

To Sing is More Than to Remember:  
Literary and Philosophical Allusion in the Songs of Caetano Veloso

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## ABSTRACT

JACOB NELSON WILKENFELD: To Sing is More Than to Remember:  
Literary and Philosophical Allusion in the Songs of Caetano Veloso  
(Under the direction of Diane R. Leonard)

This thesis examines the literary associations that, through allusion, Brazilian singer/songwriter Caetano Veloso brings to bear upon his work and suggests interpretations of the meanings sparked by these meetings of different texts. By reading seven allusive lyrics in Veloso's songbook, I intend to show that the songwriter's use of such allusions is a key aspect of his aesthetic and a mark of his broadening of the poetic dimensions of popular song. My aim is not to trace every allusion that Veloso makes, but rather to provide a framework for interpreting what his art of allusion generally entails. Furthermore, I underscore those aspects of Veloso's allusions that reflect the songwriter's dynamic reworking of literary material, rather than tracing the passive assimilation of "influences." That is, I analyze the way in which Veloso both invokes past writers and creates works that underscore their own creative difference from previous texts.

*To Rita de Cássia: How can I keep from singing?*

**Note on Translations and Song Lyrics:** Unless otherwise cited, all translations are by Jacob Wilkenfeld. All song lyrics appear in their entirety, with the following exceptions, which are quoted in part: “Livros,” “Coração vagabundo,” “Alegria, Alegria,” “Branquinha,” and “Trilhos urbanos,” by Caetano Veloso, “Beyond Compare,” by Marshall Barer, “I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You,” by George Weiss, Hugo Peretti, and Luigi Creatore, “Infidelidade,” by Atauípho Alves and Américo Seixas, and “Mané Fogueteiro,” by João de Barro.

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“I like talking. I like to listen to people talk. I like to read. I like to write.  
I like the words. I like poetry and prose and philosophy and essays.  
I like the words, and I like the Portuguese language.”  
-Caetano Veloso (“Songs of Brazil”)

**Part I: Introduction: “O pensamento na canção” [Thought in song]**

In July of 2004, the small colonial-era town of Parati, Brazil, was host to the second annual Festa Literária Internacional de Parati (FLIP), a large-scale festival and colloquium celebrating some of Brazil’s and the world’s most renowned contemporary authors. Among those attending were Margaret Atwood, Ian McEwan, Paul Auster, and Brazilian fiction writer Lygia Fagundes Telles. One of the most highly-anticipated events was a panel discussion with Angolan novelist José Eduardo Agualusa and Brazilian singer-songwriter Caetano Veloso. The musician’s presence at the literary festival was hardly an anomaly. Aside from being one of Brazil’s most popular musicians, Veloso is considered one of the country’s major poets. A newspaper article previewing FLIP’s main events was published shortly before the festival in Rio’s *Journal do Brasil*. The piece summed up Veloso’s place beside his more traditional literary brethren: “O autor...de alguns dos versos mais bonitos da língua portuguesa” [The author...of some of the most beautiful verses in the Portuguese language] (“As estrelas” 1).

There is no reason to contend that Veloso (or simply “Caetano” to Brazilians) is a wordsmith rather than a “mere” popular songwriter, for the mantle of pop music is one that he wears with pride. But Brazilians have long acknowledged that Veloso’s verbal production is of a level rarely found among the plentiful platitudes of contemporary popular song. The artist’s song-poetry is clever, experimental, and lyrical. *The New York Times* has dubbed him “one of the greatest songwriters of the century: a master melodist, a lyricist who merges surreal imagery with a sense of history” (Pareles E1). As Charles Perrone affirms, Veloso and his contemporary Chico Buarque “have often been

regarded not only as Brazil’s leading performing songwriters but also as the major poetic voices of their generation” (88). And Brazilian critic Celso F. Favaretto has written that “Caetano Veloso é o pensamento na canção” [Caetano Veloso is thought in song] (6). This notion that Veloso is a poet of ideas speaks to the songwriter’s diverse literary and intellectual background.

Such a background is naturally linked to the artist’s reading. As Bernardo Vorobow and Carlos Adriano write, “Caetano Veloso sempre projetou em suas canções um apurado sentido literário” [Caetano Veloso has always projected in his songs a notable literary dimension. Not only have the lyrics of his songs exalted poetry and imagination. The quotidian of the Bahian singer and songwriter is infused with the experience of reading and literature in a lively and profound way] (38).

Veloso’s 1997 song, “Livros” [Books], articulates the poet’s love of the written word:

<p>Os livros são objetos transcendentés          Mas podemos amá-los do amor táctil          Que votamos aos maços de cigarro          Domá-los, cultivá-los em aquários          Em estantes, gaiolas, em fogueiras          Ou lançá-los pra fora das janelas          (Talvez isso nos livre de lançarmo-nos)          Ou – o que é muito pior – por odiarmo-los          Podemos simplesmente escrever um:          Encher de vãs palavras muitas páginas          E de mais confusão as prateleiras          (Veloso, <i>Letra Só</i> 300)</p>	<p>[Books transcend time and place          Yet the love we give them is the love of hands          Such as we give to a pack of cigarettes          We tame them, nurture them behind glass          On shelves, in cages, lay them on fires          Or throw them from windows          (So as not to hurl ourselves out)          Or else, to show we hate them, this is worse          We write more of them          We fill pages with vain words          Bookcases with confusion]          (trans. Ryle 154)</p>
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It is only natural that the work of such a literary-minded songwriter would abound in allusions to other writers and works. For example, Veloso’s song “Menino do Rio” [Boy from Rio] alludes to Alexandre Kojève’s writings on Hegel. Likewise, “Genipapo absoluto” [Absolute Jenipap] was partially inspired by Proust and by Gilles Deleuze’s writing on Proust, as the poet has remarked in his book of memoirs, *Verdade tropical* [Tropical Truth] (69). Myriad songs allude to influential Brazilian authors like Carlos Drummond de Andrade, João Guimarães Rosa, and Haroldo and Augusto de Campos. The songwriter’s texts are unabashedly literary while retaining a popular, colloquial edge. As Favaretto notes:

Caetano absorve em suas canções procedimentos literários, cuja percepção nem sempre é fácil, dependendo do espectro cultural dos ouvintes. É preciso conviver longamente com as



canções para aos poucos ir descobrindo o que é citação e o que é absorção, transfiguração, transpiração; sempre invenção. (8)

[Caetano absorbs into his songs literary sources, whose perception is not always easy, depending on the cultural spectrum of the listeners. It is necessary to live for a long time with the songs to slowly discover what is citation and what is absorption, transfiguration, transpiration; always invention.]

Of course, there are popular songs from around the world that contain literary allusions but are considerably less “literary” than Veloso’s lyrics. For example, American songwriter Marshall Barer’s 1975 “Beyond Compare” is a charmingly lighthearted lyric, but it is after all light verse:

How do I love thee?  
Let me count the ways:  
One, two, three, four, five, six million—  
This could take me days and days!  
Shall I, my love, compare thee to  
Baba au rhum or summer’s day?  
Handel chorale, or Malibu?  
Rubens, Ravel, or Mel Tormé?  
.....  
Who could compose your Valentine?  
Not Billy Rose, nor Gertrude Stein!  
(qtd. in Gottlieb 554)

An even more salient example in this regard is Elvis Presley’s 1961 hit “I Can’t Help Falling In Love With You, which contains the lines, “Wise men say only fools rush in,/ but I can’t help falling in love with you” (*Blue Hawaii*)<sup>1</sup> The “wise man” here is of course Alexander Pope, whose now-hackneyed line (“For fools rush in where angels fear to tread”) has also found its way into the titles of an E.M. Forster novel, a recent Hollywood comedy, and a song by Johnny Mercer and Rube Bloom. (I would suggest that the film’s title probably alludes to Elvis and not to Pope.) In addition, as poetic a songwriter as Bob Dylan has incorporated Pope’s verse into his song, “Jokerman” (which, incidentally, Veloso has recorded on his album *Circuladô Vivo*):

So swiftly the sun sets in the sky  
You rise up and say goodbye to no one  
Fools rush in where angels fear to tread  
Both of their futures, so full of dread, you don't show one  
Shedding off one more layer of skin  
Keeping one step ahead of the persecutor within

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<sup>1</sup> “Can’t Help Falling in Love” was written by George Weiss, Hugo Peretti, and Luigi Creatore in 1961.

(Dylan, *Lyrics* 463)

Perhaps English speakers can better understand Veloso's art of allusion by comparing him to a songwriter like Dylan, the reigning poet laureate of American popular song (and whose work represents what Allen Ginsberg described as "the culmination of Poetry-music as dreamt of in the '50s & early '60s" [Qtd. in Ricks, *Dylan's Visions of Sin* 11]). Veloso, born in 1942, has held a position of comparable renown in the world of Brazilian music and letters for the past forty years (although he has acknowledged detesting such "classificações imbecéis" [idiotic classifications] as that which would dub him "the Brazilian Bob Dylan") [*Verdade tropical* 34].

Veloso's work is in fact exceedingly far removed from Dylan's aesthetic. Still, Dylan provides an apt analogue to the Brazilian songwriter's work, since his songs display an allusiveness which makes his poetry more interesting to talk about "literarily." As Christopher Ricks writes in his recent volume, *Dylan's Visions of Sin*:

On a more literary level, had you noticed that *Maybe Someday* quotes from T.S. Eliot? In *Journey of the Magi*, Eliot has:

And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly

Later in the same poem there's mention too of "pieces of silver". So in Dylan's lines:

Through hostile cities and unfriendly towns  
Thirty pieces of silver, no money down

I remember the excitement I felt when I myself noticed Dylan's debt (*many* pieces of silver) – and then the unwarrantable disappointment I felt when I later discovered from the *Telegraph* that I was not the first to discover it. (8)

Ricks is right to point out that allusions such as this "give some warrant for taking literarily" Dylan's art. However, his terminology is awkward. For Ricks, a compellingly astute critic at times, still speaks in terms of one artist's "indebtedness" to another. The problem with the notion of "indebtedness," like that of "influence," is that it seems always to undercut the second, alluding text.<sup>2</sup>

As Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein note:

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<sup>2</sup> For example, J.B. Broadbent writes that "literary allusion can be a lesson in the abuse of authority, as well as in the generous spending of an inheritance" (9).

Concern with influence arose in conjunction with the mid-eighteenth-century interest in originality and genius, and the concept still bears the marks of that origin....In such a climate, it was only natural for critics, bent on evaluation, to look for influences that lessen an author's claim to genius and for poets, bent on immortality, to guard against such influences by searching for the new in both style and subject matter. (5)

The aim of the present study is not influence-hunting, for the very notion of influence has been criticized on a number of grounds. The art historian Michael Baxandall has made a strong case for the utter misguidedness of this approach:

'Influence' is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who is the patient: it seems to reverse the active/passive relation which the historical actor experiences and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account. If one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than that Y did something to X. But in the consideration of good pictures and painters the second is always the more lively reality....Most of these relations just cannot be stated the other way round—in terms of X acting on Y rather than Y acting on X. To think in terms of influence blunts thought by impoverishing the means of differentiation. (58-59)

This is not to say that artists themselves, Veloso included, don't find recourse to the language of influence. In a 2002 interview on PBS, the songwriter broaches the subject:

JEFFREY BROWN: When you're writing a song, do all of these influences, what... the poetry that you're reading, the books that you're reading, the people you're talking to, it all...

CAETANO VELOSO: Yes.

JEFFREY BROWN: ...It's all grist for that?

CAETANO VELOSO: Yes, yes. Sometimes they all appear in quotes, you know. Sometimes they just echo. ("Songs of Brazil")

But "influence" as the artist construes it here is perhaps more reminiscent of Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, with its assertion that "tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte" [Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another] (*Semeiotiké* 146, trans. Gora et al 66). Kristeva's (and Roland Barthes's) versions of intertextuality emphasize the anonymous cultural

discourses and “intertexts” that meet and, in so many words, “echo” within any text.<sup>3</sup> The critic looking at intertextuality, then, is not as concerned with the relationship between one author and another as he is with the broad cultural milieu in which every word (and every text) is inscribed. For Kristeva, as for Barthes, all texts are intertextual to the core.

Theories of intertextuality have gleaned the crucial insight that poems are comprised of the widest-ranging cultural materials, and not only of “literary sources.” But the concept of intertextuality clashes with that of literary allusion in an important way. As William Irwin notes in “What is an Allusion,” “An author must intend this indirect reference, and it must be in principle possible that the intended audience could detect it” (293). For, as Irwin observes, there are also “intertextual connections readers make independent of authorial intent...Detecting allusions sometimes demands the precision of a science, while making fruitful accidental associations sometimes demands the creativity of an art” (294).

It is on this point of authorial intention that the study of allusion parts ways with mainstream intertextual theory. For, as Susan Friedman writes:

intertextuality posits the notion of a text which is a “mosaic” or “tissue” of quotations without quotation marks, without a preexistent author exercising agency in the construction of that text. Intertextuality is an “anonymous” and “impersonal” process of blending, clashing, and intersecting. Texts “blend and clash, not people. Supplanting the “he” or “she” of a preceding author, the “it” of a text engages in intertextual play. (149)

Although some critics have adapted the term “intertextuality” to encompass devices such as allusion, I refrain from employing the concept so as not to confuse the poststructuralist model with the approach of this study—an approach that adheres neither to concepts of “intertextuality” nor “influence,” but rather views allusion as a distinct literary phenomenon reflecting an author’s creative manipulation of a precursor text. In looking at allusion, I will at times employ authorial commentary to distinguish allusions from both unconscious authorial “echoes” and “accidental associations” on

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in his celebrated essay, “La mort de l’auteur” [The Death of the Author], Barthes describes the “texte” as “un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont aucune n’est originelle: le texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture” [a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture] (65, trans. Heath 146).

the part of the reader. Structuralist and poststructuralist theories of allusion have downplayed the role of the author in intending the reference. However, this essay invokes a conception of allusion that maintains that an author intends the allusion, an approach which makes it possible to distinguish allusions from the “intertextual connections readers make independent of authorial intent” (Irwin 294).

If the author intends an allusion, it is the reader who interprets the allusion’s meaning (and different readers will naturally produce different readings). Joseph Pucci broaches this aspect of allusion in his study, *The Full-Knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition*, going so far as to say that the reader “creates” the allusion by mentally associating two texts (41). As Pucci writes, “the reader is the crucial component in the best function of allusion” (28). While not wholly persuaded by Pucci’s privileging of readerly power, I would concur that the interpretation of any literary text depends on a creative act by the reader.<sup>4</sup> Thus, I can claim that Veloso intended to place a given allusion in a given place, but I cannot substantiate the allusion’s *meaning* within the text. I can interpret an allusion’s meaning, but my interpretation will be just that: readerly interpretation. The reader, then, can only do his or her best to put forth a convincing reading—and not a “correct” reading—of a given allusion.

But if an author intends an allusion and a reader interprets an allusion, what, precisely, *is* an allusion? The precondition of authorial intention has already been noted. One might also cite Christopher Ricks’s remark that plagiarism is “allusion’s contrary (the alluder hopes that the reader will recognize something, the plagiarist that the reader will not)” (*Allusion to the Poets* 1). A more thoroughgoing definition is offered by William Irwin, who writes that:

allusion is reference that is indirect in requiring more than the mere substitution of a referent. But just what is required beyond the substitution? I may recognize, or even be told more directly, that the author or speaker is referring to a character in an Eliot poem, but surely that

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Nabokov put it best when he wrote that, “What should be established, I think, is an artistic harmonious balance between the reader’s mind and the author’s mind...To be quite objective in these matters is of course impossible. Everything that is worthwhile is to some extent subjective...But what I mean is that the reader must know when and where to curb his imagination and this he does by trying to get clear the specific world the author places at his disposal” (*Lectures on Literature* 4).

does not complete the act of understanding the allusion. In his article, 'The Limits of Allusion,' Michael Leddy argues that 'allusion-words typically describe a reference that invokes one or more associations of appropriate cultural material and brings them to bear upon a present context.'" (288)

The present study will examine the literary associations that, through allusion, Veloso brings to bear upon his songs and suggest interpretations of the meanings sparked by these meetings of different texts. By reading seven allusive lyrics in Veloso's songbook, I intend to show that the songwriter's use of such allusions is a key aspect of his aesthetic and a mark of his broadening of the poetic dimensions of popular song.<sup>5</sup> My aim is not to trace every allusion that Veloso makes, but rather to provide a framework for interpreting what his art of allusion generally entails. Furthermore, I will underscore those aspects of Veloso's allusions that reflect the songwriter's dynamic reworking of literary material, rather than tracing the passive assimilation of "influences." In this respect, my approach is itself "indebted" to Silviano Santiago's injunction that the critic should "assinalar os elementos da obra que marcam a sua diferença" [highlight the elements of the (second) work that establish its difference] (19, trans. Burns et al. 31).

In "O Entre-Lugar do Discurso Latino-Americano" [Latin-American Discourse: The Space In-Between], Santiago develops this approach in order to rethink the notion of European writers' "influence" on Latin American literature. He characterizes Latin-American writers' use of European texts as a technique (often involving parody or pastiche) for subverting the notion of European cultural supremacy. As he writes, "o texto segundo se organiza a partir de uma meditação silenciosa e traiçoeira sobre o primeiro texto, e o leitor, transformado em autor, tenta surpreender o modelo original nas suas limitações, nas suas fraquezas, nas suas lacunas" [the second text organizes itself on the basis of its silent, treacherous meditation on the first, while the reader, now transformed into its author, labors to unearth the limitations, weaknesses, and gaps to be found in the original model] (22, trans. Burns et al 33). I would not describe Veloso's allusions to European writers as "treacherous meditations" that expose the weaknesses of European texts. Also, the songwriter invokes both

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term "allusive lyrics" rather than "allusions" because there are songs that contain multifold allusions.

European and Brazilian authors on the same footing with one another, and his allusions to both are often celebratory rather than parodic. But Veloso does subvert tradition—and assert the value of Brazilian cultural production—by doing what all skilled poets do: both invoking past writers and creating works that underscore their own creative “difference” from previous texts.

Yet of what consists this “difference” of the second work? For Santiago, whose principal concern is the postcolonial gaze back toward European centers of culture, “a obra segunda...em geral comporta uma crítica da obra anterior” [the second work generally embodies a critique of the previous work] (23, trans. Burns et al 34). However, I would argue that Veloso’s allusions do not necessarily represent such a critique (although at times, they do critique the foregoing text).

Sometimes, for example, Veloso’s allusions assume the form of homage to writers of the past. As a more generally applicable rule, one can say that Veloso’s difference from the works to which he alludes may be observed in the ways in which the songwriter departs from the alluded-to work. In other words, Veloso recontextualizes the allusion “marker” and thus endows it with new meaning—much in the way that a poet’s eye finds new, creative ways to elaborate already well-worn imagery. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T.S. Eliot hints at the kind of creative difference I am describing: “...if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, ‘tradition’ should positively be discouraged” (*The Sacred Wood* 40). As Eliot implies, the poet draws on “tradition,” but not so much as to curb his own originality. The artist, then, must know how to *rework* tradition.

Veloso has described his artistic process thus: “You take in anything and everything, coming from anywhere and everywhere, and then you do whatever you like with it, you digest it as you wish: you eat everything there is and then produce something new” (“The Tropicalista Rebellion” 123).

Here, Veloso is alluding to his involvement with the counter-cultural artistic movement known as *Tropicália*, which flourished in Brazil from roughly 1968-1970, the most censorious years of Brazil’s military dictatorship. The two major trends in popular Brazilian youth music at the time were *Musica Popular Brasileira* (MPB), a post-bossa nova style whose lyrics often dealt with social

concerns, and the *Jovem Guarda* [Young Guard], a popular urban rock movement viewed as “pathetic and misguided imitators under the insidious influence of American cultural hegemony” by many fans and artists of MPB (Dunn 58). By contrast, the *Tropicalistas*, led by Veloso, Gilberto Gil and several other musicians, poets, and visual artists, embraced American music (among other “imported” models) while still creating a politically relevant art. However, *Tropicalistas* sought to go beyond the social-realist lyric style of MPB, and to write lyrics that would be as challenging aesthetically as they were politically. While the prevailing aesthetic among politically “engaged” musicians endorsed “authentically” Brazilian art forms, the *Tropicalistas* emphasized experimentalism and openness to foreign models, musical, literary, and otherwise. The theoretical backbone of the movement was the notion of *Antropofagia* or “cultural cannibalism”—first elaborated in poet Oswald de Andrade’s 1928 “Manifesto Antropófago” (Cannibalist Manifesto). As Christopher Dunn writes:

the guiding metaphor for Oswald’s manifesto was the native Brazilian cannibal, the antithesis of the noble savage nostalgically exalted by nineteenth-century Romantic Indianists...His project took inspiration from the Tupinambá and other coastal Indians who were believed to ritually cannibalize vanquished enemies in order to absorb their physical and spiritual powers. This was a potent metaphor for elite Brazilian intellectuals who were indebted to European literary trends yet also sought cultural autonomy anchored in national reality. For Oswald, cannibalism served as the master trope of an anticolonialist project for critically absorbing cultural products and technologies from abroad...Metropolitan cultures were to be neither slavishly imitated nor xenophobically rejected but simply “devoured” for the purposes of elaborating an autonomous cultural project in Brazil. (28)

As Veloso writes in *Verdade Tropical* [Tropical Truth], his memoir about the heyday of *Tropicália*, “A idéia do canibalismo cultural servia-nos, aos tropicalistas, como uma luva” [The idea of cultural cannibalism fit us, the Tropicalistas, like a glove] (*Verdade tropical* 247). Much has been written about *Antropofagia* and its relation to *Tropicália*.<sup>6</sup> *Antropofagia* is a potent metaphor for Veloso’s work with allusion, both during his tenure as a *Tropicalista* and in his later work. The *Tropicalistas* invoked Oswald’s anthropophagic metaphor not only to absorb “cultural products and

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<sup>6</sup> For example, in English, see Perrone’s article, “Pau-Brasil, Antropofagia, Tropicalismo: The Modernist Legacy of Oswald de Andrade in Brazilian Poetry and Song of the 1960s-1980s.” In *One Hundred Years of Invention: Oswald de Andrade and the Modern Tradition in Latin American Literature*. Ed. K. David Jackson. Austin: Abaporu Press, 1992.



technologies from abroad,” but also as a way of “cannibalizing” *Brazilian* culture. For this reason, Veloso’s *Antropofagia* should not be interpreted solely as an “anticolonialist project,” but rather as a metaphor for artistic creation in general. I intend to show how the songwriter both “digests” other artists by alluding to them, and (more importantly) “produces something new.”

A final note before proceeding to a more textual analysis: in his monograph on Bob Dylan, Ricks rightly observes that “it ought to be possible...to attend to Dylan’s words without forgetting that they are one element only, one medium, of his art. Songs are different from poems, and not only in that a song combines three media: words, music, voice” (*Dylan’s Visions of Sin* 13). Favaretto has spoken to this dimension of Veloso’s work in affirming that “Caetano faz canção e esta é estruturalmente híbrida, como tão bem mostram os estudos de Luiz Tatit” [Caetano creates song and this is structurally hybrid, as the studies of Luiz Tatit show so well] (Favaretto 8). Luiz Tatit’s highly-acclaimed work with semiotics has devised a critical methodology that treats both melody and text. However, for the purposes of the present study, my analysis will be focused on the lyrics. Such an approach necessarily misrepresents the nature of the songs: as Dylan has said, “The song disappears into the air, the paper stays” (Qtd. in Ricks, *Dylan’s Visions of Sin* 12). However, my contention is that Veloso’s songs can be read as lyric poetry (a contention that Favaretto affirms as “um fato inquestionável” [an unquestionable fact] (7).

## **Part II: Allusive Lyrics: “Lançar Mundos no Mundo” [To Launch Worlds into the World]**

Since each instance of Veloso’s use of allusion occurs within the “world” of an individual lyric, the structure of this study is organized around individual songs (even though, by alluding, those lyrics—those worlds—reach out to other worlds in the literary cosmos). In his song “Livros” [Books], Veloso writes that poetry “É o que pode lançar mundos no mundo” [Is that which can release worlds into the world] (Veloso, *Letra Só* 300). This essay is divided into two chapters, the first on allusions to European writers and the second on allusions to Brazilian writers. The rationale for this is not that there is a major substantive difference between Veloso’s allusions to old- and new-world authors. Rather, the division is made for the sake of organization. Within the two chapters, the songs are arranged in chronological order to loosely reflect the songwriter’s career since his involvement in the *Tropicália* movement in the late 1960s.

I will avoid treating the songwriter’s first (pre-*Tropicália*) album in detail, but this early record does merit a few remarks regarding allusion. *Domingo* [Sunday], recorded in 1967 in the intimate, romantic style of bossa nova, contains echoes of the work of Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade. In his slim volume *Sobre as Letras* [About the Lyrics], the songwriter has pointed out that on *Domingo*, his compositions “Coração vagabundo” [Vagabond Heart] and “Onde eu nasci passa um rio” [Where I was born a river flows] “have much in them of poetry of Drummond, of those poems which we knew by heart. But (“Coração Vagabundo”) is very naïve, much below Drummond, not like other, more beautiful songs” (31). Yet though these echoes reveal certain stylistic and thematic parallels to the poetry of Drummond, one cannot confirm that Veloso *alludes* to the elder poet.

Veloso’s early song “Coração Vagabundo,” [Vagabond Heart], however, may allude to Drummond’s famous “Poema de Sete Faces” [Poem of Seven Sides]. In “Coração Vagabundo,”

Veloso writes: “Meu coração vagabundo quer guardar o mundo em mim” [My vagabond heart wants to hold the world in me] (*Letra Só* 93); while Drummond has: “Mundo mundo vasto mundo,/ mais vasto é meu coração” [World world vast world,/ vaster is my heart] (*Poesia completa e prosa* 53). The similarity lies in the speaker’s desire for his heart to encompass the world; both poems deal with the limits of subjective will to shape that world. The problem for the critic is that this *may* be an allusion, and may be simply an “echo,” or an accidental association on my part.

## Part II: A

### Allusions to European Writers

#### Alegria, alegria [Joyfulness, Joyfulness]

The first unmistakable instance of *allusion* that I encountered appears in Veloso's song "Alegria, alegria," which reflects not the relaxed swing of the *Domingo*, but rather the more modernistic aesthetic of the emerging *Tropicália* movement. This movement represented an avant-garde strain in Brazilian popular music, one which sought to merge social critique with a cosmopolitan, "anthropophagic" openness to other cultures.

"Alegria, alegria" alludes to Jean-Paul Sartre's autobiography, *Les Mots* [The Words]. The lyric's final stanza and refrain read:

Sem lenço sem documento  
Nada no bolso ou nas mãos  
Eu quero seguir vivendo amor  
Eu vou

[Without a handkerchief, without documents  
Nothing in my pockets or my hands  
I want to go on living love  
I go

Por que não? Por que não?  
(*Letra só 57*)

Why not? Why Not?]

As the poet writes in *Verdade Tropical* [Tropical Truth], "Nada no bolso ou nas mãos"—foi tirado diretamente da última página de *As palavras* de Sartre: numa brincadeira comigo mesmo, eu tinha enfiado uma linha do que para mim era o mais profundo dos livros numa canção de circunstância ["Nothing in my pocket or hands"—was taken directly from the last page of Sartre's *The Words*: it was a private joke, weaving into this casual song a line from what was for me the most profound of books] (167, trans. da Sena 101). If the allusion here is "a private joke," then surely there is some significance to it. How does Veloso's song transform Sartre's phrase?

The dénouement of Sartre's autobiography recounts the philosopher's long process of awakening from his self-diagnosed "madness," a malady whose chief symptom was turning literature into a religion in which "salvation" meant passing from the anguish of his own nothingness to the

timeless being of literary immortality. Sartre's "folie" was to believe that writing could justify his own existence. As he informs us earlier in the autobiography:

A la considérer du haut de ma tombe, ma naissance m'apparut comme un mal nécessaire, comme une incarnation tout à fait provisoire que préparait ma transfiguration: pour renaître il fallait écrire...aux environs de 1955, un larve éclaterait, vingt-cinq paillons in-folio s'en échapperaient, battant de toutes leurs pages pour s'aller poser sur un rayon de la Bibliothèque Nationale. Ces papillons ne seraient autres que moi. (161)

[Viewed from the height of my tomb, my birth appeared to me as a necessary evil, as a quite provisional embodiment that prepared for my transfigurations: in order to be reborn, I had to write...Around 1955, a larva would burst open, twenty-five folio butterflies would emerge from it, flapping all their pages, and would go and alight on a shelf of the National Library. Those butterflies would be none other than I.] (trans. Frechtman 194)

As he writes toward the book's conclusion, "Longtemps j'ai pris ma plume pour une épée: à présent je connais notre impuissance. La culture ne sauve rien ni personne, elle ne justifie pas" [For a long time, I took my pen for a sword; I now know we're powerless...Culture doesn't save anything or anyone, it doesn't justify] (211, trans. Frechtman 254). Still, Sartre muses in the book's final paragraph:

Ce que j'aime en ma folie, c'est qu'elle m'a protégé, du premier jour, contre les séductions de "l'élite": jamais je ne me suis cru l'heureux propriétaire d'un "talent": ma seule affaire était de me sauver—rien dans les mains, rien dans les poches—par le travail et la foi. Du coup ma pure option ne m'élevait au-dessus de personne: sans équipement, sans outillage je me suis mis tout entier à l'oeuvre pour me sauver tout entier. Si je range l'impossible Salut au magasin des accessoires, que reste-t-il? Tout un homme, fait de tous les hommes et que les vaut tous et que vaut n'importe qui. (212-213)

[What I like about my madness is that it has protected me from the very beginning against the charms of the "élite": never have I thought that I was the happy possessor of a "talent"; my sole concern has been to save myself—nothing in my hands, nothing up my sleeve (rien dans les mains, rien dans les poches)—by work and faith. As a result, my pure choice did not raise me above anyone. Without equipment, without tools, I set all of me to work in order to save all of me. If I relegate impossible Salvation to the propproom, what remains? A whole man, composed of all men and as good as all of them and no better than any.] (trans. Frechtman 255)

The phrase, "rien dans les mains, rien dans les poches" [nothing in my hands, nothing in my pockets] appears in the midst of a passage describing the ceaseless dedication with which Sartre approached his literary project. As Philippe Lejeune writes, Sartre presents himself, like Rousseau, as "l'homme de la nature, que n'a pas été mutilé par la civilisation, en lutte contre l'élitisme castrateur"

[a man of nature, who has not been mutilated by civilization, battling castrating elitism] (41). The conclusion of *Les mots*, then, paints its author rather heroically as a figure unhampered by the pressures of bourgeois culture. Such pressures, he tells us, have never steered him away from his sense of a writerly mission. That his commitment to literary salvation was ultimately the product of a self-delusion—that is, of “bad faith”—is irrelevant in this final passage, even though Sartre has informed us that his bid for literary immortality was a kind of “folie.” The philosopher closes his autobiography with an optimistic glance toward the writer’s engagement with his task, toward the zealous attachment to a literary ideal.

Veloso’s text both invokes Sartre’s sense of artistic commitment and parodies it. The lyric is a stream-of-consciousness narration that follows the quotidian meanderings of a young Brazilian everyman walking the streets of a modern-day city:

<p>Caminhando contra o vento          Sem lenço sem documento          No sol de quase dezembro          Eu vou          (<i>Letra só 56</i>)</p>	<p>[Walking against the wind          Without a handkerchief, without documents          In the almost-December sun          I go!]</p>
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The poem’s first image suggests that the speaker is a nonconformist within a culture of uniformity. As such, it recalls the Sartrean conception of individual freedom.<sup>7</sup> But the second line immediately conveys a lackadaisical attitude towards existence: to carry one’s identification documents in Brazil under the dictatorship was a matter of grave importance. The gist of the lyric is the idea of a teenager without a care in the world; that is, of an individual who both registers his freedom and does nothing substantial with it. Furthermore, the speaker’s lack of documents points to his withdrawal from the life of engaged citizenry—and this during the height of Brazil’s military dictatorship. The speaker continues walking until a striking collage of images draws his attention:

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<sup>7</sup> Another, later Veloso lyric, 1989’s “Branquinha,” speaks of swimming “contra a maré” [against the tide]—an allusion to 12<sup>th</sup>-century Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel (*Letra só 155*).

O sol se reparte em crimes  
Espaçonaves, guerrilhas  
Em Cardinales bonitas  
Eu vou

[The sun scatters into crimes  
Spaceships, guerillas  
Into beautiful Cardinales  
I go

Em caras de presidentes  
Em grandes beijos de amor  
Em dentes pernas bandeiras  
Bomba e Brigitte Bardot  
(*Letra só 56*)

Into faces of presidents  
Into huge kisses of love  
Into teeth, legs, and flags  
The bomb and Brigitte Bardot]

Apparently, the speaker has stopped to look at a newsstand. As Christopher Dunn has noted, the lines are replete with cultural references:

Stopping at the newsstand to take notice of *O Sol* (The Sun), a countercultural newspaper, he glances at images of Italian movie star Claudia Cardinale, local crime scenes, space exploration, and Ché Guevara's guerrilla campaign in Bolivia. The media images of the newsstand become increasingly fragmented...Images of national authority, patriotism, and political violence compete with film stars for his attention. (66)

The twinned images of "the bomb and Brigitte Bardot" ironically convey something of the violence and glossy commercialism that seem to hover in contemporary life. But the speaker declines to ruminate on such matters seriously. Rather, he drifts through the urban scene with what seems a sense of supreme indifference:

Eu tomo uma coca-cola  
Ela pensa em casamento  
É uma canção me consola  
Eu vou  
(*Letra só 57*)

[I drink a Coca-Cola,  
She thinks of marriage  
And a song consoles me,  
I go]

The crux of the lyric rests on the speaker's willful ignorance of the pressing matters of the day. If Sartre's phrase, "rien dans les mains, rien dans les poches" suggests the positive dimension of individual detachment from the corrupting aspects of culture, Veloso's lyric implies the dangers of individualism. As Christopher Dunn notes, in Veloso's lyric, "Individual desires and preoccupations obscure collective struggle, while music loses redemptive meaning, serving only to 'console' him" (66). "Alegria, alegria" was provocative at the time of its release, for its irony was misunderstood by critics. The lyric is not a paean to political apathy; it is rather a subtly ironic examination of such apathy.

On another level, however, we may take the speaker's indifference more seriously. For the allusive phrase, "nada no bolso ou nas mãos" [nothing in my pocket or my hands] does not only describe the speaker's apathetic detachment from the pressures of culture; it also suggests Veloso's declaration of independence from the prevailing aesthetic of protest music. That is, the song challenges those who, at the time, prescribed an aesthetic of "engaged" song in the face of North-American cultural influence and increasing censorship on the part of Brazil's military leaders. Thus, "Alegria, alegria" is something of a protest against protest music—or rather against blindly adhering to any kind of constraint in artistic production.

The songwriter's allusion to Sartre, then, is multivalent. On the surface level, Veloso's phrase, "nada na bolsa ou nas mãos" (nothing in my pocket or my hands) describes the speaker's carefree manner: he is strolling around the city without his documents, without any money, without any particular direction in life. But read in the light of *Les Mots* and of Sartre's philosophy, Veloso's speaker's lack of any direction is an ironic wink to Sartre's own resolute literary project. The speaker of "Alegria, alegria" is aimless, carefree, detached. Sartre presents his individual consciousness as "without equipment, without tools." Similarly, the speaker in Veloso's song appears:

Sem livros e sem fuzil  
 Sem fome sem telefone  
 No coração do Brasil  
 (*Letra só 57*)

[Without books and without soldiers' rifles  
 Without hunger, without a telephone  
 In the heart of Brazil]

But whereas Sartre's depiction of self is imbued with a sense of mission, Veloso's reflects a sense of willful unconcern. In *Les mots*, Sartre's mission is directed toward "saving" himself; in much of the other writings, it reflects the philosopher's view of literature as a form of social action. Veloso, by contrast, ironically paints the portrait of a indifferent character, whose greatest concern seems to be singing on TV ("Até pensei em cantar na televisão" [I even thought of singing on television]).



The speaker's apathy challenges critics expecting social-realist, "engaged" art. On a third level, Veloso's allusion does not mock Sartrean freedom, but rather reveres it.<sup>8</sup> The ironic detachment of Veloso's speaker is actually a form of resistance; it conveys a refusal to be bogged down by the pressures of culture. In Sartre's case, such pressure reflects notions of the "élite;" in Veloso's, it is related to the pressure to conform to a "protest" aesthetic.

Like the allusion to Sartre, the entire lyric of "Alegria, alegria" reflects both irony and underlying seriousness. Veloso suggests this when he writes that "numa brincadeira comigo mesmo, eu tinha enfiado uma linha do que para mim era o mais profundo dos livros numa canção de circunstância. A ambição que tinha me levado a compor tal canção, no entanto, era grandiosa e profunda" [it was a private joke, weaving into this casual song a line from what was for me the most profound of books. The ambition that had led me to compose such a song, however, was substantial and profound] (*Verdade tropical* 167).

### **Menino do Rio [Boy From Rio]**

"Menino do Rio," from the 1979 album *Cinema Transcendental* [Transcendental Cinema], is an ode to the songwriter's friend Peti, who in the 1970s was a well-known surfer on Rio de Janeiro's famous beaches. It was written by request for a female singer who wanted to serenade the surfer, but it has also become popular in Veloso's own rendition. The lyric reflects a homoerotic current in Veloso's work. As Dunn writes, both Veloso and his *Tropicalista* colleague Gilberto Gil:

composed and recorded songs that expressed gender ambiguity and homosociability that intervened directly in debates concerning sexuality in Brazil...and his lyrics occasionally touched upon homoerotic desire... These homoerotic overtures were ultimately ambiguous since both artists were married, insisted on their heterosexuality, and also produced numerous love songs for women. Yet the sexual ambiguity of their songs and performances (especially Veloso's) contributed in a diffuse way to a critique of traditional masculinity in Brazil. (181)

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<sup>8</sup> In this vein, it is informative that, as Dunn writes, "Veloso's own self-fashioning as an artist was informed by Sartre's notion of 'being-in-the-world'" (99). Dunn notes that "In a 1968 interview, Veloso cited Sartre's *Search for a Method* as one of the few theoretical texts that he had read as a student" (224, note 60).

If “Menino do Rio” challenged contemporary audiences to rethink sexual politics, the song is also a rather traditional love lyric. But the tune contains an enigmatic verse that is hardly the kind of language customarily heard in the realm of pop:

Menino do Rio	[Boy from Rio
Calor que provoca arrepio	Heat that provokes a shiver
Dragão tatuado no braço	Dragon tattooed on your arm
Calção corpo aberto no espaço	Swimming trunks, body open to space
Coração	Heart
De eterno flerte	Of eternal flirtation
Adoro ver-te	I love to see you
Menino vadio	Vagrant boy
Tensão flutuante do Rio	Flowing tension of a river (Rio)
Eu canto para Deus proteger-te	I sing for God to protect you
O Havaí seja aqui	Hawaii, be right here
Tudo o que sonhares	Everything you dream of
Todos os lugares	All of the places
As ondas dos mares	The waves of the ocean
Pois quando eu te vejo eu desejo o teu desejo	When I see you I desire your desire
Menino do Rio	Boy from Rio
Calor que provoca arrepio	Heat that provokes a shiver
Toma essa canção como um beijo	Take this song like a kiss]
( <i>Letra só 110</i> )	

As Veloso has noted in an interview:

“Desejo teu desejo” é Hegel, que eu estava lendo com Cícero, a partir de umas aulas de Kojève; eram interpretações bonitas sobre a dialética do senhor e do escravo, “a realidade é uma sucessão de desejos desejados e você deseja o desejo...”. Essa forma de desejar o desejo ficou na minha cabeça e terminou saindo na letra do “Menino do rio”, que é uma coisa assim amena, que não tem nada a ver. (“Outras palavras” 52)

[“Desire your desire” is Hegel, whom I was reading with (poet Antônio) Cícero, by way of some of Kojève’s classes; they were beautiful interpretations of the master/slave dialectic: ‘Reality is a succession of desired desires and you desire the desire...’ This form of desiring desire stayed in my head and ended up appearing in the lyric of ‘Menino do Rio,’ which is something mellow, that has nothing to do with it.]

Perhaps we can see whether Veloso’s lyric really “não tem nada a ver” [has nothing to do] with Hegel and Kojève.

In Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [Phenomenology of Spirit], in fact just before his celebrated elucidation of the master/slave dialectic, the philosopher broaches the relation between desire and self-consciousness. Such consciousness is required if we are to genuinely understand our

own nature, for, as Stephen Houlgate writes, “I cannot fully understand who I am, if I remain alone by myself with only the objects of nature to attend to. I gain a proper consciousness of myself only when my self-understanding is recognized and confirmed by others” (10). Thus, human beings *desire* the recognition of other consciousnesses, or rather *desire the desire* of other consciousnesses.

Alexandre Kojève, one of the most influential interpreters of Hegel in the twentieth century, dedicates important passages of his *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* [Introduction to the Reading of Hegel]

(1947, Eng. Trans. 1969) to this theme of desire.<sup>9</sup> As he writes:

Le Désir humain doit porter sur un autre Désir... Ainsi, dans le rapport entre l’homme et la femme, par exemple, le Désir n’est humain que si l’un désire non pas le corps, mais le Désir de l’autre, s’il veu “posséder” ou “assimiler” le Désir pris en tant que Désir, c’est-à-dire s’il veu être “désire” ou “aimé” ou bien encore: “reconnu” dans sa valeur humaine, dans sa réalité d’individu humain... et la réalité humaine en tant que différente de la réalité animale ne se crée que par l’action que satisfait de tels Désirs: l’histoire humaine est l’histoire des Désirs désirés. (13)

[Human Desire must be directed toward another Desire... Thus, in the relationship between man and woman, for example, Desire is human only if the one desires, not the body, but the Desire of the other; if he wants ‘to possess’ or ‘to assimilate’ the Desire taken as Desire—that is to say, if he wants to be ‘desired’ or ‘loved,’ or, rather, ‘recognized’ in his human value, in his reality as a human individual... and human reality, as distinguished from animal reality, is created only by action that satisfies such Desires: human history is the history of desired Desires.] (trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. 5-6)

In other words, what one individual desires in another is not really the *other*, but, as Hegel says, “die Rückkehr aus dem *Anderssein*” [the return from *otherness*] (*Phänomenologie* 138, trans. Miller in *The Hegel Reader* 88). I think that there is a way in which we can see this philosophy in Veloso’s song.

For the aim of the lyric is to draw the attention of an interlocutor, the “boy from Rio” to whom the text is dedicated. At first glance, the lyric looks like a conventional love poem, in which the principal theme is the speaker’s desire for the object of his or her affections. The first few lines of the text would confirm such a reading, for they concentrate on describing the idealized young man whose

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<sup>9</sup> As Stephen Houlgate notes, “Kojève lectured on Hegel’s *Phenomenology* at the École des Hautes Études in Paris from 1933 to 1939 and counted in his audience many of the leading French intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century, including Merleau-Ponty, Bataille, Klossowski, Breton, and Queneau” ().

heart is described as one “De eterno flerte” [of eternal flirtation]. The imagery is deliberately sensual, and the thrust of the lyric might be encapsulated in the line, “Adoro ver-te” [I love to see you], which underscores the focus on the speaker’s desire.

But the second portion of the song invites a different interpretation. These lines deal not with the speaker’s desires, but with those that the speaker imagines the “boy from Rio” as having:

O Havaí seja aqui	[Hawaii, be right here
Tudo o que sonhares	Everything you dream of
Todos os lugares	All of the places
As ondas dos mares	The waves of the ocean]
(Letra só 110)	

These verses culminate with the line, “Pois quando eu te vejo eu desejo seu desejo” [When I see you I desire your desire]. There are at least three possible readings of this line. The first one is that the speaker desires the boy’s desires to be fulfilled. Such is implicit in the lines, “Tudo que sonhares/ Todos os lugares” [Everything that you dream about/ All of the places].

But the second reading of the line has to do with the speaker’s desire for the mutual recognition that, Hegel says, is necessary for us to experience true self-consciousness. In other words, what the speaker desires is that the interlocutor will acknowledge him in the same manner that the speaker has acknowledged the interlocutor. As Hegel writes, “Das Selbstbewußtsein erreicht seine Befriedigung nur in einem andern Selbstbewußtsein” [self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness] (trans. Miller 175-176). Thus, the subject of “Menino do Rio” is not so much the “boy from Rio” as it is the speaker himself. The last lines of the poem bring us back from the otherness of the interlocutor to the speaker’s desire to be recognized and desired.

Hegel describes such desire as a process of negation. As Stephen Houlgate writes, “If (consciousness) is to attain an undiluted consciousness of *itself*, it must thus negate and destroy the other things it encounters. As this activity of negating what is other than itself, self-consciousness is desire” (12-13). The notion of negating or even destroying the other as a cornerstone of desire gives new, amplified meaning to the connotation of desire in Veloso’s lyric. For no longer can the song be simply identified as a traditional love lyric. Rather, by invoking the Hegelian (and Kojèveian)

conception of desire, the song becomes not just another popular love song, but a meditation on the nature of human desire. Such desire really has more to do with the speaker than it does with the “boy from Rio.” The song’s closing lines would corroborate such a reading:

Menino do Rio  
Calor que provoca arrepio  
Toma esta canção como um beijo  
(*Letra só* 110)

[Boy from Rio  
Heat that provokes a shiver  
Accept this song like a kiss]

The kiss that the speaker requests would bring us back from the interlocutor to the speaker, for it would constitute the interlocutor’s recognition of the speaker (and thus the fulfillment of the speaker’s desire).

However, a third possibility is that, rather than seeking recognition from the “boy from Rio,” the speaker seeks to *embody* certain traits that he admires in the interlocutor (for example, the surfer’s “heart of eternal flirtation” or his “vagrancy”—traits that suggest an air of youthful nonchalance). In this reading, the speaker’s desire for the interlocutor is more along the lines of Kojève’s reading of Hegel. For Kojève, the self that desires the other is in fact only “un *vide* avide de contenu, un *vide* que veu se remplir par ce que est plein” [an *emptiness* greedy for content; an emptiness that wants to be filled by what is full] (167, trans. Nichols, Jr. 38) and that “Désir est *absence* d’Être” [desire is *absence* of being] (168, trans. Nichols, Jr. 40). Thus, the subject desires to *incorporate* the other into his own self-identity. In this sense, we could read the line, “I desire your desire” as referring to the speaker’s desire to possess the boy’s youthful sense of desire—desire for life. In other words, perhaps the boy represents that which the speaker desires to *be* rather than to *have*.

I would suggest that the song incorporates all three of these meanings of desire. As Robert Frost said, a poet is entitled to all the meanings that can be found in his poem. Ultimately, the nature of the speaker’s desire for desire is left ambiguous. However we interpret it, the song reflects not Hegel’s or Kojève’s “influence,” but a bringing of Hegel’s rather dense abstractions into the concrete world of human relations. On the one hand, what could be further from Hegel than a love song to a surfer? On the other hand, Veloso creatively reworks the Hegelian concept of

desire and introduces it into the “pop” context of a contemporary, urban, and distinctly Brazilian scene.

### **Jenipapo Absoluto [Absolute Genipap]**

“Jenipapo absoluto” (Absolute genipap), from the 1989 album *Estrangeiro*, is a poem that deals with memory. But unlike “Onde eu nasci passa um rio,” which evokes the songwriter’s home region with dreamlike imagery, the strength of “Jenipapo Absoluto” lies in its precision of recorded detail, registered and regrouped by the artistic eye. Although it is one of Veloso’s most poetic lyrics, it has received little attention from critics:

Como será pois se ardiam fogueiras	[How can it be that bonfires once burned
Com olhos de areia quem viu	If now sandy eyes cannot behold
Praias, paixões fevereiras	Beaches and passions of Februaries
Não dizem o que junhos de fumaça e frio	Not to mention Junes of smoke and cold]
<i>(Letra só 36)</i>	

The speaker broaches the difficulties inherent in remembrance. I think that such difficulties are manifest in the “olhos de areia” [sandy eyes] that the poet describes. The image is one of blindness—one that also connects with the beach imagery of the next line. How can my past moments have existed if all that exists now—if all that has ever existed—is the present moment? What is the place of memory? These are the questions which Veloso’s poem seeks to answer.

Immediately, the listener is thrust into a distinctively Brazilian reality—hence the “Praias, paixões fevereiras” [beaches and passions of Februaries], which must sound jarring to any listener from the northern hemisphere. We are recalling February as the height of summer. Likewise, the Junes referred to are the winter months.

Onde e quando é genipapo absoluto	[Where and when is jenipap absolute
Meu pai, seu tanino, seu mel	My father, his tannin, his honey
Prensa, esperança, sofrer prazeria	Pressing, waiting, suffering pleasures,
Promessa, poesia, Mabel	Mabel, promises, poetry]
<i>(Letra só 36)</i>	

Jenipap is a kind of fruit that grows in Northeastern Brazil, the songwriter's home region. It is customarily pressed into a very sweet liquor which is served at the annual June festivals in the countryside. In this song, the jenipap becomes a symbol for the richness or the speaker's childhood. The song is thus highly personal, and yet "universal" in its thematic treatment of memory. The speaker's question, "Onde e quando é genipapo absoluto" [where and when is jenipap absolute], will be answered in the following stanza. But the imagery of this stanza also merits some attention for its very idiosyncrasy. "Meu pai, seu tanino, seu mel" [My father, his tannin, his honey]: the line suggests two varying sides of his father's character. The poet's commentary in *Sobre as letras* offers some clarification: "Uma pessoa em São Paulo, descendente de italianos, pensou que meu pai se chamasse Caetano, porque os italianos usam Tanino como apelido de Caetano, de Gaetano. Não é o caso, pois aqui 'tanino' é substantivo comum" [A person in São Paulo, descendant of Italians, thought that my father was named Caetano, because the Italians use Tanino as a nickname for Caetano, for Gaetano. But that's not the case, for here 'tanino' is a common noun] (44). The songwriter offers no further indication as to the meaning of "tannin" in the passage, but it is worth noting that the bark of the jenipap is rich in tannin (used in tanning leather). Tannin is an astringent, contrasting with the sweetness of honey. My reading of the phrase supposes that these twin qualities are evocative of the bittersweet memories of childhood, of experience that is at once painful and joyous. Such a reading is compatible with the phrase, "sofrer prazérias" [suffering pleasures] that appears in the next line. With regard to "pressing," the songwriter furnishes another gloss:

A letra também fala de 'prensa', porque meu pai me chamava para ajudá-lo a prensar o jenipapo numa prensa de madeira para fazer o licor. Era sempre a mim que ele chamava: 'Caetano, vamos prensar o jenipapo'. Eu adorava fazer. E adorava o licor, adoro ainda. Prensar o jenipapo com meu pai me deixava todo orgulhoso. Ele tinha certa cumplicidade comigo numas coisinhas assim. E algumas eram cruciais, como essa, espremer o jenipapo. (44)

[The lyric also speaks of 'pressing,' because my father called on me to help him press the jenipap in a wooden press to make the liquor. It was always me whom he called: 'Caetano, let's press the jenipap. I loved to do it. And I loved the liquor—I still love it. To press the jenipap with my father made me so proud. He had a certain attachment to me in things like that. And some were crucial, like that, crushing the jenipap.]

The song remembers not only the poet's father, but other members of the family as well. Regarding the "Mabel" of the last line in this stanza, the songwriter notes, "Eu tinha citado noutras letras Irene, Clara, Nicinha, menos Mabel, que, quando eu era criança, era a minha irmã favorita...ela que faz poesia, apareceu aqui, aliada à poesia" [I had cited in other lyrics Irene, Clara, Nicinha, all but Mabel, who, when I was a child, was my favorite sister...she, who writes poetry, appeared here, linked to poetry] (*Sobre as letras* 43). The song, then, is an homage to the songwriter's family. The next stanza, the refrain, is undeniably Proustian in its notion of the artistic recreation of time:

Cantar é mais do que lembrar	[To sing is more than to remember
É mais do que ter tido aquilo então	It's more than to have had those things back
Mais do que viver do que sonhar	then
É ter o coração daquilo	More than to live, more than to dream,
( <i>Letra só</i> 36)	To sing is to have the heart of it all]

It was illuminating, in the poet's book of memoirs, to come across the following passage:

Lembro de uma tarde que passai ouvindo repetidas vezes a gravação de Ray Charles de 'Georgia on my mind' no nosso apartamento de Salvador, chorando com saudades de Santo Amaro—saudades transcendentais, a experiência da beleza do canto fazendo os conteúdos que tinham se tornado matéria de memória estarem mais presentes do que jamais estiveram, vivenciados com mais verdade do que da primeira vez: algo que vim a ver luminosamente representado pelas palavras no grande livro de Proust, que li alguns anos depois, e adequadamente analisado no livro de Gilles Deleuze sobre Proust, que li muitos anos depois—o que me levou a poder escrever a canção 'Jenipapo absoluto.'" (69)

[I remember spending one afternoon in our Salvador apartment listening over and over to 'Georgia on my Mind' and crying because I missed Santo Amaro. These were transcendental nostalgias, the beauty of the singing infusing memory with a life more intense than the moments as they were actually lived, allowing them to be relived more truthfully the second time. Years later, I would find this effect luminously described in Proust as well as in Deleuze's critical commentary on Proust, and I would be moved to compose the song "Jenipapo Absoluto."] (trans. Isabel da Sena 41)

Before broaching the songwriter's invocation of Proust, I would like to look at the song's concluding section. The lyric celebrates Veloso's father, but as the songwriter writes: "Outro dado que me emociona é que essa canção fala de minha identificação com meu pai mas declara, em seguida, que 'minha mãe é minha voz'" [Another thing that moves me is that this song speaks of my identification with my father but declares, subsequently, that 'my mother is my voice'] (*Sobre as letras* 44):



Tudo são trechos que escuto – vêm dela  
 Pois minha mãe é minha voz  
 Como será que isso era este som  
 Que hoje sim, gera sóis, dói em dós  
 “Aquele que considera”  
 A saudade de uma mera contraluz que vem  
 Do que deixou pra trás  
 Não, esse só desfaz o signo  
 E a “rosa também”  
 (Letra só 36)

[All that I hear is an echo of her  
 My mother was my voice all along  
 How can it be that she was this sound  
 That now bears suns and aches in this song  
 One who considers his longing  
 To be a mere backlight that glows  
 Out from what he’s left behind  
 No, such a one only undoes the sign  
 As well as the rose]

The poet had written that the song was inspired in part by reading both Proust and Deleuze’s reading of Proust (in the well-known study, *Proust et les signes* [Proust & Signs]).

What Veloso’s song has in common with *A la recherche du temps perdu* is what the songwriter himself characterizes as “infusing memory with a life more intense than the moments as they were actually lived.” Turning back to Proust’s novel, then, provides a revealing glimpse into the song. As has been noted, the first stanza of the songwriter’s text mentions the “olhos de areia” [eyes of sand] through which the speaker now bemoans the inadequacy of mere memory. Such a perspective resonates with the realization of Proust’s narrator at the end of *À coté de chez Swann*, who now understands:

la contradiction que c’est de chercher dans la réalité les tableaux de la mémoire, auxquels manquerait toujours le charme qui leur vient de la mémoire même et de n’être pas perçus par les sens. La réalité que j’avais connue n’existait plus... Les lieux que nous avons connus n’appartiennent pas qu’au monde de l’espace où nous les situons pour plus de facilité. Ils n’étaient qu’une mince tranche au milieu d’impressions contiguës qui formaient notre vie d’alors; le souvenir d’une certaine image n’est que le regret d’un certain instant; et les maisons, les routes, les avenues, sont fugitives, hélas, comme les années. (427)

[how paradoxical it is to seek in reality for the pictures that are stored in one’s memory, which must inevitably lose the charm that comes to them from memory itself and from their not being apprehended by the senses. The reality that I had known no longer existed... The places that we have known belong now only to the little world of space on which we map them for our convenience. None of them was ever more than a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time; remembrance of a particular form is but regret for a particular moment; and houses, roads, avenues are as fugitive as the years] (trans. Scott Moncrieff 433-434).

As Vladimir Nabokov observes in his *Lectures on Literature*, “the point (the speaker) makes is that simple memory, the act of visualizing something in retrospect, is not the correct method: it does not

recreate the past” (246). Likewise, the speaker of “Jenipapo Absoluto” finds himself searching for those “pictures” of his youth.

Proust’s narrator does discover a way to recreate the past. The presentiments of such a knowledge are there from the beginning in the *Recherche*. For the narrator experiences a series of intense memories triggered by sensory impressions. The scene of the dipping of the Madeleine in tea is, naturally, the most celebrated of these momentary enlightenments:

Il en est ainsi de notre passé. C’est peine perdue que nous cherchions à l’évoquer, tous les efforts de notre intelligence sont inutiles. Il est caché hors de son domaine et de sa portée, en quelque objet matériel (en la sensation que nous donnerait cet objet matériel), que nous ne soupçonnons pas. (*À côté de chez Swann* 44)

[And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect.] (trans. Scott Moncrieff 42)

I would propose that the genipap serves much the same function as Marcel’s Madeleine. It is never specifically mentioned as such, but the song’s title, and its Proustian overtones, suggest that such a reading might be valid. Thus, just as “tout Combray et ses environs, tout cela que prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé” [the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea] (*À côté de chez Swann* 48, trans. Scott Moncrieff 46), so the listener might trace Veloso’s evocation of his past and of his family to the liquor of the genipap.

As in Proust, however, these momentary epiphanies are not enough to sustain that past reality. Nor can the intellect itself sufficiently endow the past with meaning:

Car les vérités que l’intelligence saisit directement à claire-voie dans le monde de la pleine lumière ont quelque chose de moins profond, de moins nécessaire que celles que la vie nous a malgré nous communiquées en une impression, matérielle parce qu’elle est entrée par nos sens, mais dont nous pouvons dégager l’esprit. En somme, dans ce cas comme dans l’autre, qu’il s’agisse d’impressions comme celles que m’avait données la vue des clochers de Martinville, ou de réminiscences comme celle de l’inégalité des deux marches ou le goût de la madeleine, il fallait tâcher d’interpréter les sensations comme les signes d’autant de lois et d’idées, en essayant de penser, c’est-à-dire de faire sortir de la pénombre ce que j’avais senti, de le convertir en un équivalent spirituel. (*Le Temps retrouvé* 712)

[For the truths that the intelligence grasps directly and openly in the full-lighted world are somehow less profound, less indispensable than those which life has communicated to us without our knowledge through the form of impressions, material because they have come to us through the senses, but the inner meaning of which we can discern. In short, in this case as in the other, whether objective impressions such as I had received from the sight of the spires of Martinville, or subjective memories like the unevenness of the two steps or the taste of the *madeleine*, I must try to interpret the sensations as the indication of corresponding laws and ideas; I must try to think, that is to say, bring out of the obscurity what I had felt, and convert it into a spiritual equivalent.] (trans. Frederick Blossom 1001)

The only medium capable of comprehending that “spiritual equivalent” is art. As the narrator muses, “la récréation par la mémoire d'impressions qu'il fallait ensuite approfondir, éclairer, transformer en équivalents d'intelligence, n'était-elle pas une des conditions, presque l'essence même de l'oeuvre d'art telle que je l'avais conçue...?” [...recreating through the memory impressions which must then be plumbed to their depths, brought into the light and transformed into intellectual equivalents, was this not one of the prerequisites, almost the very essence of a work of art such as I had conceived...?] (*Le Temps retrouvé* 838, trans. Blossom 1122).

The songwriter invokes this Proustian view of artistic recreation when he writes that “Cantar é mais do que lembrar” [To sing is more than to remember]. Singing is thus a means of capturing that inner meaning of which Proust’s narrator speaks. It is to get to the heart, the reality, of things—what Gilles Deleuze calls art’s ability “pour réfracter l’essence, c’est-à-dire la qualité d’un monde originel” [to refract essence, that is, the quality of an original world] (60, trans. Howard 47). As Deleuze has observed, art’s “essence” is expressed “aussi bien à travers les mots, les sons et les couleurs” [equally well through words, sounds, and colors] (60, trans. Howard 47).

The French philosopher’s book on Proust relates to the poet’s text in more ways than one. There is, for example, Deleuze’s emphasis on *signs*: “L’oeuvre de Proust est fondée, non pas sur l’exposition de la mémoire, mais sur l’apprentissage des signes” [Proust’s work is not based on the exposition of memory, but on the apprenticeship to signs] (11, trans. Howard 4). That is, for Deleuze, Marcel’s “search” really constitutes a process of learning to read various levels or “worlds” of signs. An example can again be found in the famous episode of the Madeleine. The shock of joy that the Madeleine and the tea produce belongs to what Deleuze calls the world of “qualités sensibles ou les

impressions” [sensuous impressions or qualities] (20, trans. Howard 12). Such signs are basically subordinate to the signs of art, which contain past reality’s inner meaning, or as Deleuze calls it, the “essence idéale qu’il incarne” [ideal essence that it incarnates] (trans. Howard 13). Deleuze wants to critique the commonsensical view that Proust’s work is about memory, “remembrance of things past,” etc. Rather, he argues, “La Recherche du temps perdu, en fait, est une recherche de la vérité. Si elle s’appelle recherche du temps perdu, c’est seulement dans la mesure où la vérité a un rapport essentiel avec le temps” [The Search for lost time is in fact a search for truth. If called a search for lost time, it is only to the degree that truth has an essential relation to time (23, trans. Howard 15). Deleuze’s reading of Proust, then, helps us to see Veloso’s lyric as dealing with the nature of reality (and not merely with memory). Such a stance is inherent in the songwriter’s comment that artistic recreation (in this case, through music) allows past moments to be “vivenciados com mais verdade do que da primeira vez” [relived more truthfully the second time] (*Verdade tropical* 69, trans. da Sena 41).

Thus, Veloso’s use of the word “signo” [sign] coincides with Proust’s notion of rediscovering past reality through the medium of art.<sup>10</sup> For the songwriter’s text implies that one who considers memory as an end in itself thus forgoes the more significant “esprit” [spirit] of which Proust writes, and which is associated with artistic creation (712, my translation). Deleuze describes artistic creation as a superior kind of sign: “Or le monde de l’Art est le monde ultime des signes; et ces signes, comme *dématérialisés*, trouvent leur sens dans une essence idéale” [Now the world of art is the ultimate world of signs, and these signs, as though *dematerialized*, find their meaning in an ideal essence] (21, trans. Howard 13). The signs of art are represented in the songwriter’s text by both singing and “a rosa” [the rose] which appears in the last line of the song. The rose is thus a symbol of the manner in which “l’essence s’incarne-t-elle dans l’oeuvre d’art” [essence is incarnated in the work of art], to use Deleuze’s phrase (60, trans. Howard 46).

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that in an earlier song, the 1979 “Trilhos Urbanos” [Urban Tracks], Veloso also treats the theme of artistic recreation of the past. In that song, he sings, “Vão passando os anos/ E eu não te perdi/ Meu trabalho é te traduzir” [The years are passing by/ Yet I’ve not lost you/ My work is to translate you] (*Letra só* 34, trans. Ryle 157).

I have broached the way in which the songwriter takes up certain Proustian themes (that is, how the song is similar to Proust), but wherein lies the lyric's difference? In other words, it would be easy to assert that the song is "influenced" by Proust, but how does Veloso go beyond mere "influence"? The answer, I think, is twofold. First, it lies in the intensely individual quality of the imagery. Just as, for Proust, it is not really the philosophical expositions, but rather the sensuous descriptions, which render the past alive, so in "Genipapo Absoluto," Veloso employs highly personal images. For the crux of "Jenipapo absoluto,"—that is, its difference—is precisely its attempt to convey a unique subjectivity, or rather, as Deleuze writes, "la région de l'Être qui se révèle au sujet" [the region of Being that is revealed to the subject] (56, trans. Howard 43). It is no coincidence that this is one of the most personal songs in Veloso's repertory. These images contribute to the aesthetic difference underscored by the lyric: its exploration of an individual "world." To employ Proust's phrase, "ces mondes que nous appelons les individus, et que sans l'art nous ne connaissons jamais" [those worlds which we call individual persons and which, without the aid of art, we should never know] (*La Prisonnière* 210, trans. Scott Moncrieff 559) "Jenipapo Absoluto" deals with the smallest details of individual experience. One might look at the personal symbolism surrounding the genipap, or the aforementioned term "tanino" [tannin] (in its unusual placing in the context). Such images are as particularized as the narrator's Madeleine in Proust's novel. And not only the images, but the language itself is highly individualized. For example, the singer says that the sound of his mother's voice "hoje sim gera sóis, dói em dós" [now bears suns and aches in this song]. The multiple puns in this line underscore the songwriter's gift for compacting meaning within a lyric's wordplay. For "gera sóis" [literally, generates suns] has an almost identical sound to the Portuguese word, "gerações" [generations]. The pun suggests the power of life—and art—to renew themselves in successive generations, a process compared to the birth of stars. The second half of the same line says that speaker's singing "dói em dós" [literally, aches in C's]. "Dó" is the syllable used to represent the first note of the diatonic scale, and thus implies the capacity of one's longing for the past to produce music. But the plural, "dós" is identical in sound to "dois" [two], thus suggesting the double-voiced nature of

the singer's art (since it represents not only his own voice, but that of his mother). Through wordplay and internal rhyme, then, as well as through personal images, Veloso endows his song with a particularizing vision. For Deleuze, it is precisely this individual vision that endows art with the ability to reveal “ideal essence”:

Qu'est-ce que'un essence, telle qu'elle est révélée dans l'oeuvre d'art? C'est une différence, la Différence ultime et absolue. C'est elle qui constitue l'être, qui nous fait concevoir l'être...Chaque sujet exprime le monde d'un certain point de vue. Mais le point de vue, c'est la différence elle-même, la différence interne absolue. Chaque sujet exprime donc un monde absolument différent. (53-55)

[What is an essence as revealed in the work of art? It is a difference, the absolute and ultimate Difference. Difference is what constitutes being, what makes us conceive being...Each subject expresses the world from a certain viewpoint. But the viewpoint is the difference itself, the absolute internal difference. Each subject therefore expresses an absolutely different world] (trans. Howard 41-2).

“Jenipapo absoluto” attempts to express an essence in precisely this sense. Therefore, the song is not “Proustian.” It does not reflect Proust’s “influence” in the sense of simply applying the novelist’s ideas about time to Veloso’s experience. Rather, what is emphasized is the particularity of the songwriter’s experience of the world.

Another way in which “Jenipapo absoluto” diverges from the *Recherche* is in its bridging of “high” and popular culture. For if Proust echoes throughout “Jenipapo absoluto,” so do the words of two popular Brazilian songwriters of the 1940s. As the songwriter notes in *Sobre as Letras*, “a primeira é ‘aquele que considera’, que cita letra e melodia de uma canção de Ataulfo Alves; a segunda é ‘Rosa também’, que recupera letra e melodia de ‘Mané fogueteiro’, um sucesso com Augusto Calheiros” [the first is “one who considers,” which cites a lyric and melody of a song by Ataulfo Alves; the second is “As well as the rose,” which takes up a lyric and melody from ‘Mané fogueteiro,’ a hit for Augusto Calheiros] (*Sobre as letras* [About the Lyrics] 43, my translation).

The first of these songs, the 1947 samba “Infidelidade” (Infidelity) by Alves and Américo Seixas, begins:

Aquele que considera  
 O amor uma quimera  
 Vive longe de um sofrer  
 Tem sempre os olhos enxutos  
 Crer no amor de dez minutos  
 E nelas não deve crer  
 (Noite Ilustrada)

[One who considers  
 That love is a chimera  
 Lives far from suffering  
 And always has dry eyes  
 Believe in the love of ten minutes  
 And in women you shouldn't believe]

By reading the lyric side-by-side with the songwriter's text, we can see that "Jenipapo absoluto" is a sort of rereading of this song as well. For the older lyric speaks of the ephemeral nature of love (in rather misogynistic language). Veloso's lyric, by contrast, affirms love, and particularly familial love, as the sustaining force that allows him to sing. Thus, the allusion here represents a radical reworking of the phrase's meaning in the first song.

The second quotation in "Jenipapo absoluto" is from a 1934 samba by João de Barro, popularized in a version by Augusto Calheiros. In Barro's lyric, "Rosa" is actually a woman's name.

The text is a short narrative of love and sordid violence:

Mané Fogueteiro gostava da Rosa  
 Cabocla mais linda este mundo não tem  
 Porém o pior é que o Zé Boticário  
 Gostava um bocado da Rosa também  
 Um dia encontraram Mané Fogueteiro  
 De olhos vidrados, de braços no chão  
 Um tiro certo varara-lhe o peito  
 Na volta da festa do Juca Romão  
 (Calheiros)

[Mané Fogueteiro loved Rose  
 A more beautiful half-breed does not exist in  
 this world  
 So it's too bad that that Zé Boticário  
 Liked Rosa a whole lot too  
 And one day they found Mané Fogueteiro  
 With his eyes glazed over, lain on the ground  
 A well-aimed bullet had pierced his chest  
 On the way back from Juca Romão's party]

In "Jenipapo absoluto," Veloso completely reconfigures the meaning of the phrase "Rosa também" (making it refer to the flower rather than the name). And yet, "Rosa" maintains the sense of being an object of desire in Veloso's song: rather than a symbol of amorous or sexual fulfillment, Veloso's "Rosa" represents fulfillment through art's revivifying power. The two musical citations reflect what is ultimately the song's main difference from the Proustian conception of art to which it alludes: the emphasis on singing. The emphasis on the "work" of art is different from Veloso's emphasis on "singing" in the following manner: Veloso emphasizes not the artistic product, but the performance. It is through singing itself that the past is recaptured, not through the song.

Because of the lack of shared language between the two texts, the question might arise whether Veloso's invocation of Proust constitutes an allusion. However, I would argue that "Genipapo absoluto" fulfills the criteria for allusion in that it does indirectly reference Proust's text by calling upon the Proustian conception of memory in art (or art in memory). This is most clearly evident in the refrain, "Cantar é mais do que lembrar" [To sing is more than to remember], but is buoyed by the other verses and by Veloso's declaration that the song was inspired partly by reading the French novelist.

### **Lindeza [Beauty]**

"É uma canção sobre a beleza. Ia se chamar *Coisa Linda*, mas este título eu já havia dado a outra música. Adoro esta canção. É um bolero cantado em bossa nova que eu quase gravei em bolero" [It's a song about beauty. It was going to be called "Beautiful Thing," but I had already given that title to another song. I love this song. It's a bolero sung in bossa nova that I almost recorded as a bolero] (qtd. in Fonseca 59, my translation). Like "A terceira margem do rio," "Lindeza" appears on the 1991 album "Circuladô." Like "Menino do Rio," the song could be taken as a simple love song in the "pop" vein<sup>11</sup>; actually, it is a meditation on the nature of beauty. As such, it cites two of the most famous definitions of beauty in world literature, those of Keats and Stendhal:

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<sup>11</sup> In this regard, the song's title recalls Carlos Lyra's bossa nova love song, "Coisa Mais Linda" [Most Beautiful Thing], which Veloso has recorded.



Coisa linda  
É mais que uma idéia louca  
Ver-te ao alcance da boca  
Eu nem posso acreditar

[Thing of beauty  
You are more than a mad idea  
To see you within the mouth's reach  
I just can't believe it

Coisa linda  
Minha humanidade cresce  
Quando o mundo te oferece  
E enfim te dá, tens lugar

Thing of beauty  
My humanity grows  
When the world offers you  
And at last you give yourself, you have a  
place

Promessa de felicidade  
Festa da vontade, nítido farol  
Sinal novo sob o sol  
Vida mais real

Promise of happiness  
Festival of the will, clear beacon  
Sign that's new under the sun  
Life that's more real

Coisa linda  
Lua, lua, lua, lua  
Sol, palavra, dança nua  
Pluma, tela, pétala

Thing of beauty  
Moon moon moon moon  
Sun word nude dance  
Feather screen petal

Coisa linda  
Desejar-te desde sempre  
Ter-te agora e o dia é sempre  
Uma alegria pra sempre  
(*Letra só 159*)

Thing of beauty  
To have desired you forever  
To have you now and the day is forever  
A joy for ever]

The words that frame the song at its beginning and end, “Coisa linda/ É...uma alegria para sempre”

[A thing of beauty is a joy for ever] are naturally an allusion to the poem of Keats's 1818

“Endymion: A Poetic Romance.” The oft-quoted lines are the opening words of Keats's poem:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness;  
(*Complete Poems 107*)

The remainder of the poem outlines a notion of beauty as something eternal and divine, “Pouring  
unto us from the heaven's brink.” As such, it is a comfort to us in a world:

...of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
Made for our searching  
(107)

It is ironic, then, that beauty often appears to us in what seem emblems of the ephemeral. Among  
these emblems, Keats names not only the “eternal” sun and moon, symbolic both of timelessness and

constant shifting, but also “Trees old and young,” the “simple sheep,” and daffodils (107). The lines are a Romantic rendering of Plato’s doctrine of forms.

Veloso’s song invokes Keats’s platonic vision of beauty. For the speaker identifies the thing of beauty as “ao alcance da boca” [within the mouth’s reach], but paradoxically says that “Eu nem posso acreditar” [I just can’t believe it]. In other words, beauty is apprehended as something binding the mortal to the immortal. “Within the mouth’s reach” suggests the power of spoken (or sung) language to express beauty. The idea that the “thing of beauty” is “within the mouth’s reach” also suggests a kiss; this reflects the doubleness of the song, which may be interpreted at once as a short treatise on aesthetics and as a love song. As the latter, Veloso’s lyric takes the form of an ode. It is addressed *to* beauty, whereas Keats’s poem is rather a delineation of beauty’s attributes.

The poem to Endymion stresses the effect that beauty has on the human observer. Thus, “Some shape of beauty moves away the pall/ From our dark spirits” (107). Similarly, Veloso writes that “Minha humanidade cresce/ Quando o mundo te oferece/ E enfim te dá, tens lugar” [My humanity grows/ When the world offers you/ And at last you give yourself, you have a place]. Veloso’s lyric suggests that beauty is part of humanity’s maturing process; the birth of beauty is paralleled by a similar kind of spiritual birth in humankind.

Beauty is also a “promise of happiness,” and it is here that we encounter the song’s second allusion. The phrase comes from Stendhal (pseudonym of Henri Beyle) in his long treatise, *De L’Amour*, first published in 1822 (224). In that volume, the French author turned his anguish over a difficult love affair into a systematic elucidation of what he called “that passion all of whose developments are inherently beautiful” (31, trans. H.B.V. 1).<sup>12</sup> Chapter seventeen of the book is entitled “La Beauté Détrônée par L’Amour” [Beauty Dethroned by Love], and treats the manner in which the beloved is viewed through the eyes of a lover:

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<sup>12</sup> As Joanna Richardson writes, “In *De L’Amour* he set down his cherished thoughts, his personal beliefs, and the whole science of happiness to which he attached such profound importance. He considered it his most important work” (168).

Albéric rencontre dans une loge une femme plus belle que sa maîtresse : je supplie qu'on me permette une évaluation mathématique, c'est-à-dire don't les traits promettent trois unités de bonheur au lieu de deux (je suppose que la beauté parfaite donne une quantité de bonheur exprimée par le nombre quatre). (64)

[In a box at the opera Alberic meets a woman who is more beautiful than his mistress—I beg leave to put the situation into mathematical terms—that is to say, a woman whose features promise three units of happiness, instead of two. I am supposing that perfect beauty gives an amount expressed by the number 4.] (trans. H.B.V. 44)

Stendhal writes that such a man would in fact “préfère les traits de sa maîtresse, que lui promettent cent unités de bonheur” [prefer the features of his mistress, which promise him a hundred units of happiness]. Even if his mistress displays “petits défauts de sa figure” [minor defects in her face], such blemishes become more beautiful in the eye of the lover, for they are inevitably tied to the experience of love. “Si l'on parvient ainsi à préférer et à aimer la *laideur*, c'est que dans ce cas la laideur est beauté” [If one arrives thus at preferring and loving what is in itself ugly, it is because in this case ugliness becomes beauty]. Stendhal attaches a footnote to this observation: “La beauté n'est que la *promesse* du bonheur” [Beauty is only the promise of happiness] (64, trans. H.B.V. 44). If our experience of beauty is indeed a “promise of happiness,” then the contemplation of beauty is inextricably bound to self-interest: we see in beauty that which will fulfill the promise of being happy.

Stendhal's definition of beauty was alluded to, famously, by both Baudelaire and Nietzsche. Since Stendhal's original phrase has become so colored, in literary history, by Baudelaire's and Nietzsche's allusions to it, I will briefly sketch their rereading of Stendhal before broaching Veloso's invocation of him. In his 1863 essay, “Le peintre de la vie moderne,” Baudelaire writes that “Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable...et d'un élément relatif, circonstanciel” [Beauty is made up of an eternal, invariable element...and of a relative, circumstantial element] (*Écrits esthétiques* 362, trans. Mayne 3). “L'erreur des académiciens” [the academic error] has been to postulate beauty as something “unique et absolu” [unique and absolute], thus overlooking the degree to which beauty also depends on the “relative” subjectivity of the beholder. In his questioning of the academic view, Baudelaire writes that Stendhal:

esprit impertinent, taquin, répugnant même, mais don't les impertinences provoquent utilement la méditation, s'est rapproché de la vérité plus que beaucoup d'autres, en disant que le Beau n'est que la promesse du bonheur. Sans doute cette définition dépasse le but; elle soumet beaucoup trop le beau à l'idéal infiniment variable du bonheur...mais elle a le grand mérite de s'éloigner décidément de l'erreur des académiciens. (363)

[an impertinent, teasing, even a disagreeable critic, but one whose impertinences are often a useful spur to reflection—approached the truth more closely than many another when he said that “Beauty is nothing else but a promise of happiness.” This definition doubtless overshoots the mark: it makes Beauty far too subject to the infinitely variable ideal of Happiness...but it has the great merit of making a decided break with the academic error.] (trans. Mayne 3-4)

Thus, while he sees Stendhal's formulation as giving exaggerated weight to the relative quality of beauty, Baudelaire extols Stendhal for recognizing the “éléments variables du beau” [variable elements of beauty], which depend on the beholder's “idéal...du bonheur” [ideal of of happiness]—an ideal that necessarily changes with each historical period.

In the third essay of his *Zur Genealogie der Moral* [On the Genealogy of Morals] (1887), Nietzsche also refers to Stendhal's definition of beauty in order to counter the Kantian notion of beauty.<sup>13</sup> Kant had written that “the delight which determines the judgment of taste is independent of all interest.” This conception of aesthetic judgment is often described as one of “disinterested contemplation;” thus, Kant disallows that personal interest plays a role in our appreciation of beauty. In the third essay of Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, entitled “Was bedeutet asketische Ideale?” [What do ascetic ideals mean?], Nietzsche opposes the Kantian view by asserting that Kant naively conceives of beauty narrowly and only through the eyes of a critic (and not of an artist):

“Schön ist,” hat Kant gesagt, “was ohne Interesse gefällt.” Ohne Interesse! Man vergleiche mit dieser Definition jene andre, die ein wirklicher “Zuschauer” und Artist gemacht hat—Stendhal, der das Schöne einmal *une promesse de bonheur* nennt. Hier ist jedenfalls gerade das abgelehnt und ausgestrichen, was Kant allein am ästhetischen Zustande hervorhebt: le désintéressement. Wer hat recht, Kant oder Stendhal? (106)

[Kant said, ‘Something is beautiful if it gives pleasure *without interest*’. Without interest! Compare this definition with another made by a genuine ‘spectator’ and artist—Stendhal, who once called the beautiful *une promesse de bonheur*. Here, at any rate, the thing that Kant alone accentuates in aesthetic matters: *le désintéressement*, is rejected and eliminated. Who is right, Kant or Stendhal?] (trans. Diethel 78).

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<sup>13</sup> (in his *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* [Critique of Judgment]) (1790).

Nietzsche comes down firmly on the side of Stendhal, arguing that “interest” (or the will to possess happiness) is a fundamental part of aesthetic contemplation. Nietzsche then uses this observation to critique Schopenhauer for following Kant’s definition of beauty and thus separating aesthetics from personal interest and desire.

What, the reader may ask, does all this have to do with Caetano Veloso’s song, “Lindeza”? First of all, although I cannot verify which writer (Stendhal, Baudelaire, or Nietzsche) Veloso alludes to, I can confirm that the songwriter read both Stendhal and Nietzsche. In a 2001 interview, he has talked about reading Stendhal: “eu li *O vermelho e o negro* e eu vou lhes dizer: esse é o romance de que eu mais gosto de todos os romances que eu já li” [I read *The Red and the Black* and I’ll tell you: this is the novel that I like best of all the novels I’ve ever read] (“Outras palavras 49). Furthermore, in the same interview he discusses reading Nietzsche, and particularly the *Genealogy of Morals*:

“...eu li *Além do bem e do mal*, gosto muito, e *Genealogia da moral*, que é um livro mais duro, às vezes é insuportável, realmente tem muitas coisas que são prefiguração do nazismo e a reação mais profunda contra as idéias democráticas...Mas, ao mesmo tempo, o primeiro movimento foi de grande entusiasmo com aquele desmascaramento desses conteúdos e aquela descoberta da doença por trás da moral e da religião. Eu gosto muito dessa temática de Nietzsche e do estilo, que é de uma grande viveza.” (58)

[...I read *Beyond Good and Evil*, which I like very much, and *Genealogy of Morals*, which is a harder book, sometimes insupportable; it really contains many things that prefigure Nazism and the most profound reaction against democratic ideas...But, at the same time, the first movement was of great verve, with that elucidation of that subject-matter and that discovery of the sickness that lies behind morality and religion. I very much like that thematic of Nietzsche and his style, which is very vivid.]

Veloso’s interest in Nietzsche led him so far as to compose an eponymous song based on the life of the philosopher’s good friend, the experimental composer Peter Gast. In any case, it seems fair to assume that the songwriter was familiar with Nietzsche’s formulation regarding beauty.

But what does this mean within the context of Veloso’s song? I would argue that the song is precisely about the Stendhalian notion of beauty as encompassing desire and self-interest. For the lyric proceeds to describe the “beautiful thing” as a “festa da vontade” [festival of the will]. This phrase suggests that Veloso is indeed alluding to Nietzsche and not only to Stendhal, since the philosopher’s essay critiques Schopenhauer for believing in the “Loskommen vom ‘Willen’ als den

grossen Vorzug und Nutzen des ästhetischen Zustandes zu verherrlichen” [escape from the ‘will’ as the great advantage and use of the aesthetic condition] (107, trans. Diethe 79). Thus, Nietzsche argues that “will” *is* involved in aesthetic contemplation. Veloso’s song invokes this idea. Personal interest is involved in the contemplation of a “beautiful thing,” for we are looking to fulfill our desire for happiness. Veloso thus connects the Stendhalian/Nietzschian view of beauty with the Keatsian one.

The following two lines again invoke the Keatsian perspective, calling the “coisa linda” a “Sinal novo sob o sol/ Vida mais real” [Sign that’s new under the sun/ Life that’s more real]. Like Keats, Veloso connects beauty to eternal, Platonic ideals. Thus, beauty represents something beyond the world of appearances. In this way, beauty presents a form of “life that’s more real.” But at the same time, beauty is protean. It represents an unchanging form of eternal beauty, but it is constantly changing. The language in which beauty is represented must always be made new, and thus real beauty is always a “sign that’s new under the sun” (contradicting, of course, the old adage that there is in fact nothing new under the sun). This association that Veloso makes between beauty and newness or invention (that is, of beauty always needing to shatter outmoded conceptions of beauty) suggests the songwriter’s own aesthetic project as a modernistic endeavor (one is reminded of Pound’s dictum, “Make it new”). Thus, beauty is always both changing and unchanging. This paradoxical notion brings us back to Keats’s proem, in which he writes of beauty in both ephemeral and eternal terms.

The next stanza of Veloso’s lyric lists several “beautiful things”:

Coisa linda	[Beautiful thing
Lua lua lua lua	Moon moon moon moon
Sol, palavra, dança nua	Sun, word, nude dance
Pluma, tela, petala	Feather, screen, petal]
( <i>Letra só</i> 159)	

“Lua lua lua lua” [Moon moon moon moon] is actually an allusion to one of Veloso’s own most popular songs, “Lua lua lua lua” from the 1975 album *Jóia* (Joy). Allusion to his own earlier lyrics is a not-infrequent gesture in Veloso’s work. The lyrics of “Lua lua lua lua” are as follows:

Lua lua lua lua  
Por um momento meu canto contigo  
compactua  
E mesmo o vento canta-se compacto no tempo  
Estanca

Branca branca branca branca  
A minha nossa voz atua sendo silêncio  
Meu canto não tem nada a ver  
Com a lua  
(*Letra só 76*)

[Moon moon moon moon  
For a moment my song makes a compact with  
you  
And even the wind sings itself compact in  
time  
Stop

White white white white  
My our voice acts out being silence  
My song has nothing to do  
With the moon]

The self-allusion here suggests the theme of that earlier song, the fleetingness of language's ability to connect to that which it describes, in this case an object of eternal beauty. Such a union, between language and things, comes only in moments. Thus, the song "Lua lua lua lua" "makes a compact" with the moon "for a moment," only for the speaker to later declare that "My song has nothing to do with the moon." Sun and moon are also among the "things of beauty" that Keats cites in the proem to "Endymion": "Such the sun, the moon,/ Trees old, and young sprouting a shady boon/ For simple sheep; and such are daffodils" (13-15). Veloso's list of beautiful things in "Lindeza" is perhaps more idiosyncratic: "Sun, word, nude dance/ Feather, screen, petal." The emblems that the songwriter chooses to list are beautiful not only in themselves, but also in their artistic, particularly melodic recombination: "Pluma tela petala." These three words, a seemingly random set, are brought together through internal rhyme ("tela, petala") and alliteration of the P ("Pluma," "petala").

In the song's concluding quatrain, Veloso merges the Keatsian and Stendhalian conceptions of beauty:

Coisa linda  
Desejar-te desde sempre  
Ter-te agora e o dia é sempre  
Uma alegria pra sempre  
(*Letra só 159*)

[Thing of beauty  
To have desired you forever  
To have you now and the day is forever  
A joy forever]

Whereas the song begins by describing beauty as "ao alcance da boca" [within the mouth's reach], it ends with the consummation the beholder's desire to possess the beautiful. Such desire recalls Stendhal's formulation of "interested" contemplation of beauty—that is, of the desire to possess

happiness. Likewise, the consumation partakes of Keats's platonic vision of beauty as something more than ephemeral: as "uma alegria para sempre" [a joy forever].

The question might arise, then, how much "influence" can we trace in this song. I would answer again that the song does not so much display influence as it does Veloso's creative reworking of two earlier meditations on beauty. As mentioned, Veloso's song can be interpreted as a love song, and the "thing of beauty" as the desired lover. Furthermore the song displays originality in its imagery. Some of the best lines are those like, "Sol, palavra, dança nua/ Pluma, tela, pétala" [Sun, word, nude dance]. The songwriter is not simply combining allusions, but is creating beauty by bringing new combinations of words together (and thus creating a "new thing under the sun").



## **Part II: B**

### **Allusions to Brazilian Writers**

#### **Lua lua lua lua [Moon moon moon moon]**

As Veloso writes in *Sobre as Letras*, his 1975 song, “Lua lua lua lua” [Moon Moon Moon Moon] has “o eco de alguma coisa de Haroldo de Campos, dos poemas dele que eu lia nos anos 60 e que traziam palavras como ‘estanco’, ‘branco’” [the echo of something by Haroldo de Campos, from the poems that I was reading in the sixties which contained words like “estanco” (I stop), “branco” (white)] (46).

Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003) was best known as one of the originators and leaders of the concrete poetry movement that flourished in Brazil from the 1950s to the 1970s (Perrone 27). As German poet Max Bense has noted, concrete poetry “is a poetry that does not confer aesthetic or semantic meaning to its elements—words, for example—through the habitual construction of contexts ordered in linear and grammatical ways, but rather that supports itself in visual connections” (qtd. in Perrone 39). Concrete poetry draws attention to the linguistic sign itself, making the reader question the arbitrary link between signifier and signified. To do so, the *Concretistas* disrupt conventional language and literary patterns in a manner that recalls, for English-speaking readers, the work of Joyce in *Finnegan’s Wake*, with its rich use of puns and neologisms, and Cummings’s experiments with the layout of words on the page.

The clearest example of a Haroldo de Campos poem to which Veloso alludes in “Lua lua lua lua” is “branco,” which was collected in a series of poems Campos composed from 1955-1957, and which he called “fome de forma” [famished for form]. At first glance, “branco” seems to tease the reader with its minimalist composition that lacks conventional syntax. It is difficult even to know whether the poem is to be read from right to left and from top to bottom:

branco	branco	branco	branco
vermelho			
estanco	vermelho		
	espelho	vermelho	
		estanco	branco

(*Xadrez de estrelas* [Star chess] 115)

[white	white	white	white
red			
I stop	red		
	I mirror	red	
		I stop	white]

As Campos writes, during this period of his career, he was working out a “geométrica’ ou...matemática da composição’. Poemas reduzidos a uma expressão voluntariamente elemental, ao ‘mínimo múltiplo comum’ da linguagem” [“geometrics” or...“mathematics of composition.” Poems reduced to a voluntarily elemental expression, to the ‘lowest common denominator’ of language] (*Depoimentos de oficina* [Workshop proceedings] 38, my translation). For their often non-representational character, concrete poems have been compared to the moment of pure abstraction in modern painting.

As Perrone notes, for the Concrete poets, “the first level of projection of a poem—like concrete sculpture or painting—should be its own structure; a poem should communicate, in theory, its own idiosyncratic formal self, not interpret extratextual reality” (43). If structure is content, then the reader must concentrate on the form of the poem itself. Like a Mondrian painting, Campos’s poem can only be discussed with regard to its own internal rules of artistic harmony. In the case of “branco,” that harmony consists of a tension between meaning and the absence of meaning in written language. The poem teases the reader with the suggestion of lines of color (as they might appear in an abstract painting, for example). A horizontal “line” of white seems to run across the top of the poem, accompanied by a descending diagonal “line” of red.

However, to what degree are these words really lines of color? As Claus Cluver writes, “the white of the page traversed by the eye as it travels vertically from the black ‘branco’ above to the black ‘branco’ below makes us concretely aware of the arbitrary relationship between the verbal sign and the extra-linguistic reality it signifies” (138). The subject of “branco,” then, is the linguistic sign, particularly a sign that both draws attention to its own arbitrariness (thus “stopping” the reader from making automatic connections) and at the same time seems to “mirror” signifiers. Is there a connection between sign and referent? No, the poem suggests, although language teases us into believing that there is.

Veloso’s “Lua lua lua lua” is a meditation on a similar theme. However, it is composed in a more narrative vein, and is not as abstractly theoretical as “branco”:

Lua lua lua lua	[Moon moon moon moon
Por um momento meu canto contigo compactua	For a moment my song makes a compact with
E mesmo o vento canta-se compacto no tempo	you
Estanca	And even the wind sings itself compact in
( <i>Letra só 76</i> )	time
	Stop]

Like Campos’s poem, Veloso’s song begins with a horizontal “line” made up of four words. Of course, in the recorded version, Veloso’s words are sung rather than appearing on the page. One would expect the song to be a reflection on the moon, that most conventional image of eternal beauty.

However, Veloso’s lyric is, rather, a meditation on the fleetingness of language’s ability to capture such beauty. As the speaker says, “Por um momento meu canto contigo compactua” [For a moment my song makes a compact with you]. For an instant, then, the singer’s voice and words seem to manifest a connection to the moon. Such a moment attains almost a magic quality, as “mesmo o vento canta-se compacto no tempo” [even the wind sings itself compact in time]. Even nature seems to echo the “compact” made between singer and moon. Yet the connection is immediately undermined by the singer himself, as the word “estanca” [stop] suggests.

As in Campos’s poem, the verb “estancar” [to stop] reflects a halting of the connection between signifier and signified: in “branco,” between the words “branco” and “vermelho” and the

actual colors, white and red; in Veloso's song, between the verbal sign, "lua," and the moon. As in "branco," then, "Lua lua lua lua" slides between suggesting a possible connection between words and the things they describe, and underscoring the fleetingness of such a union. The notion of disunion continues in the song's second section:

Branca branca branca branca	[White white white white
A minha nossa voz atua sendo silêncio	My our voice acts out being silence
Meu canto não tem nada a ver	My song has nothing to do
Com a lua	With the moon]
<i>(Letra só 76)</i>	

The repetition of "branca" is the second clear allusion to Campos's "branco." (Veloso uses the feminine form, "branca"; Campos had used the masculine form, "branco," which is also the noun-form of "white"). As in Campos's poem, "branco/a" can mean "white," but also "blank," and Veloso's song relies particularly on the latter meaning. For the connection that the speaker asserted with the moon becomes blank, empty, and silent: "A minha nossa voz atua sendo silêncio" [My our voice acts out being silence]. Here, the voice of the speaker and the voice of the moon, which seemed to be joined by the "compact" between the two, becomes null and void, leading the speaker to declare, finally, that "Meu canto não tem nada a ver/ Com a lua" [My song has nothing to do with the moon]. Whereas the beginning of the song holds out the possibility for a link between language and that which language describes, the concluding lines suggest that such connections only take place in brief moments (or are perhaps even illusory).

Like Campos's work, many of Veloso's lyrics convey a meta-linguistic quality: they are poems about language. However, Veloso's work tends to employ more discursive language than that of concrete poetry, as can be seen by comparing "branco" to "Lua lua lua lua." Still, the concrete poets have been a major presence in Veloso's artistic career, both as personal friends and as founts of aesthetic ideas. The songwriter has set to music and recorded poems both by Haroldo de Campos and

by his brother, Augusto.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Veloso has dedicated a chapter to them in his book of memoirs, *Verdade tropical* [Tropical Truth]. Charles Perrone and Celso Favaretto, among others, have also pointed to formal elements that are similar to concrete poetry in some of Veloso's songs (elements which do not always constitute allusions).<sup>15</sup> Lastly, the songwriter has alluded to concrete poetry in one of his best-known (and most commented-upon) songs, "Sampa," an homage to São Paulo, in which Veloso makes oblique references to several of the city's most important *literati*; in one line, he praises "a dura poesia concreta de tuas esquinas" [the hard concrete poetry of your street-corners], a nod to the "hard," bare verse of the *Concretistas* (*Letra só* 198).<sup>16</sup>

### **A terceira margem do rio [The Third Bank of the River]**

Veloso released "A terceira margem do rio" [The Third Bank of the River] on his 1991 album, "Circuladô" [Circulator]. As the poet states in an interview, "Eu fiz a pedido do Milton Nascimento, que queria que se chamasse assim e que tratasse do conto de Guimarães Rosa. O resultado da letra me agradou muito" [I did it at the request of Milton Nascimento, who wanted it to have that title and to treat the story by Guimarães Rosa. I was very pleased with the lyric that resulted] (Qtd. in Fonseca 58, my translation). The music is by Nascimento, the lyrics by Veloso. João Guimarães Rosa (1908-1967) is one of the towering figures of twentieth-century Brazilian prose, and best known for his vast novel *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (translated into English as *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*). His short story, "A terceira margem do rio" is, in Audemaro Taranto Goulart's words, "uma das narrativas mais apreciadas de Guimarães Rosa. Alguns chegam mesmo a dizer que

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Veloso has set to music and recorded Augusto de Campos's "Pulsar," on the 1984 album, *Velô* [Velocity], and Haroldo de Campos's "Circuladô de Fulô" [Circulator of Flowers] on the 1991 album, *Circuladô*, whose name derives from Campos's poem.

<sup>15</sup> In English, see Charles Perrone's article, "From Noigandres to 'Milagre da Alegria': The Concrete Poets and Contemporary Brazilian Popular Music." *Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 6 (1985): 58-79.

<sup>16</sup> The line, "Lua lua lua lua" is repeated in Veloso's 1983 song, "Lindeza" [Beauty] discussed below, as well as in his song, "Giulietta Massina," which celebrates the Italian film actress, on the 1987 album, *Caetano* (*Letra só* 159, 283).

se trata do melhor conto da literatura brasileira” [one of Guimarães Rosa’s most highly regarded narratives. Some even go so far as to call it the greatest Brazilian short story] (in Duarte, *Outras margens* 7).

Guimarães Rosa’s story asks a question much like the one Wallace Stevens poses in “The Irish Cliffs of Moher”:

Who is my father in this world, in this house,  
At the spirit’s base?

My father’s father, his father’s father, his—  
Shadows like winds

Go back to a parent before thought, before speech,  
At the head of the past.

They go to the cliffs of Moher rising out of the mist,  
Above the real  
(*Poems* 165)

Like Stevens’s poem, Guimarães Rosa’s story recounts a quest for the father—a search for meaning and origin. As in the poem, the answer to the question lies, finally, “above the real.”

In Guimarães Rosa’s story, a son recounts how one day, without explanation, his father, “homem cumpridor, ordeiro, positivo” [a responsible, law-abiding, straightforward sort of a man], had a canoe built for himself, and, leaving his family with a brief farewell, sailed out to the middle of the river (the “terceira margem” [third bank] of the story’s title) near which the family resides (*Primeiras estórias* 27, trans. Treece 157). There he remains, day in and day out as the decades pass by, never providing so much as a hint as to his actions, and resisting all attempts to lure him back in to shore. While the concerns of the other family members return to their own lives, the dutiful son stays on through the years to fret over his father, eschewing marriage and a life of his own and in this way becoming “um homem de tristes palavras” [a man of sad words] (31, trans. Treece 162).

One day, many decades having passed, the son spies the “vulto” [shape] of his father, and, calling out to him, offers to take his place in the canoe (31, trans. Treece 163). However, when the father seems to gesture his acceptance of this proposition, the son flees in terror, for “ele me pareceu

vir: da parte de além. E estou pedindo, pedindo, pedindo um perdão” [he had seemed to come from...the beyond. And I’m begging, begging, begging for his forgiveness] (32, trans. Treece 163). The son is filled with remorse: “Sou homem, depois desse falimento?” [Am I a man, after a failure like that?] (32, trans. Treece 164). His only remaining wish is “que, no artigo da morte, peguem em mim, e me depositem também numa canoinha de nada, nessa água, que não pára, de longas beiras: e, eu, rio abaixo, rio a for a, rio a dentro—o rio” [that at the point of death at least I too am taken and laid in an insignificant little boat, on that unceasing race of water, with endless banks alongside: and down the river-run, out over the river-ride, deep into the river-dive—I, the river] (32, trans. Treece 164).

As José Miguel Wisnik has noted, “É impossível desvendar esse claro enigma que parece querer permanecer luminoso e irreduzível na sua literalidade” [It is impossible to uncover this clear enigma that seems to want to remain luminous and irreducible in its literality] (*Sem Receita* 229). Wisnik suggests that we read the father’s actions in terms of the mythological crossing from the land of the living to that of the dead: “A passagem para a outra margem, que repartiria na tradição mitológica o território dos vivos e dos mortos em dois campos opostos e dualizados, não se dá aqui: o conto dissolve essa dualidade na alusão...à terceira margem inominável” [The passage to the other shore, which in mythological tradition would divide the territories of the living and dead into two opposing and dualized realms is not depicted here: the story dissolves that duality in the allusion...to the third, unnamable bank] (230). The “third bank” which the father inhabits is *almost* unnamable. But perhaps poetry can name it. It is a region of being between presence and absence, both near and remote, where the seemingly discordant contradictions of life are resolved. Therefore, it is a space beyond rationality and beyond what is, in the quotidian sphere, denominated as “the real.”

Heidegger described such a region of being as *Lichtung*—a place of clearing, illumination, and openness of Being. As Heidegger writes, this “Lichtung, das Offene, nicht nur frei für Helle und Dunkel, sondern auch für das Tönen und das Verklingen. Die Lichtung ist das Offene für alles An- und Abwesende” [clearing, the open region, is not only free for brightness and darkness but also for

resonance and echo, for sound and the diminishing of sound. The clearing is the open region for everything that becomes present and absent] (*Zur Sache des Denkens* 72, trans. Stambaugh in *Basic Writings* 384). It is a space from which Being may be better understood. For Heidegger, as for Veloso, such a “clearing” is conceivable in terms of the space of poetry. The father’s motionless journey in the canoe can be understood as nothing less than his undertaking the quest for the essence of being. But the present/absent third bank that he sails is, for Veloso, also a region of poetic revelation. Heidegger wrote that “Dichtung ist das stiftende Nennen des Seins und des Wesens aller Dinge” [poetry is the inaugural naming of being and of the essence of all things] (*Erläuterungen* 40, trans. Scott in *Existence and Being* 283). Veloso’s lyric expresses a similar conception of poetic language. If the father’s quest is for meaning, then, it is also a quest, not for what lies beyond language, but for what can belong only to poetic language (which alone is sufficiently malleable and ample to contain the paradoxes of Being).

The song begins on a note of magic that recalls the fantastical quality of Guimarães Rosa’s story:

Oco de pau que diz:	[Hollowed out log that diz:
Eu sou madeira, beira	I am wood, the good
Boa, dá vau, triztriz	Riverbank allows for crossing, to just barely trace
Risca certa	A surefire streak
Meio a meio o rio ri	From half to half the river laughs
Silencioso, sério	Silent, serious
Nosso pai não diz, diz:	Our father doesn’t say, he says:
Risca terceira	Third streak]
(Letra só 296)	

Wisnik suggests that the “oco de pau” [hollowed out log] is a description of the canoe that the father has built for himself, and that the first section of the poem describes “a construção da canoa que se diz por si mesma na madeira escavada...lançada à água na margem propícia...traçando nela a risca levíssima...e inequívoca” [the construction of the canoe that identifies itself in the hollowed out wood...launched into the water at the propitious bank...tracing in it a very light...and unequivocal...streak] (232). The critic also observes the ways in which these lines mirror the style of Guimarães Rosa, whose play with language is often compared with Joyce. For example, one could



note the emphasis on internal rhyme, alliteration, and even an invented word, “triztriz.” As Wisnik writes, this term “remete ao mesmo tempo à expressão por um triz (por um fio, por um tudo-nada) e ao verbo ‘triscar’ (roçar levemente)” [recalls both the expression “por um triz” (by a hairsbreadth, just barely)...and the verb “triscar” (to graze lightly)] (232).

As mentioned, the hollow of a log that identifies itself as wood recalls the magical quality of Guimarães Rosa’s story. Log hollows do not usually speak and define their identity. Rather, people use language to fix the identity of things (or of ourselves). Veloso’s lyric begins in this world of fixed language. But as the canoe is launched into the river, the song moves into a different realm, one in which language, like water, is ever in flux and whose meaning is impossible to pin down. This river’s current, in Veloso’s lyric, is a world of contradiction and ambiguity. Once the canoe is launched into the river, the speaker tells us that, “Meio a meio o rio ri/ Silencioso, sério” [From half to half the river laughs/ Silent, serious].

“Meio a meio” [Half to half] is a direct allusion to Guimarães Rosa’s story, in which the father is described as remaining in “aqueles espaços do rio, de meio a meio, sempre dentro da canoa, para dela não saltar, nunca mais” [those wide-open stretches of the river, half-way across, always in his boat, never to leave it again] (28, trans. Treece 158). In fact, “meio a meio” is an expression that means, roughly, “half and half.” However, the phrase is also denotative of that which is in-between. Asked whether the weather today is sunny or cloudy, I might reply that it is “meio a meio”: in-between, not quite one nor the other. The word “meio” also means “middle.” Thus, Veloso employs this phrase to let the listener/reader enter the in-between space of the river, the fluid world of language. “Meio a meio” describes the “third bank,” that ever-changing space between the two other banks of the river.<sup>17</sup> As Wisnik writes, this is “o lugar da ausência do pai, mas também da linguagem em estado nascente, onde ela não se detém e flutua” [the place of the absence of the father, but also of

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<sup>17</sup> It is impossible to convey in translation the sound quality of this line in Portuguese (MEH-oh ah MEH-oh oh REE-oh REE), that seems to mimic, through alliteration and heavy internal rhyme, the bubbling flow of the river’s current.

language in its nascent state, where it is unconfined and in flux] (233). Like language, the river ever eludes fixity of expression. Rather, it laughs and is serious and silent all at once.

The third bank (that is, the river itself) is the place of the father in Guimarães Rosa's story. And thus, Veloso's lyric tells us that "Nosso pai não diz, diz" [Our father doesn't say, he says]. This literally recalls the situation of the short story, in which the father never explains his strange actions (and yet remains close to home, always silently suggesting the inexpressible meaning of what he does). But it also glosses what is only suggested in the story: that it is *our* father who is out in the third bank, and not only the father of the unnamed narrator of the story. "Nosso pai" [Our father] is also a reference to Christian tradition, to the notion of God the father as the ultimate point of origin (In the beginning was the Word).<sup>18</sup> By saying that our father paradoxically expresses himself and at the same time *does not*, Veloso suggests that our spiritual point of origin (perhaps it cannot even be described as a "point"), that "parent before thought, before speech" that Stevens describes, is the place of linguistic instability, and that "nosso pai" both furnishes and withholds meaning. Any meaning we do associate with that point of origin is necessarily fraught with obliqueness and contradiction.

"Nosso pai" is also an homage to Guimarães Rosa himself. This fictionist is a fountainhead of Brazilian letters in the second half of the twentieth century. And Veloso's song is partly about Rosa's enigmatic style. He is the father who tells without telling, who never allows an uncomplicated meaning to escape from his fiction. Veloso pays homage to the complexities of Rosian prose; this is especially fitting, for the songwriter's linguistic play recalls Guimarães Rosa's work. Veloso mimics the fluidity of his poetical "father's" style in the lines that follow, never allowing easy interpretation. For example, the songwriter describes a "risca terceira" [third "streak" or "line"]. This phrase is ambiguous: it might refer to the trajectory of the canoe in the water, or to the river's current, or to both. Whatever the "risca terceira" is, precisely, is never disclosed, for it belongs to the:

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<sup>18</sup> John 1:1.

Água da palavra  
Água calada, pura  
Água da palavra  
Água de rosa dura  
Proa da palavra  
Duro silêncio, nosso pai  
(*Letra só* 296)

[Water of the word  
Pure hushed water  
Water of the word  
Hard rose water  
Prow of the word  
Hard silence, our father]

The pure silence of the river's water is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's idea (in "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" [The Task of the Translator]) of a "reinen Sprache, die nichts mehr meint und nichts mehr ausdrückt, sondern als ausdrucksloses und schöpferisches Wort das in allen Sprachen Gemeint ist" [pure language—which no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative Word, that which is meant in all languages] (*Gesammelte Schriften* 19, trans. Zohn 80). It is a language that expresses everything and nothing, that says and doesn't say. Veloso describes it as "Água de rosa dura" [hard rose water], which suggests a palliative of sorts that is also hard, difficult. "Água de *rosa* dura" is also an explicit reference to Guimarães Rosa, and to the exquisite difficulty of his prose.

The phrase, "Proa da palavra" (prow of the word) brings back the image of the canoe that carries the father. But this complicates our notion of what constitutes "the word." For if "the word" is represented by the river's water, then how can it also be embodied by the canoe? In Veloso's poetry, river and canoe are merged into one: the space of the word. But such oneness is not a wholly comforting image, for the word is described as a "Duro silêncio" [hard silence] at the same time as it is that which bestows life on us: "nosso pai" [our father]. The song suggests that the silence is hard because the meaning of language is ever both present to us and absent. In this way, we can never get beyond the edge of meaning:

Margem da palavra  
Entre as escuras duas  
Margens da palavra  
Clareira, luz madura  
Rosa da palavra  
Puro silêncio, nosso pai  
(*Letra só* 296)

[Edge of the word  
Between the dark two  
Edges of the word  
Clearing, ripe light  
Rose of the word  
Pure silence, our father]

Thus, we coast along the “margens” [edges or riverbanks] of the word, never getting to a fixed center (and this image recalls the “oco de pau” [hollow of a log] at the beginning of the song, which underscores the vacuity of its own attempt to name itself). And yet, language not only lets us graze the margins, but it illuminates. For the “margem da palavra” [edge of the word] exists “Entre as escuras duas/ Margens da palavra” [between the two dark margins of the word]. Language manifests the qualities of a “clareira, luz madura” [clearing, ripened light], and also a “Rosa” [rose—and also *Rosa*]. These words all suggest enlightenment through language. Particularly, the language is reminiscent of Heidegger’s aforementioned notion of *Lichtung*, “clearing” but also “light.” But this illumination and blossoming take place, paradoxically, within a “Puro silêncio” [pure silence], a phrase which again suggests that language withholds itself even as it reveals itself.

Above all, the “third bank” that Veloso describes is the place of *poetic* language, for only poetry is capable of expressing the unutterable paradoxes of expression. Such language must be above the mundane language of rational discourse. And in this way poetic language is “above the real,” to again quote Stevens. Poetic language comprises a serious form of play (word play), and the notion of play is suggested in the next section of the lyric:

Meio a meio o rio ri	[From half to half the river laughs
Por entre as árvores da vida	Between the trees of life
O rio riu, ri	The river laughed, laughs
Por sob a risca da canoa	Under the canoe’s trail
O rio viu, vi	The river saw, it sees
O que ninguém jamais olvida	That which none ever forgets
Ouvi, ouvi, ouvi	I heard I heard I heard
A voz das águas	The voice of the waters]
( <i>Letra só</i> 296-297)	

The river’s laughing current flows “Por entre as árvores da vida” [between the trees of life], an image that suggests the “tree of life,” and thus the eternal nature of the river’s course. Veloso also plays with the common literary trope of rivers as emblematic of the eternal present; for “O rio riu, ri” [the river

laughed, laughs].<sup>19</sup> This sound quality of this line is pure music: oh REE-oh REE-oo REE. The balanced flow of the sounds suggests constancy of the river's flow; but the meaning of the words indicates change (since it encompasses both past and future). The river's laughter "sob a risca da canoa" [under the trail of the canoe] suggests that the canoe rider—that is, the human observer—is somehow apart from the current of the river. But the next line, "O rio viu, vi" [The river saw, I saw] does suggest a merging of river and humanity. Here, a first-person speaker is introduced into the lyric. But who is this lyric voice? The hollowed out log that spoke at the beginning of story? The son/narrator of the story? The father? The suggestiveness of Veloso's text mirrors the song's emphasis on ambiguity in language.

In any case, what was seen is "O que ninguém jamais olvida" [what no one ever forgets]. The verb "olvida" also suggests "olvido" [oblivion], and thus, what is seen is that which never passes: the eternal present of being itself. It is that unnameable space of the river, the space of language's origin, that is described here. But is that primordial source something that is seen, or is it rather heard (tied as it is to language)? For the text says that "I saw," but then goes on to declare that "Ouvi ouvi ouvi" [I heard I heard I heard]. In terms of sound (oh-VEE oh-VEE oh-VEE), this line is very close to the previously mentioned, "O rio riu, ri." It is almost as if river and self become one in these lines; this is suggestive of some kind of mystical experience. Some critics have pointed to a mystical element in Guimarães Rosa's story as well, suggesting that the father's experience represents a mystical experience. What is heard by the speaker is "A voz das águas" [the voice of the waters], and here the singular "water" becomes plural, suggesting not a single, "theological" font of language but a myriad of sources.

At this point, the imagery of the song moves away from water altogether, and, as

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<sup>19</sup> The words also allude to a passage in Guimarães Rosa's story, in which the son laments, "Se o meu pai, sempre fazendo ausência: e o rio-rio-rio, o rio — pondo perpétuo" [There was my father, forever absent: and the river-iver-iver, the river—perpetually posing the possible] (31, trans. Treece 162).

Wisnik writes, “numa série de metamorfoses, a água faz-se aérea...depois fogo...e finalmente árvore ou tronco, madeira espessa e terra” [in a series of metamorphoses, the water becomes aerial...then fire...and finally tree or trunk, thick wood, and earth] (233, my translation). This final section of the lyric traces a series of paradoxes:

Asa da palavra	[Wing of the word
Asa parada agora	Wing now stilled
Casa da palavra	House of the word
Onde o silêncio mora	Where silence lives
Brasa da palavra	Ember of the word
A hora clara, nosso pai	The hour of clarity, our father]
( <i>Letra só</i> 297)	(trans. Lindsay in <i>Circuladô</i> , liner notes)

“Asa da palavra” [wing of the word] suggests a quality of language that allows some kind of ascent. Might it be an ascension from impenetrability into illumination? For the next line, “Asa parada agora” [wing now stilled] suggests that the ascension which the “wing of the word” might sometimes allow is hindered. The next figure, of a “Casa da palavra/ Onde o silêncio mora” [house of the word/ where silence lives] is one of the most evocative in the lyric. If what lives within words is, ultimately, silence rather than fixed meaning, then every word has a potential infinity of meanings. The house of the word is where poetic creation can always take place. The image is reminiscent of Heidegger’s reflection, in his “Brief über den Humanismus” [Letter on Humanism], that language is “das Haus des Seins” [the house of Being] (*Wegmarken* 330, trans. Capuzzi and Gray in *Basic Writings* 213). There is not sufficient evidence to suggest an allusion here, but the parallel remains. For the notion of the “puro silêncio” [pure silence] dwelling within language is comparable to Heidegger’s notion of Being. That is, Veloso’s lyric traces a progression from the mundane world of linguistic fixity to the more fluid world of language that underlies it, a progression symbolized by the canoe’s entrance into the water’s wordless, yet awe-inspiring, world. The lyric might also be said to trace a progression, then, from a world of objects of fixed nature to the more ample field of *Being*. In this vein, the “hora clara” [hour of clarity] that Veloso writes of, as well as the “clareira” [clearing] merit comparison to Heidegger’s conception of the “lichtung” [clearing], “das Offene für alles An- und Abwesende [the

open region for everything that becomes present and absent], and where Being is illuminated (*Zur Sache des Denkens* 72, trans. Stambaugh in *Basic Writings* 384).

But whether one speaks of “Being” or of the word Veloso uses, “silence,” it is clear that the “hora da palavra” [hour of the word] is a moment of revelation:

Hora da palavra	[Hour of the word
Quando não se diz nada	When nothing is said
Fora da palavra	Outside the word
Quando mais dentro aflora	When further inside flowers
Tora da palavra	Trunk of the word
Rio, pau enorme, nosso pai	River, huge log, our father]
( <i>Letra só</i> 297)	(trans. Lindsay in <i>Circuladô</i> , liner notes)

This “hora da palavra” embodies the play of presence and absence of meaning that the songwriter alluded to previously, when he wrote that “Nosso pai não diz, diz” [our father doesn’t say, he says]. Language, the lyric suggests, both speaks and says nothing, at least nothing “Fora da palavra” [outside of the word] itself. The song’s closing image, as Wisnik notes, is one in which:

A canção, que começava com o vazio da linguagem no “oco de pau” (a madeira-canoa na água), termina simetricamente com o cheio da água como “a tora” fálica “da palavra”... (essa imagem é uma reverência ao último parágrafo do *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, em que se lê: “O Rio de São Francisco—que de tão grande se comparece—parece um pau grosso, em pé, enorme...” (234)

[The song, which began with the void of language in the “hollow of a log” (the wooden canoe in the water), concludes symmetrically with the fullness of water as the phallic “trunk of the word”... (this image is an homage to the last paragraph of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, where one reads: ‘The São Francisco River, that for being so large appears to be—seems like a thick pole, upright, huge...’).]<sup>20</sup>

The phallic quality of the final image is reinforced by the fact that, in Brazilian Portuguese, “pau” can refer to “wood” or a “pole,” but is also slang for “penis.”

The play of hollowness to fullness in the song recalls the simultaneous absence and presence of the father in Guimarães Rosa’s story, and also the notion of linguistic meaning as always both presence and absence, expression and silence. Furthermore, the idea that “our father” in the song is at once man and wood and river speaks to the way in which Veloso underscores our origin not in one

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<sup>20</sup> As mentioned above, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* [Eng. trans. *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*] is the long novel for which Guimarães Rosa is best known.

thing, but rather in Being itself. As such, our father truly does lie “beyond the real,” beyond what can be described in rational language. Our father, then, is man, wood, river, and, the song suggests, *poetry* itself. The rhymes of the final stanza (“hora da palavra,” “fora da palavra,” “tora da palavra”) are amazing in their own right, and seem to say something themselves about the song’s play of meaning; they seem to be out there on the third bank. This lyric is one of Veloso’s finest lyrics to date, and illustrates his capability to work with philosophical ideas about language and being, recurrent themes in his work.

### **Manhatã [Manhattan]**

This song, a celebration of the isle of Manhattan, alludes to the technically singular nineteenth-century Brazilian Romantic Sousândrade, whose epic poem “O Guesa” contains a section entitled “O Inferno de Wall Street” [The Wall Street Inferno]. It appears on the 1997 album Livro [Book]. In *Sobre as Letras*, Veloso describes the genesis of the song:

Quando a escrevi, dediquei a Lulu Santos, porque lembrava de ouvi-lo repetir em Nova York, numa vez em que coincidiu de estarmos os dois lá: “Manhatã...Manhatã...”. Achei emocionante porque logo me lembrei de uns versos do trecho do épico de Sousândrade que os irmãos Campos apelidaram de “O Inferno de Wall Street”, em que a palavra Manhattan aparece tomada como um oxítono rimando com uma palavra portuguesa em “ã”. (47)

[When I wrote it, I dedicated it to (singer-songwriter) Lulu Santos, because I remembered hearing him repeat in New York, one time when it happened that we were there at the same time: “Manhatã... Manhatã...” I thought it moving because I at once remembered some verses of the part of Sousândrade’s epic that the Campos brothers nicknamed “The Inferno of Wall Street,” in which the word Manhattan appears as an oxytone rhyming with a Portuguese word ending in “ã.”]<sup>21</sup>

Veloso’s invocation of Sousândrade’s pronunciation of Manhattan, “Manhatã,” is particularly appropriate, since the island’s Algonquin name is usually transliterated as “Man-a-hatt-a.” In his book of memoirs, he has also described the song’s genesis:

A palavra *Manhattan*, que encontrei no espantoso “Inferno de Wall Street”, do poeta romântico brasileiro Sousândrade, tomada, por força da métrica e da rima, pelo que ela soaria

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<sup>21</sup> An oxytone is a word with “a heavy stress accent on its last syllable.” The English word Manhattan is an amphibrach; however, in Sousândrade’s and Veloso’s renderings, the word would scan as an anapest: Man-ha-TÃ. The Portuguese “ã” sound may be described as “a nasalized ‘uh’” (Ulsh 39).



se a lêsemos à portuguesa—*Manhatã*—, volta, com essa aparência de palavra tupi, à minha mente sempre que ando por esses desfiladeiros pontilhados de portais dourados. Manhatã, Manhatã, cantarolo com carinho e sorriso em face do entendimento imediato que posso ter da aventura norte-americana, de sua realidade fatalmente mestiça.

(*Verdade tropical* 505)

[The word “Manhattan,” which I found in the amazing “Inferno de Wall Street” (Wall Street Inferno) by the Brazilian romantic poet Sousândrade, by dint of its metric and rhyme, would sound in Portuguese like “Manhatã.” So it comes back to mind like some Tupi word each time I walk through those canyons dotted with golden portals. Manhatã, Manhatã, I hum to myself fondly and smile at the instant understanding I am able to have of the North American adventure, of its inevitably mestiza (mestiça) reality.] (trans. da Sena 328)

In Brazilian letters, the fame of Sousândrade might be compared to that of Blake or Melville in the English-speaking world. Largely obscure until Augusto and Haroldo de Campos resuscitated critical interest in his work in the 1960s, Sousândrade once wrote of his own epic, “O Guesa,” that “I’ve already heard twice ‘that The Wandering Guesa will be read 50 years later; I was saddened—a disappointment for one who writes 50 years before’” (qtd. in Campos, *Re visão de Sousândrade* [Revision of Sousândrade] 24). Since the ‘60s, and largely due to the reception of the Campos brothers’ *Re visão de Sousândrade*, the poet has been considered far ahead of his time. Canto X of his epic poem has been singled out as an exemplar of proto-modernist verse for its highly allusive poetics, its incorporation of foreign (particularly English) words, and its deep, parodic cynicism about the modern world. Like Eliot in “The Waste Land,” Sousândrade invokes myth as a parallel to modernity, in this case, not the grail legend, but rather a Quechua legend about a young man (the eponymous “Guesa”) who is to be sacrificed.

The long poem narrates the flight of the Guesa from the tribal leaders who would sacrifice him. His travels lead him around the South American continent to Africa and to Europe. In Cantos IX and X, the Guesa journeys to New York, the financial capital of the New World. Sousândrade himself lived in New York from 1871 to 1885, and it was there that much of “O Guesa” was composed. It is these New York cantos of the poem to which Veloso’s “Manhattan” alludes, and specifically, to the section that has been called “O Inferno de Wall Street” [The Wall Street Inferno]. This “Inferno” is one of the most remarkable poetic documents in all of nineteenth-century literature. When the Guesa

arrives in New York, he is engrossed by the grandeur of the young and prosperous United States, remarking:

Livre terra! Onde á luz da liberdade  
Os raios Franklin subjogou dos céus;  
Venceu Fulton do mar a tempestade;  
E Washington disseras ser um deus!  
(*O Guesa* 190)

[Free land! Where there is the light of liberty  
Franklin's rod subdued the skies  
Fulton conquered the storms of sea  
And Washington is considered a god!]

Cantos IX and X of Sousândrade's poem are full of references to North-American life. The *Guesa* presents an affirmative vision of the United States until he enters the New York Stock Exchange. It is there that, amid widespread corruption and hypocrisy, the experiment of the United States reveals its underbelly. In stanzas that recall the limerick form and incorporate manifold cultural references (with speakers that range from Henry Ward Beecher to King Arthur), neologisms, plays on words, and a scathing view of American decadence, Sousândrade's "Inferno de Wall Street" is far ahead of its time. Unlike the rest of "O Guesa," this section of the poem reads much like a modernist, collage-like text, and has been compared in depth and scope to Pound's *Cantos* and Neruda's *Canto Geral*.<sup>22</sup>

Among those whom Sousândrade mentions in his caustic indictment of American hypocrisy and corruption are the preacher Henry Ward Beecher (brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe) and Alice Tilton, whose affair had been an enormous public scandal; President Grant, who had been accused of governing autocratically; and the notorious Boss William Tweed, whose influence and vote buying in New York were the epitome of corruption of the democratic ideal:

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<sup>22</sup> For example, see Duarte (1993) and A. and H. de Campos (2002).

(Mob violentada:)

—Mistress Tilton, Sir Grant, Sir Tweed,  
Adultério, realeza, ladrão,  
Em másc'ras nós (rostos  
Compostos)  
Que dancem à eterna Linch Law!  
(*Re visão de Sousândrade* 344)

[(Violated *mob*):]

—Mistress Tilton, Sir Grant, Sir Tweed,  
Adultery, royalty, outlaw,  
Knot masked (grim faces)  
Disgraces,  
Let them dance th'eternal *Lynch law*!] (trans.  
Brown in *Re visão de Sousândrade* 587)

Sousândrade targets not only political and moral corruption, but the materialism that undergirds America's capitalist society.

The stanza to which Veloso alludes to in “Manhatã” is stanza 43 in Canto X of “O Guesa,” and it includes several proto-modernistic elements.

(Tammany entre as tribos:)

--Bisões! Águias! Ursos! Gorilas!  
Ao fundo lá vai Manhattan!  
Sitting-Bull! Perdida  
Vendida  
Ao rascal, ao rum-Arimã!  
(*Re visão de Sousândrade* 353)

[(Tammany among the tribes:)]

—Bison! Eagles! Bears! Gorillas!  
To the bottom goes Manhattan!  
Sitting-Bull! 'twas lost,  
Swindle cost  
To the *rascal rum*-Ahriman!  
(trans. Brown in *Re visão de Sousândrade* 596)

As Augusto and Haroldo de Campos have noted, the stanza is about the Tammany Society:

sociedade político-nativista, inspirada no modelo índio, que exerceu poderoso papel na vida pública norte-americana...Na *Tammany*, as seções estaduais recebiam nomes como ‘Águia’ (“tribo” de Nova Iorque); ‘Urso’ (“tribo” de Connecticut) etc. Intervém na estância a *persona* de Sitting-Bull, chefe dos Sioux (1837-1890), talvez o maior líder da resistência dos peles-vermelhas contra o branco. (*Re visão de Sousândrade* 60)

[a political-nativist society, inspired by an Indian model, that played a powerful role in North American public life...In *Tammany*, the state sections received names like ‘Eagle’ (‘tribe’ of New York); ‘Bear’ (‘tribe’ of Connecticut), etc. The persona of Sitting-Bull, chief of the Sioux (1837-1890), perhaps the greatest leader of the resistance of the red-skins against the whites, intercedes in the stanza.]

The Campos brothers also note that “rum Arimã” [rum-Ahriman] is a “compósito sousandradino, reunindo as idéias de bebedor de rum e de gênio do mal—Arimã, na mitologia persa” [a

Sousândradian composite, reuniting the ideas of a drinker of rum and an evil demon—Ahriman, from Persian mythology] (60).

It should be clear, then, that this stanza from Sousândrade's epic treats the hypocrisy that undergirds America's democratic ideals. The Tammany Society, a patriotic society whose very name

is an invocation of a Delaware Indian chief, was by Sousândrade’s time in New York a hotbed of corruption under the infamous “Boss” William Tweed. Thus, Sousândrade’s stanza traces a double hypocrisy of sorts. Tammany is hypocritical because it fails to uphold the democratic ideas on which it was founded; but also because the flipside of America’s democratic ideals meant the systematic marginalization of Indians. The democratic ideal of political action that is embodied by the Indian leader Sitting Bull has been paradoxically sold to the demon of political corruption.

Veloso’s “Manhattan,” then, alludes to this stanza’s play on Manhattan. Veloso rhymes the words Manhattan as Sousândrade does here, turning it into “Manhatã.” But Veloso’s song must also be viewed in dialogue with Sousândrade’s Canto X. In fact, not only this stanza, but the whole of the “O Inferno de Wall Street” is a denouncement of the deep hypocrisy and corruption in the United States. Veloso’s song can be seen as a response to this overwhelmingly negative vision:

Uma canoa canoa Varando a manhã de norte a sul Deusa da lenda na proa Levanta uma tocha na mão	[A canoe, a canoe Crossing over the morning from north to south Goddess of legend stands on the prow Lifting a torch in her hand
Todos os homens do mundo Voltaram seus olhos naquela direção Sente-se o gosto do vento Cantando nos vidros nome doce da cunhã:	All of the men of the world Turned their eyes to stare in that direction You can taste the very wind On the windowpanes singing the sweet name of the Indian woman:
Manhattan, Manhattan Manhattan, Manhattan ( <i>Letra só 211</i> )	Manhattan, Manhattan Manhattan, Manhattan]

Like Sousândrade, Veloso treats the question of Indians in the New World. But rather than focus on their exploitation by European colonization, the songwriter’s opening image seems to offer an ideal, pre-Columbian image of America. That is, until we realize what that the “Deusa da lenda” [Goddess of legend] standing on the prow of the canoe is actually the Statue of Liberty, and that the canoe is itself the isle of Manhattan. In *Verdade Tropical*, The songwriter has discussed his vision of New York’s legendary quality:

Uma palavra indígena nomeia a ilha em que se erguem os desfiladeiros de arranha-céus, os quais não transcendem a vulgaridade apenas por se apresentar—como notou Lévi-Strauss—antes como acidentes geográficos do que como arquitetura, mas também por elevar-se à

condição de obras humanas atemporais: ao vê-los, vivenciamos ao mesmo tempo a força de sua lenda, como se eles já tivessem sido destruídos há muitos séculos. (504-505)

[An indigenous word names the island where canyons of skyscrapers rise, escaping vulgarity not merely because they seem to be, as Lévi-Strauss remarked, more topographical accidents than architecture, but also because they rise to the condition of atemporal human works: seeing them, we experience at the same time the power of a legend, as if they had been demolished many centuries ago.] (trans. Isabel da Sena 328)

Here, the songwriter points to the dual nature of New York City and of the American experience. As he has observed in a PBS interview, “I don't think history has ever faced anything like the power and the achievements of the United States, the generosity and the potential of oppression, all the greatness of the United States” (“Songs of Brazil”). “Manhatã” treats the dual nature of New York and of “the American Empire,” its tremendous beauty and power and also its dangerous potential for corruption. Veloso’s lyric is a paean to New York, but a cautious one that, by depicting the isle of Man-a-hatt-a *before* the arrival of the Dutch, is also an ironic reminder of how Manhattan’s colonizers took over that unspoiled area. “O Guesa,” in fact, contains a scene depicting the Dutch buying Manhattan from the Indians (or swindling it from them) for sixty guilders:

(Ao fragor de Jericó encalha Hendrick os Índios vendem aos Holandeses a ilha de Manhattan malassombrada:)	Hudson;	[(At the din of Jericho Hendrick Hudson runs aground; the Indians sell to the Dutch the haunted island of Manhattan:)]
--A Meia-Lua, proa pra China Ésta crenando em Tappan-Zee... Hoogh moghende Heereen... Pois tirem		--The Half Moon, its prow toward China, Is careening in Tappan, Bay... Hoogh moghende Heeren... Here, then,
Por guildens sessenta...Yea! Yea! ( <i>Re visão de Sousândrade</i> 369)		Are sixty good guilders...Yea! Yea!] (trans. Brown in <i>Re visão de Sousândrade</i> 611)

This stanza is of course a reference to Peter Minuit’s purchase of the island for \$24 worth of trinkets. Since he had “O Guesa” in mind when he composed this song, perhaps Veloso’s depiction of pre-Columbian Manhattan may be said to suggest some of Sousândrade’s own cynicism about American culture (including the exploitation of the Indians). Still, it must be noted that there are moments in Sousândrade’s epic which also celebrate the United States. In fact, an often-overlooked section of “O Guesa” highlights some of the positive aspects of American democracy. Before the Guesa enters the

New York Stock Exchange, his vision of New York is much like the speaker's acclamatory perspective in "Manhatã." As the Guesa extols:

[Vinde a New-York, onde ha logar p'ra todos,  
Patria, se não esquecimento,—crença,  
Descanso, e o perdoar da dor immensa]  
(*O Guesa* 187)

[Come to New York, where there is a place for  
all  
Fatherland, if not forgetting,—faith,  
Rest, and the letting go of an immense pain]

Despite lines such as these (and others which praise such men as Washington, Franklin, and Lincoln), the poet's fame, which is still far less than is deserved, rests on his trenchant critique of American cultural patterns. It must be admitted that the Guesa's praise of New York is completely undercut by the "Inferno de Wall Street" section of Canto X. Still, perhaps the optimistic vision of New York in Veloso's "Manhatã" may be considered a more ironic commentary if we read it in light of "O Guesa." For perhaps the speaker of the song, like the Guesa before he enters the New York Stock Exchange, is expressing a merely naïve vision of the United States—one in the case of the speaker of "Manhatã" that would conflate an almost edenic, pre-Columbian image of Manhattan with the modern city we know.

Perhaps the speaker is not so naïve, however, for as in "O Inferno de Wall Street," the second section of Veloso's "Manhatã" deals with the darker side of American capitalism. It is as if the speaker enters the world of the Stock Exchange just as the Guesa does:

Um remoinho de dinheiro  
Varre o mundo inteiro, um leve leviatã  
E aqui dançam guerras no meio  
Da paz das moradas de amor  
(*Letra só* 211)

[A whirlwind of money  
Sweeps over all the world, a light leviathan  
And here wars dance around in the midst  
Of the peace where love resides]

Here, the economic system on which the United States is built is embodied in the "leve leviatã" [light leviathan] that "varre o mundo inteiro" [sweeps over the whole world]. Note the play of sound in "leve leviatã." As a musician, Veloso is a poet who loves to play with sound. But wordplay is also one of the major features of Sôsa's verse in "O Inferno de Wall Street." Money here is both destructive (as a "remoinho" [whirlwind]) and monstrous (as a "leviatã" [leviathan]). The leviathan is

also a legendary creature, underscoring the aforementioned mythological quality with which Veloso endows New York (and by extension, America).

The image of wars dancing reflects the violence that pervades “the American dream,” both within the “paz das moradas de amor” [peace where love resides] and the many places where America makes war in the name of “peace” and “democracy.” But the notion of a war dance also lends a ritualistic quality to American violence, suggestive of an Indian war dance. As the Sousândrade verses to which Veloso alludes, in which “Americans” have modeled the Tammany political society on an Indian model, in Veloso’s song the modern American “war dance” is an ironic commentary on the vanishing of war dances among the vanquished Indian tribes. And yet, the song never expresses this negativity with regard to America explicitly; it is only implied. The song’s final stanza returns to a positive vision:

Ah! Pra onde vai, quando for  
Essa imensa alegria, toda essa exaltação  
Ah! Solidão, multidão  
Que menina bonita mordendo a polpa da maçã:  
  
Manhattan, Manhattan  
Manhattan, Manhattan  
(Letra só 211)

[Ah! Where does it go when it goes  
Such immense exaltation, such a sense of  
joyfulness  
Ah! Solitude, multitude  
What a beautiful girl biting into the apple’s  
flesh:  
  
Manhattan, Manhattan  
Manhattan, Manhattan]

Is the “menina bonita” [beautiful girl] the same pre-Columbian Indian woman of the beginning of the song, or is she a modern Manhattanite? Perhaps the phrase refers to both. Just as pre-Columbian Man-hatt-a was taken over by European settlers, so modern America is reaching its eclipse. The final image of the girl “mordendo a polpa da maçã” [biting into the apple’s flesh] echoes the song’s dual vision of New York: is the girl able to take advantage of all that the “Big Apple” has to offer, or does she simply partake of the forbidden fruit, the temptation of the “remoinho de dinheiro” [whirlwind of money] that the city holds out to its would-be denizens. The line, “where does it go, when it goes” reminds us that New York is a passing civilization. Veloso has written elsewhere that “Nova Iorque é o esplendor do Império Americano e também a seta com que ele aponta para um futuro que só o reafirmará superando-o” [New York, the splendor of the American Empire, is also the arrow with

which it points toward a future to be reaffirmed only by overcoming it] (*Verdade tropical* 505, trans. da Sena 328). As the splendor of the American Empire, New York is also both a solitude and a multitude, both a place where all the world wishes to congregate and part of a world removed from the rest of the world. The city and the country are composed of all of these contradictions. And yet, Veloso implies that the American experiment is not all bad, and rather than mount a transparent critique of “the American Empire,” he prefers to celebrate it as a legendary civilization that is past, or passing, or to come.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In Veloso’s song, “Americanos,” he writes that “Americanos sentem que algo se perdeu/ Algo se quebrou, está se quebrando” [Americans feels that something has been lost/ Something broke, something is breaking].



### **Part III: Conclusion: “O ato mero de compor uma canção” [The mere act of composing a song]**

There are other instances of literary and philosophical allusion in Veloso’s repertoire.<sup>1</sup> For example, the 1967 “Tropicália,” which announced the “anthropophagic” movement bearing that name, alludes to the title of *Iracema*, José de Alencar’s 19<sup>th</sup>-century indigenist novel. The 1969 “Os Argonautas” [The Argonauts] alludes to a famous, posthumously published fragment by Portuguese modernist poet Fernando Pessoa (not mention the mythical Greek ship). 1977’s “Um frevo novo” [A New Frevo] is a rereading of the democratic ode, “O povo ao poder” [Power to the People] by Bahia’s nineteenth-century abolitionist poet, Castro Alves. 1978’s “Sampa” (nickname for São Paulo) has allusions to São Paulo’s Concrete poets, to the novel, *Panamérica*, by José Agrippino de Paula, and to Jorge Mautner’s first novel, *Deus da chuva e da morte* [God of Rain and Death].<sup>2</sup> 1984’s “Língua” [Language], one of the songwriter’s most innovative compositions and an homage to the Portuguese language, alludes to the work of Fernando Pessoa, João Guimarães Rosa, Martin Heidegger, and nineteenth-century Brazilian Parnassian poet Olávo Bilac.<sup>3</sup> The 1985 “Milagres do povo” [Miracles of the People] is an homage to Jorge Amado’s novel, *Tenda dos Milagres* [Tent of Miracles]. 1989’s “Neide Candolina,” about a fictional personage of that name, alludes to James Joyce’s phrase, “Dear Dirty Dublin,” which appears in *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. And “Este Amor”

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to allusions, there are also other connections with literary texts in the songwriter’s oeuvre. For example, as mentioned, Veloso has set to music and recorded versions of poems by Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, and a John Donne’s elegy translated by the latter and set to music by Péricles Cavalcanti. He has also composed a sound collage based on colonial Brazilian poet Gregório de Mattos’s “Triste Bahia” [Sad Bahia], and recorded a percussive version of Antônio de Castro Alves’s antislavery poem, “O Navio Negroiro” [The Slave Ship], among other songs of literary extraction.

<sup>2</sup> The latter is also a musician who has collaborated with Veloso.

<sup>3</sup> “Língua” in particular has garnered a good deal of critical attention with regard to its allusions. For this reason, I do not include the song among the analyses here. See Borim: “Roçando a língua de Camões: Reverência e dessacralização do português em Caetano Veloso” in *Luso-Brazilian Review* 41(2) 2005, Neto: “Gosto de sentir a minha língua...” in *Cult* 49, August 2001, and Witkowski: “Caetano Veloso or the Taste for Hybrid Language” in *Diogenes* 48(3) March 2000.

[This Love], released in the same year, alludes to Kafka's short text, "Wunsch, Indianer zu werden" [The Wish to be a Red Indian].<sup>27</sup>

My aim here has not been to trace every allusion that Veloso has made (since there are undoubtedly allusions that will go unperceived in any case). Rather, I have tried to show the degree to which this popular artist engages in serious dialogue with literary tradition. In his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T.S. Eliot writes that "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead" (*The Sacred Wood* 41). I hope to have shown in the foregoing pages that Veloso is a poet, and should be set among the illustrious names of the past. He is, therefore, part of a literary tradition.

As Eliot suggests, the poet's role is not merely to receive tradition, but, in turn, to shape it, for "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it" (41). I hope to have demonstrated the degree to which, rather than simply absorbing "influences," Veloso's use of allusion has allowed him to parody, to reverence, to converse with, in a word, to *create* using literary materials of the past. "Influence" signifies an adherence to the past; creative allusion suggests engaging critically with the past, rethinking it.

Still, if what I write is true, and Veloso is a poet working in a literary tradition, I must also consider the other side of the coin. He is, after all, a songwriter, working in a popular tradition as well. In an interview, he has affirmed that "Sou desse mundo da música industrial para a diversão das massas e é nessa área que me expresso" [I'm of the world of industrial music for the diversion of the masses and it is within that area that I express myself] (Qtd. in Lucchesi 330). Although, in "Genipapo absoluto," the songwriter alludes to Proust, he also refers to popular songwriters Ataulfo Alves and Augusto Calheiros. Likewise, in "Hotel Night," Veloso alludes to canonical Brazilian modernist poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade—but also to Mick Jagger. The question that inevitably arises is, what does one make of this?

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<sup>27</sup> For Veloso's comments on "Este Amor," see *Sobre as letras* 40.

It would be easy to assert in an age that has entered postmodernity that the mixture of allusions to “high” and “popular” culture represent a smashing of artificial hierarchies. Veloso himself has addressed the distance between “erudite” and “popular.” In an interview he talks about the launching of his 1997 album, “Livro” [Book], explaining that the title was an inside joke:

...a palavra “livro” aponta—não necessariamente é claro, mas na organização geral das coisas—para uma região da alta cultura, enquanto disco—não necessariamente—já apontaria na direção da indústria cultural. Embora, evidentemente, haja milhões de livros que são produtos comerciais de baixíssimo nível e que vendem milhões no mundo inteiro. E há muitos discos de grande refinamento, e há discos que vieram justamente da área mais comercial e que se tornaram focos de informação importantes. (“Outras palavras” 41)

[... the word “book” points—not necessarily of course, but in the general organization of things—toward a region of high culture, whereas “record”—not necessarily—points in the direction of cultural industry. However, obviously, there are millions of books that are commercial products of the lowest level that are sold in the millions around the world. And there are many records of great refinement, and there are records that come precisely from the most commercial area and that have become important points of reference.]

Veloso is a songwriter, then, who sees the possibility for works of “high” culture to exist within “popular” culture. Yet he is not an artist who wishes to demolish the distinction between “erudite” and “popular” altogether. As he has said with regard to his use of allusion, “às vezes, eu pudesse pegar uma coisa ou outra...em geral, mais de prosa erudita—e citar assim diretamente” [sometimes I could take one thing or another...in general from erudite prose, and cite it directly] (“Outas palavras” 52). What I wish to underscore here is the fact that Veloso’s allusions to traditional “literary” and “philosophical” texts bestow on his own lyrics a “literariness” that is not found in the work of most “popular” musicians. As John Ryle has observed:

Although popular culture and high culture in Brazil are more closely linked than in the English-speaking world—a modernist poet, Vinicius de Moraes, wrote the original lyrics to ‘The Girl from Ipanema’ and Caetano’s contemporary, Chico Buarque, has written two novels—Caetano is unique in his combination of literary and demotic, lyrical and metaphysical, and in the degree of cultural self-awareness he brings to the pop idiom. (“Translating Caetano” 154)

Veloso has affirmed that the bridging of high and low culture “é um problema que é complexo, é um negócio de nosso tempo” [is a complex problem, something of our times] (“Outras Palavras” [Other Words] 41). His song, “Noite de Hotel” [Hotel Night], treats the problem of “high”

and “low” in some detail. It is a pessimistic reflection on the degradation of modernity that is particularly manifest in popular culture. As Veloso writes in *Sobre as Letras*:

Fiz em Lisboa, num hotel. Estava muito mal, deprimido e irritado ao mesmo tempo. Falo mal dos videoclipes da MTV que estavam passando, digo que são uma mera diluição do “sangue do poeta”, numa referência ao filme de Cocteau, do qual todos os videoclipes de rock-and-roll são uma contrafação de décima quinta category. Eu já achava, mas na hora senti aquilo com muita raiva. (53)

[I composed it in Lisboa, in a hotel. I was doing very poorly, depressed and irritated at the same time. It speaks badly of the MTV music videos that were playing; I say that they are a mere dilution of the “blood of the poet,” a reference to Cocteau’s film, of which all the rock-and-roll videos are a fraudulent imitation of the 15<sup>th</sup> category. I already thought that, but at the time I felt it with much anger.]

“Noite de hotel” presents a cynical view of modern popular culture as compared to a work of refinement such as Jean Cocteau’s 1930 avant-garde film, *Le sang du poète*. The speaker calls the music videos a “cantilena diabólica, mímica pateta” [diabolic cantilena, goofy mimic]. Yet the pinnacle of true art in these lines is also a product of mass culture, a film. In “Noite de Hotel,” then, Veloso first separates “high” forms of cultural expression from “low” forms, and then breaks that boundary line. For what constitutes “high” art can itself be enacted in a popular form.

As “Noite de Hotel” continues, so does the speaker’s engagement with both erudite and popular. The disconsolate atmosphere of the “hotel night” weighs on the speaker as heavily as the “spleen” of Baudelaire:

Noite de hotel  
E a presença satânica é a de um diabo morto  
Em que não reconheço o anjo torto de Carlos  
Nem o outro  
Só fúria e alegria  
Pra quem titia Jagger pedia simpatia  
(*Letra só* 84)

[Hotel night  
And the satanic presence is that of a lifeless  
devil  
In which I can recognize neither the crooked  
angel of Carlos  
Nor the other  
Only fury and joy  
For whom Aunty Jagger  
Begged sympathy]

The points of reference here are two devils that appear in two key twentieth-century texts. Both these demons are less menacing than the one which comprises the “satanic presence” of Veloso’s lyric. The first is the “crooked angel” that appears in “Poema de sete faces” [Seven-Sided Poem] by Brazilian

modernist poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade, whom Perrone calls “the axial figure of modern poetry in Brazil” (*Seven Faces* 13). Drummond’s poem opens on a facetious note:

Quando nasci, um anjo torto  
dêsses que vivem na sombra  
disse: Vai, Carlos, ser gauche na vida.  
(*Poesia* 53)

[When I was born, one of the crooked/  
angels who live in shadow,  
said: Carlos, go on! Be *gauche* in life.]  
(trans. Bishop in *An Anthology* 63)

The second devil to which Veloso alludes is that of Mick Jagger’s 1968 anthem, “Sympathy for the Devil.” Here, a work of popular music is juxtaposed to one of high art. Are the Rolling Stones, then, as important a cultural reference as the verse of Drummond? Surely Mick Jagger is not the poet that either Drummond or Veloso is.

Yet “Sympathy for the Devil” is often considered the Stones’ most “poetic” song. Jagger himself touched on its “literary” dimension in an interview, when he said that “I wrote it as sort of like a Bob Dylan song,” thus associating the style of “Sympathy” to that of the contemporary English-language pop singer most often cited as a *littérateur* (“Jagger Remembers” 58). Jagger also noted that “I think (the idea for the song) was taken from an old idea of Baudelaire’s, I think, but I could be wrong. Sometimes when I look at my Baudelaire books, I can’t see it in there. But it was an idea I got from French writing” (“Jagger Remembers”). By alluding to Jagger’s song, Veloso suggests that the Stones’ lyric constitutes as valid a cultural reference as a work of literature.

“Noite de Hotel” concludes by suggesting that a work of “popular” art might transcend the very degradation so often witnessed in popular culture:

Noite de hotel  
Estou a zero, sempre o grande otário  
E nunca o ato mero de compor uma canção  
Pra mim foi tão desesperadamente necessário  
(*Letra só* 84)

[Hotel Night  
I’m at zero, always the great fool  
And never has the mere act of composing a  
song  
Been so desperately necessary for me]

Whereas the song began by denigrating the “goofy mimic” of music videos in relation to the art of Cocteau, the speaker ends on a note of hope for popular culture. To transcend the situation of modern mediocrity, what is “desesperadamente necessário” [desperately necessary] is to compose a song.

Veloso sees the possibility for art in the work of pop musicians, for poetry in the work of the lyricist—but only if it transcends banality.

To transcend the mundane, one of the songwriter's major tools is allusion. Allusion declares that popular culture has not become a Waste Land, that contemporary art of the masses has not forgotten (completely) about literary tradition. To forget is not an option for an artist who conscientiously engages with the materials of his or her culture, for as Veloso has stated, "I cannot deny where I live, nor can I forget what I have read" (qtd. in Dunn 117). If the *music* of Veloso's poetry reminds us that, in Ezra Pound's words, "Poetry atrophies when it gets too far away from music," the songwriter's references to the literary past are a reminder that to allude is more than to be influenced, that to create is more than to rehash old ideas, and that to sing is more than to remember (*ABC of Reading* 61).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Guilherme Wisnik has noted in the songwriters work, since its inception, "a imagem do poder mágico da música—como uma reatualização do mito de Orfeu" [the image of the magical power of music—like a renewal of the myth of Orpheus] (79).

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