

A STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLECTIVE BRAZILIAN SUBJECTIVITY  
THROUGH THE MAKINGS OF THE EP (C)ASA

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate  
College in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts in Music Greatbatch School of Music  
March 2021

## Abstract

*(C)ASA* is a subjective expression of the collective and individual Brazilian consciousness into a post-modern social context. It does not give emphasis to exoticism but to the issues, suffering, desire and, of course, consciousness of this group of people. The purpose of this paper is to analyze and describe this subjectivity through the music production process of the EP. In this paper, the music production process is treated as a symbolic speech act. All creational processes will be described and analyzed through a psychoanalytical lens in order to elaborate their symbolism. This paper will document all technical decisions made during the construction of the EP as well as clarify some characteristics of music production. It is important to clarify that the post-production phase – mixing or mastering – will not be covered, but the compositional and recording process only. Finally, the thoughts written on following pages exist to demonstrate how art is functioning in a deeper level of expression in the musical work of *(C)ASA*. Here, music is not expressing the artist's self only, but the context in which they live. In other words, it is portraying an individual and collective identity.

### (C)ASA - An Overview

It is true that the reality in which composers find themselves directly influences their art. Even if composers try to avoid expressing emotions, that in and of itself reveals something about the composer and their times. The simple decision of a composition technique can point to the characteristics of the composer. There is always subjectivity behind a piece. Because of that, I will be reflecting on the conditions that I, the composer, found myself in during the creation process of this project and describing the choices of instrument, dynamics, structure, musical references, birdcall material that was used as inspiration, lyrics and the many possible allegories of it.

The condition of being far away from home was crucial to the making of this artistic project which explores the idea of “Home.” Dialectically not being home is essential to further comprehend what to be home is and this articulation permeates the entire musical construction in this work. The title of the EP itself was created in a way that combines the main ideas of this project: Brazilian birds and home. The word *casa* in Portuguese means *house* and the word *asa* means *wings*. Thinking about that, I organized the title in a way that would emphasize both meanings of home and birds into this combination: (C)ASA. It is very meaningful to use birdcalls from the country I was born in as a subject of research, because they already represent home. However, the presence of the bird in here also illustrates a dialectic articulation against the other theme, since birds live outside of a house: they are both home and not home.

It is important to mention that, at first, the idea for this project was to research birdcalls from Brazilian birds and write songs about love, inspired by one song that I had done before. The song which inspired the whole work came from the birdcall of the bentevi, a bird that was very present in a house where I lived for ten years surrounded by family. However, after writing the first song that appears in the EP – “Verão” – I realized that the subject that I had to further develop in the project was the concept of home.

The process of deciding which birdcall to use as a musical material was made through having an immediate musical reaction – in other words, being able to translate musically the birdcall in an intuitive and immediate manner. – I heard lots of birdcalls while making this research, but only the ones used in this project aroused musical ideas in me.

Beside the birdcall, the choice of musical references also make reference to home. The work of a Brazilian songwriter called Tim Bernardes was one major influence between these musical references. His musical genre is recognized as new MPB (Brazilian Popular Music), Brazilian folk, Brazilian rock and indie. A particular work of his that directly influenced this project was his solo album *Recomeçar*<sup>1</sup>, in which there are not many electrical instruments but lots of strings and a folk sounding aesthetic. Because of this reference, there are no electrical instruments being used in (C)ASA as the basis of the song's structure. Even so, there are some midi and electrical instruments, however they do not receive as much emphasis as the acoustic instruments in order to create a similar folk sound aesthetic as the work of Tim Bernardes. This decision was intentionally taken in order to embrace a sound aesthetic that could communicate with the type of people that might be interested in my work, and because I, the composer, relate to it. Another reason to choose folk is because it embraces a raw sound in its aesthetic and it does not require a large studio or the best equipment to reach a standard sound, making the recording process simpler.

All of the songs had a different timing to write and had a collaborative approach in the arrangement phase. While one song in the EP was written in almost two days, the others took many days and hours of hard thinking to make them work. The chronological process of making this EP was mostly looking for inspiration (researching birdcalls), composing the songs with the help of the piano or guitar, researching and defining musical references, producing

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<sup>1</sup> Bernardes, Tim, *Recomeçar*, Tim Bernardes, 2017 Accessed March 20  
[https://open.spotify.com/album/5MCqEdFGL3K7ZZavFcJdhh?si=jD1GGktpR\\_OpRTxe2EeBg](https://open.spotify.com/album/5MCqEdFGL3K7ZZavFcJdhh?si=jD1GGktpR_OpRTxe2EeBg)

and arranging, researching recording methods and finally, solving the logistics to rehearse and record.

Above all, (C)ASA is a subjective expression of the collective and individual Brazilian consciousness into a post-modern social context, not giving emphasis to exoticism but to the issues, suffering, desire and, of course, consciousness. Of course, the EP was not made by a collective Brazilian group, but by someone that lived in the same context for 20 years, so the aspects of having this experience come out subjectively through the composition process. Those subjectivities will be developed throughout the paper with a psychoanalytical lens. The reason why this can be done is because “psychoanalysis is a practice of speech,”<sup>2</sup> and if we consider music to be a language – and not a language at the same time – this can be possible. The thesis around this project argues that its construction is very much similar to a psychoanalytical session in which:

The analysand speaks about what brings him there, his suffering, his symptom. This symptom is hooked into the materiality of the unconscious, made out of things that have been said to the subject, that have hurt him, and things that are impossible to say and cause him suffering. An analyst will punctuate the words of the analysand and enable him to weave the thread of his unconscious. The powers of language and the truth effects that it enables, what is called interpretation, is the actual power of the unconscious.<sup>3</sup>

With the creation of this EP, I speak of symptoms and sufferings while with this paper I punctuate the words, musical symbols and movements that allow me to interpret hooked truths within the unconsciousness of a Brazilian composer. This paper and the construction of the EP both don't substitute the psychoanalytical session but explore music as a practice of speech and its benefits to understand society or communities within the musical production context.

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<sup>2</sup> Santiago, Jorge, *BEYOND FULL AND EMPTY SPEECH*, *Contours Journal*, (Simon Fraser University), March 19 of 2021. <https://www.sfu.ca/humanities-institute/contours/LaConference/paper2.html>

<sup>3</sup> Santiago, Jorge, *BEYOND FULL AND EMPTY SPEECH*, *Contours Journal*, (Simon Fraser University), March 19 of 2021. <https://www.sfu.ca/humanities-institute/contours/LaConference/paper2.html>

## A Brief Look at Music Production

The construction of a musical work has lots of steps and decisions that should be carefully thought out. Of course, a musical idea can come to existence randomly inside the composer's mind at any moment or hour in the day and there is nothing wrong with it. Each person has a style, a way to perceive sounds and express them. But the point here is that an effective music production is intentional, though it works with the apparent irreverent random musical ideas.

To start, it is important to ask: what is music production? According to James Burgess:

Music production is the technological extension of composition and orchestration. It captures the fullness of a composition, its orchestration, and the performative intentions of the composer(s). In its precision and inherent ability to capture cultural, individual, environmental, timbral, and interpretive subtleties along with those of intonation, timing, intention, and meaning (except where amorphousness is specified), it is superior to written music and oral traditions. Music production is not only representational but also an art in itself.<sup>4</sup>

In my own process I have come to understand that music production is the process of polishing a song in a way that it becomes understandable, aesthetically pleasing or relatable to a specific group of people. Composing is usually seen as a means of expression of the self, and the same can be considered when it comes to its technological extension. However, beyond the expression function is the communicative one.

In the post-modern era technology has become a bridge between the individual and the collective, and of course, in music production this is no different. The composer and the producer must be able to convey meaning into sounds sometimes with the help of words but always be able to at least communicate with the public that one is making music to. In other words, music becomes a product. For this reason, it came to my comprehension that good music producers must have an extensive and diverse musical appreciation list. Critical listening must

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<sup>4</sup> Burgess, Richard James. *The Art of Music Production : The Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2013

never be neglected for them. Another requirement from the part of the producer is being sensible enough to know how to maintain the unique characteristics of a song from its raw musical form and make its sound standard at the same time. The producer must be able to comprehend what can be lost and what should be kept, what is peripheral material and what is essential in a song.

While songwriting is an inherently free process, producing is about comprehending any issues with the communicative potential of the song to its public and fixing it. Because of this, a good music producer must know not only music, but people, culture and the society in general, in order to communicate musically with them. It is important to stop and carefully listen to the songs in a repetitive manner and with a reflective mind, in order understand which meanings can be found. Of course, while composing some pieces, one may not be aware of all subjectivities, being able to see them may allow the same to be enhanced in the arrangement phase.

Knowing compositional techniques, how to transcribe music in the clearest manner for the musicians to read and play, what works for a specific instrument or not, and knowing the musicians you are working with are some of the undeniably essential characteristics of composers and arrangers. While producers are responsible for scheduling recordings and defining the musical references to work with in a specific project, they are also responsible for understanding the type of people one is communicating to. This is an important step to an effective music production or any production in general: understanding the historical subjectivity of a particular community. It gives power of communication and a possible positive feedback on the presented subject. Because again, the producer is trying to communicate an idea from one or maybe a small group of individuals to a massive group of them through technology. Producers must have great social skills and be good at logistics and dealing with people. They are expected to master midi technology and compose through a

DAW such as Pro Tools, Logic Pro or Ableton. A composer doesn't have to necessarily be a producer, but a producer must be a composer in order to create music with the help of technology. The same goes for arrangers, they don't have to be music producers, but the producer must be able to arrange a song.

## Meaning and Musical Symbols: Behind the Songs

### “Verão”

Verão	<i>Summer</i>
O frio tem cheiro de longe	<i>Cold has a distant smell</i>
E as palavras não encaixam	<i>And words do not fit</i>
Meu coração tão inconstante	<i>My inconstant heart</i>
Tem um canto onde é sempre	<i>Has a place where is always</i>
Verão	<i>Summer</i>
Verão	<i>Summer</i>
Verão	<i>Summer</i>
Terra molhada onde sempre é verão	<i>Wet land where is always summer</i>
Fish aren't jumping	<i>Fish aren't jumping</i>
The living is not easy	<i>The living is not easy</i>
Onde sempre é verão	<i>Where is always summer</i>
Fish aren't jumping	<i>Fish aren't jumping</i>
Verão	<i>Summer</i>

“Verão” was born with an old idea that I had of creating a song in response to “Summertime,”<sup>5</sup> the famous jazz composition by George Gershwin. The idea pretty much suited this project because the song would describe the perspective of summer in Brazil - where I call home - while making reference to “Summertime” which describes the perspective of summer from a North American. Before moving on to the references made in this composition, it is necessary to describe how the first melodies of this song came from my research from birdcalls in Brazil.

<sup>5</sup> Armstrong, Louis, Fitzgerald, Ella, “Summertime”, track 2 on *Porgy & Bess*, Verve Label Group, 1958, Accessed March 20 <https://open.spotify.com/track/2gNjmvuQiEd2z9SqyYi8HH?si=L1k9KzgyTzG0tc0bSqw0pg>

While researching, I remembered of a very common bird in Brazil called trinca-ferro and found its singing to be very interesting to use. Its singing does not have a clear pitch sound, but it has three to four ascending sounds which I translated into major chord with major seven arpeggio in the piano (see fig. 1).



Figure 1

Right after creating this arpeggio I started playing simple cold chords (IV ii vi V) with the left hand and a melody in right which turned to be section A in this song. Then, I tried to sing the melody with words, and they ended up describing the perspective of being far from home: cold, words that do not fit and longing. Soon I connected this section to the birdcall material parallelly singing the word verão. Only after this exact moment, it occurred to me to make a reference to Summertime.

At first, this section led to a very abrupt change to what can be considered the B section, where I mix the Portuguese and English languages in the lyrics. Throughout this whole song the feeling keeps changing, almost jumping between two different places. This is marked by the time signature and key changes. While the A section is Bb major and in 6/8 tempo, B section is in its relative minor, Gm and in a 4/4 tempo. Its chord progression turns into a  $IV^{7M} ii^9 vi^9 vi^{(9;6)}$  and the last chord makes reference to summertime because of the sixth interval.

The first section also has a colder and still feeling while the second is warmer and agitated illustrating the opposing weathers of the United States and Brazil. The illustrative elements from the sections in this song appear to be functioning in contrast since the beginning of the song. When the end, or section C, starts, both previous feelings articulate against each other, switching the time signature to 6/8 – as it was in the beginning – but keeping the chord's cadences from B, in a conclusive manner.

Once the songwriting process was finished, the arranging and production phase started: the primary step was to transcribe all of it into MuseScore and write an arrangement for voice, piano and string quartet. This was when each instrument received careful attention. This phase was probably the most time-consuming part of this process because it demanded several reevaluations of the song. It is a repetitive movement of listening to musical references and the song itself, in order to make it better. The four overall goals of this phase were: constructing a story with the song; making it sound more constant; smoothing transitions and building the dynamics.

Comparing the first version of this song to the final, we can find a lot of changes. At first, the tempo was around 10 bpm faster, the A section was repeating twice at the beginning and the strings would start playing before B. I tried to add a guitar to the song, but it was not working so I had to leave this idea aside for a while. The first change was to cut the repetition of A in the beginning and the reason why this choice was made is because I wanted it to be similar to the through composed version in which there is no repetition. The effect I was looking for was surprise, and the song had lost it when the A section was repeating.

With the repetition of the A section cut, new problems emerged: the surprise feeling was too abrupt because of a weak transition between A and B, and because the strings would start playing only after the middle of the song. To solve the issue of the string's entry, I created a short introduction with strings. In it we can feel a lot of the musical reference from Tim Bernardes work. The piano has both hands written in the treble clef in a very soft dynamic and melody played which actually feels like introducing a story. The melody in the right hand never rests in the tonic, it is very active or walking like, and ends on the leading tone while the final chord, a subdominant with flat five, leaves the melodic statement unanswered. It is important to say that this introduction has reference of "Lar" – another song in this project that will be developed in here later. They are similar in the key signature, both have an active melody or

has jumping pitches, and both melodies start on the dominant. The goal for this introduction was to it sound like a prediction of what is about to come or what the listener can expect to hear throughout the EP as well. So, just like almost all of the songs in the work, the intro starts with the piano followed by the strings. The only exception for that is the “Bentevi” song, whose harmonic structure is based on the nylon guitar instead of the piano.

By this point I had fixed the string’s entry issue, but I had to solve the A to B section abrupt transition. For that, Professor Ashbaugh suggested me to add one new bar before the B section and create a piano line that would prepare the listener for further change of feeling in the song. So, I did what he suggested and using the piano, I created a melodic line which, at first, appeared to have solved the transition issue. But when I tried to play the section, with the midi file, I did not feel it was soothing the section enough. Stuck in this situation, I went back to the idea of using a guitar in this piece, but with the intent of creating a fluid transition between the sections A and B this time.

Finally, I was able to create a nylon guitar pattern for the whole song which smoothed the transition, by using harmonics and anticipating a melodic line sung in section B “fish aren’t jumping”. But in order to do that I had to decrease the tempo because I felt the need to do so while playing the new guitar part along with the midi file. The next step was to update the piano arrangement with the new guitar part, so I adapted the exact same chords of the guitar to the piano and added a few more repetitions of the word verão before the transition.

In the end, the new guitar arrangement made so much sense in the music that it allowed the old guitar idea to be added to the song, leaving it with two different guitar arrangements: one with a nylon and one with acoustic guitar. Because the new nylon guitar arrangement worked so well, I decided to start the song – after the intro – with it only.

The decision of using a piano to start composing this piece was crucial because it gave the song a unique and not warm sound at the beginning that helped create the whole identity of

it. It is not common in my birth country for people to have pianos as much as guitar, for historical reasons. So, not just in this song, but in all of them referring to this project, the piano represents what is not home while the guitar does the opposite.

Understanding which elements were important and peripheral in the construction of the song was a crucial ability for me to decide what could be changed and what should be kept. For example: it would be fine to add a guitar arrangement to fix a transitional problem, but it would not be acceptable to change the minor 6 chords in the B part because of their reference to summertime.

The lyrics and music help each other to convey a meaning in my compositional process. In fact, the lyrics were created fitting the melodic pattern of the piano. The words and music came out from what I was feeling and had in mind at the moment: a desire to be home but knowing, missing the warm weather and at the same time, lamenting that life does not have as much good opportunities there as in North America. I was feeling sad and a bit wrathful because of these things. The longing appears in the A section while the lamenting appears mostly in B. In the end, when their musical ideas merge, the musical dynamic is *forte* as an illustrative manner of how strong these feelings were felt.

This song is a description of the life perspective from the Latin American community, – or home – it's a result of the need to communicate this injury, this irreparable wound left in history from the violent form of colonialism we suffered and the consequences we still face from it. The last vocal line at the end sings a strong and loud *verão* as a symbolic scream of the pain from this open wound left five hundred years ago. The song *Verão* hopes to awaken whoever is listening to be aware of it, and maybe help to heal this wound. Because the never changing weather from Brazil cannot be a poetic illustration of our life perspectives, not anymore.

## “Lar”

Lar	<i>Home</i>
O tempo passou E eu me esqueci De aproveitar a vida	<i>Time has passed by And I forgot To enjoy life</i>
O que ficou O que perdi Foi mais do que queria	<i>What remained What I lost Was more than I wanted</i>
Todo mundo ganha Todo mundo perde Vira e mexe Acha um lugar Pra se chamar de lar	<i>Everybody wins Everybody loses But at some point Finds a place To call home</i>

This song was the third one to be created in this process. It was written from an imaginative character perspective in contrast to “Verão” in which I explicitly express my own feelings. The compositional process of this song was very similar to “Verão”: after listening to the bird’s sound, I immediately translated it into a melodic line (see fig.2) with the help of the piano. The jumping pitches were translated into intervals and rhythmic notes that were very similar to the birdcall in my perception.



Figure 2

The second natural reaction was to play the same intervals but a fourth interval up. Instantly, I found two chords that could fit the melody: Bb major and Cm7/Bb. I kept repeatedly playing them in a 3/4 tempo and just sang the first thing that came to mind and that’s how the lyrics were created. The structure formed is very cyclic: ABABA, with verse and chorus. This song was probably the fastest one to make because I had the complete idea for the song all at once, and it was completely ready in two days with all the string instruments, lyrics, piano and voice arrangements in the score. After writing the piano, voice and lyrics I had the idea for the string’s arrangement. After listening to the string’s arrangement, I knew the song was asking

for a harp part. There were a few adjustments to be made such as improving the notation in the score and the cello part at the end. At first the cello was playing the bass note only, at the ending measures. But I wanted to have a specific melody being played and the cello was the instrument chosen for it. The reason why the cello was the chosen instrument for this specific melody is that the bass note could be played by the harp and the piano was already playing the same pitch and rhythm. But in the end, I had to change it to the way it was at first because of the difficulty level to execute that on the cello.

The work of Tim Bernardes really inspired me to create this song, from the choice of instruments such as the harp, to the nostalgic spirit. Lar also has a sadness to it, and perhaps foolish hope inspired by Tim's work. The melody and the major key express happiness while the lyrics express regret and loss in the verse. This unusual combination is what provokes the foolish spirit in the poetic persona, because only a fool would say sad things in a happy way.

One effect that I tried to embody in this song was a searching feeling for home with a cyclic moving away and return movement. The pedal bass of the piano part in the verse reinforces the desire for home by playing the tonic, and while the moving chords in the right hand illustrate the search for it. When strings and harp enter later on in the verse repetition, they reinforce this search by playing the same chords of the right hand from the piano part.

There is a shift of character in the poetic persona or maybe a resolute mood reflected on the lyrics in the chorus reflected on the lyrics. This is when the poetic persona realizes that losing or gaining in life does not really matter but still has a fantasy of finding home. Here, the posture of the poetic persona is more realistic and less immature because the he or she develops a collective perspective of suffering and stops lamenting for his or her own suffering only. The poetic persona perceives that suffering is a part of life but creates a fantasy of finding a place to call home as a way of dealing with this hard new comprehension of life.

The duality of home being us, being our own minds, our consciousness, our bodies and an external place is allowed here. But if home is the self, we can say that in the verse the poetic persona is closed in oneself while in the chorus, when the collective consciousness happens, one' character opens up to the perspective of others. This philosophical movement from an individual to a collective place, or from being closed into oneself to being part of group of people, is illustrated by the key change from Bb major to Db major. Another musical illustration of this dynamic between individual and collective is the hemiola effect in the chorus where the tempo signature still is 3/4, but the piano has a duplet rhythmic feeling (see fig. 3).



Figure 3

It is very curious how this individual versus collective saturated dynamic of postmodern society shows up in the subjectivity of this song. If we consider the existence of the articulation of both concepts here, we could say that home can be a resolution for the philosophical issue of supplying the collectives needs without neglecting the freedom of uniqueness of an individual. Again, it reinforces the perception of home being this fantasy, this ideal place where there is no issue in being free to be yourself in a society whose structural patterns may prevent you from doing so.

Another important textual illustration in this song is when the strings move from a tense to a relaxed chord when the voice sings: “todo mundo ganha/ todo mundo perde”. The word “ganha” has a supertonic harmonic formation moving to the tonic on the word “perde” in the new key signature. The harmonic motion in this section explicitly illustrates the gaining through the harmonic tension and the losing through the releasing. In fact, this is the only moment in the chorus in which the tonic chord appears. This suggests that losing is lighter than keeping things – in other words, losing can be positive. Here, the act of losing doesn't have a sad feeling manifesting through the music, on the contraire, it is represented through a tonic

major chord. Upon this happy perception of loss brought by the song is where I place the argument of maturation of character in the poetic persona. The chorus has a resolute character generally expressed in the lyrics, strings arrangement, voice part and key change. However, this resolute character is not illustrative of a romantic ideal place, it is illustrating the acceptance of suffering. Another example of that is the last word sung in the chorus, “lar” which is in the tonic in contrast to the dominant pitch of the last word in the verse, “queria.”

“Lar” is a waltz, and because of it the song is very illustrative of this never-ending movement in order to find home someday. Just like the dancers keep moving around the same place on the dance floor, the song expresses the search for home, a never-ending desire of home, or resolution for the things the poetic persona wanted. In other words, this song could also be affirming that the human desire itself is never-ending. This closed 3/4 dance motion around the same place also illustrates the philosophical reflection of going to the past, remembering and realizing the regret of not enjoying life present in the lyrics. In this perspective, the dual meter feeling in the chorus can also illustrate a fight to move away from the past and get out of this cyclical act of remembering.

On the repetition of the A section is where the strings show up for the first time with the harp. This is the only song in the EP that contains this instrument, and its existence in here illustrates the act of recurring to the past made by the poetic persona in the lyrics. This illustration is possible because the harp is an old instrument. The act of going to the past can be associated with living in a dream, or not in reality and the harp with the strings on pizzicato make allusion to that as well. The plucking of the strings instead of resonance of the bow illustrates this numb or dreamy feeling. When the word “vida” is sung, the strings emphasize the being alive feeling or being awake to reality with the use of the tremolo, letting the sound resonate while the harp stops plucking or playing. When the song moves to the chorus the strings play ascending notes with bow. This illustrates a breakthrough moment in which the

poetic persona moves from this unreal form of living to reality, making the chorus the actual climax of the song.

Just like in “Verão”, the final measures are a compilation or a mixture of almost all philosophical and musical ideas that have been happening in the song so far with the same harmonic structure of the verse section but with fluid motions in the strings from the chorus. The end reinforces the cyclic idea of the of going to past with the third repetition of the A but also recycles the moving into reality chorus idea with the new fluid melodic lines in the upper strings that is recurrent in B. This search for a resting place or home is never found. At the end, the dynamic between living in the past and being awake to reality does not have a resolution which is illustrated by the last chord in the song, a supertonic with the bass on the tonic and the fermata on it. In other words, the search for home is never-ending.

#### “Quem Sou Eu”

Quem sou eu	<i>Who am I</i>
Centenas de deuses pra me montar	<i>Hundreds of gods to portrait myself</i>
Tiro foto no banheiro	<i>I take a picture in the bathroom</i>
Na sala de estar	<i>In the living room</i>
Solto o cabelo	<i>I let my hair loose</i>
Rasgo-me ao meio	<i>I tear myself apart</i>
É só copiar	<i>It's just copying</i>
Quem sou eu	<i>Who am I</i>

In this song there is an intentional allusion between the self and home. Here they are the same and the title itself is a question: who am I? The idea behind this song came to me right after watching a Brazilian psychoanalyst speech whose subject was the ideal self created by people on social media or this action per se. Hence, in this case what inspired me to write the song at first was not a bird, but I do use birdcall material in it. Because the creational process did not start with the birdcall material as inspiration, the song became hard to develop. Some of the issues were: inserting the birdcall in it and improving the piano and strings arrangement.

Another issue was that, unlike “Verão”, there is not much poetry in the lyrics. They are a very literal complain from the poetic persona about not knowing who she or he is. Of course, there’s some poetry in the lyrics but they are mostly a very strict description of posting a selfie on social media – even though the term social media is never mentioned in it. Part of the reason why I chose to let the lyrics be strict to its literalness is to illustrate how violent this relation between the I and social media can be. The literalness itself is violent because it does not give room for allegory, it is a place for one instead of many, its meaning is on the edge of the words such as bathroom, hair or picture. It’s a suffocating place to be and that is sung by the voice part which illustrates the poetic persona.

Another reason to maintain the literal aspect of the lyrics is: there is not too much music with this subject and it might be complicated for the listener to understand what the song is about. The words suffered a few changes along the way in order to make them more poetic, but their final version was pretty much similar to their original one.

The first format of this song was through composed with only A and B, in contrast to the current ABCBA structure. The song had two versions before becoming what it is now. The finalized version of the song is currently in the G major key area, but at first, it was in F major, following the pattern of the flat key signatures of the songs in the project so far. The only and simple reason for this change was difficulty level of singing in a general low melody range for a mezzo-soprano voice. Even with the key change the melody of this song is considered low for a mezzo soprano, though it is doable.



Figure 4

The first chord cadencies were a IV<sup>7</sup>; a ii and a suspended III in the original key (see fig. 4) in a high range in the piano part illustrating the delicate topic of the song. I wrote the lyrics while repeating these chords on the piano. By the time the voice sings the chorus with

the words “quem sou eu,” the pattern changes to Bb7M; Gm; Asus9 and D/A on a similar rhythmic pattern. At this point I did not have any elaborate arrangement, only the words and chords and the “who am I” question musically illustrated through the suspended chord without resolution.



Figure 5

Only after the chords and lyrics were written, I started researching for the birdcall in order to help create an arrangement for it and the bird chosen was the gibão-de-couro. The musical interpretation of the bird (see fig. 5) was thought to be played by the strings, and it gave life to the first arrangement of this song. I tried to work with this idea in the strings for the first and second versions, but they were developing independent lines throughout the song that would take too much attention from the voice. Because of that I had to start over while keeping the words, the suspended chords and the bird’s melody.

Using a keyboard and playing around with the chords, I thought of merging better the birdcall with the song. In this moment I changed the key signature and after a long appreciation of Tim Bernardes’ work – *Recomeçar* – I wrote a new very independent piano part. From this moment on, the song did not need much besides the piano and voice to exist or to be good. But everything was sounding a lot like the songs of my references, so I had to try a different approach and make it sound like less of a copy.

In order to get a different result, I changed the approach and used the acoustic guitar to inspire a new arrangement. The idea created through the guitar was transposed to the piano with the exact same pitches and rhythm. The finger picking pattern from the guitar became the first eight bars of the song: a very apathetic and constant piano sound. The harmony is not homophonic, and the chords generated through the sequential melody do not have a third.

In the first bar, the piano plays a sequence of pitches that could be considered a C suspended chord with a major seven and a second. The next bar does not form any type of chords in general while the right hand keeps repeating its pattern all the way through the end of measure four. Between bar two and three, the left hand moves from D to A while measure four is just a repetition of measure three. Those last measures generate what could be considered a supertonic – considering the G major key signature we are in – suspended chord with the second.

From this moment on, the piano was sounding very original and illustrating very well the spirit of the poetic persona: a lifeless and weak movement. The low range of the melody illustrates that. The constant rhythm and melody played on the piano illustrate the constant movement of the poetic persona portraying oneself to “gods,” taking pictures in different places of a house in a heavy and low feeling. The suspended chords or the lack of the third interval illustrates the lack of clarity or knowledge from the poetic persona about his or her own identity. The bass note is moving from the subdominant, dominant and super tonic but there is not much tension in it. This movement in the piano is a statement about the reality that structures voice line or surrounds the poetic persona. Here, the piano reflects the perception of reality of the poetic persona, not necessarily reality itself.



Figure 6

After the voice makes its entry on measure eight, it does not take long for it to start singing a similar eight note pattern as the piano part illustrating the lyrics. In fact, the voice does copy the rhythm of the piano (see fig. 6) on measure nineteen when it sings: “é só copiar” (it’s just copying). What I had in mind while writing those words was the general looking and

copying behavior that people do from each other on social media. However, this interaction is clearly harmful to the poetic persona that has to “tear himself or herself apart” in order to copy or fit into this reality.

The lyrics are a complaint about a reality that can make people tear themselves apart for them to be in it. In this sense, this song is a denouncement about reality possibly being a structural fantasy created by people with privilege throughout history. One example of that is the idea of nation, created to strengthen and centralize the monarchic power, but that divides people. This is not a moral judgment about nation or fantasy, but a statement about the song depicting that the mere interaction between an individual with social media provokes the perception that one can create a fantasy about oneself in it, “copying” other peoples’ behaviors. Far more important, one perceives the existence of fantasy provoked by imagination in our daily interactions, which agrees with psychoanalysis’ dissertations:

Lacan’s account of the mirror stage also raises interesting questions regarding the relationship between embodiment and identity. The notion that the formation of the ego is related to a recognition of the bodily image of another, which is also an image of itself, clearly means that the formation of the ego is directly linked to an image of the body’s surface. It is by recognizing this body-image that the subject distinguishes itself from its world. However, this body is not simply a physical body, but a ‘lived anatomy’ and one regulated by social, symbolic and cultural significations (Grosz, 1990:43– 4). It is a psychic map of the body, what Lacan calls the ‘imaginary anatomy’, and it varies with different cultural ideas about the body and biology.<sup>6</sup>

Having in mind that social media interactions could function as a huge social mirror that puts us, as society, in a new perspective towards our identity, “Quem sou eu” is built upon a common post-modern society dilemma: what does it mean to be me in a place whose boundaries of nation, gender or race are disappearing or being reimagined? Will one keep tearing oneself apart in order to keep up with a structural fantasy created by others throughout

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<sup>6</sup> *Anthropology and Psychoanalysis : An Encounter Through Culture : An Encounter Through Culture*, edited by Ariane Deluz, and Suzette Heald, Taylor & Francis Group, 1994.

history but does not make much sense anymore? Will one tear oneself apart for not keeping up with it? Will one tear oneself apart for trying to change the way I interact with oneself?

This song is directly connected with the subject of this EP – home – once it questions the concept of identity as an individual and as society. “Who am I” is a question that society is making again but not as nation physically divided in a map, but as a huge global nation self. Home is put into a global as well as individual significant place here.

By the time the song arrives on the chorus and the voice makes its statement, questioning “who am I,” the piano pattern changes into a vertical harmonic sound. This is the first time that a third interval appears in this song with a C major with major 7 chord followed by a suspended A chord with a second and minor seventh. The last chord of the harmonic cycle in the chorus is a suspended E chord in the second inversion without a resolution. However, the chord does solve on the next repetition of the harmonic cycle, illustrating the start of a construction to a clearer view about identity from the perspective of the poetic persona. Here, the voice pitch starts on B and moves ascending until A (a minor seventh) to illustrate the question made by the poetic persona, while the piano reinforces it with the suspended chords. The movement from C major to a completely different chord from the tonality of the music, E major, illustrates a desire to move away from this reality. In fact, this is the first time that the song musically expresses the desire to change the structure around it.

After the chorus, the music moves to a completely different place or form of statement, rhythmically and harmonically: the bridge. From this section on, the tempo is 10 bpm faster than it was before and the dynamic is suddenly stronger. The rhythm is much more agitated, and the harmony passes through the tonic (G major) for the first and only moment in the song. The bridge is an illustration of the increasing strong desire to change the reality of the poetic persona, perspective of reality about him/herself or clarity over one’s identity. This section creates a contrast to the weak and apathetic feeling from the beginning, demonstrating a

distance or considerable change from it. The piano part that was playing a single melodic line with both hands now has two independent hand part, illustrating the moment in which the poetic persona diverges from whatever is not allowing him or her to clarify these identity crises. Right here is where the bird material appears in its new simplified form (see figure 7) for the first and only time in the entire song just like the G major chord. The bird material appears in the voice part starting on a B pitch or the third scale degree reinforcing, again, a clear perspective of things from the part of the poetic persona. This section – the bridge or C section – is preparing the way to the climax of the song – the repetition of B – illustrating a breakthrough moment of the desire of the poetic persona to know who himself or herself.



Figure 7

Before having the bird material in its final musical form, I was holding on to the idea of singing it in its literacy just like the lyrics. That is what I have been doing as a natural reaction to listening to birdcalls in general: musically interpreting in the most literal way. But after writing the piano part of the bridge I gave up the literal idea of the birdcall and just tried reduction or simplification of the birdcall into what the voice sings in the bridge now.

The bridge leads to a chorus repetition, but this time, in a much stronger dynamic compared to the first time. The strings enter here in order to help increasing the dynamic level. The cello is the first to appear, followed by viola with the second violin while the first violin makes the last entry. The strings' voices were written a little higher, but my professor suggested in our lesson to invert the chords lower in order to enhance the contrast in the breakthrough part of the song, when the strings go up high around the 1 minute and 36 second point of the song. They also help fading out the dynamics at the chorus and lead the song to the end.

The final part is a return to the melodic line statement in the piano from the beginning with the same rhythm, bass notes and tempo. However, it has an important difference: the first

notes are an arpeggio of C major with major seventh. The third interval is present here, illustrating a clearer perspective on the subject of the song. Another relevant difference between the beginning and the end of the song is the melodic movement. Before the piano plays the last three measures, the voice sings an inverted melodic movement from the birdcall material in the bridge. Instead of starting on the B pitch and moving to A, it does the opposite, ending on the third scale degree, reinforcing one more time the clear desire to change the reality around the poetic persona. The last voice pitches lead into the final piano measures, where the melodic line starts moving up from the C pitch on the left hand, reaching D on the right hand and moving down to G just like in the first bars of the song. But in the last three measures the left-hand line is played a sixth up (A, B and F#) and the melodic line ends up on an E pitch, illustrating a resolution of the desire to change the reality that surrounds the poetic persona, stated by the piano part throughout the song.

“Bentevi”

Bentevi	<i>Bentevi</i>
Minha alma se encaixou nos seus olhos	<i>My soul fit into your eyes</i>
E me vi	<i>And I saw myself</i>
Eu bentevi	<i>I bentevi</i>
Pousado na janela dos teus olhos	<i>Perched on the window of your eyes</i>
Quero fugir	<i>I want to run away</i>
Sou livre, livre	<i>I am free, free</i>
Minha alma se encaixou nos teus olhos	<i>My soul fit into your eyes</i>
Você se viu	<i>And you saw yourself</i>
Sendo meu lar	<i>Becoming my home</i>
Mantendo a janela aberta	<i>Keeping the window open</i>
Pros meus medos	<i>To my fears</i>
Confio	<i>I trust</i>
Vo(o)u	<i>I go (fly)</i>
Preso à liberdade	<i>Imprisoned by freedom</i>

The first version of this song had a very contemplative mood and was made with an open D guitar tuning (using a capo on the first fret). The second version had a piano, voice and cello part (already with a three-part arrangement) and the third version had voice, guitar (still

with an open D tuning) and violin. But in order to achieve the final version, I had help from a friend to brainstorm a new arrangement for the song and she brought me a new uplifting, muted sound and constant guitar arrangement very similar to the final one. We both loved the new idea. I then unmuted the guitar sound and changed the finger picking pattern at the end in order to bring a more introspective sound.

Having the guitar arrangement ready, I created the piano part by recycling some ideas that were created before, on top of an informal recording of the guitar. Right after listening to it, I felt the need to include percussion in the song, reinforcing the desire of having unity and diversity represented here. The percussion part was created from midi samples inside Logic Pro and the refining process of the percussion was collaborative as well. The song had many versions with a completely different sonority and choice of instruments within an approximately two-year period.

This song is unique for many reasons, one of them is not having a fixed key signature. It keeps jumping between Eb major and B major in a very fluid manner. This behavior is an illustration of the freedom or the liberation described in lyrics. The bird appears on the piano/voice part (see fig. 8).



Figure 8

“Bentevi” is a description of a moment in which two people look at each other’s eyes arousing empathy or connection. It also is a celebration of life, freedom, and diversity found in post-modern society. The use of different instruments illustrates that, and each one of them bring a specific meaning or representation of their own associated ethnic background. The guitar and percussion represent the non-western culture while the piano represents the opposite – home and not home. The percussion is responsible for bringing the celebratory feeling into the song. The idea was to use a rhythm that had a constant beat throughout the music similar

to the ones used in rituals by native people and by some afro diaspora religions in Latin America. It arouses a desire to dance and move the body in a way the other songs do not. In here, the music wants to pass through the body not in a constrained way such as in a Waltz, but freer like in a ritual. The song puts in perspective two different manners of relating to the idea of body, one that abnegates, constrains and moralizes it – western culture – while the other does not. With that in mind, the “Bentevi” song illustrates a freedom that crosses the body, a freedom that demoralizes the individual and collective body and was – is being – conquered by the post-modern people.

The lyrics do not contain rhymes as much as the others, in fact, the only existing rhyme in this song is when the poetic persona recognizes oneself as a bentevi, in an illustrative manner. The song plays with the words used in the lyrics. The name of the bird – and song title – itself also means “I saw you” and this generated the play of words and poetry of the entire lyrics. The cultural multiplicity, freedom and “I saw you” are being articulated against each other throughout this entire song, like an expression of them existing all together in one place: possibly, home.

The presence of the words “fear” and “open window” in the lyrics are very important here. They relate to the new – morals, philosophies, genres, anything that can be new – as seen as a threat to what is common, and the effect of their combination which is sometimes fear. As a result, we may find acts of violence against the new existing in post-modern culture. But the song reports an open position from whoever the poetic persona is saying to, when the voice sings “keeping the window open to my fears/ I trust.” This expresses a reality of safety as being vulnerable, an open window instead of a wall, a bridge to trust instead of fear.

“Bentevi” makes reference to a Shakespeare’s phrase “The eyes are the window of the soul”<sup>7</sup> when the voice sings “perched on the window of your eyes.” It also has a bible reference: “there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”<sup>8</sup>

I did not look through the bible or through Shakespeare’s phrase in order to inspire me to write this song because Christianity has always been part of my life context and I just remembered it while writing the song. It is also important to point out that the first title of “Bentevi” was “to love” – but in Portuguese – referring to the bible verse.

With these references in perspective, it would be correct to say that the idea of love is much related to being courageous, letting the fear go, embracing the new, or to what this entire song subjectively describes. The “casting out the fear” bible reference comes out in the song when the poetic persona sings “keeping the window open to my fears/ I trust” as well.

The act of trusting is musically illustrated by the piano’s ascending melodic line just like the movement of a bird starting to take flight when the voice sings “keeping the window open to my fears”. This movement gets intensified from the moment the voice sings “I trust” until the words “fly”, when the piano actually illustrates wings flapping.

At the end, the guitar plays a harmonic while the last word – liberdade – is sung, letting the “freedom” sound disappear – or letting it go just like a bird flying away – in an illustrative manner. The end is reflexive compared to the rest of the song that keeps bringing the listener from inside out with the help of the beat. The last chord is similar to the one played at the end of the introduction: a IV with a flat 5. However, this time the chord is with a major 7, ending the EP in a more interrogative place than it started.

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<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare, William, “*King Richard III*” Act V, Sc.3, Line 117

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4:18 (New International Version)

## The Recording Process

People can naturally create similar things from which they were exposed to and this case is not different. The choice of doing an EP whose sounds were predominantly acoustic is directly related to the type of music that I was exposed to when growing up at home. Usually, that music did not have much electronic sounds, especially the Brazilian ones where the nylon guitar is very present.

The first decision made was to record every instrument separately – with the exception of the string quartet – because this way I would be able to edit the audio materials better into the DAW. The second action was to create a Logic Pro session and transcribe all the tempo and time signature changes from the score into it as well as the MIDI files to record on top of. The process was the same for all of the songs with exception of “Bentevi”, because I did not need to use a score to produce it, nor had the piano as the primary instrument to be recorded, but instead I had the guitar to be recorded first with the metronome and percussion.

All piano tracks were recorded with a pair of 4050 Audio Technica Studio Condensers – one for the low frequencies and the other for the high – and with a classical Steinway grand piano. The microphones were configured in a figure-of-eight set in order to capture the reverberation of the sound on the lid. The classical guitar was captured with one Audio Technica microphone – the same model of the one used for the piano – only in a cardioid polar pattern directed to the guitar mouth. The acoustic guitars had the same sound recording set plus a 10 FT plugged in cable.

However, the string quartet was recorded before the guitars in general. For the strings set up I used the same Audio Technica microphones to record the cello and another one for the viola, again in a cardioid configuration. The Avantone Pro CK-1 Small-diaphragm Condenser microphones were used to record the upper strings with a cardioid capsule. I had a set up test with the strings at the rehearsal day to check How the sound was and I really enjoyed the

Avantones's high frequencies emphasis and the Audio Technica fat sound for the low strings. The issue that I was able to fix after the rehearsal was the distant position of microphones plus finding someone to stay sound-engineering for me because I had to play cello and I could not do both at the same time. Another important factor from the string quartet recording set up was the use of C414 XLII AKG microphones as stereo room mics in the blumlein configuration.

To record the harp, I used the same pair of microphones being used so far, an Avantone for the high strings of the harp and the Audio Technica condenser for the mid-low region. I put them as close as possible to the harpist hands to get a clearer sound. One thing I would have done differently to record it would be putting a microphone inside of the harp's soundboard to get a fatter sound. However, the sound quality of the harp's recording was good enough considering all things above.

As previously said, I was the one playing the cello, guitars in general, piano and voice. Besides having someone sound engineering on the string quartet recording, I had help to do its set up. I also had other music industry students' opinions on possible microphones and set ups that could work.

All pads were created after the piano and strings were recorded, but the last thing to record were the voices. The main voice had to be recorded before the back vocal ones. Again, the 4050 Audio Technica Studio Condenser on cardioid set up with a pop filter was the choice. One fun aspect of recording voice was having to do a warmup and using devices such as a stretcher to help stabilize my voice sound. After recording the main voice, I recorded the vocals or any other vocal details for an embellishment purpose. For me, recording voice was more exhausting than the instruments, because it requires more physical effort bearing in mind that we sing not only with the voice but with the whole body. To give an example, while eleven recordings from the piano gave enough material to work with, the voice – including back vocals – had more than fifty tracks in one song only.

## Final Thoughts

The beauty about music is that it is not a language as much as it is, hence, it already is on the other side of the wall of language where the symbolic exists. It has access to both places and becomes a double agent to achieve the symbolic elaboration. Psychoanalysis was only a tool to organize and clarify the music producer's ability to capture cultural, individual, and environmental interpretive subtleties.

The reason why one makes music or art can be the same as why one speaks. Now, I as the composer question myself if it was a process to find some type of healing, resignification of the symbolic, a report of my perception of reality, or all of it, because (C)ASA exposes a trauma related to the Latin American collective in "Verão"; an insistent regress to the past in Lar, plus an emerge of a collective consciousness; "Quem Sou Eu" questions or searches for a new identity of this huge self; when finally, a comprehension of reality is celebrated in "Bentevi".

The work (C)ASA is a report of the changes that society, the body, the collective or individuals are currently facing. And they cross the boundaries nation. It was made during a period of time in which being home was a matter of life and death: the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is intrusive, violent and makes us rethink things, choose or decide in a precipitate manner. This musical work is a response to the pandemic, too. It puts in perspective what divides us as humans: the boundary of a nation, the walls of a house, the body. (C)ASA is an amalgamation of all of this, is a lament as much a celebration of life, a way of dealing with this collective trauma that intensifies the distance and proximity of humanity. It aims to deal with what invades the boundaries of life, and put in perspective what can bring society closer while we are still alive.

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