1st, 2020. Some additional steps were taken to ensure that these were high quality works in their fields, but I find these minutiae fall outside of the scope of this thesis. It is, however, worth noticing that only articles written in English were taken into account and that the final number of works was 64.

⁶³ "atestar (*bewähren*) a afinidade (*Verwandtschaft*) entre as línguas; uma afinidade não necessariamente histórica ou etimológica, mas que se projeta no plano de intencionalidade (*intentio*) oculta em cada uma delas e que as faz tender para convergência reconciliada na plenitude da língua pura" in the original Portuguese

When it comes to the types of work found, the reported numbers are that 70.3% of the selected works were journal articles, 20.3% were book chapters, and 9.4% were doctoral theses. It was noticed among their selection that, after the first publication (in 1995, perhaps “Translation as transcreation and reincarnation” by Mohit K. Ray, a paper on the translation of poems), there was a peak between the years 2015 and 2019. The countries most represented in the selection are the United States, followed by the United Kingdom, and Spain. Brazil has three entries out of the 64. Out of these works, 51.6% were conducted through qualitative analyses, 34.4% were theoretical discussions and 14.1% were quantitative analyses.

Four main fields of application in which this term is used were noticed: translation, communication, advertising and poetry. In addition to that broad view, the 25 most common words in articles from each of these key areas of knowledge were considered. The most common relevant word in all areas were their very category denomination: translation studies had ‘translation’ as the most used word, communication studies used the term ‘communication’ the most, and so on, so I do not include them here.

Works that delved into ‘translation’ had their core concepts identified as ‘culture’, ‘text’ and ‘language’, unsurprisingly. The ‘communication’-centered entries had ‘product’, ‘culture’, ‘appeal’ and ‘health’ as keywords. Díaz-Millón and Olvera-Lobo note that there is a product-oriented approach to these works, as well as a focus on the role of culture in this exchange.

‘Advertising’-centered works had their keywords identified as ‘product’, marketing’ and ‘culture’. ‘Poetry’, the last among the main topics, often use the words ‘voice’, ‘poem’, ‘work’, and ‘text’. The authors noticed that in these ‘poetry’ entries the concept of the transmission of the poetic voice by the transcreator has been a prevalent concern. Voice was mentioned in the previous subchapter, which once again suggests that these areas are quite interconnected.

The definition of transcreation and its associations, then, varies depending on the main field of study or use. An overall definition proposed by Díaz-Millón and Olvera-Lobo (2023) seems to be quite fitting, as overall:

Transcreation is a type of translation characterized by the intra-/interlingual adaptation or re-interpretation of a message intended to suit a target audience, while conveying the same message, style, tone, images and emotions from the source language to the target language, paying special attention to the cultural characteristics of the target audience. This reinterpretation of the message may imply adaptations that move away from the original text to a greater or lesser extent to fit the original purpose, transmit the original message and overcome cultural barriers. For such reasons, it is present in persuasive and communicative context (p. 358)

This definition by Díaz-Millón and Olvera-Lobo is universal for transcreative practices. It appears to encompass not only the poetic notion of what a source text would accept as faithful to its spirit, but also the *modus operandi* of the marketing brand of transcreation. And those are not the only fields that use transcreation as a term and tool. The term is also used in video game translation process, in which a great degree of freedom is experienced by the translators/transcreators. What videogame translations must achieve is a seamless experience, as close as possible to how the source audience experiences the game. It must feel smooth, natural and local. Gaballo (2012) notes that there are “strong domestication tendencies when it comes to the treatment of jokes, plays on words, linguistic varieties and lyrics of theme songs” (p. 97). Websites and mobile apps may also use such approach in their translation *skopos*.

Some, however, deem the term ‘transcreation’ to be unnecessary. Miguel Bernal Merino (2006) voices this position when he writes that

[t]he terms ‘game localisation’ and ‘transcreation’ do not seem accurate enough to be used in Translation Studies, since ‘localisation’ is an industry-used term and includes non-linguistic activities, and we do not have a clear definition of ‘transcreation’. TS do not seem to gain anything from their acceptance. In my opinion, ‘translation’ is still the most adequate term to refer to any type of language transfer, but if ‘localisation’ is to be used it should always be preceded by ‘linguistic’ or ‘cultural’.
(p. 35)

I disagree with Merino because I do not think that ‘translation’ and ‘transcreation’ should not be used interchangeably. ‘Translation’ as a term could encompass all translational strategies, but only in a very broad manner that does not provide any information on how it is done. ‘Translation’ is, in my opinion, a superordinate for specific practices. The confusion continues, as in the field of marketing specifically, Claudia Benetello (2018) notices that, for some, transcreation would fit somewhere between a translation and copywriting (a persuasive text form that aims to convince readers to become customers by playing with their needs and desires), and her perspective as a copywriter herself is what drives her article. In the same field, one could even define transcreation as adapting culturally relevant content to a new audience when the source text has already been translated. Such a definition would very likely separate transcreation from Translation Studies.

The definitions and linked terms for ‘transcreation’ in the marketing field are numerous. Whereas some scholars link transcreation to the practice of copywriting, others associate it to texts that are hard to translate. Gaballo (2012) even puts forth the possibility that the transcreator is a “professional copywriter who may also translate”, at least in the marketing world (p. 100). Other linked terms are “‘marketization’, ‘cultural adaptation’, ‘multilingual

copywriting', 'copy adaptation', 'marketing translation', 'international copy', 'adaptation of marketing materials', 'creative international marketing' and 'transliteration'" (Gaballo, 2012, p. 102). Gaballo reproduces a figure in which translators contribute to the debate by giving their own definition. One of them, by Rossana T., in 2004, reads:

Transcreation is a culturally appropriate transference of a concept into another language, as opposed to the linguistic transfer that is a translation. It is extremely used in advertising & marketing, where you hardly want linguistic accuracy but need cultural insertion (p. 98).

If one believes in that notion, then the previous concern of the validity of the term of 'transcreation' to translation studies, voiced by Merino (2006), could make sense. And yet I ask: is it also not the role of a translator overseeing a linguistic transfer to make a transference of a concept into another language possible? Perhaps transcreation can be viewed as a concept that is independent from translation studies in the marketing field, but not in the literary world.

This preponderance of the concept of transcreation in the marketing field is echoed in *The Little Book of Transcreation* (Humphrey et al., 2011). Humphrey et al. include various marketing-related cases in which something has been lost in translation, causing awkwardness in reception, has no resonance in the target context, and thus constitutes a failure in the communicative interaction. There is also confusion, Benetello writes, about what separates transcreation and adaptation, which is used by some as synonyms. Gaballo (2012), however, maintains that transcreation is not encompassed by any other term in Translation Studies, and that it is valid as a category on its own. She also proposes that most discussions on transcreation nowadays are industry-dictated and applied to business and marketing, which could be a reason why translator scholars have not been paying much attention to it.

The issue of Adaptation (Studies) goes deeper, and it is not only that transcreation and adaptation are often treated as if they were the same concepts. John Milton (2009) writes that terms sometimes taken as synonyms to adaptation are "recontextualization, tradaptation, spinoff, reduction, simplification, condensation, abridgement, special version, reworking, offshoot, transformation, remediation, and re-vision" (p. 51). This shows how unclear the matter still is. Milton lists some areas in which translated texts tend to be adapted or altered, such as websites, children's literature, theater texts, advertising texts, visual texts for the hard-of-hearing and the translation of songs as well, even if he is referring to opera librettos. He also mentions adaptation in literary translation in Brazil in the form of those done for Clube do Livro, a series of world classic fiction that had monthly issues published between 1943 and 1989. With homogenized size, weight and page number, all books were 160 pages long and

weighed very little so as to keep postal costs down. Milton clarifies that in the case of lengthy books such as *Moby Dick*, two volumes have been published. Additionally, offensive material and political references were cut. These are all constraints for the translator, and Milton reminds us that censoring literary translation was also the norm in France in the 17th and 18th centuries (translations known as *belles infidèles*, as previously stated).

If one expands the search to the work of Julie Sanders (2006), then one finds even more terms linked to ‘adaptation’. It is difficult to specify the limits between transcreation and adaptation when there is not an agreement on the very definition of these terms in particular. It is my view that every transcreation is an adaptation, but not every adaptation is a transcreation.

What can be defined are my working definitions for transcreation, and they are those of Campos, for a couple of reasons: firstly, there is evidence that Vitor Ramil got the term from reading Campos’s essays, as previously stated. Mostly, though, my choice is so because Campos’s writing on the term appears to be the most comprehensive amongst all my sources on the subject. His approach is not that of a commercial and marketing-oriented nature, which does not fit the texts I am studying, despite being a popular way of seeing transcreation currently. Also, Campos’s definitions expose his rich theoretical framework in a way that is poetic and thought-provoking. It is this depth and this breadth I need for my analyses.

3 SONG TRANSLATION ANALYSES

In this chapter I analyze the lyrics that are part of my *corpus*. The order of the subchapters mirrors the chronological release of Vitor Ramil's versions rather than the release of Bob Dylan's originals. Lyrics for the ST and TT are available in each subchapter, along with a brief historical context for each recording.

3.1 "JOEY" INTO "JOQUIM"

Vitor Ramil's first version of a Bob Dylan song was released in the album *Tango* (1987), Vitor Ramil's third LP. The song is called "Joquim", and it has become one of Vitor Ramil's most well-known songs, as he tells Maicá (2022) that "Joquim" has received the most radio airplay of all of his *oeuvre*. "Joquim" was based on "Joey", by Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy, the sixth track in *Desire* (1976), Bob Dylan's 17th album.

"Joey" tells a romanticized version of the real-life story of Joe Gallo, a member of the Mafia in New York. Gallo was considered a controversial character, as Hinton (2006) writes that Gallo "beat his wife, abused his children, was a well-known racist, and took part in a brutal gang rape of a young boy in prison" (p. 145). Bob Dylan, however, did not see Gallo as such, but instead as a hero or an underdog like Billy the Kid, as told to Larry Sloman (1978). This is the only ST in my *corpus* that was not written solely by Bob Dylan, but with the aid of theater director Jacques Levy. Clinton Heylin (2010) writes that Levy spent time with Gallo sometime during the gangster's final year, but that Bob Dylan's statement which says that the lyrics for "Joey" were written by Levy are not trustworthy. Still, it is unclear what the exact nature and extent of each writer's contribution was. It is likely that Bob Dylan used Levy's help to recreate the life of Gallo in song lyrics. What follows are the lyrics to ST and TT, with number of lines, rhyming notations for "Joey" only, which follow the AABB pattern for verses and ABAB for choruses. There are no notations in the rhyme column for "Joquim" because there is no consistent rhyming pattern in those lyrics. There is a syllable count for both, line by line.

L	Source text Joey (Bob Dylan/Jaques Levy)	R	Sy
1	Born in Red Hook, Brooklyn, in the year of who knows when /	A	13
2	Opened up his eyes to the tune of an accordion /	A ⁶⁴	14
3	Always on the outside of whatever side there was /	B	13
4	When they asked him why it had to be that way, "Well," he answered, "just because" /	B	18

⁶⁴ Slant rhyme

5	Larry was the oldest, Joey was next to last /	C	12
6	They called Joe "Crazy," the baby they called "Kid Blast" /	C	12
7	Some say they lived off gambling and runnin' numbers too /	D	13
8	It always seemed they got caught between the mob and the men in blue /	D	16
9	Joey, Joey /	E	4
10	King of the streets, child of clay /	F	7
11	Joey, Joey /	E	4
12	What made them want to come and blow you away? /	F	11
13	There was talk they killed their rivals, but the truth was far from that /	G	15
14	No one ever knew for sure where they were really at /	G	13
15	When they tried to strangle Larry, Joey almost hit the roof /	H	15
16	He went out that night to seek revenge, thinkin' he was bulletproof /	H	16
17	The war broke out at the break of dawn, it emptied out the streets /	I	15
18	Joey and his brothers suffered terrible defeats /	I	13
19	Till they ventured out behind the lines and took five prisoners /	J	15
20	They stashed them away in a basement, called them amateurs /	J ⁶⁵	14
21	The hostages were tremblin' when they heard a man exclaim /	K	14
22	"Let's blow this place to kingdom come, let Con Edison take the blame" /	K	16
23	But Joey stepped up, he raised his hand, said, "We're not those kind of men /	L	16
24	It's peace and quiet that we need to go back to work again" /	L	15
25	Joey, Joey /	E	4
26	King of the streets, child of clay /	F	7
27	Joey, Joey /	E	4
28	What made them want to come and blow you away? /	F	11
29	The police department hounded him, they called him Mr. Smith /	M	15
30	They got him on conspiracy, they were never sure who with /	M	15
31	"What time is it?" said the judge to Joey when they met /	N	13
32	"Five to ten," said Joey. The judge says, "That's exactly what you get" /	N	16
33	He did ten years in Attica, reading Nietzsche and Wilhelm Reich /	O	16
34	They threw him in the hole one time for tryin' to stop a strike /	O	15
35	His closest friends were black men 'cause they seemed to understand /	P	14
36	What it's like to be in society with a shackle on your hand /	P	17
37	When they let him out in '71 he'd lost a little weight /	Q	16
38	But he dressed like Jimmy Cagney and I swear he did look great /	Q	15
39	He tried to find the way back into the life he left behind /	R	15
40	To the boss he said, "I have returned and now I want what's mine" /	R	15
41	Joey, Joey /	E	4

⁶⁵ Slant rhyme

42	King of the streets, child of clay /	F	7
43	Joey, Joey /	E	4
44	Why did they have to come and blow you away? /	F	11
45	It was true that in his later years he would not carry a gun /	S	15
46	"I'm around too many children," he'd say, "they should never know of one" /	S	17
47	Yet he walked right into the clubhouse of his lifelong deadly foe /	T	16
48	Emptied out the register, said, "Tell 'em it was Crazy Joe" /	T	15
49	One day they blew him down in a clam bar in New York /	U	13
50	He could see it comin' through the door as he lifted up his fork /	U	16
51	He pushed the table over to protect his family /	V	14
52	Then he staggered out into the streets of Little Italy /	V	15
53	Joey, Joey /	E	4
54	King of the streets, child of clay /	F	7
55	Joey, Joey /	E	4
56	What made them want to come and blow you away? /	F	11
57	Sister Jacqueline and Carmela and mother Mary all did weep /	W	17
58	I heard his best friend Frankie say, "He ain't dead, he's just asleep" /	W	15
59	Then I saw the old man's limousine head back towards the grave /	X	15
60	I guess he had to say one last goodbye to the son that he could not save /	X	18
61	The sun turned cold over President Street and the town of Brooklyn mourned /	Y	17
62	They said a mass in the old church near the house where he was born /	Y ⁶⁶	15
63	And someday if God's in heaven overlookin' His preserve /	Z	15
64	I know the men that shot him down will get what they deserve /	Z	14
65	Joey, Joey /	E	4
66	King of the streets, child of clay /	F	7
67	Joey, Joey /	E	4
68	What made them want to come and blow you away?	F	11

Figure 3: lyrics to "Joey", by Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy

⁶⁶ Slant rhyme

L	Target text Joquim (Vitor Ramil)	R	Sy
1	Satolep /		4
2	Noite /		2
3	No meio de uma guerra civil /		9
4	O luar na janela não deixava a baronesa dormir /		17
5	A voz da voz de Caruso /		8
6	Ecoava no teatro vazio /		10
7	Aqui nessa hora é que ele nasceu /		11
8	Segundo o que contaram pra mim /		9
9	Joquim era o mais novo /		7
10	Antes dele havia seis irmãos /		9
11	Cresceu o filho bizarro /		8
12	Com o bizarro dom da invenção /		10
13	Louco, Joquim louco /		6
14	O louco do chapéu azul /		8
15	Todos falavam e todos sabiam /		11
16	Quando o cara aprontava mais uma /		11
17	Joquim, Joquim /		4
18	Nau da loucura no mar das ideias /		11
19	Joquim, Joquim /		4
20	Quem eram esses canalhas /		8
21	Que vieram acabar contigo? /		10
22	Muito cedo /		4
23	Ele foi expulso de alguns colégios /		12
24	E jurou: “nessa lama eu não me afundo mais” /		12
25	Reformou uma pequena oficina /		11
26	Com a grana que ganhara vendendo velhas invenções /		16
27	Levou pra lá seus livros, seus projetos /		11
28	Sua cama e muitas roupas de lã /		10
29	Sempre com frio, fazia de tudo /		10
30	Pra matar esse inimigo invisível /		11
31	A vida ia veloz nessa casa /		11
32	No fim do fundo da América do Sul /		12
33	O gênio e suas máquinas incríveis /		11
34	Que nem mesmo Júlio Verne sonhou /		10
35	Os olhos do jovem profeta /		9
36	Vendo coisas que só ontem fui ver /		10
37	Uma eterna inquietude e virtuosa revolta /		16
38	Conduziam o libertário /		9
39	Dezembro de 1937 /		15
40	Uma noite antes de sair /		9
41	Chamou a mulher e os filhos e disse: /		12
42	“Se eu sumir procurem logo por mim” /		11

43	E não sei bem onde foi /	7
44	Só sei que teria gritado a uma pequena multidão /	18
45	“Ao porco tirano e sua lei hedionda /	14
46	Nosso cuspe e o nosso desprezo!” /	11
47	Joquim, Joquim /	4
48	Nau da loucura no mar das ideias /	11
49	Joquim, Joquim /	4
50	Quem eram esses canalhas /	8
51	Que vieram acabar contigo? /	10
52	No meio da madrugada, sozinho /	11
53	Ele foi preso por homens estranhos ;	11
54	Embarcaram num navio escuro /	10
55	E de manhã foram pra capital /	10
56	Uns dias mais tarde, cansado e com frio /	12
57	Joquim queria saber onde estava /	11
58	E num ar de cigarros /	7
59	De uns lábios de cobra, ele ouviu: /	10
60	“Estás onde vais morrer” /	7
61	Jogado numa cela obscura /	11
62	Entre o começo do inferno e o fim do céu /	14
63	Foi assim que depois de muitas histórias /	12
64	A mulher enfim o encontrou /	9
65	E ele ainda ficou ali por mais dois anos /	15
66	Sempre um homem livre apesar da escravidão /	14
67	As grades, o frio, mas novos projetos /	11
68	Entre eles um avião /	8
69	O mundo ardia na guerra /	8
70	Quando Joquim louco saiu da prisão /	11
71	Os guardas queimaram os projetos e os livros /	14
72	E ele apenas riu, e se foi /	9
73	Em Satolep alternou o trabalho /	12
74	Com longas horas sob o sol /	8
75	Num quarto de vidro no terraço da casa /	13
76	Lendo Artaud, Rimbaud, Breton /	7
77	Joquim, Joquim /	4
78	Nau da loucura no mar das ideias /	11
79	Joquim, Joquim /	4
80	Quem eram esses canalhas /	8
81	Que vieram acabar contigo? /	10
82	No início dos anos 50 /	10
83	Ele sobrevoava o Laranjal /	11
84	Num avião construído apenas das lembranças /	15
85	Do que escrevera na prisão /	9
86	E decidido a fazer outros, outros e outros /	15

87	Joquim foi ao Rio de Janeiro /	10
88	Aos órgãos certos, os competentes [de coisa nenhuma] /	16
89	Tirar uma licença /	7
90	O sujeito lá responsável por essas coisas lhe disse /	17
91	“Está tudo certo, tudo muito bem /	11
92	O avião é surpreendente, já vi /	12
93	Mas a licença não depende só de mim” /	12
94	E a coisa assim ficou por vários meses /	13
95	O grande tolo lambendo o mofo das gravatas /	15
96	Na luz esquecida das salas de espera /	12
97	O louco e seu chapéu /	6
98	Um dia alguém lhe mandou um bilhete decisivo /	16
99	E, claro, não assinou embaixo /	10
100	“Desiste”, estava escrito, “muitos outros já tentaram /	17
101	E deram com os burros n’água /	9
102	É muito dinheiro, muita pressão /	10
103	Nem Deus conseguiria” /	7
104	E o louco cansado, o gênio humilhado /	13
105	Voou de volta pra casa /	8
106	Joquim, Joquim /	4
107	Nau da loucura no mar das ideias /	11
108	Joquim, Joquim /	4
109	Quem eram esses canalhas /	8
110	Que vieram acabar contigo? /	10
111	No final de longa crise depressiva /	12
112	Ele raspou completamente a cabeça /	12
113	E voltou à velha forma com a força triplicada /	16
114	Por tudo o que passou /	6
115	Louco, Joquim louco /	6
116	O louco do chapéu azul /	8
117	Todos falavam e todos sabiam /	11
118	Que o cara não se entregava /	9
119	Deflagrou uma furiosa campanha /	12
120	De denúncias e protestos /	8
121	Contra os poderosos /	7
122	Jogou livros e panfletos do avião /	12
123	Foi implacável em discursos notáveis /	12
124	Uma noite incendiaram sua casa /	12
125	E lhe deram quatro tiros /	8
126	Do meio da rua ele viu as balas /	12
127	Chegando lentamente /	7
128	Os assassinos fugiram num carro /	11
129	Que como eles nunca se encontrou /	10
130	Joquim cambaleou ferido alguns instantes /	13

131	E acabou caído no meio-fio /		11
132	Ao amigo que veio ajudá-lo, falou: /		12
133	“Me dê apenas mais um tiro por favor /		12
134	Olha pra mim, não há nada mais triste /		11
135	Que um homem morrendo de frio” /		9
136	Joquim, Joquim /		4
137	Nau da loucura no mar das ideias /		11
138	Joquim, Joquim /		4
139	Quem eram esses canalhas /		8
140	Que vieram acabar contigo?		10

Figure 4: lyrics to “Joquim”, by Vitor Ramil

“Joquim” begins like a film script: “Satolep, night, in the middle of a civil war”. These first seconds are especially striking in the re-recording for the album *Foi no mês que vem* (2013). Here Ramil’s voice sounds clear and close instead of reverb and echo-filled like in the original 1987 recording, metaphorically echoing lines 5-6: “the voice of the voice of Caruso echoed in the empty theater”. One might wonder whether Vitor Ramil’s voice is filled with echo in his original 1987 recording because he is also singing this story to an empty venue, devoid of an audience for such a story that longs to be told.

In both versions of “Joquim”, these initial lines are sung acapella, giving maximum emphasis to the words, since there is nothing else to distract the listener while they are being uttered; there is just a voice carrying vital information for those who are about to embark on a journey of getting to know this man’s life. Joquim, the character in this song, is not mentioned until line 7. Instead, we have unconnected glimpses of his world: this happens in a place called Salotep, which is in a civil war. This place, Satolep, is Pelotas spelled backwards. Pelotas, a town in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, is where the singer-songwriter Vitor Ramil was born, and the mention of this (non-)place creates a confusion between fact and fiction which is echoed in the lyrics. Some things were factual at a certain time, but not then, such as the presence of the baroness, inspired by Amélia Fortunata Hartley de Brito. This historical figure, according to Verlaine Wazenkeksi (2017), came to Pelotas from Rio de Janeiro in 1864 and lived until the first decade of the 20th century – far from 1937, the year cited in the song. Some things did happen, but some things did not.

As presented in Chapter 1, Vitor Ramil said to Maicá (2022) and Barberena (2020b) that he did not want this story to be tied down to a specific time frame. The lyrics in the first stanza say that the moonlight does not let a certain baroness sleep, which brings forth an aura of a fairy tale worthy of this semi-imaginary place called Satolep. But just who is this baroness

who is never again mentioned in the song (and who is not cited at all in the ST)? Later, the date of December 1937 is mentioned in the song lyrics, but by then Pelotas no longer had a baroness, as Vitor Ramil explained to Maicá (2022) that this is something he also did in his novel *Satolep* (2008): “I mixed people from different eras, everyone together at the same time”.⁶⁷

The voice of the voice of Caruso – very likely Enrico Caruso, an Italian tenor who died in 1921 – echoes in an empty theater, as the lyrics in “Joquim” tell us. Why is such a beautiful voice not being heard, and what does that tell us about the story we are about to embark on? Joquim is born, therefore, amid physical danger (civil war), something ethereal, oneiric (the moonlight bothering the baroness) and the spectral presence of Caruso and his voice no one hears. But that is only what is told to the narrator-singer.⁶⁸ He is not certain of this information; he is just passing it on. It is a striking first stanza that leaves the listener with many questions, and also hooked, curious to know more.

In contrast, such a reverb-filled acapella voice is not found in “Joey”. In Bob Dylan’s original, what we have instead is a story that begins as if it were a legend, a person born “in the year of who knows when”, already accompanied by instruments. In Chapter 1, I note that Bob Dylan, in an interview reprinted in Cott (2006), told that “Joey” had a Homeric quality to it. This mark of orality, both in “Joquim” and “Joey”, is also there in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from the very first verses. In Robert Fagles’s translations, the first lines in both books read, respectively: “Rage-Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles, murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses” (1998, p. 77) and “Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns driven time and again off course, once he had plundered the hallowed heights of Troy” (1997, p. 77). Just as in both of Homer’s classics, we inherit this undefinition of history passed orally through “Joey” and “Joquim”.

Homer’s epics are not works of literature in the Romantic sense of the word – that is, written by a single author who sculpts his or her words in silence, to be read in silence. Instead, the belief is that these were originally oral tales that were deemed worthy enough to be written down. Albert B. Lord (1971) notes that there seems to be a contradiction in terms with the expression “oral literature”, then, since “literature” commonly presupposes the written word which is read from a page. Lord also exposes what is known as the Homeric Problem – that is, the fact that no one now knows who Homer was, if he ever existed, if he was a man, a woman,

⁶⁷ “[...] juntei pessoas de épocas distintas, todo mundo no mesmo momento”, in the original Portuguese.

⁶⁸ I use the term “narrator” to refer to the lyrical voice in these lyrics because I read them as being a narration of events, the narrator is telling the story of what happened to Joquim and what happened to Joey.

multiple people or just a fictitious author to whom these works were attributed.⁶⁹ The name of the singer of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is not in the text, as Andrew Dalby (2006) points out. Dalby also considers it very unlikely that Homer was both the singer and the writer of the epics, but most probably the singer. Homer also existed “in the year of who knows when”, so to speak.⁷⁰ There is a veil of mystery that comes from time itself that turns Homer into a myth, which is to a certain extent also true about Joey and Joquim. What is told about these men is not certain.

Dalby (2006) calls “poet” and “singer” near synonyms in his research about the Homeric Problem, because “at the time when the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* were made, poets more often called themselves *aoidoi*, ‘singers’, because they were live entertainers, performing their work by singing it” (p. ix). By making this parallel, it makes even more sense that Bob Dylan would call Joey “Homeric” in some way. It is worth noticing that Bob Dylan is well known for changing the lyrics to his songs in live performances, as well. Some small changes in the lyrics for “Joey” can be heard comparing the original studio version from *Desire* (1976) with the live album recording *Dylan & The Dead* (1989), which features The Grateful Dead as a backup band. Lyrical changes during performances were very likely present in Homeric times, too, as David C. Rubin (1995) states in his study on oral traditions in literature. As a matter of fact, that is in the very nature of oral literature because they “rely on human memory for storage and [...] they do change from telling to telling” (p. 3).

As a matter of fact, this undefinition in Greek literature of what is true or false is not only regarding to the figure of Homer, but also to the writings of Herodotus, called by some “the Father of History”, and “the Father of Lies” by others. Detlev Fehling (1989) writes about how questionable Herodotus’s sources are. According to Fehling, Herodotus seems to attribute his own hypothesis to the sources he cited, or that he *suggested* to his informers what he wanted to hear back from them. In fact, Fehling writes that “the problem is not confined to the false information present in Herodotus. To an enormous extent it is a matter of the absence of any correct information” (p. 7). These songs too are stories sung that do not necessarily speak the truth, despite singing about historical figures and events. The ruthless mafioso Joe Gallo is not the hero “Joey” paints, sculptured in word and song by Bob Dylan (and Jacques Levy). Joquim is Joaquim Fonseca, the historical figure who was an aviator, but he is also writer Graciliano

⁶⁹ Lord (1971) writes that linguistic studies in the nineteenth century have noticed the texts use “dialect forms from several regions and archaisms from different periods” (p. 8).

⁷⁰ According to Dalby (2006), the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* were composed before 600 B.C.. The first mention of Homer does not occur until 500 to 300 B.C., as a Greek singer who composed these and other poems, most of them now lost. No biography was given to place Homer on a firmer ground.

Ramos in the film *Memoirs of Prison* (1984). Thirdly, Joaquim is also Joey – that is where the motion for the transcreation begins.

In line 43, Vitor Ramil sings “and I don’t know where it was”⁷¹, denoting once again the unreliability of the narrator, who cannot even tell the entirety of the story. In another reading, one could think of how common this is in myths. A part of heroes’ stories is often unaccounted for (Odysseus, the hero in Homer’s *Odyssey*, for instance, being a case in point). The printed lyrics for both songs also allude to literariness, as they are written in official sources with quotation marks when the characters speak.

What could Vitor Ramil mean by “the voice of the voice of Caruso”? Musician and professor Luiz Tatit (2022) writes about José Miguel Wisnik, a fellow professor and musician who claims that the singing voice imbues the spoken voice with potential, and all that was seemingly aimless and devoid of passion is suddenly made important, it is potentialized. Tatit calls this “the singing voice inside the speaking voice” (p. 50)⁷². By contrast to the singing voice, the speaking voice is ephemeral in its utilitarian nature – it serves its function in communication and then it is gone: “its function is to give instantaneous forms to abstract content and these must be apprehended. The phonic casing is disposable” (p. 50).⁷³ What is important in oral communication is that one is understood; that the message is received as close as possible to the way it was intended. There are nuances in the speaking voice that could go by unnoticed such as sarcasm, but to a greater extent one tries to convey a message when speaking and then whatever sounds were uttered by them are no longer needed once the exchange is done.

The singing voice, however, has replaying potential. This voice is mindful about how something is said, and, as Tatit (2022) points out, it is through this special way of saying-singing that the public, who wants to know who this singing voice belongs to, is often able to do so. There is the timbre of the voice, but also how the voice sings, how it accentuates syllables, how it implements its own clichés. Tatit writes: “the singing voice foreshadows, beyond a certain living body, an immortal body. A body immortalized in its timbral extension. A body

⁷¹ “E não sei bem onde foi”, in the original Portuguese.

⁷² “A voz que canta dentro da voz que fala”, in the original Portuguese. Unfortunately, the original text from which Tatit takes this citation was not found. In case the reader wants to search for the original text as well, here is the reference: WISNIK, J. M. S.. Onde não há pecado nem perdão. **Almanaque Cadernos de Literatura e Ensaio**, São Paulo, v. 06, p. 11-16, 1978.

⁷³ “Sua função é dar formas instantâneas a conteúdos abstratos e estes sim devem ser apreendidos. O invólucro fônico é descartável”, in the original Portuguese.

materialized in melodic durations” (p. 51).⁷⁴ The living body, the one that speaks, is the one most of us have and that is the imperfect body to which we can relate. The singing voice is enchanted.

On the other hand, Tatit also writes that there is a speaking voice inside the singing voice, too, and it is through that speaking voice that the sounds can communicate something specific, as words and sentences are formed and carried through this enchantment. Tatit notes that songs (and music in general) exist in time, but they “transform lost time into time gained” (p. 57)⁷⁵ when they serve as a portal through which one can remember other fragments of time by dint of memories. And yet the singing voice is always present, here and now, singing for us. It is through this process, referred to by Tatit as “figuratization”, the voice when made present, as if speaking to the listener, that one can grasp the speaking voice inside the singing voice. The voice of the voice of Caruso, then, may be alluding to this enchantment, this endless loop of the singing voice and the speaking voice that reside inside each other. Singer-songwriter Tom Waits (2011) once said: “I like beautiful melodies telling me terrible things”⁷⁶ It is when we are spellbound by these conditions that we too may struggle to sleep, just as the Baroness does.

If one compares Joquim to Joey as characters, one can notice that they are both outsiders: “always on the outside of whatever side that was” (line 3 of “Joey”) and the bizarre son, “the madman with the blue hat” (line 14, “Joquim”). Their life stories as told to us in song share similarities. With that being said, it does not take much effort to notice that attempts to translate the lyrics straightforwardly were not made. The situations depicted in each song do not necessarily mirror each other even if there are some displacements of translated content here and there. Of the four lyrics in my *corpus*, this is the one that comes the closest to being a replacement text, as Peter Low (2017) defines non-translations of lyrics.

What makes me not agree with the statement that this is simply a replacement text is that, when collating the lyrics, one notices that there are similar themes, similar moments in the texts (explained below) and similar endings to the stories. The choruses in both are laments that include the name of the protagonist in the same position and sung to the same melody, a feature that Natanael Ferreira França Rocha (2018) deems advisable when a word is tied to the melodic composition in the ST (p. 71) – “Joey, Joey” and “Joquim, Joquim”. The song “Joquim” is not

⁷⁴ “A voz que canta prenuncia, para além de um certo corpo vivo, um corpo imortal. Um corpo imortalizado em sua extensão timbrística. Um corpo materializado nas durações melódicas”, in the original Portuguese.

⁷⁵ “Transforma o tempo perdido em tempo ganho”

⁷⁶ NPR. Tom Waits: A Raspy Voice Heads To The Hall Of Fame. Retrieved from: <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/134236977>. Access on: 28 April 2025

a palimpsest – it is, in a way, a collaboration. If a songwriter were provided with the melody in “Joey” and asked to write lyrics from scratch without knowing the original (or even from memory after listening to the original song once or twice), such new lyrics would not be as close as “Joey” and “Joquim” are. “Joey” is in “Joquim”, it is a vital part of “Joquim”. By comparing the two attentively, it is noticeable that Vitor Ramil knew the original lyrics well and echoed the ST in many parts of his transcreation. I contend that the similarities I now point out could not be mere coincidences.

As for a previous general view of the recordings before collating the texts, there are additional remarks I want to make. Firstly, one can notice that Vitor Ramil’s vocal performance features a slight crescendo in intensity in the original 1987 version after around the tenth (and especially in the eleventh) stanza. It is another way of keeping this lengthy song exciting, holding the listener’s attention instead of keeping it in the same intensity from beginning to end (which does happen in Bob Dylan’s original, in my opinion). In the 2013 re-recording this was done by extra instrumentation (a tambourine after the second chorus) and a female voice doing backing vocals from the fourth chorus onwards. The presence of backing vocals is noticed throughout “Joey” in all the choruses⁷⁷. An additional musical accent is made in line 2 of “Joey”: “opened up his eyes to the tune of an accordion”, after which an accordion starts playing. Is it not a diegetic sound, but it could be deemed an illustrative sound.

On a macro analysis, it can be noticed that the structure of the ST and that of the TT are similar but not equal. The structure in “Joey” is as follows: 2 stanzas, first chorus, 3 stanzas, second chorus, 3 stanzas, third chorus, 2 stanzas, fourth chorus, the final two stanzas and the fifth, final chorus (12 stanzas excluding choruses). “Joquim” has the same structure until the third chorus, then 3 stanzas (instead of two), fourth chorus, 3 stanzas (instead of two) and the fifth and final chorus (14 verses, 5 choruses as well). Despite “Joquim” being lengthier lyrics-wise, “Joey” is a longer song in terms of its duration because it has a slower, more dragged pace. The number of lines in each stanza is consistently four in the ST and 8-9 in the TT. As it happens with “Sara” (chapter 3.4), Vitor Ramil writes sometimes shorter but more numerous lines. I now inspect both lyrics stanza by stanza.

Whereas Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy begin their lyrics with Joey’s birth, Vitor Ramil begins with a first scene that is never integrated into the storyline. It works as a symbolic, dreamlike image. “Joey”’s first stanza introduces the character, the second one introduces the

⁷⁷ As told in chapter 1, it was singer Emmylou Harris who did the backing vocals and, according to Hinton (2006), Harris was not provided with lyrics to guide her performances and Bob Dylan did not like to record overdubs, so Harris had to sing the lyrics as she heard them for the first time.

family and his fame (“some say...”, ‘it always seemed they got caught...’ – imprecise or second-hand information is frequent). That second-hand information is also in “Joquim”, in the second stanza in which the protagonist also introduces his family and his fame (“Everyone said and everyone knew / Whenever the guy pulled another stunt”, lines 15-16). It starts with a line comparable to that of the ST, which reads “Larry was the oldest, Joey was next to last”. In the TT this line (the first in the second stanza) reads “Joquim was the youngest, before him there were six siblings”, which would make Joquim the seventh son, an epithet commonly associated with a bearer of special powers in folklore, perhaps given the importance of the number seven in the Bible and Christian theology (seven deadly sins, seven heavenly virtues, God resting on the seventh day).

Both lyrics tell stories that, at least initially, are based on hearsay, especially “Joey”. The last line in ST chorus bears some similarities to the TT’s last chorus line: “What made them want to come and blow you away?” becomes “who were those bastards that came to destroy you?”. The second line in the ST chorus contains two epithets describing Joey (“king of the streets / child of clay”), whereas in the TT there is instead what a metaphor about who this character Joquim seems to be: a big ship of madness on the sea of ideas. Both of these are descriptions of the characters in the songs.

The third stanza in “Joey” brings unclear information and hearsay once again (“there was talk they killed their rivals...”, “no one ever knew for sure where they were really at”), but its intention seems to be that of establishing Joey as fearless, “thinkin’ he was bulletproof” (line 16). The TT’s third stanza, however, finishes with an image of frailty, not of strength: Joquim is vulnerable to cold, which referred to as an “invisible enemy”⁷⁸. In “Joquim”, Vitor Ramil recites the lyrics faster at times to make them fit the tempo. The “cold” being an “invisible enemy” acts as a case of “Chekhov’s gun” – that is, an element introduced early in the story that will end up becoming relevant later. Both third stanzas give more information on the protagonists’ pasts, including that of Joquim having been expelled from school in a very early age (line 23), which may serve to explain his antagonistic attitude towards authority: “I won’t sink in this mud again”⁷⁹.

Stanza number four in the ST: mentions a war (line 17) but does not explain what kind or where or when, although it might be the Second World War, which is also mentioned in “Joquim”, but only in its eighth stanza. Stanza number four in the ST mentions “terrible defeats”

⁷⁸ “inimigo invisível” in Portuguese, which sounds a bit unnatural in the oral register of the lyrics. It does not rhyme, either, which helps these words feel out of place.

⁷⁹ “Nessa lama eu não me afundo mais”, in Portuguese.

(line 18) for both Joey and his brothers. The tone of the ST contrasts that of the TT's fourth stanza: here Joquim's genius and insight into the future are reported. There are no defeats. "An eternal restlessness and virtuous revolt / drove the libertarian", Vitor Ramil sings. There is a motion forwards and a sense of optimism in these lines, which do not resemble the ST.

In stanza 5 Joey refuses to "blow up" an unknown location and blame it on someone else and instead says "it's peace and quiet that we need to go back to work again" (line 24). This suggests that his impulses are not entirely destructive, but that there is something humane in this character. This time it is Joquim who is in danger, in a stanza that is in stark contrast with the previous one. Joey by then has already shown his credentials as a man who gets into trouble: gambling (line 7) and acting out in revenge (line 16), whereas so far there is only a passing remark about Joquim's expulsion from school (line 23) to characterize this protagonist as a troublemaker. At the end of stanza number five, Joquim screams to a small crowd: "'to the tyrant pig and his heinous law / Our spit and our contempt!'" (lines 45-46), which as we will see is bound to start some trouble in the next stanza after the second chorus. Musically these lines are given extra weight as both guitar and drums start playing in this part in the original 1987 recording of the song. It is as if this stanza ends in a cliffhanger that resumes after a commercial break, which is the chorus. In "Joey" every chorus ends with a short instrumental break to let the music breathe a little. It is here in the fifth stanza of the TT that we can read the only specific mention to a date in "Joquim": December 1937 (line 39). The mentions to war in both versions are probably referring to World War II (line 17 in ST and 69 in TT).

After the second chorus, the sixth stanza in both texts report their protagonists getting arrested and end with words of doom for the characters: five to ten years being how long Joey may stay incarcerated, and in the case of Joquim the omen is even worse: not only is he also imprisoned somewhere, he is where he is going to die. The seventh stanzas both tell of what happened to the protagonists in prison. As for "Joquim", in the sixth and seventh stanzas (52-68) one can read an influence of *Memoirs of Prison*, a film based on a book by Brazilian writer Graciliano Ramos, which Lacerda (2024) reports as being one of the three main intexts for the creation of the character Joquim. In the film, the protagonist Graciliano Ramos also has his writings destroyed, and he does not care much for this act because what he wrote is already in his head, as it is written in line 71 in the TT ("the guards burned his projects and books / and he just laughed and left").

In the seventh stanza in the ST the lyrics mention that Joey was reading philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and psychoanalyst doctor William Reich in prison. There is a displacement here, as Vitor Ramil writes that Joquim read Antonin Artaud (an avant-garde poet, actor and

essayist), Arthur Rimbaud (a Symbolist poet) and André Breton (a writer, poet and a leader of Surrealism) when he left prison as the war was happening. The three authors mentioned in the TT were all transgressive in their own way, and it is easy to see how they would feature in the reading list of a “libertarian” who is driven by “an eternal restlessness and virtuous revolt” (line 37-38 in the TT), whereas for Joey these authors come as a surprise, as nothing mentioned in the lyrics before or after that would suggest that he is an intellectual. Joquim’s bibliography, however, is only revealed at the end of the eighth stanza, not in the seventh like in the ST. Both eighth stanzas deal with their immediate reinsertion into the lives of free men after their imprisoned years: Joquim resumes working (most likely designing and building plane, since he had these projects in prison and is then said to fly a plane built from the memories of what was written in prison – lines 83-85), Joey tried to continue where he left off after talking to a mysterious boss. Joey returns to society, Joquim remains alone. It is in line 37 (eight stanza) that we get the only date in “Joey”: 1971, the year he left prison.

The ninth stanza in Joey shows the character’s recklessness as he tries (and apparently succeeds) to enrage his “deadly foe” (line 47), while trying to show his good side as someone who would not use guns around kids (and also, in stanza number seven, as someone who was close friends with the black men in prison for sharing an experience of injustice). In these moments, if we are to take the testimony by Hinton (2006) that Joe Gallo was racist and someone who abused his own children, then it seems the songwriters are smoothing the edges, to say the least, to create a positive image of this man. This romanticizing, it could be argued, also happens in “Joquim” – not by spreading lies, but for also making a martyr out of an underdog. The ninth stanza in “Joquim” no longer parallels the ST that much as it did in stanzas 6-8 (arrest, the years imprisoned, the immediate aftermath), but they both start telling the story of what happened to these men that led to their deaths: Joey tries to provoke his sworn enemy, whereas Joquim tries to get a license for his plane. The aftermath comes much faster for Joey, as in the tenth stanza we already witness his death, making it seem as if the emptying out of his enemy’s cash register was the reason for him being “blown down”. Joey is shot indoors, tries to protect his family (once again trying to sell the image a good person) and then “he staggered out into the streets of Little Italy” (line 52), creating a cinematic image of the incident. The following chorus acts like an ellipsis. We understand that Joey died when in the next stanza his mother and sisters are weeping and “the old man’s limousine head[s] back towards the grave” (line 59). The final stanza (number 12 in “Joey”, whereas in “Joquim” we have two additional ones) in the ST tells that “The sun turned cold” and “Brooklyn mourned” (line 62). It also calls for justice in the divine realm, that “the men that shot him down will get what they deserve”

(line 64), fully shaping the image of a good man who unfairly died, despite his behavior not quite making justice to this treatment.

In the final parts in “Joquim”, specifically in stanza number nine Joquim starts his path towards his dream of getting a plane license, but it seems we (or at the very least the singer) may already know his fate, as he names those responsible as “the competent for nothing at all” or, in the 2013 re-recording, “the competent for fuck-all”⁸⁰. That does not set a good precedent, and one must also remember the choruses in both songs, which already warn of their coming fates, like a in Greek tragedy. In stanza ten Joquim still waits for the result of his plea, he is not yet doomed like Joey was. Still, the image of “the madman and his hat” (line 97) is conjured, and the idea of a madman with his blue hat makes it seem as if such an eccentric fellow will not likely succeed amidst bureaucrats. In the next grouping of lines, the lyrics tell of his receiving of a note which tells him to give up. The chorus between stanzas 11 and 12, as it did between stanzas 10 and 11 in “Joey”, serves as an ellipsis. It appears as if Joquim was defeated and went through a long depressive episode (line 111) but came back strong and would not give up.

The stroke of bad luck that led to death is even more immediate in “Joquim” as it is in “Joey”, as it happens in the same section in which Joquim is still protesting (the thirteenth stanza). Joquim “launched a furious campaign of denunciations and protests against the powerful” (lines 119-121) and, as a result, gets his house burnt down and is shot four times, a scene he too, like Joey (line 50), was able to witness as if in slow motion (lines 126-127 in TT). Whereas Joey dies indoors, Joquim does so outdoors. Still, they are both gunned down for having upset the wrong people. Both characters stagger down the street after being shot, and in “Joquim” the Chekhov’s gun mentioned at the beginning (his many clothes made of wool because he was always cold) ends up being a melodramatic ending to the song, as Joquim begs for another gunshot so he would not freeze to death. The word “frio” (cold) is elevated in the 2013 rerecording as Vitor Ramil extends the vowel “i” in four ascending notes, as if one for each gunshot that hit Joquim.

After taking all of these into account, one would not be able to call this a translation as the term is commonly understood, as neither a word-for-word nor sense-for-sense transfer has taken place here. It is not even fruitful to apply Low’s Pentathlon Approach here because the TT is not an attempt towards translating line by line. In the spectrum of song translation, “Joquim” seems to sit in a peculiar position between transcreation and replacement text. It is named a transcreation in the very booklet that accompanies the album *Tango*, and that does

⁸⁰ “Os competentes de coisa nenhuma” and “os competentes de porra nenhuma”, respectively. Strangely, in the booklet for *Tango* it just reads “os competentes”, not followed by either of the endings.

seem to be the best definition since it is not, in my opinion, a complete deviation from the ST. The song lyrics tell similar stories that begin and end in a similar fashion and there are parallels in how the songwriters shaped these narratives. It is clear that Vitor Ramil has paid attention to the original lyrics and kept them in mind while creating his, otherwise he would not have remembered details refracted in the TT. And yet Vitor Ramil has created his own lyrics deriving from “Joey”, adding other elements not present in the original. It is at parts a new creation, but one that bears some resemblance to the ST. Among the four songs in my *corpus*, this is the one that takes the most liberties and drifts away the most from the original Bob Dylan lyrics, as the next subchapters show. Yet I argue this is not a replacement text per se, as in new lyrics composed with total disregard for the ST’s meaning. “Joquim” lies somewhere between a translation and a new creation.

3.2 “GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY” INTO “UM DIA VOCÊ VAI SERVIR A ALGUÉM”

“Um dia você vai servir a alguém” was released in 2000 in the Vitor Ramil album *Tambong*, being a version of “Gotta Serve Somebody” recorded for *Slow Train Coming* (1979), Bob Dylan’s first Christian album (and nineteenth album overall) in what came to be known as the Christian Trilogy. His conversion to Christianity, explained in more detail in Chapter 1.1, was surprising to his listeners and peers at the time, but authors such as Beckwith (2006) note that Bob Dylan’s lyrics have always had a certain moral component since the early 1960s. Petrusich (2017) makes the claim that “Dylan has always performed devotional material – work that suggests an unyielding allegiance to a certain worldview” (p. 15). Margotin and Guesdon (2015) report that this was the first song recorded for *Slow Train Coming*. They cite two Bible quotations as possible inspiration for the words in the chorus and title. They are, firstly:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15 – KJV) ⁸¹

And secondly: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24 – KJV) ⁸²

⁸¹ BIBLE. **Holy Bible**. Retrieved from:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua%2024%3A15&version=KJV>. Access on: 17 sept. 2024.

⁸² BIBLE. **Holy Bible**. Retrieved from:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%206%3A24&version=KJV>. Access on: 17 sept. 2024. Margotin and Guesdon clarify that “mammon” stands for wealth and greed.

Bob Dylan won a Grammy Award for Best Male Rock Vocal Performance in 1980 for “Gotta Serve Somebody”. Margotin and Guesdon testify that *Slow Train Coming* achieved a Platinum certificate in the USA (indicating the sale of one million copies), and it hit the 3rd position in the Billboard charts, as well as the second place in British charts and 430,000 copies sold in France alone. Yet these songs, according to Margotin and Guesdon (2015), were originally intended to be given to one of Bob Dylan’s backup singers.

Vitor Ramil’s *Tambong* was released in 2000 and recorded in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was also released in a version which includes lyrics in Spanish instead of Portuguese to many songs. The Bob Dylan versions (this and the one in the next subchapter) did not receive a Spanish version but remained in Portuguese only in this alternative release. As with the previous set of lyrics and the ones that follow, here I reproduce the lyrics in their entirety with line number, rhyme scheme and syllable count for each.

L	Source text	R	Sy	L	Target text	R	Sy
	Gotta Serve Somebody (Bob Dylan)				Um dia você vai servir a alguém (Vitor Ramil)		
1	You may be an ambassador to England or France /	A	13	1	Você pode ser rei no país do futebol /	A	13
2	You may like to gamble, you might like to dance /	A	11	2	Pode ser viciado em bingo e nunca ver a luz do sol /	A	15
3	You may be the heavyweight champion of the world /	B	12	3	Você pode ser um mago e vender livros de montão /	B	16
4	You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls /	C	13	4	Pode ser uma socialite, enriquecer vendendo pão /	B	16
5	But you’re gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed /	D	13	5	Mas um dia vai servir a alguém, é /	C	10
6	You’re gonna have to serve somebody /	E	9	6	Um dia vai servir a alguém	D	8
7	Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord /	F	13	7	Seja ao diabo /	E	6
8	But you’re gonna have to serve	E	10	8	Ou seja a Deus /	F	4
				9	Um dia você vai servir a alguém /	D	10

	somebody /						
9	You might be a rock 'n' roll addict prancing on the stage /	G	14	10	Pode ser incendiário e fazer um índio arder /	G	15
10	You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage /	G	13	11	Você pode ser o índio vendo a chama acender /	G	15
11	You may be a businessman or some high-degree thief /	H	13	12	Pode ser um bom ladrão, pode ser um mau juiz /	H	14
12	They may call you Doctor or they may call you Chief /	H	12	13	Pode ter um passado limpo, pode ter uma cicatriz /	H	17
13	But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed /	D	13	14	Mas um dia vai servir a alguém, é /	C	10
14	You're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	9	15	Um dia vai servir a alguém /	D	8
15	Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord /	F	13	16	Seja ao diabo /	E	6
16	But you're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	10	17	Ou seja a Deus /	F	4
17	You may be a state trooper, you might be a young Turk /	I	13	18	Um dia você vai servir a alguém /	D	10
18	[You] may be the head of some big TV network /	I	11/12	19	Você pode estar na mídia sem saber por quê /	I	13
19	You may be rich or poor, you may be blind or lame /	J	12	20	Você pode ser dono de uma rede de TV /	I	14
20	[You] may be living in another country under another name /	J	17	21	Você pode dar o fora tendo tudo pra ficar /	J	15
21	But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes [you are] indeed /	D	13	22	Adotar um nome diferente, você pode mesmo se isolar /	J	19
22	You're gonna have to serve	E	9	23	Mas um dia vai servir a alguém, é /	C	10
				24	Um dia vai servir a alguém /	D	8
				25	Seja ao diabo /	E	6
				26	Ou seja a Deus /	F	4

	somebody /			27	Um dia você vai servir a	D	10
23	Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord /	F	13		alguém /		
24	But you're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	10	28	Você pode trabalhar na construção civil /	K	13
25	[You] may be a construction worker working on a home /	K	14	29	Pode estar desempregado, com a vida por um fio /	K	15
26	[You] may [might] be living in a mansion [or] you might live in a dome /	K	14/ 16	30	Você pode ter poder, fazer coisas que ninguém fizer/	L	16
27	You [may] might own guns and you [may] might even own tanks /	L	11	31	Pode ter mulheres numa jaula, pode ter as drogas que quiser /	L	19
28	You [may] might be somebody's landlord, you [may] might even own banks /	L	14	32	Mas um dia vai servir a alguém, é /	C	10
29	But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes [indeed] /	D	11/ 13	33	Um dia vai servir a alguém /	D	8
30	You're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	9	34	Seja ao diabo /	E	6
31	Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord /	F	13	35	Ou seja a Deus /	F	4
32	But you're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	10	36	Um dia você vai servir a alguém /	D	10
33	You may be a preacher [preacher] [with your] spiritual pride /	M	12	37	Você pode desejar a cura com Lacan /	M	13
34	[You] may be a city councilman taking bribes on the side /	M	14/ 15	38	Você pode procurar os serviços de um xamã /	M	14
				39	Você pode ser um pregador, chutar os santos do altar /	J	17
				40	Você pode ter um bom discurso, você pode nem saber falar /	J	19

35	[You] may be workin' in a barbershop, you may know how to cut hair	N	16/17	41	Mas um dia vai servir a alguém, é /	C	10
36	You may be somebody's mistress, may be somebody's heir /	N	14	42	Um dia vai servir a alguém /	D	8
37	But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes [indeed] /	D	11/13	43	Seja ao diabo /	E	6
38	You're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	9	44	Ou seja a Deus /	F	4
39	Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord /	F	13	45	Um dia você vai servir a alguém /	D	10
40	But you're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	10	46	Você pode ser demente, pode ser doutor /	K	13
41	Might like to wear cotton, might like to wear silk /	O	11	47	Você pode ser sincero, pode ter rancor /	K	13
42	Might like to drink whiskey, might like to drink milk /	O	11	48	Você pode ser um crente, você pode ser ateu /	L	15
43	[You] might like to eat caviar, you might like to eat bread /	P	12/13	49	Pode ser um leitor vaidoso ou uma miss que nunca leu /	L	17
44	You may be sleeping on the floor, sleeping in a king-sized bed /	P	15	50	Mas um dia vai servir a alguém, é /	C	10
45	But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed /	D	13	51	Um dia vai servir a alguém /	D	8
46	You're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	9	52	Seja ao diabo /	E	6
47	Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord /	F	13	53	Ou seja a Deus /	F	4
48	But you're gonna have to serve	E	10	54	Um dia você vai servir a alguém /	D	10
				55	Você pode ser turco, pode ser nissei /	M	12
				56	Pode estar ali na esquina, estar onde jamais pensei /	M	16
				57	Você pode me adular, você pode me esquecer /	G	14
				58	Você pode estar me ouvindo	G	19

	somebody /				agora, você pode mesmo nem saber /		
49	[Well,] You may call me Terry, [or] you may call me Timmy /	Q	12/ 14	59	Mas um dia vai servir a alguém, é /	C	10
50	You may call me Bobby, you may call me Zimmy /	Q	12	60	Um dia vai servir a alguém /	D	8
51	You may call me R.J., you may call me Ray /	R	11	61	Seja ao diabo /	E	6
52	You may call me anything but no matter what you say /	R	14	62	Ou seja a Deus /	F	4
				63	Um dia você vai servir a alguém	D	10
53	[Still] [You're] gonna have to serve somebody, yes [indeed] /	D	10/ 12				
54	You're gonna have to serve somebody /	E	9				
55	Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord /	F	13				
56	But you're gonna have to serve somebody	E	10				

Figure 5: lyrics to “Gotta Serve Somebody” and “Um dia você vai servir a alguém”

When talking to Barberena (2020a), Vitor Ramil explains that when he attempts to make a version of someone else’s song, he must start with a part he deems important in that song, such as the chorus or a repeated phrase. In the case of his version of “Gotta Serve Somebody” as “Um dia você vai servir a alguém”, he started with the chorus (“It may be the devil / or it may be the Lord / but you’re gonna have to serve somebody” – the word “serve” being the one most stressed in the chorus by the way Bob Dylan elucidates it in the melody), and he then had to find a translational solution for that before moving on to other parts of the song.⁸³ His solution was “Seja ao diabo / ou seja a Deus / um dia você vai servir a alguém”, which fits the rhythm and the stress perfectly. Both “but you’re gonna have to serve somebody”

⁸³ Vitor Ramil has made a similar remark about “Sara” to Barberena (2020a). In this case he also began with the chorus. For more information about “Sara” to “Ana”, read chapter 3.4.

and “um dia você vai servir a alguém” have 10 syllables. The key word here (serve/servir) occurs on the 7th syllable both in the English lyrics and on the 7th syllable in Portuguese. “Servir” has two syllables in Portuguese, so it needs to go on to the 8th syllable on this line, which is neutralized by the fact that “a al/guém” takes two syllables instead of three, not causing any disruption or unnaturalness to the melody. His explanations make it seem as if there must be a certain element in important parts of the songs in the original versions (such as the beginning or the chorus) for which a solution must be found before he can move on further. If this resonance is not found, the transcreation will not take place.

Before analyzing the structure of both lyrics, it is important to note that there are slight discrepancies when one compares the official lyrics for the source text, whether in printed or online format, to the sung version in the album *Slow Train Coming* (1979). These discrepancies do not alter the meaning of the text but are slight variations Bob Dylan made while performing the song in studio. There are, for instance, omissions of “indeed” in the fourth, fifth and last chorus as well as omissions of the pronoun “you” in verses, which also happens in the TT when Vitor Ramil often omits the pronoun “você” and starts the lines with the conjugated verb instead. The reader can listen to the song and notice these slight changes. There is a similar form in how the stanzas are organized in both, being four lines for the entirety of the ST and four lines in the verses with an additional line in the chorus in the TT (an additional line which could easily have been merged into only one, but for some reason it was not: “be it the devil / or be it God”⁸⁴). There are seven stanzas and seven choruses in both the ST and TT.

Charles O. Hartman (2019) writes that “in many songs, one of our primary listening tasks is to work out exactly who ‘I’ and ‘you’ are” (p. 56), and I believe one way to start analyzing these lyrics is to think of the word you/você, which is present from beginning to end in these lyrics. “You” functions as a deictic word – that is, it is a word whose meaning depends on the context in which one uses it (“here”, “there”, “tomorrow”, “this” and “that” are other such words). Bob Dylan’s title does not include a pronoun, stating simply “Gotta Serve Somebody”, it is not clear who must serve, what serving means and who is served. These are questions that are answered in the lyrics, for the most part. Vitor Ramil’s title seems more direct and perhaps prophetic, absolute: “Um dia você vai servir a alguém” (“One day you will serve somebody”). So even if you, the listener, do not know who to serve or even what that means, the day will come when this act of serving will take place. There is no escape from this fact.

⁸⁴ “seja ao diabo / ou seja a Deus”

Along each of the seven verses (once again echoing the celestial number seven, mentioned in the previous subchapter), both Bob Dylan and Vitor Ramil enumerate the many possibilities for who this “you” may be: professions, acts “you” may engage in, behaviors, social statuses, conditions, locations, religions, drinking and eating habits. Each of these stanzas arrive at a similar conclusion – but not the same one. The ST reads “it may be the devil or it may be the Lord / but you’re gonna have to serve somebody”. And indeed, in both versions the devil and the Lord (or “God”, in the TT “Deus”) are mentioned as alternatives. These lines closely resemble one another. One differing detail in the TT is that, in the first two instances of the line about serving somebody, we do not have the pronoun (você/you). In Portuguese it makes sense that this does not have a pronoun because the choruses all come after verses which tell about all the things “you” may do or be. It is implied “you” are still the addressee from the conjugation of the verb, too. Vitor Ramil could have easily added “você” to these lines as they would not be sung awkwardly with the addition of two syllables. Both initial lines in the choruses have fewer syllables in the TT than they do in the ST, so he may have opted for a more economical solution.

But there is another subtle difference in the chorus that suggests a possible overall difference in tone in both versions. This is not quite what is called a literal translation by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1958/2007), because Bob Dylan sings you are “gonna have to serve” and Vitor Ramil sings “you will serve”. This makes sense, after all, because Bob Dylan was beginning his own tirade against the infidels (which is, interestingly, the title of his first album post-Christian years). He is forcing the listener to choose one or the other, because there are no other options. It is black or white, you are going to have to choose. Which one will it be? The TT, however, seems to be a little lighter in tone here, in contrast with how the title suggested at first, with no further context. Vitor Ramil seems not to be preaching, but maybe indeed predicting that one day this will happen, but “you” do(es) not have to think too much about it, it will happen naturally. It seems like a contemplative approach rather than an evangelizing one, which once again is not surprising given that only Bob Dylan was in a fervent Christian phase. Nothing else in Vitor Ramil’s *Tambora* points towards gospel music. Perhaps the knowledge of who Vitor Ramil is points his version in a different direction than does Bob Dylan’s.

Aidan Day (1988) writes that these visions of doom in Bob Dylan’s Christian years are the norm, as his Christian body of work “repeatedly stresses that there are no human choices that do not have absolute implications”, therefore one is going to have to choose. These lyrics foresee that we are going to face an “inescapable threat” (p. 98) and that “the voice that sings the words is driven by anxiety” (p. 99). Humanity will not be able to save itself according to

Bob Dylan's lyrics in this era. Day writes that "one of the sharpest realizations of the Christian lyrics is of a world whose hunger and sickness lie beyond the capacity of human endeavour to satisfy and redeem." (p. 96). All humanity can do is make the right choice of who to serve and serve them (hopefully Him, God) vehemently. Day argues that the lyrics oscillate between a "possibility of regeneration" and "a sense of irreducible corruption in the soul, a certainty of alienation from grace that is indeed at times close to despair" (p. 101).

Susam-Sarajeva (2006), when writing about cross-cultural song translations of a genre of Turkish music called *rembetika*, states that music in that context "emerges as a form of intercultural communication which does, at times, involve translation, but is by no means limited to it" (p. 255). There is certainly a great deal of domestication in Vitor Ramil's transcreation of "Gotta Serve Somebody", as well, and it starts in its first line: "You can be a king in the land of football"⁸⁵, whereas in the ST the line is "You may be an ambassador to England or France". Both are positions of power, but the solution Vitor Ramil has decided on sets the precedent for much of what we will encounter. The second lines in each lyrics have some resemblance if one focuses on the first half ("you may like to gamble"), which becomes "you can be hooked on bingo"⁸⁶. It is worth noting that the subject "você" is not here in line 2 of the TT but is implied since it was present in the previous line, and the verb conjugation agrees with it. This suppression of the subject will be a constant in the TT. In the case of the "bingo" line, we have an exaggeration of what was present in the ST – a mere liking of gambling becomes an addiction towards bingo. The meaning of the third line in the ST ("you may be the heavyweight champion of the world") is not carried across to the TT at any point, whereas the third line in the TT ("you can be a wizard, sell books by the ton"⁸⁷) may bear a small resemblance to the first half of line 33 in the ST ("you may be a preacher with your spiritual pride"). It is, however, a distant correspondent (wizard and preacher), and thus, it could not be considered a translation.

The last lines in the first stanzas (lines 4) find the transference of the English word "socialite" straight to Portuguese, a foreign expression which was adopted into our own vocabulary in Brazil. However, in the ST this socialite has a "long string of pearls" and in the TT there is no more clarification about who this character may be or what they may do. Vitor Ramil just adds another possibility of what "you" may be – someone who gets rich by selling bread, a word that is found in the ST but only in line 43 at the end of the sixth stanza, and not

⁸⁵ The original reads "Você pode ser rei no país do futebol".

⁸⁶ "Pode ser viciado em bingo" in the TT.

⁸⁷ "Você pode ser um mago e vender livros de montão"

as something you can sell but as something you may like to eat. In the first stanzas, both songwriters illustrate five different kinds of people. The number of characters Bob Dylan and Vitor Ramil conjure in each stanza varies, but they coincide in number in the first, fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas, which means half of them.

In stanza two of the TT there is a reference to a well-known case in Brazil of the murder of an indigenous man who had 95% of his body burnt when a group of teenagers threw alcohol on the sleeping victim and then set him on fire in the capital Brasília in 1997.⁸⁸ Vitor Ramil writes down both sides of this incident as possibilities of who “you” may be: the arsonist who sets the indigenous man aflame and the indigenous man himself who sees the flames start. The mention to a “bad judge” (line 12) may or may not be in reference to the previously mentioned murder case, as the sentences were bland for such a heinous crime.⁸⁹ This is, once again, a case of domestication. The second stanza in Bob Dylan’s lyrics is also worth mentioning, because for once it seems like he turns the mirror to himself for a while, whereas elsewhere he is having it face outwards so that hopefully everyone will see themselves as someone who must serve the Lord (or the devil). Here the lyrics say “You might be a rock ‘n’ roll addict prancing on the stage / You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage”. When he wrote these lyrics, Bob Dylan was once again a touring artist after spending much of the second half of the 1960s and first half of the 1970s not touring consistently. His 1974 tour with The Band had probably cost Bob Dylan his marriage with Sara (as stated in chapter 1.1). The life of a rock ‘n’ roll addict who has drugs at his command and “women in a cage” if he so wants is certainly one he was familiar with. He seems to be talking about himself in these lines. This is a strong passage that is displaced in Vitor Ramil’s version from the second to the fourth stanza: “You can have women in a cage, all the drugs you want”⁹⁰. The latter part of this line can be understood as a modulation according to Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/2007), who define it as “a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view” (p. 133). It is more natural in Portuguese to phrase “drugs at your command” as such. Additionally, there is another instance of a close correspondence: “high-degree thief” (ST) becomes “good thief”⁹¹ (ST) in the third line of the stanza.

⁸⁸ SILVA, Leopoldo. **Índio é queimado por estudantes no DF**. Retrieved from: <<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff210401.htm>>. Access on 29 May 2024.

⁸⁹ VILELA, Pedro Rafael. **Assassinato do indígena Galdino, em Brasília, completa 25 anos nesta quarta (20)**. Retrieved from: <<https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2022/04/20/assassinato-do-indigena-galdino-em-brasil-completa-25-anos-nesta-quarta-20/>>. Access on 29 May 2024.

⁹⁰ “Pode ter mulheres numa jaula, pode ter as drogas que quiser”

⁹¹ “Bom ladrão”

The third stanza is only half translated in the TT, specifically the even lines: “you may be the head of some big TV network” (line 14, ST) becomes “you may be the owner of a TV network” (line 20, TT) and “you may be livin’ in another country under another name” (line 16, ST) becomes “adopt a different name, you can even seclude yourself”⁹² (line 22, TT)⁹³. None of these are word-for-word or even a literal translation, but one can argue that the sense is somewhat carried in these transferences of meaning. The fourth stanza scores less on a translational analysis because, in the TT, all we get is a carrying across of “you may be a construction worker working on a home” (line 25, ST) to “you may work in construction”⁹⁴ (line 28, TT). The lines in the ST in this stanza are those of power and wealth: living in a mansion, being a landlord, owning guns, tanks or banks. Line 29 of the TT, however, says “(You) might be out of work, barely alive”⁹⁵, despite following that with an allusion to power in the next line⁹⁶ and the displacement of the “women in a cage” at the end of stanza number four. Keeping all that in mind, these fourth stanzas seem to refer mostly to high living, especially in “Gotta Serve Somebody”.

After the fourth chorus, we arrive at the fifth stanzas. Both conjure up six possibilities each. The Bob Dylan lyrics bring forth the images of a prideful preacher, a city councilman who takes bribes, a hairdresser (or someone who knows how to cut hair), somebody’s mistress or somebody’s heir. These seem to be an assorted sample of people without anything that connects them all. The characters in the first two lines, and arguably the mistress, seem to point towards corruption, however. Someone doing what they should not do. The “preacher” in the ST also makes an apparition in the TT (a “pregador”), as well as another spiritual figure (a shaman, in line 38). This stanza, in Vitor Ramil’s lyrics, does not seem to be impregnated with the immediate presence of corruption, but instead with that of people looking for answers and those who are sought for that purpose. Line 36 speaks of seeking the cure with Lacan, referring to psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and bringing up the question of whether the average Vitor Ramil listener, supposedly well-read and educated, would know who that is. The next lines (38-39, TT) talk of seeking the services of a shaman and then there is the mention of the preacher.

⁹² “Adotar um nome diferente, você pode mesmo se isolar”

⁹³ Whereas in the ST the lines in the stanzas include a “may” or “might” and almost always a “you” as a subject, this is the one case in which there is neither a subject (você/you) nor “pode” (which in the ST is either “may” or “might”). It starts with the verb in the infinitive: “adotar um nome diferente” in the original Portuguese.

⁹⁴ “Você pode trabalhar na construção civil”

⁹⁵ “Pode estar desempregado, com a vida por um fio”

⁹⁶ “Você pode ter poder, fazer coisas que ninguém fizer” – “you may have power, do things no one does”

This parallelism, for those who know or compare it to the original, may imbue the TT's preacher with corruption, as someone who takes bribes or is prideful.

Even in the TT, what follows is the mention of kicking the saints off the altar (a wrongful attitude) and then of someone who has a way with words ("você pode ter um bom discurso"), perhaps a sophist. The last two stanzas in the ST change the gear slightly: now there will be a more numerous conjuring up of preferences and actions with less description, totaling almost always two per line. This causes a change in the singing as well, as there is suddenly a different dynamic of two separate parts per line. In the sixth stanza, the same happens with the TT, despite there not being a single correspondence found when collating both texts (only a mention to bread in the ST which is found in the TT as the last word in the first stanza). In the ST's last stanza there is another change of pace, because in all these lines the different possibilities are all of the same category: how you may call him, the singer, including "Bobby" or "Jimmy" (two fitting possibilities for a man born Robert Zimmerman), finishing with "you may call me anything but no matter what you say" and then going to the final chorus. This calling of names⁹⁷ is not carried over to Vitor Ramil's version, who instead only calls back the echo of a Turk (line 17, third stanza) and translates that in line 55.

It seems, in sum, that Vitor Ramil has largely reproduced the gist and the form of the ST without translating all the content. It is clear both songs talk about similar things, just using different examples. There has been consistent domestication, but much meaning is also carried across, especially in the first half of the lyrics. Now we move on to the third song.

3.3 "YOU'RE A BIG GIRL NOW" INTO "SÓ VOCÊ MANDA EM VOCÊ"

Just like the song in the previous subchapter, "Só você manda em você" was originally released in *Tambora* (2000), Vitor Ramil's sixth album. It is a version of "You're a Big Girl Now", a song featured in Bob Dylan's acclaimed 15th studio album *Blood on the Tracks* (1975). This is arguably the song lyrics that are closest to a translation in my *corpus*, when collating ST and TT.

As discussed in 1.1, there is a general consensus that the lyrics to the album *Blood on the Tracks* are of an autobiographical nature (even according to Bob Dylan's son Jakob⁹⁸),

⁹⁷ This "calling of names" echoes the song "Man Gave Names to All the Animals" from the same album *Slow Train Coming*. This song's lyrics talk of how mankind has seen and then named the animals after observing them. The lyrics make this sound like a children's song, and the lyrics were indeed published as a children's book in 1999 with illustrations by Scott Menchin and then in rereleased in 2010 with illustrations by Jim Arnosky.

⁹⁸ JAKOB'S Ladder. 1997. Retrieved from: <https://www.angelfire.com/music2/wallflowers725/rsarticle.html>. Access on: 11 sept. 2024.

despite testimonies of Bob Dylan himself refuting those claims.⁹⁹ It is a fact that Bob Dylan was in a situation of impending divorce when this album was released. He had been married to Sara Lownds since 1965, but his touring with The Band in 1974, with all the excesses of a rock ‘n roll band on the road, along with household conflicts and a new interest of Bob Dylan in painter Norman Raebe (which Sara did not understand) led to the couple’s breaking-up. This album is both a critical and commercial hit; it became part of the Grammy Hall of Fame¹⁰⁰ in 2015, was placed in the sixteenth position in the Rolling Stone magazine’s 500 greatest albums of all time¹⁰¹ and received double platinum certificate in 1994 for selling 2 million copies in the US alone, among other accolades.

In the liner notes for the compilation *Biograph* (1985), Bob Dylan wrote that interpreters who said this song was about Sara are “stupid and misleading jerks” and that he does not “write confessional songs. Emotion’s got nothing to do with it. It only seems so, like it seems that Laurence Olivier is Hamlet” (p. 6). This discussion, however, is not very relevant for this analysis, which follows both lyrics side by side with rhyming pattern and syllable count.

L	Source text	R	Sy	L	Target text	R	Sy
	You’re a Big Girl Now (Bob Dylan)				Só você manda em você (Vitor Ramil)		
1	Our conversation was short and sweet /	A	9	1	Um papo breve e tão sutil /	A	9
2	It nearly swept me /	B	5	2	Depois de tudo, me confundiu/	A	9
3	Off of my feet /	A	4	3	Eu tô de novo na chuva, oh! /	B	9
4	And I’m back in the rain /	C	6	4	Você em terra firme /	C	7
5	Oh, you are on dry land /	D	6	5	Sempre certa do que dizer /	D	8
6	You made it there somehow /	E	6	6	Pois só você manda em você /	D	9
7	You’re a big girl now /	E	5	7	Pássaro tão só no fio de luz /	E	9
				8	Canta uma canção que me	E	9

⁹⁹ Bob Dylan (2004) wrote, in his autobiography, that these songs were inspired by Chekhov’s short stories. As previously stated and widely recognized by Dylanologists, the singer-songwriter is not a reliable source for his own life or work.

¹⁰⁰ GRAMMY Hall of Fame Awards. 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.grammy.com/awards/hall-of-fame-award#b>. Access on: 10 sept. 2024.

¹⁰¹ LEVY, Joe (org.). *Rolling Stone: The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time*. New York: Wenner Books, 2005

8	Bird on the horizon, sittin' on a fence /	F	11		seduz /		
				9	Eu me pareço com ele, oh! /	B	9
9	He's singin' his song for me /	G	7	10	Cantando só pra você /	D	7
10	At his own expense /	F	5	11	Que nem ao menos pode me ouvir /	F	9
11	And I'm just like that bird /	H	6				
12	Oh, singin' just for you /	I	6	12	Eu canto pra me consumir /	F	8
13	I hope that you can hear /	J	6				
14	Hear me singin' through these tears /	J	7	13	O tempo é uma nave que corre demais /	G	11
				14	Mas reconheço o que deixamos pra trás /	G	12
15	Time is a jet plane, it moves too fast /	K	9	15	Eu posso mudar, eu juro, oh! /	B	8
16	Oh, but what a shame /	L	5	16	Mas que poder você tem /	H	7
17	That all we've shared can't last /	K	6	17	Posso mudar pra valer /	D	7
18	[And] I can change, I swear /	M	6/5	18	É só você também querer /	D	8
19	Oh, see what you can do /	I	6				
20	I can make it through /	J	5	19	O amor é simples, fácil dizer /	D	9
21	You can make it too /	J	5	20	Você sempre soube disso, acabo de aprender /	D	14
				21	Também sei onde te encontro, oh! /	B	8
22	Love is so simple, to quote a phrase /	K	9	22	Talvez no quarto de alguém /	I	7
23	You've known it all the time /	L	6	23	Mas não vai me custar entender /	D	9
24	I'm learnin' it these days /	K	6				
25	Oh, I know where I can find you /	I	8	24	Pois só você manda em você /	D	9
26	Oh, in somebody's room /	J	6				
27	It's a price I have to pay /	N	7	25	Noite escura, raios no ar /	J	9
28	You're a big girl all the way /	N	7	26	Qual o sentido de tanto andar /	J	9
				27	Eu tô vagando na chuva, oh! /	B	9
29	A change in the weather /	O	6	28	A dor vagando em mim /	K	6
30	Is known to be extreme /	P	6	29	Como um tiro no coração /	L	8
31	But what's the sense of changing horses in	P	12	30	Desde o começo dessa canção	L	9

	midstream?/						
32	And I'm going out of my mind/	Q	8				
33	Oh, with a pain that stops and starts /	R	8				
34	Like a corkscrew to my heart /	S	7				
35	Ever since we've been apart	S	7				

Figure 6: lyrics to “You’re a Big Girl Now” and “Só você manda em você”

Vitor Ramil does not seem to stray too far into making the song his own this time as he did with “Joquim”, for example, perhaps because it is not necessary. It is a love song without naming names (unlike “Sara”, analyzed later), without naming locations or anything else that would inspire Vitor Ramil to adapt it to his reality, to a story happening near him. This song seems to be about a nearly universal experience of the emotional pain someone can undergo when one is in love. “You’re a Big Girl Now” is a love song that talks about the internal landscape of a man in a way that is perfectly relatable to a Brazilian listener.

The song leads us through what seems like a heartfelt admission of immense pain about this man who does not have his loved one with him anymore. A common love song, even if it is a beautiful one. However, if one scrutinizes the lyrics, one may find some incongruences and some indications of questionable behaviors that may point to why there was a parting of ways.

Firstly: what does it mean for a conversation to *nearly* sweep one off one’s feet (line 2, ST)? Is this even a good thing, if after all this conversation did *not* sweep the lyrical person off their feet, given that it *almost* got there? Could the lyrical person be adopting a sarcastic and patronizing position, trying to detach himself from a situation in which he seems to be tangled?¹⁰² He is back in the rain, in an unfavorable position, meanwhile she is “on dry land”, she is safe and sound. Of course, as we only hear from him, we do not know if that is so or if she is, too, suffering from this breakup.

In the second stanza, the lyrical person talks of a bird that sings like him, through his tears (once again, the image of wetness, which returns in a later song in the album, called “Shelter from the Storm”). One may or may not believe that at this point, since the lyrical person has not proven to be trustworthy or open enough. The song, as a sum of lyrics and music, leads

¹⁰² For the remainder of this analysis, I refer to the lyrical person as a “he”, assuming it is the voice of Bob Dylan, or at least that of a male singer.

us to believe every word the lyrical person says, especially when one listens to this song as part of an album that is, overall, a love dirge.

Stanza three begins with a banal comparison – time moves fast like a jet plane. He promises to change, but does he mean it? “Love is so simple, to quote a phrase” begins verse four. The lyrical person seems, though, to be dabbling in platitudes. If he claims then that love is simple, then why is he suffering so much? Is he really above these simple emotions? It is after these lines that one of the two centers of emotional pain in these lyrics (lines 25-26, ST) is found. Here the lyrical person comes to the realization that this girl who is now grown up is not his anymore. She can be found in somebody else’s room, leading her life away from the wailing lyrical person. Of course, there is a possibility that he is projecting this behavior, and that this woman may be suffering as well. We do not know, this is not a duet. And why is his loved one a girl and not a woman? Is it not patronizing to say she is a big girl now, as a parent would talk of their young child? Is it not demeaning?

By now it seems the lyrical person is struggling between “keeping his cool” and succumbing to this very real pain this affair is causing him. He once again tries, in the last stanza, to come up with a comparison or something of a poetic analogy, but he falls short. “What’s the sense of changing horses in midstream?”: is he trying to say that it is no use trying to stay away from this love, that what once was must forever be? Perhaps having come to the end of his supply of banal metaphors and analogies, his defenses break down and honesty seemingly breaks through. The lyrical person admits he is going out of his mind (now certainly being swept off his feet) with a pain that is like a corkscrew straight through his heart ever since he has been apart from his loved one, which is followed by a harmonica solo. There is nothing more to say after one admits being this deep in their lovesickness. Now it is all clear, there is not much to hide behind. There it is.

Just as in “Gotta Serve Somebody”, questioning who the “you” and “I” are in these lyrics is important to comprehend its dynamics. Both Bob Dylan’s and Vitor Ramil’s versions are love songs whose key pronouns are “I”/“me” and “you”, and yet they are not love songs that one may listen to and fantasize that they are being sung for you, that the singer is actually in love with you – think here of The Beatles’ early songs such as “From Me to You”, “Love Me Do” and “Do You Want to Know a Secret”. Hartman (2019) writes that “this is not ‘I Want to Hold Your Hand’, but Dylan counts on our knowing the conventions of pop song that he is subverting” (p. 56). Hartman adds, when referring to the song “Sweetheart Like You”¹⁰³ but

¹⁰³ From the album *Infidels*, Bob Dylan’s 22nd studio album and the first after his Christian trilogy.

which is just as relevant here, that “as is true of many of Dylan’s songs, it is horrifying to imagine being on the receiving end of these lines, though to imagine uttering them may be exhilarating” (p. 56). It is a relief for the lyrical person to get these things off his chest, but how would it feel to read or hear these things knowing they are directed to you? How did it feel for his then-wife Sara to listen to these songs likely knowing what their desired purpose was?

Vitor Ramil’s “Só você manda em você”, starting from the title, is not as condescending as the source text, but it stays close to the many of the images conjured by the lyrical person in the ST. “You’re a Big Girl Now” and “Only You’re the Boss of You” are vastly different titles, after all. The TT sounds much more empowering to the “you”, and that is reinforced in some moments of the TT as I examine them now.

The first line in the ST mentions the conversation between the “you” and the “I”, which was “short” (appropriately translated as “breve” in the TT) and “sweet”. In the TT it is not “sweet” but instead subtle (“sutil”). In Vitor Ramil’s TT such conversation did not nearly sweep him off his feet, but left him confused. After that, in both texts the lyrical person is “back in the rain” while “you are on dry land” (line 4, ST) or “on solid ground”¹⁰⁴ (line 4, TT). The ending of the stanzas starts pointing in different directions just as the titles do. Bob Dylan sings that “you’ve made it there somehow / you’re a big girl now”. Where did she make it? On dry land, perhaps? It does not seem as if the lyrical person looks highly upon his object of love when they have made it “somehow”, and so we have the only mention of the condescending title in its entirety in the ST. For Vitor Ramil the situation is a bit different. There is a certain awe and admiration for the woman who is “you”, as she is “always sure of what to say / because only you’re the boss of you”¹⁰⁵ (line 5, TT), whereas the lyrical person in Bob Dylan’s lyrics seems not to accept that this woman (or “girl”) has moved on and might have indeed made it somewhere else.

Stanza number two starts with the image of a bird, but in the ST it is “on the horizon, sitting on a fence” (line 7) and in the TT it is “on the power line”¹⁰⁶, in a more informal and Brazilian collocation. In the ST this bird is singing “at his own expense”, and in the TT it “sings a song that lures me in”¹⁰⁷. The two first lines and two last lines in all stanzas rhyme in both ST and TT, and therefore the general the rhyming pattern is maintained in all of Vitor Ramil’s TT. The form of both lyrics is also similar: both have five stanzas and no chorus, but instead a howl

¹⁰⁴ “em terra firme”

¹⁰⁵ “sempre certa do que dizer / pois só você manda em você”

¹⁰⁶ “no fio de luz”

¹⁰⁷ “canta uma canção que me seduz”

that returns when there is an “oh” section. That is another returning element in what Low (2017) calls a strophic song – a song in which the same melodies are repeated on the verses and on choruses, if there are choruses. All stanzas in the ST have seven lines, whereas all those in the TT have six lines, albeit with a generally larger syllable count per line.

Concluding the second stanza, the bird is still present, and Bob Dylan writes that “I’m just like that bird, oh / singin’ just for you” (lines 9-10), and then hopes “you” can hear him singing through “these tears” (line 12). Vitor Ramil’s transcreation of this moment leads him to a different place, and his lyrical person seems like the bird¹⁰⁸ (a lesser approximation to the bird), who is also “singing just for you” (a word-for-word, literal translation here from line 12 in the ST to 10 in the TT), even if “you” “can’t even hear me”¹⁰⁹ (lines 11) and finishing with a line that has no correspondent in the ST: “I sing to consume myself”. Still, this line may refer to the self-pity expressed by the lyrical person in the ST, instead alluding to that in another way.

A “jet plane” as a “time” metaphor would take up too many syllables in Portuguese (“avião a jato”), so instead Vitor Ramil opts for “ship” (nave). In the ST it “moves too fast”, in the TT it “flies too fast”¹¹⁰ – the verb has changed but the meaning remains similar. The next lines are also indications of how the lyrical persons differ in their respective views of their relationships: “Oh, but what a shame / that all we’ve shared can’t last” and “But I acknowledge what we left behind”¹¹¹ (lines 16-17 ST and 14 TT). Vitor Ramil’s lyrical person acknowledges what was left behind, while Bob Dylan’s is still struggling to face the current reality. This is followed by a word-for-word translation (“I can change, I swear”), but once again it is clear both lyrical persons are in a different mind space: in the ST there is a bargain (“see what you can do”), in the TT he exclaims “but what power you have!” (line 16)¹¹², before a plea that they “can make it through/you can make it too” (ST) or “I can change for real / that is, if you want it too” (ST).¹¹³

Stanza number four is the one with one of the most dramatic moments in the ST, and yet I do not think that intensity is translated, both because of the laid-back performance in Vitor Ramil’s recording and because of the picture his lyrical person is painting is of a man who very much wants to be with his loved one, but who is not as desperate as the one in the ST. Both lyrics talk of love being so simple, concluding with “to quote a phrase” (ST) and “easy to say”

¹⁰⁸ “Eu me pareço com ele”

¹⁰⁹ “Que nem ao menos pode me ouvir / Eu canto pra me consumir”.

¹¹⁰ “O tempo é uma nave que corre demais”

¹¹¹ “Mas reconheço o que deixamos pra trás”

¹¹² “Mas que poder você tem”

¹¹³ “Posso mudar pra valer / é só você também querer”

(TT) and that “you” have always known that, whereas the lyrical person is “learning” in the ST and has “just learnt” it in the TT, implying once again that this man who sings here has been able to go a step further. In a painful realization made with slightly different wording, the lyrical persons realize their loved ones may be found in somebody’s room – but a shadow of doubt is cast here in Vitor Ramil’s version, as she is “maybe” in somebody’s room (line 22). The possibility that this is a false speculation is not raised in Bob Dylan’s ST. The most surprising moment here is how the lyrical persons react to this prospect: in the ST, he says that “it’s a price I have to pay / you’re a big girl all the way” (lines 27-28). One can wonder: a price to pay for what exactly? For loving her? In the Brazilian version the paying of this “cost” is put differently: “but it won’t cost me to understand” (a literal translation of the Portuguese “mas não vai me custar entender”, meaning it will not be difficult to understand), and the reason for this ease to understand lies in the fact that “only you’re the boss of you” (line 24).

The last stanza carries the momentum after the “somebody’s room” line in Bob Dylan’s original. The ST talks of a “change in the weather” and asks what the sense is in “changing horses in midstream” before finally confessing that he, the lyrical person, is going out of his mind “with a pain that stops and starts / like a corkscrew to my heart / ever since we’ve been apart”. This is a strong line with staying power that just happens to be the very last line, and then the listener of the original *Blood on the Tracks* version is left with a wailing harmonica solo. Vitor Ramil does not mention the word “weather”, but writes of a “dark night, lightning in the air” in the first line of the last stanza (line 25)¹¹⁴ and follows it by also asking for the sense of something, but here it is not about “changing horses in midstream”, but about the “sense of so much wandering”¹¹⁵. The lyrical person in the Brazilian Portuguese lyrics is not going out of his mind, but is instead “drifting in the rain” (line 27, TT)¹¹⁶, which also refers to weather and is a reference to line 4 in the ST. The pain too is drifting inside him like a “shot to the heart / since the beginning of this song” (lines 29-30). That is a stark contrast. The image of a corkscrew to one’s heart was strong, and the pain stops and starts, perhaps as the corkscrew twists. The intensity of a (gun) shot is perhaps more intense at first, but it does not persist in the sense that he is not being shot repeatedly. And even if that was not enough, his intense pain is not “ever since we’ve been apart”, as in the ST, but only since the beginning of the song – which only amounts to less than four minutes when that is sung.

¹¹⁴ “Noite escura, raios no ar”

¹¹⁵ “Qual o sentido de tanto andar”

¹¹⁶ “Eu tô vagando na chuva”

The way these songs are performed is very distinct. Vitor Ramil's version is laid-back and cool, with a lot of sonic space for an elegant and clean electric guitar sound to shine through. Bob Dylan's version, him being the writer supposedly experiencing such pain, is drenched in feeling in its acoustic setting (drums, acoustic guitars, piano and harmonica). If the lyrical person in the ST is desperate and unreasonable, that is carried through in the performance. While both versions are excellent in what they aim to achieve, they paint different pictures.

The songs were released in different times as well, twenty-five years apart to be more precise (1975 and 2000). This refraction-transcreation would not be as well received in 2000 and beyond if Vitor Ramil, a forward-thinking artist with an audience that seems to match that, wrote a song with such condescending tones and bitterness towards a woman. It would be unlike him. His version of "You're a Big Girl Now", however, could and would be called a translation by Low or any song translation scholar.

3.4 "SARA" INTO "ANA"

The last of the four songs analyzed here is "Ana", Vitor Ramil's version of Bob Dylan's "Sara". Out of the four songs, this is the one whose title differs the most from the original. As explained in the first chapter, this song was arguably written for Sara Lownds. She had been married to Bob Dylan since 1965 and by the time this song was composed and then recorded in late July 1975, the couple was on the verge of divorce. This situation was captured in the troubled lyrics of *Blood on the Tracks*, recorded from September to December 1974 and released January 1975.

Margotin and Guesdon (2015) write that Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy, the co-writer of most songs in the album *Desire*, spent several weeks in East Hampton in July 1975, and it was then that Bob Dylan wrote the song by himself, patching it together with lyrical and musical ideas he had long since been considering. Margotin and Gueson write that "the view of the dunes, combined with the gentle sound of the waves, acted on the songwriter like the madeleine on Proust" (p. 445), and from then the memories of Bob Dylan and Sara Lownds's marriage came rushing in through what seems like confessional lyrics, despite Bob Dylan's usual dismissal of the idea that he writes confessional lyrics. Bob Dylan, in his usual deflective attitude to admitting that any of his songs are autobiographical, has denied that the Sara in the song was his wife. In 1978, he told Jonathan Cott that "it doesn't necessarily have to be about her just because my wife's name happened to be Sara. Anyway, was it the real Sara or the Sara

in the dream? I still don't know" (Cott, 2006, p; 259)¹¹⁷. In the recording sessions of July 31, 1975, Sara was present and, according to Margotin and Guesdon (2015), was approached by Bob Dylan, who was on the other side of the studio glass panel and dedicated the song to her. She was, according to Margotin and Guesdon, moved enough to give the marriage another try, until eventually filing for divorce in early 1977. The official Bob Dylan website informs that this song was performed live 33 times, from October 30th, 1975, until January 25th, 1976, when it was last played.¹¹⁸

When Vitor Ramil transcreated his version for the 2017 album *Campos neutrais*, he did not write a song for Sara Lownds, but for his wife Ana Ruth. He did not translate Bob Dylan's memories but instead recreated the song using his own memories for content. In this way, he has created a song that is just like Bob Dylan's but sung from another point of view. The 41 years that separate the release of the original song and the Brazilian Portuguese version make this the longest time frame between ST and TT in my *corpus*.

In order to proceed with the analysis, I reproduce here the two lyrics side by side:

Sy	L	Source text Sara (Bob Dylan)	R	Sy	L	Target text Ana (Vitor Ramil)	R
10	1	I laid on a dune, I looked at the sky/	A	7	1	Eu olhava a paisagem /	A
12	2	When the children were babies and played on the beach /	B	6	2	Que se estende ao Sul /	
				7	3	As crianças corriam /	
11	3	You came up behind me, I saw you go by /	A	6	4	Pela margem do rio /	B
				7	5	No teu pala vermelho /	
10	4	You were always so close and still within reach /	B	6	6	Eu te via passar /	
				7	7	Mais profunda que a tarde /	A
4	5	Sara, Sara /	C	6	8	Mais intensa que o frio/	
10	6	Whatever made you want to change your mind? /	D				
				4	9	Ana, Ana /	B
4	7	Sara, Sara /	C	6	10	Teu rosto sereno /	
11	8	So easy to look at, so hard to	D ¹¹⁹	6	11	Faz o tempo parar /	

¹¹⁷ As told in Chapter 1, in a 1978 interview with Jonathan Cott present in Cott, 2006, p. 259.

¹¹⁸ SARA. Retrieved from: <https://www.bobdylan.com/songs/sara/>. Access on: 18 Feb. 2025.

¹¹⁹ Slant rhyme.

		define/		4	12	Ana, Ana /	
				6	13	Te vejo o que sinto /	
13	9	I can still see them playin' with their pails in the sand /	E	6	14	Não sei bem explicar /	B
11	10	They run to the water their buckets to fill /	F	7	15	Vejo ainda as crianças /	
12	11	I can still see the shells fallin' out of their hands /	E	6	16	Como brincam no rio /	A
11	12	As they follow each other back up the hill /	F	7	17	Suas vozes distantes /	
				6	18	Chegam fortes aqui /	
4	13	Sara, Sara /	C	6	19	Tua imagem se move /	
10	14	Sweet virgin angel, sweet love of my life /	D	6	20	Dá sentido ao vazio /	A
				6	21	Teus passos na areia /	
4	15	Sara, Sara /	C	6	22	Deixam marcas em mim /	
9	16	Radiant jewel, mystical wife /	D				
				6	23	Ana, Ana /	
11	17	Sleepin' in the woods by a fire in the night /	G	4	24	Suave Madona /	
10	18	Drinkin' white rum in a Portugal bar /	H	6	25	Minha dama austral /	C
11	19	Them playin' leapfrog and hearin' about Snow White /	G	4	26	Ana, Ana /	
				6	27	Tão perto da gente /	
12	20	You in the marketplace in Savanna- la-Mar /	H	6	28	Tão distante do mal /	C
					29	Caminhando em San Telmo /	
4	21	Sara, Sara /	C	6	30	Numa noite de abril /	A
10	22	It's all so clear, I could never forget/	I	6	31	Em Punta del Diablo /	
				6	32	Vendo a chuva no mar /	B
4	23	Sara, Sara /	C	7	33	Eles rindo no quarto /	
11	24	Lovin' you is the one thing I'll never regret /	I	6	34	Ou chamando por ti /	
				7	35	Tu sonhando com barcos /	
				6	36	De Belém do Pará /	
				4	37	Ana, Ana /	

12	25	I can still hear the sounds of those Methodist bells /	J	6	38	Ver tudo tão claro /	
				6	39	É jamais esquecer /	D
11	26	I'd taken the cure and had just gotten through /	K	4	40	Ana, Ana /	
				7	41	Te amar cada instante /	
11	27	Stayin' up for days in the Chelsea Hotel /	J	6	42	Nunca me arrepender /	D
12	28	Writin' "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" for you /	K	6	43	Escuto ainda /	
				6	44	Sinos da catedral /	C
				6	45	Rumor de calçadas /	
4	29	Sara, Sara /	C	5	46	Apitos de um trem /	
11	30	Wherever we travel we're never apart /	L	7	47	Eu insone há dois dias /	
				6	48	Dentro do Grande Hotel/	
5	31	Sara, oh Sara /	C				
10	32	Beautiful lady, so dear to my heart /	L	7	49	Escrevendo que tudo /	
				5	50	Foi no mês que vem /	
8	33	How did I meet you? I don't know /	M				
12	34	A messenger sent me in a tropical storm /	N	4	51	Ana, Ana /	
				6	52	Por mais que eu viaje /	
12	35	You were there in the winter, moonlight on the snow /	O	6	53	Sempre quero voltar /	B
				4	54	Ana, Ana /	
12	36	And on Lily Pond Lane when the weather was warm /	N	6	55	Teu nome é o nome /	
				6	56	De onde quero ficar /	B
5	37	Sara, oh Sara /	C	7	57	Timidez e silêncio /	
10	38	Scorpio Sphinx in a calico dress /	P	6	58	Quando te descobri /	
4	39	Sara, Sara /	C	7	59	Namorei teus segredos /	
10	40	You must forgive me my unworthiness /	P	6	60	Desejei teu olhar /	B
				7	61	Te esperei na neblina /	
				6	62	De um inverno febril /	A
				7	63	Primavera em delírio /	
12	41	Now the beach is deserted except for some kelp /	Q	6	64	Te segui ao luar /	B
12	42	And a piece of an old ship that lies	R	4	65	Ana, Ana /	

		on the shore /		7	66	Esfinge libriana /	
12	43	You always responded when I	Q	6	67	Equilíbrio e razão /	E
		needed your help /		4	68	Ana, Ana /	
11	44	You gimme a map and a key to	R	6	69	Perdoa meus erros /	
		your door /		6	70	Minha imperfeição /	E
5	45	Sara, oh Sara /	C	7	71	A planície, agora /	
10	46	Glamorous nymph with an arrow	O	6	72	É deserta ao Sul /	
		and bow /		6	73	O rio que se afasta /	
5	47	Sara, oh Sara /	C	6	74	Esse verde sem fim /	F
9	48	Don't ever leave me, don't ever go	O	7	75	Fosse outra a paisagem/	
				6	76	Também ia te ver /	D
				7	77	Tua chave, teu mapa /	
				6	78	Foram feitos pra mim /	F
				4	79	Ana, Ana /	
				6	80	Dispersa no vento /	
				6	81	Desenhada no sol /	
				4	82	Ana, Ana /	
				5	83	Não vai embora /	
				6	84	Nunca me deixa só	

Figure 7: lyrics to “Sara” and “Ana”

A superficial look at the lyrics in terms of form shows that while Bob Dylan's lyrics feature longer but fewer lines, Vitor Ramil's transcreation instead opts for shorter yet more numerous lines. The number of lines (48 in the ST and 84 in the TT) suggest a mirroring, which is an apt metaphor regarding this translation, especially if one also accounts for the image of refraction. When considering both versions, one notices how the lyrics look different in this reflection/refraction, and yet, in a way, they are united by their nature. The name of their muse is different and so are many of the situations, but they do not differ up to the point they are unrecognizable. Let us delve into the text, then.

“Ana” does not score points in Low’s Pentathlon in the category of rhyme. The odd rhymes do not follow the ABAB rhyming pattern of the original, which goes for both the verses and the choruses. It may not score any points in rhyme, but on the other hand it is slightly more homogeneous when it comes to the syllable count. The lines in “Sara” range from 10 to 13 syllables (the latter in only one instance, in line 9) and from 9 to 11 syllables on the even line numbers of the chorus (with only one case of this higher number, in line 8).

Out of the six choruses in the ST, the first four have the repeated call “Sara, Sara” in the odd numbered lines, therefore coming up to 4 syllables. In choruses 5 and 6, the official lyrics read “Sara, oh Sara”, but the difference in the recording is not significant, since the “oh” part is a melisma in the first four choruses and the second note in this melisma gets more and more closed, as if “Sara, ah Sara” gradually became “Sara oh Sara” as the song runs its course. A listener would probably not notice this on the first listens. “Ana” consistently delivers from 6 to 7 syllables in each line of the verses – however, there are two lines with 5 syllables, and they are both in the fourth verse, lines 46 and 50. In the choruses, the lyrics are consistent syllable-wise: “Ana, Ana” always has 4 syllables and most of the other lines in them have exactly 6 syllables. There are only three exceptions: 7 syllables in lines 41 (third chorus) and 66 (fifth chorus), as well as 5 syllables in line 83 in the sixth and last chorus. It is, overall, more syllabically consistent. Both songs, melody-wise, can also be labeled strophic – that is, both of them repeat melodies in every chorus and in every verse.

There is a great deal of displacement, which Franzon (2009) categorizes as when the meaning of certain words in the ST is carried across, but the words themselves, in translation, do not appear in the correspondent part in the TT if sentence structure and order were maintained. These words or expressions are situated elsewhere in the TT. Just as with the other songs, Bob Dylan’s words are not lost, but they are instead echoed in Vitor Ramil’s lyrics. They are sometimes displaced, found somewhere else. Ferraz (2020) also notices displacements in, for instance, the versions of “Mr. Tambourine Man” in Brazilian Portuguese. It seems to be a common practice for Bob Dylan song translators in Brazil.

In addition to the word-led analysis I make here, I find it relevant to briefly mention a musical aspect of this translation. Comparing the official sheet music chords for the original Bob Dylan recording and the Brazilian Portuguese version of the song¹²⁰, there is definitely a change in the musical part of these works. Here are Figures 3 and 4, which show what chords are played in the recorded performances:

¹²⁰ These versions are available as DYLAN, Bob. **The best of Bob Dylan chord songbook**. London: Wise Publications, 2012 and RAMIL, Vitor. **Campos neutrais songbook**. Pelotas: Satolep, 2017.

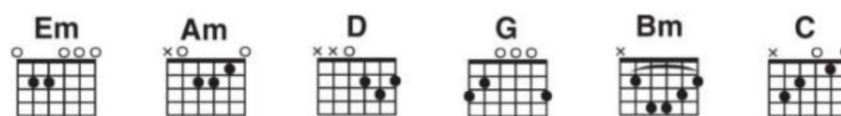


Figure 8: chords played in the Bob Dylan original recording of ‘Sara’

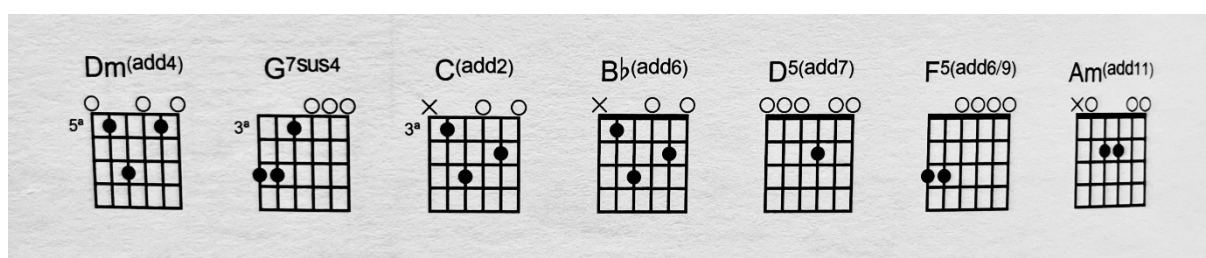


Figure 9: chords played in the Vitor Ramil recording of ‘Ana’

What we see in the Bob Dylan version are three basic chords (three major chords, three minor chords) played using the standard tuning for guitar, in which every string from the top is tuned to the following notes respectively: E, A, D, G, B and E once again. These six chords belong to both the key of G Major and that of E Minor. They are not only some of the most common chords in pop music, but they are also among the first ones a guitar student is likely to learn in his or her first lessons because they are simple to perform. Only Bm is a barre chord and is therefore often more difficult for a beginner, since it requires one to press multiple strings with one finger across a single guitar fret. With these six chords, however, one can play a considerable number of pop songs.

Vitor Ramil’s version, however, carries a musical change as well as a lyrical one, although that was not evident to my untrained ear until I read the official sheet music for “Ana”. The guitar is also tuned differently, in a DADGDC pattern instead of the previous standard EADGBE one – which means only half the strings are tuned to the same frequency. One can also attest that none of the original chords have carried over in their basic form.

In the introduction to the *Campos neutrais songbook*, musician Fabricio Gambogi (2017) calls the voicings of some of these chords Vitor Ramil’s “chordal archetypes”.¹²¹ In Vitor Ramil’s music, it is indeed common to find unusual voicings and unusual chords, often with open strings (that is, when a string is played without pressing down on any of the frets in a guitar). Even the chords have been refracted to fit Vitor Ramil’s sound. But how has that happened in the lyrics? The lyrical person in the ST tells the listener about lying down on a

¹²¹ “arquétipo cordal” in Portuguese.

dune and looking at the sky, and from this action many memories suddenly come back, which makes for an apt comparison to Proust's madeleines in his classic novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*, in which these sweets evoke a stream of memories that go on for seven volumes. As previously stated, this comparison is present in Margotin and Guesdon (2015) when they also point out that the song itself was conceived while Bob Dylan was on the dunes in East Hampton. Here both original and translation work in the same way: all verses are about memories of the lyrical persons' wives and children, situated in the past, while the choruses bring matters to the present with an exaltation of Sara and Ana respectively. Both also end with the same plea, this time one for the future: that their wives will never leave them.

Neither lyrical persons in the song seem to have an identity of their own that is separate from that of their muse and offspring, except in two situations whose meanings are unstable. In line 26 of the ST, Bob Dylan sings, "I'd taken the cure and had just gotten through". It is unclear whether that is somehow related to Sara. It might be connected, however, with the previous line about hearing methodist bells, a line which likely refers to the lyrical person's marriage with his muse. If that is so, then it would be also related to Sara, even if indirectly. In the TT the only possible sharing of an unconnected memory occurs when the lyrical person sings, from line 47 on, that he had been sleepless for two days in the Grande Hotel writing that "everything was next month"¹²². That is a reference to Vitor Ramil's own song "Foi no mês que vem", but it is not said that it is written for Ana; rather, it seems like an unconnected memory at first. The reference is lost if the listener is not familiar with Vitor Ramil's work.¹²³ In "Sara" there is also a mention to the act of songwriting: Bob Dylan sings that he wrote "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" specifically for Sara (line 28, ST). It is possible that, if the listener of "Ana" is also familiar with "Sara", they might hear a parallelism. If Bob Dylan mentions writing a song for Sara in the ST, and Vitor Ramil also mentions writing a song in this TT, then it is possible that this song could have been written for Vitor Ramil's wife, as well. The fact that both mentions to songwriting occur at the end of each lyrics' fourth stanzas can be added to aid this hypothesis. This is a meaning that can only be inferred when putting these elements together. It requires familiarity with and a memory of both songs. If we accept the hypothesis that Vitor Ramil wrote "Foi no mês que vem" for Ana, then all memories of both lyrical persons in both songs are related to their muses. That in itself would make sense, since these songs are dedicated to them.

¹²² "Tudo foi no mês que vem", in the original Portuguese.

¹²³ If the listener is familiar with "Foi no mês que vem", they may recall that this is a song about longing, intimacy and even sexual desire, so it would make sense he would write it in 1995 for her, when they had already been married since the previous decade.

This notion of time in the lyrics and the constant addressing of Sara were brought to my attention when, in a Translation Criticism class during my M.A.¹²⁴, the whole class was asked to translate this song to whatever language they most worked with. Two classmates translated the Bob Dylan lyrics into LIBRAS, Brazilian Sign Language, and their process is described in Aline Iolanda de Souza and Camila Neves Petrópulos (2024). As I watched their translation unfold in front of me, I realized that sign languages are spatial languages, which in practice means that every time Sara was named or addressed, it was done so in a specific space in front of the interpreters, at a certain angle, and it was as if they were singing (signing) directly to this person Sara right in front of them at that specific location.¹²⁵

What made the biggest impact on me was not the addressing of the imaginary Sara, but a gesture made every time the lyrics refer to the past. Souza and Petrópulos raised their hands up to their heads and signaled in a way that reminded me of a balloon getting inflated (as in a comic book strip), and from then on we would be in this realm of the past, of daydreaming, as if cognitive italics had just been activated, brackets in a mathematical equation or maybe parentheses, until this balloon was closed by a certain signal, and we would once again be back to the present. This linguistic hypnosis would then be over for a while. The fact that their translation was a visual one helped me engage with the lyrics in a different way, seeing what I had only read or listened to before. Seeing how the different timelines in the song lyrics (the present and the past) became a spatial manifestation made me engage with the song in a deeper way; it made me more conscious of these two distinct time-spaces. It marked a clear, spatial, visual distinction between the songwriters who sing their memories and their experiences while going through these past events.

In the first line, “I looked at the sky” becomes “Eu olhava a paisagem”. Both could induce a person into a dreamlike or meditative state that would make memories bloom. That is, in fact, exactly what happens next in both lyrics. These situations are not exactly the same, though, since they point towards a different perspective in relation to what the lyrical person sees – one gets a much more limited view when looking at the sky. The children, in line 2 of the ST “played on the beach”, whereas in the TT they were running (“corriam”), which foreshadows verse 2 in the ST, in which the children “run to the water”. This is the first case of displacement. The final word of verse one in “Ana” is “rio”, which is the F rhyme in the ST:

¹²⁴ This class took place during the first semester of 2024, with Professor Dirce Waltrick do Amarante at UFSC (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina) at PGET (Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos da Tradução – Post-Graduate Program in Translation Studies).

¹²⁵ I write about this in further detail in Yuri Cunha (2024).

“hill”, “fill”, and “still”, a word that features in verses 2 and 4. “Still”, for one, is an important word because the lyrics are constantly evoking the past in both versions. This sound (after word endings -il or -io) makes for the second most frequent rhyme in the TT, with five occurrences.

Verse two of the TT tells of Ana going by in a red *pala*, which is a common vest for Andeans and *gaúchos*, especially in traditional dances and celebrations. This is the first time in the lyrics in which Vitor Ramil sets the song to a location that is his own and not that of Bob Dylan’s. One can also notice that, in Bob Dylan’s lyrics, there is only one mention to winter (line 35), whereas elsewhere in the lyrics most places evoke warmth: the dunes, the beach, sleeping by a fire in the woods, Savanna-la-Mar in Jamaica, Lily Pond Lane “when the weather was warm” (line 36, referring to a place in East Hampton where the song was written) and also a tropical storm. Bob Dylan also mentions the Chelsea Hotel, which still operates in New York City and was a legendary temporary home for countless authors, musicians, artists and entertainers – Joni Mitchell (“Chelsea Morning”) and Leonard Cohen (“Chelsea Hotel #2), to name a few, have written songs about their experiences there. This does not carry a necessarily cold or warm connotation, however. Portugal is also mentioned without a specific time of the year, so I consider it a neutral reference in this sense.

Vitor Ramil’s sceneries are varied in this sense: “cold” (“frio”) is mentioned in line 8, and a “feverish winter” (“inverno febril”) in line 62. Other locations mentioned are San Telmo (a neighborhood in Buenos Aires, Argentina) in April, which would mean autumn time, Punta del Diablo in Uruguay (northeast of Buenos Aires) and Belém do Pará in Brazil, the latter, a city associated with warm weather. There are neutral references to rivers in lines 4, 16 and 73 and to a Grande Hotel (possibly echoing Bob Dylan’s mention of the Chelsea Hotel), but this is not a clear one because there are many establishments named as such, one of them in the Rio Grande do Sul town of Canela, which is a possibility.

There is another element that makes Vitor Ramil’s “Ana” feel colder than “Sara”. The word “vazio” rhymes with the previously used “rio” and “frio”, which may lead the listener to paint a certain picture of cold emptiness. Right in the beginning, there is a mention to the “south” (“sul”, line 2), and in line 73, Vitor Ramil also writes that the plains are deserted in the south. In line 25, Ana is his “dama austral” (“austral lady”). For someone who is familiar with Vitor Ramil’s work, the mentions of the south of South America (San Telmo, Punta del Diablo) are not a surprise. If we count that Vitor Ramil’s stanzas have eight lines instead of Bob Dylan’s four lines per stanza, then the mention to the first warm place is at the end of the third verse for both versions (Savanna-la-Mar and Belém do Pará, which have the same number of syllables

and rhyme with each other). I do not think that is a mere coincidence, but an echo of Bob Dylan's, in the manner that these lyrics prove to resemble each other.

It is also not a coincidence how close some images in the following verses are. In the first two verses of "Sara" and first four verses of "Ana", we get this similar setting of looking at the surroundings near a body of water (a beach in "Sara", a river in "Ana") and the children who are around them, playing or running (this is also the case later on in verse two of "Sara"). Both women in the first verses "go by"/"via passar" followed by a comparison: "always so close and still within reach"/ "more profound than the afternoon, more intense than the cold"¹²⁶. There is a difference, though, as Sara is close, within reach and coming up behind the lyrical person, whereas Ana is seen going by, more distant. At the end of the first chorus, Sara is "so easy to look at, so hard to define" (line 8). Vitor Ramil tells Ana that "I see you what I feel I can't quite explain" ("te vejo o que sinto não sei bem explicar"). Over here there is a parallelism of sorts, because at first she is being looked at, seen and then there is a difficulty to explain or define who these women are. Verse two of "Sara" starts with the image of the children "playin' with their pails in the sand" (line 9) and running to the water to fill their buckets. In "Ana", the kids are playing by a river, and their voices are the recalled as opposed to their image; they come to him from a distant place. The extra verses (4 and 5) serve to exalt Ana a bit more, writing that her moving image "gives meaning to emptiness" ("dá sentido ao vazio"), and that her steps on the sand leave marks on him too. The children's "pails in the sand" in "Sara" would also make marks on the sand, and that occurs in the same section as "Ana", that is, before the second chorus.

Chorus two for both lyrics exalt their muses once again, Bob Dylan opting to call Sara a "sweet virgin angel, sweet love of my life", "radiant jewel" and "mystical wife". Vitor Ramil calls her "suave Madona, minha dama austral" who is "tão perto da gente, tão distante do mal" ("gentle Madona, my austral dame" and "so close to us, so distant from evil"). This is the first of two times in which this glorification of the lyrical muse turns into something super-natural: not only are they great human beings worthy of affection, but they are also mystical, virgin/ "Madona", angels.

Verses three in each of them start naming locations: Bob Dylan refers to Portugal and Savanna-la-Mar, whereas Vitor Ramil refers to San Telmo, Punta del Diablo and Belém do Pará. As stated before, there seems to be a parallelism of locations with the latter ones for each songwriter. Vitor Ramil's other locations, however, arguably suggest a milder climate than that

¹²⁶ "mais profunda que a tarde, mais intensa que o frio" in the original Portuguese.

of Portugal. But what is happening in these locations? For Bob Dylan the first two seem to be memories in which he is a protagonist (sleeping in the woods by the fire and drinking white rum in Portugal), and the same is true for Vitor Ramil (walking in San Telmo in April and watching the rain hit the sea in Punta del Diablo). In the second part of the verses, first one gets a mention to what is happening with the children (“playing leapfrog and hearing about Snow White”/ “rindo no quarto ou chamando por ti”). The first part describes a fun activity, and the second part relates to oral communication – hearing something from someone and calling for someone, a passive and active approach to oral communication. These are not translations, but adaptations. And then the verses end with mentions to the definitely warm locations, as mentioned before (Savanna-la-Mar and Belém do Pará).

Chorus three has clear parallelisms, with “it’s all so clear, I could never forget” being translated almost entirely in “ver tudo tão claro é jamais esquecer”. The second part is also mostly translated: “Lovin’ you is the one thing I’ll never regret” because “Te amar cada instante, nunca me arrepender”. Verse four in Bob Dylan’s original starts with a mention to “Methodist bells”, probably referring to their wedding. “Ana” follows suit: “Escuto ainda sinos da catedral”, but here he adds some more elements he hears: sounds from the sidewalk, a train whistle. The second part of this stanza also sticks close to the ST: Bob Dylan spends many nights awake writing “Sad-Eyed Lady Lady of the Lowlands” for Sara¹²⁷, and Vitor Ramil spends two sleepless nights writing “Foi no mês que vem” at the Grande Hotel¹²⁸. As previously stated, it is not completely clear that this was done for Ana, or even that this refers to a song, if the listener is not familiar with Vitor Ramil’s work.

In chorus 4, there is a close correspondence once again: “wherever we travel we’re never apart” becomes “por mais que eu viaje sempre quero voltar”. Next, “beautiful lady so dear to my heart” becomes “teu nome é o nome de onde quero ficar”. This choice does not carry the meaning from the ST, but it does feature the same -ar sound at the end of the lines, present

¹²⁷ This is a very unusual if not unique occurrence in Bob Dylan’s career. Never before had he stated he had written a song for a specific someone, to the best of my knowledge. “Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands” is the closing track of the 1966 classic album *Blonde on Blonde*, occupying all of Side 4 in the original vinyl, lasting for 11 minutes and 23 seconds. As Margotin and Guesdon (2015) point out, this song was believed to have been written for folk singer and ex-girlfriend Joan Baez.

¹²⁸ This song was originally written for the album *À beça* (1995) and then revisited/rerecorded with new arrangements for albums *Tambora* (2000) and then for the double album *Foi no mês que vem* (2013), an anthology of many songs throughout his career, only rerecorded with new arrangements. Vitor Ramil’s approach to his own songs seems to be analogous to that of singer-songwriter Belchior, who also revisited his tracks often searching for something new in his old words and melodies. In 1999 Belchior released an album called *Auto-retrato*, which was also a double album of re-recorded versions of many of his songs with new arrangements. Their approaches were opposites, though, with Belchior wishing to update his sound using synthesizers and more electronic instrumentation and Vitor Ramil opting for an acoustic sound.

in both texts. Verse five for both ST and TT has a mysterious mood, especially in Bob Dylan's original which mentions a messenger in a tropical storm being a reason for his and Sara's meeting. She is there in the winter and moonlight shines on the snow, but also "on Lily Pound Lane when the weather was warm". Vitor Ramil transcreates that by maintaining the mysterious flavor while also mentioning the moonlight at the end (line 64). Both winter and warm weather are mentioned in "Sara", whereas in "Ana" there is mention of both winter and spring, which brings to mind cold and warmth also. The lyrical person talks of "discovering" Ana, not meeting or being "sent" his muse, as in "Sara". This choice of words may indicate why on this verse there is a greater emphasis on action instead of a passive approach: he woos her secrets, desires her gaze, waits in the fog, follows her under the moonlight.¹²⁹ In Bob Dylan's verses (the 5th verse, that is), the only thing he does (meeting her) is uncertain, for he does not know how that happens. He is passive in this section.

Chorus 5 is, for both, an admission of guilt and once again a glorification of their muse above the human, reaching towards a godly supernatural being. Sara is a sphinx in a calico dress, Ana is a Libra sphinx that personifies balance and reason. Both Bob Dylan and Vitor Ramil ask for forgiveness for their mistakes, but Bob Dylan's plea seems to be a bit more troublesome: "you must forgive me my unworthiness". This seems to be a man who feels guilty but who absolutely must not lose his companion, and that in itself seems to be a pressing issue if one considers his personal life as an inspiration for his lyrics. Sara *must* forgive him, and yet he knows he is unworthy, or that there is unworthiness in him. Vitor Ramil's words are of a lighter nature: "forgive my mistakes, my imperfections"¹³⁰. There does not seem to be a greater crisis with Ana that requires begging or intense requests.

And then it is time for the final verses and the final choruses, which are the moment in the song lyrics when the lyrical person returns to the present and sings about what he sees around him once again for the first time since verse one, at least in "Sara". Bob Dylan's lyrical person sees a deserted beach except for some kelp and remnants of an old ship on the shore. It is a place of desolation in a way, abandoned and destroyed, as the ship. "You always responded when I needed your help, you gimme a map and a key to your door" (lines 40-41), the lyrical person sings right after begging for forgiveness in his unworthiness. It is a dramatic final act to

¹²⁹ "namorei teus segredos, desejei teu olhar, te esperei na neblina [...], te segui ao luar" in the original Portuguese.

¹³⁰ "Perdoa meus erros, minha imperfeição" in the original Portuguese.

the song, which ends in the chorus with yet another exaltation and a plea – just as it happened in chorus 5. This time, Bob Dylan sings “don’t ever leave me, don’t ever go”.

Vitor Ramil follows the cue in describing deserted plains, a river which allays (“afasta” – a verb with a negative connotation in Portuguese) the endless green. When Vitor Ramil sings that plains are deserted, that may bring to mind a desert, sands and the dune from the beginning of Bob Dylan’s lyrics. Vitor Ramil uses both “map” and “key” in this last verse, mirroring the ST, and he also makes the plea at the very end. Nonetheless, in Vitor Ramil’s case, it feels like a constant renewal of vows, and not as begging of a man who sees the ruin of his marriage.

Having made this comparative overview of the lyrics, which has thus far fallen under the category of the study of sense, I now move towards a brief analysis of the other categories in Peter Low’s Pentathlon Approach. In the beginning of this subchapter, I tackled the category of rhyme, writing that “Ana” does not score points in this regard because whatever rhyming it presents is not that of the predictable ABAB pattern in the ST, perhaps due to Vitor Ramil’s translating choice that steers clear of a word-for-word approach. Nonetheless, “Ana” scores high on naturalness and singability, making it sound like a song that could have been written in Vitor Ramil’s native Brazilian Portuguese.

Speaking of stressed syllables, one can notice a curious pattern which is different in both songs. In “Sara”, the last words in almost every line are one-syllable (not counting the repeating word “Sara” in the choruses). The exceptions are the even lines in the third chorus (22 and 24), which end with two-syllable words: “forget” and regret”. There are also the word “apart” ending line 30 in the fourth chorus and “unworthiness” ending the fifth chorus in line 40. All these examples, however, prove that the stressed syllables are the last ones (oxytones). In “Ana” we find yet another pattern: there is a constant switching between paroxytones (in the odd lines, except on choruses) and oxytones (in the even lines, except on choruses). Even in the choruses, one can also notice that this pattern remains, and Vitor Ramil does not lose any points in rhythm, naturalness or singability for it. The rhythms of both songs are also very similar to each other.

As a conclusion, I find it worth reporting that Ferraz (2020) writes that some translations of “Mr. Tambourine Man” into Brazilian Portuguese are based upon the intralingual refraction made by the group The Byrds, which has been previously mentioned in subchapter 3.2. This abridgement resulted in a narrowing down of meanings present in the original lyrics, and Ferraz found that the meanings The Byrds’ version focused on (that of a psychedelic trip) were not only adopted but extrapolated by translator-songwriter Gileno in 1981, who translated the first Brazilian version for “Mr. Tambourine Man”. Ferraz writes that The Byrds’ version,

and therefore Gileno's, "discarded the verses with a higher density of imagery representing the uncomfortable situation and the nonconformity of the song's 'I'" (2020, p. 204)¹³¹. Ferraz argues that this makes the reader understand this song in a different way compared to the original lyrics. I find that "Ana" is not received in a very different way compared to "Sara". There is no abridgement or omission of the ideas and situations of the original song, as they operate in a similar manner. There is a great deal of exalting and reminiscing, all the while using similar imagery, such as sands, cities and bodies of water. And all of this is done for a similar purpose, that is, making a homage to the singers' wives.

This brings this chapter to a conclusion. When analyzing the source and target texts in this section, I verified that different approaches to translation were taken. To illustrate this, let us imagine a spectrum going from, on the one end, a translation scoring high on Low's criterion of sense and, on the other end, a translation that would arguably not even be called a translation, but a replacement text. If one tried to put the song translations explored in this chapter on such a spectrum, then the pair "You're a Big Girl Now" and "Só você manda em você" would be the first. The two songs in this pair bear the closest resemblance to each other, as there was no need for refracting names or situations. Such refractions, I found, were significant in Vitor Ramil's versions of both "Sara" and "Gotta Serve Somebody". This would be the order in which these two song translations would likely present themselves in this spectrum, since they translate only some of the ST. Instead, these versions are mostly imbued with examples and situations that may remind one of the ST, but they are not in it. Lastly and on the opposite end of this spectrum there is a transcreation which is almost a replacement text: the pair "Joey"/"Joquim", a different story with many parallels.

Having looked at these texts in detail, I now take a broader view once again and consider all that I have found and learned during this research and compare what I have found with the questions I originally had in mind when embarking on this research. That takes place in the next section: my final remarks.

¹³¹ The original Portuguese writing reads "descartava as estrofes com mais densidade de imagens representativas da situação desconfortável e de desconformidade do "eu" da canção."

FINAL REMARKS

Bob Dylan is considered one of the most influential and celebrated songwriters of all time, a man who has won most awards and accolades he could have won in life, such as a Pulitzer, an Academy Award, a Golden Globe, Grammys, a Nobel Prize, and two honorary doctorates, to name a few. His legend remains as cultural icon of Western English-speaking countries and beyond, as the so-called voice of a generation in the 1960s with disheveled hair and sunglasses. To translate lyrics of such a respected figure is quite a task, especially in singable form. Yet it was a task many have undertaken in Brazil, as Ruffato (2012) shows. One of these translators was, of course, Vitor Ramil, a songwriter who, though not as nearly lauded as Bob Dylan, is respected as a celebrated singer-songwriter of the highest order, an artist with a voice of his own. How then can the words of an often-deified songwriter in the English language be filtered or refracted through a songwriter who also makes sure his voice is heard in every song he records? Whose voice are we hearing? Why is it that multiple songwriters want to translate Bob Dylan into Brazilian Portuguese and so many other languages? Often it seems to be out of pure admiration for Bob Dylan's oeuvre, as the translators do not financially profit directly from their versions. There is an impulse to enter a dialogue with those lyrics, to make them understandable by those who do not speak English. These are words that must be heard. At least that seems to be so in most cases.

This has been a work of passion for me from the start. After one year working with a slightly different approach in mind, I decided that I wanted to work with Vitor Ramil's translations only and not triangulate them with those done by Caetano W. Galindo for two books that form the complete Bob Dylan lyrics collection. Once that had been decided, it became clear that this was, in its core, a case of exploring how one singer-songwriter whose work is personally important to me was translated by yet another singer-songwriter who shares this same attribute. What I wanted to find out was how the genius of one was channeled through the sensitivity of the other, knowing full well that significant changes had been made in the songs.

That was, in fact, one of my research questions: how did Vitor Ramil deal with the constraints generated by song translation? I found that, to different degrees, it is undeniable that the bulk of the words and expressions was not translated from ST into TT in these versions I label as transcreations. Not only is song translation a medium with considerable constraints, but also Vitor Ramil did not attempt to engage in what I called in the Introduction section a "slavish need for faithfulness". He has chosen the path of refracting, of transcreating. And yet it is arguable that all four songs here translate themes, images and intentions of the originals while

scoring high on Low's singability and naturalness. This takes me back to my other research question, which pondered how one can argue that Vitor Ramil's translations deserve this title and not that of replacement texts. The answer to this question is answered in each of the analyses separately. Each of these translations, I have argued, carry a great deal of the STs with them, even if phrases do not always find their correspondents in the TT. My hypothesis was that the TTs in my *corpus* were not replacement texts, and I think I have shown why they are not – line by line, stanza by stanza.

What happens here may be a case of polyphony. Dennys Silva-Reis and Daniel Padilha Pacheco da Costa (2019) write that the musical concepts of counterpoint and polyphony (that is, the combination of two or more melodic lines at the same time) can be used to define translation itself, “understood as a discourse in which at least two voices (the author's and the translator's) speak at the same time”¹³² (p. 1). After taking a close look at what happened in these lyrics, I argue that both voices can be heard.

At times Vitor Ramil has refracted Bob Dylan towards a place the latter would not go to on his own, and very often does Vitor Ramil skew Bob Dylan's words. “Joquim” takes “Joey” as its starting point but tells another story, instead. The character Joquim is part Joey, part Joaquim Fonseca and part Graciliano Ramos and the TT at times situates itself close to a replacement text. “Gotta Serve Somebody” is a song with a clear gospel message comprised of many images and situations the listener might find themselves in. Its Brazilian version “Um dia você vai servir a alguém” arguably keeps the message of the ST but opts for different examples to get there – often making them more relatable to a Brazilian audience. Vitor Ramil's version of “Sara” completely refracts the ST's reality to that of Vitor Ramil's – the memories are now in South America, the situations described are those that he lived with his wife Ana.

Yet all the songs are similar in nature and aim towards similar objectives: to glorify an underdog while singing of misdeeds committed against him, to warn listeners they must choose if they will serve good or evil, to speak of heartache, or to express love and memories. Those descriptors can be used to describe “Joey” and “Joquim”, “Gotta Serve Somebody” and “Um dia você vai server a alguém”, “You're a Big Girl Now” and “Só você manda em você”, “Sara” and “Ana”.

With this thesis I follow the footsteps of academics such as Ruffato (2012), Ferraz (2020), and Rodrigues (2022) and give my own contribution not only to the study of song translation in Brazil but also to the study of the reception of Bob Dylan's work in this country.

¹³² “[...] entendida como um discurso em que ao menos duas vozes (a do autor e a do tradutor) falam ao mesmo tempo”, in the original Portuguese text.

This thesis is not perfect, and it is entirely possible that the reader will identify facets of these translations that should have been more thoroughly analyzed or analyzed through different theoretical frameworks. There is also, admittedly, at least one blind spot here: the one pertaining to musical theory, that is, the musical choices made in the translations-transcreations. Such analyses are almost absent in this thesis. Still, whatever shortcomings found here can be taken as an invitation for further inquiry into these songs in the future, either by myself or by other scholars, because the ways these songs have been translated have a lot to teach the song translator and song translation analyst.

The practice of song translation will remain relevant for as long as there are songs being written and artists or translators who deem these songs worthy enough, for whatever reason, to be presented to another audience, in another language. The “why”, “when” and “how” are questions that naturally follow these practices and will continue to fuel research in this field. The songs I have delved into here still have a lot to say, and they must be sung and heard – be it echoing in an empty theater with the voice of Caruso, performed in a sold-out venue or listened through cheap earbuds via a low-quality mp3 file in the late hours of the night. These songs, both the originals and their translations, certainly have that power to move the listener as they have moved me to carry out this research. As long as the music keeps playing, someone will listen. And if someone listens attentively enough, they just might be inspired to write about it. It is a calling towards a deeper understanding of something, a calling for what lies beyond the obvious. It may be Bob Dylan or it may be anything else, but as researchers we are going to have to serve this calling.

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