

SONGWRITING AS TRANSLATION: A PRACTICE-AS-RESEARCH APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: This article positions songwriting as an intrinsically translational practice and advances a Practice-as-Research (PaR) methodology to demonstrate how the experience of a place's atmosphere can be translated into a musicopoetic artefact. Grounded in Böhme's phenomenology of 'atmosphere' (2017), Vidal and Campbell's framework of 'experiential translation' (2024, 2025), and Smith's theorisation of the 'artefact' (2007), the study centres on the song *búzios*. (Galvão, 2024), which renders the atmosphere of the Brazilian peninsula of Búzios as experienced in 2018–2019. Drawing on Barrett and Bolt's PaR model (2007) and Haseman's 'performative paradigm' (2006, 2007), it details a songwriting-as-translation process that is analysed using Bennett's 'musical building blocks' (2002) and an intermusicality lens informed by Desblache (2019). The study thus establishes songwriting as an embodied creative practice through which the resulting artefact emerges as the subject, method, and evidence of research, enriching Translation Studies' engagement with the creative arts.

KEYWORDS: Songwriting; Experiential Translation; Musicopoetic form; Practice as Research (PaR); Musical Building Blocks; Intermusicality

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the “age-old notion that the process and product of translation can relate to more than interlingual translation, as well as to other disciplines” has acquired fresh momentum within Translation Studies (Vidal & Campbell, 2025, p. 1). Once marginalised within the academy, artistic practices—including music—have been progressively reframed through innovative strands of the discipline, notably its more ‘experimental’ and ‘practice-based’ approaches, which have reconceptualised translation as an “embodied creative practice” (Bennett, 2023, p. 1) and reaffirmed the epistemic value of the creative arts. Foundational studies by Marinetti (2013, 2018), Laera (2019), Desblache (2019), Tarantini (2021, 2023, 2025), and De Fransisci and Marinetti (2025), alongside the work of the Experiential Translation Network—particularly the two-volume collection *The Experience of Translation* and *The Translation of Experience* (Campbell & Vidal, 2024, 2025)—as well as the *Translation Matters* special issue on *Experiential Translation* (2023), have consolidated this ‘outward turn’, challenging paradigms that treat translation as a static, instrumental activity confined to interlingual transfer. Yet songwriting remains conspicuously under-examined, and no study has yet systematically investigated the translation of experience of place into “musicopoetic” form—a term coined by Gorlée (2005, p. 7) to describe the hybrid art form that brings together music and language as coexisting artistic media.

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Accordingly, the present study treats songwriting¹ as an intrinsically translational practice and poses the question of how the experience of a place's atmosphere may be translated into a musicopoetic artefact. The question is anchored in a case study of the song *búzios*.² (Galvão, 2024), which renders the atmosphere of the Brazilian peninsula of Búzios as experienced during fourteen visits between 4 December 2018 and 31 March 2019.

The argument is scaffolded by a tripartite theoretical matrix. First, Gernot Böhme's phenomenology of *atmosphere* (2017) identifies the pre-conceptual, affective 'feel' of place that constitutes the experiential material for translation. Second, the 'outward turn' framework of *experiential translation* advanced by Campbell and Vidal (2024, 2025) reframes translation as an in-the-moment, embodied process whose outcome is an *artefact*. Third, the artefact itself is understood via Owen F. Smith's flexible definitions (2007). To further explore the resulting artefact, I draw on Karen Bennett's analytical framework of five musical building blocks (2002), complemented by a concept I term *intermusicality*, developed in dialogue with Desblache's (2019) account of 'intertextuality in music.' These tools enable a granular examination of the song's sonic fabric alongside a close reading of its lyrics, linking the atmosphere of Búzios, the experiential translation process, and the resulting artefact within a coherent theoretical framework.

Methodologically, the study adopts a *Practice-as-Research* (PaR) approach, situated within the performative paradigm as articulated by Haseman (2006, 2007). Songwriting is treated as an embodied creative practice through which the resulting artefact emerges as the subject, method, and evidence of research—aligning with Nelson's (2013) understanding of Practice as Research as a mode of 'knowing-doing' grounded in creative practice. To structure the methodological articulation, I adapt Barrett and Bolt's medium-agnostic model of 'Materials and Methods in Creative Arts Research' (2007), reorganising it into four interrelated components tailored to the exigencies of songwriting as a translational act. This adaptation foregrounds the iterative and replicable principles central in PaR, thereby ensuring transparency and methodological rigour.

Drawing on the foregoing theoretical and methodological configuration, this article contributes to Translation Studies' outward turn by introducing songwriting—framed through experiential translation—as a communicative modality and embodied creative practice that resists monolingual paradigms and attests to the plurality of lived experience. It further articulates a methodological architecture that renders the translational

¹ In this study, 'songwriting' refers to the complete process of crafting a song, including lyric writing, musical composition, recording, production and mixing. While the term is sometimes used exclusively for lyric writing, here it encompasses the full scope of crafting both words and music, as well as the sonic and structural elements involved in producing the final piece.

² The song title *búzios*. is intentionally stylised with a lowercase initial letter and a final full stop. This follows the aesthetic convention adopted throughout the EP, *perfil.*, where all track titles, as well as the EP title itself, adhere to this stylistic choice. This decision was made for creative and conceptual reasons, contributing to the overall cohesion of the project's visual and textual identity.

operations explicit and offers a replicable Practice-as-Research model for future songwriter-researchers.

2. Atmosphere as Experiential Phenomenon

Gernot Böhme's conception of *atmosphere* in *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres* (2017) provides a phenomenological point of departure for understanding what, precisely, is to be translated when one attempts to render an experience of place into musicopoetic form. In everyday usage, Böhme notes, the expression "atmosphere of a city" is typically invoked "from or for the perspective of the stranger"; it designates those qualities that locals generate unreflectively but that a newcomer perceives with particular vividness (2017, p. 128). Moreover, the term points to something "peculiar to the city, what makes it individual and therefore cannot be communicated in general concepts" (2017, p. 128). This quality must first be sensed before it can be named; it precedes cognition and occupies a liminal zone between subject and object. In Böhme's succinct formulation, "the atmosphere of a city is precisely the way life unfolds within the city" (2017, p. 128).

Accepting this premise involves shifting attention from what a place *means* to how it *feels*. What captivates us in an urban environment, Böhme insists, "cannot be construed as language; instead, it enters our disposition as a touching character" (2017, p. 128). Yet this feeling is not confined to private sensation. Atmospheres "radiate from another person, from things, or from the surroundings", rendering them shareable and thus open to collective reflection (2017, p. 129).

Böhme further identifies an 'advantage' of the concept: atmospheres can be studied from the side of the object—that is, "from the side of the agencies by means of which they are created", including "lights, music, sound, spatial constellations, and the use of characteristic objects" (2017, p. 129). These agencies are not addressed to a detached observer but to the participants in urban life, who together produce the atmosphere through their own activity (2017, p. 129). By including music and sound among the generators of atmosphere, Böhme implicitly legitimises their use as media through which the sensed field of place can be re-articulated.

Within this conceptual horizon, the composition *búzios* functions as a concrete act of what Böhme calls "pointing out the character"—the disclosure of an environment's affective quality (2017, p. 128). Rather than fixing *Búzios* in abstract adjectives, the track allows such tonalities to emerge through musical parameters and lyrical imagery (further discussed in section 5). In this way, it translates the felt atmosphere into a sensuous configuration that listeners can inhabit bodily and recognise affectively. The composition, then, constitutes an act of translation that renders the experience of the locale's way of life unfolding into musicopoetic form.

Establishing atmosphere as the *what* to be translated is only the first analytic move. Explaining *how* that felt quality is re-configured in musicopoetic terms requires a conceptual framework of multimodal, embodied semiosis. Experiential translation theory

fulfils this role by conceiving translation as an embodied creative process whose outcome is an *artefact*—a framework that constitutes the next stage in the theoretical discussion.

3. Artefacts as Outputs of Experience

Experiential translation furnishes the conceptual tools needed to trace the translation from felt atmosphere to musicopoetic form. Vidal and Campbell (2025, p. 8) define it as a “meaning-making process which is in-the-moment, temporally contingent, relational, material, ludic, and embodied”. Emerging from the ‘outward turn’ in Translation Studies, this approach reframes the notion of ‘text’ to include all modalities of communication, “including the human beings that produce them and the natural and technological environment within which humans operate” (Campbell and Vidal, 2024, p. 2). It thereby challenges reductionist, monolingual models and asks how translation might instead reflect and sustain the plurality of experience, conferring greater agency on participants in translation events (Campbell and Vidal, 2024, p. 3).

The translation of experience, then, does not culminate in a fixed product or a definitive ‘endpoint’, but rather in what Vidal and Campbell (2025, p. 8) describe as an “outcome, output or result”—an *artefact*. While the Latin derivation of *arte* (‘by skill’) and *factum* (‘made’) is instructive (Friedman, 2007, pp. 6, 10), the term’s value here lies less in its etymology than in its processual role. Within Vidal and Campbell’s conception, the artefact signifies the result of acts of translation “which are mediated by and mediate the world around us” (2025, p. 9).

Furthermore, as Böhme observes, atmosphere—though first registered individually—quickly extends into a shared domain (2017, p. 129); the experiential translation operates in the same supra-subjective register. In Vidal and Campbell’s framework, artefacts arise from acts of translation that constitute ‘agented semiotic work’, that is, “a collective phenomenon across the animate and inanimate world, and in a constant process of reconfiguration between translating agent(s) and artefact” (2025, p. 9). This conception resonates with Marais (2019) and Blumczynski (2023), who define translation as ‘negentropic semiotic work’—reconfiguring the components or relations of a sign system, or its inscription in space-time, through the action of an agent. Because such work enlists animate and inanimate participants, agency is distributed rather than individual: translator and artefact are co-constituted within a shifting ecology of “human and more-than-human actants” (Fraunhofer, 2023, p. 42).

There is, however, considerable variation in how the concept of the artefact is understood (see also Gell, 1996; Friedman, 2007; Hagan, 2007; Brix, 2015; Miles, 2020). Nevertheless, Vidal and Campbell (2025, p. 12) highlight Owen F. Smith’s attempt—set out in his article ‘Object Artifacts, Image Artifacts and Conceptual Artifacts: Beyond the Object Into the Event’ (Smith, 2007)—to synthesise these differing viewpoints by offering a set of definitions grounded in anthropology, art history and new-media studies. For Smith (2007, p. 2), artefacts may be understood as:

- (1) an object produced or modified by human agency, especially a tool or ornament;
- (2) a creation of human conception or agency rather than an inherent element;
- (3) an erroneous effect, observation, or result, especially one generated from the technology used or from experimental error;
- (4) a structure or feature not normally present but visible because of an external agent or action.

I contend that the song *búzios*. qualifies most directly under definition (2)—a creation of human conception that did not exist in the world until composed. Yet it also resonates with definition (1) once it is fixed as a recorded track, a tangible file that can be replayed, and with definition (4) insofar as recording and playback technologies render its sonic structure audible across time and space. In Smith’s terms, the song thus operates as “artifactual mediation”—a creative event that mediates human action and interaction and, through the “relational aesthetic” it engenders, enables listeners to see and know the world differently (Smith, 2007, p. 5). In doing so, it carries the lived experience of the atmosphere of *Búzios* into a shareable event, translating it into music and lyrics, thus allowing that experience to accumulate and transform through listeners.

Framed within these converging perspectives, the composition *búzios*. addresses the question of how the experience of a place’s atmosphere may be translated into a musicopoetic artefact. Specifically, Böhme (2017) explains *what* is translated—the pre-conceptual, relational feeling of place as experienced; Campbell and Vidal (2024, 2025) outline *how* that experience is translated—through an in-the-moment, embodied creative process whose outcome results in an artefact; and Smith (2007) elucidates *what form* the artefact may assume. Together, these perspectives offer a solid theoretical underpinning that enables the positioning of *búzios*. as a musicopoetic artefact that translates the experience of atmosphere—inviting listeners into a shared, affective encounter with place that unfolds not as description but as lived experience, anew on every playback. Accordingly, this study adopts a *Practice-as-Research* (PaR) methodology, deploying the songwriting process itself as a site of inquiry to enact—and thus reveal—the procedural dynamics of experiential translation that the preceding theory has articulated in principle.

4. Practice as Research as Investigation Methodology in Songwriting as Translation

4.1. Paradigm, Terminology, and Rigour

Building on Carol Gray’s seminal definition of ‘practice-led research’—inquiry ‘initiated in practice’ and ‘carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners’ (Gray, 1996)—Brad Haseman formulates a performative paradigm in which “a dance, a novel, a contemporary performance” operate simultaneously as research question, method, and evidence (Haseman, 2006, p. 102). Set alongside quantitative and qualitative traditions, performative research is realised through symbolic data “other than words in discursive text”, including “material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of *music* and *sound*, of live action and digital code” (Haseman,

2007, p. 151); the practitioner's own techniques therefore "stand as research methods in their own right" (2007, p. 151). In light of this, this investigation adopts the performative paradigm as its point of departure and overarching framework, and does so under the designation of *Practice as Research* (PaR).

Terminology in the field is plural—*Practice as Research* (PaR), *Performance as Research*, *Research-Through-Practice*, *Practice-based* and *Practice-led Research* constitute the overlapping set catalogued by Suzanne Little (2011, p. 20) and synthesised by Angela Tiziana Tarantini (2021, p. 40). In the present inquiry, however, I adopt the term Practice as Research (hereafter PaR) for two linked reasons. First, this study adopts the term PaR in part because the model it adapts—in Barrett and Bolt's book *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (2007)—operates under the same designation. Tarantini (2021) makes a similar terminological choice when adapting Kershaw et al.'s (2011) model in her book *Theatre Translation: A Practice as Research Model*. Second, the term most fully captures what Robin Nelson describes as "the knowing-doing [that] is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the inquiry and evidences it" (2013, p. 10). Moreover, PaR also legitimises "knowledge that derives from ... the senses" (Barrett & Bolt 2007, p. 1)—the very modality of knowing that Böhme characterises as sensed before it can be named (2017, p. 128), and that Vidal and Campbell (2025, p. 3) likewise locate in the sensorium through which experience is first apprehended. PaR thus provides the epistemic scaffolding required to investigate how the experience of a place's atmosphere may be translated into a musicopoetic artefact.

The PaR literature further distinguishes the 'practitioner-researcher' from the 'ordinary artist'. What differentiates the former, Suzanne Little argues, is "the depth of reflection on their art ... as a creative response to a specific investigation" (Little, 2011, cited in Tarantini, 2021, p. 41). Following Tarantini's (2021, p. 42) adaptation of this figure as the 'translator-researcher (T-R)', the present study adopts the designation *songwriter-researcher* (hereafter S-R). In line with the conceptualisation of songwriting as a translational practice outlined in the Introduction, I—as the S-R responsible for *búzios*.—approach songwriting as an embodied creative practice through which the resulting artefact emerges as the subject, method, and evidence of research (cf. Tarantini, 2021, p. 42).

Rigour, therefore, is not a function of artistic virtuosity but of methodological reflexivity: research in the performing arts must "demonstrate a rigour equivalent to that of the sciences" (Nelson, 2013, p. 39). Iterability and replicability are likewise central to PaR and, as Barrett (2007, p. 1) contends, "what constitutes robust and successful research". These qualities do not imply the reproduction of identical artistic outcomes—each composition remains irreducibly 'original'—but rather the establishment of a transparent investigative process that can be re-applied by other S-Rs, thereby contributing to the advancement of disciplinary knowledge (see Tarantini, 2021, p. 42). On this basis, the songwriting process that produced *búzios*. is examined as method of inquiry, with each

procedural stage documented to facilitate potential re-enactment—though never precise replication—by future S-Rs.

4.2. Choosing a Model in PaR for Songwriting as Translation

As outlined in the previous section, this study adopts the designation PaR and frames the songwriting process as the method of inquiry. In line with this methodological orientation, it becomes necessary to determine which PaR model best supports a songwriting-centred investigation that treats musical composition as a form of experiential translation.

While Kershaw et al.'s (2011, p. 65-67) model of the “not-without-which aspects of PaR” remains highly influential in the performing arts, its five proposed constituents—“Starting Points, Aesthetics, Locations, Transmission, and Key Issues”—were developed with theatre performance in mind. As the authors themselves note, the model arises from theatre’s ontological paradoxes and its ‘boundless specificity’, reflecting the situated, and often ephemeral nature of stage-based practice. Consequently, its structure presumes a dramaturgical arc that is not directly transferable to songwriting as a translational practice.

Tarantini (2021, pp. 44-46) adapts this model to the context of theatre translation, substituting three constituents to reflect her focus on translated texts in performance. While performance in her study serves an instrumental rather than creative role, her adaptation nonetheless remains grounded in the investigation of how translation operates in theatrical settings. In contrast, the present study treats songwriting as an embodied creative practice that is neither necessarily performance-based nor concerned with the translation of pre-existing dramatic texts. The resulting artefact may be performed, but performance is not the methodological site of the research. Rather, the focus lies in the compositional process that translates the experience of a place’s atmosphere into a musicopoetic artefact.

For these reasons, Barrett and Bolt’s model of ‘Materials and Methods in Creative Arts Research’, as outlined in the appendix to *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (2007), offers a more suitable framework. Unlike Kershaw et al.’s theatre-based model, Barrett and Bolt’s approach is medium-agnostic and structured to accommodate the methodological diversity of creative practice across disciplines. It enables a more flexible articulation of the processes, materials, and methodological choices specific to songwriting while still upholding the principles of rigour, iterability, and replicability that underpin PaR.

4.3. Adapting Barrett and Bolt’s Model

As Barrett and Bolt (2007, p. 191) observe, materials and methods in PaR are never neutral: they are “encoded with historical knowledge and conventions” and must be critically adapted by the practitioner-researcher in response to the specific demands of the inquiry. In what follows, I adopt and adapt Barrett and Bolt’s medium-agnostic model into four interrelated constituents suitable for the specificities of my inquiry as a S-R:

- (1) Materials;
- (2) Reasons and Justification for Choice;
- (3) Material Engagement;
- (4) Procedures.

This adapted structure clarifies the methodological logic of the investigation and supports the transparency and rigour expected in PaR, omitting or adapting only those components (such as ‘Genre’) not relevant to the present inquiry (see Barrett and Bolt, 2007, pp. 191-194).

4.3.1. *Materials*

In this study, I—as the S-R—mobilised field audiovisual recordings, photographic documentation, informal notes, and music recognition software.

Materials were gathered during fourteen visits to Búzios between 4 December 2018 and 31 March 2019, while I was performing as a touring vocalist along the Brazilian coast. On a mobile device I recorded six short videos (30–60s each) that captured (1) live local music; (2) ocean waves overlapping with human conversation in beachside venues; and (3) shoreline street ambience. These recordings were complemented by forty-four photographs documenting both natural scenery and informal social interactions (see Figures 2 and 3).

One photograph (see Figure 1) portrays an exchange with a coconut vendor who, when asked for permission to take the picture, replied *Ai, promove meu coco, vai* [‘*Ai*, give my coconut a shout-out, will you?’. The utterance consolidated a speech pattern I had subconsciously registered throughout my visits: the tendency to open interactions with the interjection *ai*. This discourse marker subsequently informed the song’s opening lyrical hook (see section 5.3).

Furthermore, *Shazam* (i.e., a music-recognition application), was employed to identify pieces heard in public spaces, producing a playlist that functioned as an auditory index of the local soundscape; many of these tracks later provided structural and timbral models during composition. Concurrently, I kept brief field notes, including an entry dated 13 January 2019: “Of all the places I’ve visited, Búzios has touched me the most. The local music makes me smile, and there’s this feeling of joy, love, and peace I just can’t explain. I want to write a song that captures it somehow.” Although informal, the entry constitutes an initial trace of translational intent—a first articulation of the research question that subsequently guided the study.



Figure 1. Photograph taken at Travessa dos Pescadores 31, Búzios, documenting an exchange with a coconut vendor whose speech pattern later informed the lyrical composition of the song.



Figure 2. Photograph of Avenida José Bento Ribeiro Dantas in Búzios, documenting ambient coastal scenery and informal social activity.



Figure 3. Photograph taken from the Píer de Búzios, looking onto Avenida José Bento Ribeiro Dantas and surrounding coastal scenery.

4.3.2. *Reasons and Justification for Choice*

The selection of materials in this investigation was determined by their capacity to preserve and reactivate the atmosphere of Búzios. Although not originally gathered with compositional intent, each material became integral to the songwriting process by virtue of its distinct sensory and mnemonic affordances.

The audiovisual recordings offered the most immediate route back to the atmosphere as it was originally experienced. Their multimodal character enabled me to re-enter the spatial, sonic, and affective dynamics of the locale, bridging the temporal distance between the moment of capture and the later compositional phase. Without these recordings, subtleties of atmosphere might have been lost to memory alone.

Photographs played a complementary role. Crucially, their relative incompleteness—in contrast to video—allowed them to function as prompts for embodied recall, particularly in situations where audiovisual capture would have been intrusive. For instance, still images facilitated the recollection of vulnerability in informal encounters with locals, enabling a return to these dynamics during the songwriting process.

Informal notes, written at the time of the visits, served to document the affective texture of my lived experience. These written reflections preserved the immediate phenomenological response to place, insulating it from the distortions of retrospective interpretation. Without such notes, subsequent engagement with images and recordings might have relied solely on reconstructed memory, rather than the in-the-moment impressions that underpin experiential translation.

Finally, the playlist compiled via *Shazam* provided a sonic archive of the local musical environment. These tracks—heard in beach bars, shops, and public spaces—carried with

them the power to elicit atmospheric recall. While initially assembled to preserve the memory of Búzios, the playlist later acquired a methodological function, offering structural and stylistic cues during composition. Together, these materials enabled a layered reconstruction of atmosphere that grounded the songwriting process.

4.3.3. *Material Engagement*

Material engagement began in March 2023, four years after the materials were originally collected. Over the course of a week, I systematically re-engaged with the archived materials stored on a hard drive. The process began with video analysis of live performances, where I analysed musical parameters such as tempo (measured with a BPM Tapping Tool), structure, and instruments used by local musicians. These were then cross-referenced with Logic Pro X's—a professional digital audio workstation (DAW)—instrument library, which I used throughout the compositional process to experiment with orchestration options and draft sonic layers for the composition.

Subsequent phases involved re-examining the photographs, which triggered multisensory memories of my experience of the atmosphere of Búzios, and re-listening to the playlist for tonal and structural patterns relevant to the composition. Although this engagement was concentrated into a one-week period, the materials remained in active use throughout the songwriting process. Rather than serving as a static archive, they acted as a dynamic and iterative resource, consistently revisited to inform compositional choices—particularly during the lyric-writing stage, which began only after the musical architecture had been established.

4.3.4. *Procedures*

Following the re-engagement with the field materials, the compositional process unfolded in five distinct stages:

1. *Structural design*: The narrative arc was designed to parallel the experiential rhythm of arrival, immersion, and departure from Búzios. This was rendered musically through a structure comprising: Intro (fade in), Verse 1, Chorus, Verse 2, Chorus, Bridge, Chorus, and a return to the Bridge (fade out). The gradual entrance and exit via fade-in and fade-out aimed to evoke the temporal contour of an atmospheric encounter.
2. *Musical foundation*: Using Logic Pro X, I developed the harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic scaffolding of each section. Draft melodies were initially recorded using non-lexical syllables to foreground musical contour over linguistic content. These aspects—tempo, rhythm, pitch, volume, and timbre—are thoroughly examined in section 5.1.
3. *Lyric development*: Rather than preceding the musical content, the lyrics were shaped around the pre-established melodic lines. This sequencing was intentional: for listeners unfamiliar with Portuguese, the primary mode of access to the song's affective content would be musical. Nonetheless, the lyrics were carefully crafted to

draw on the experiential materials previously gathered, functioning as a poetic vehicle through which my experience of the atmosphere of Búzios could be rendered in language. The lyric writing process and its translational implications are addressed in detail in section 5.3.

4. *Vocal layering*: This stage involved the re-recording of lead melodies and layering of background vocals. With the full musical and lyrical architecture now in place, this phase allowed for greater experimentation with melodic ornamentation and harmonic layering—dimensions further discussed in section 5.1.
5. *Iterative refinement*: This stage involved repeated listening sessions, notation of structural or textural imbalances, and subsequent adjustments to transitions, dynamics, and preliminary mixing design. Although not the focus of this article, these refinements contributed to the overall coherence of the artefact and were integral to ensuring that the composition fulfilled its translational intent.

Guided by Barrett and Bolt's adapted model (2007), the preceding discussion has delineated the methodological architecture underpinning this investigation of songwriting as a translational practice. Materials gathered during fieldwork in Búzios were selected for their capacity to conserve the locale's atmosphere. Their distinct translational affordances warranted their inclusion, and systematic re-engagement with them furnished a compositional scaffold grounded in embodied recollection of the atmosphere of Búzios. The ensuing stages—*Structural Design*, *Musical Foundation*, *Lyric Development*, *Vocal Layering*, and *Iterative Refinement*—were conceived to enact, rather than merely document, the translation of my experience of atmosphere into musicopoetic form. The following section interrogates the resulting artefact, tracing the musical and poetic component through which it renders experienced atmosphere.

5. Results

5.1. Musical Component: Musical Building Blocks

Building on the methodological framework outlined in section 4., this section draws on Karen Bennett's (2002, pp. 29–35) approach to musical meaning—specifically her analytical framework of five musical building blocks (i.e., tempo, rhythm, pitch, volume, and timbre)—to analyse the resulting musicopoetic artefact, *búzios*. Several alternative frameworks have been proposed for analysing sound, including Van Leeuwen's (1999) six domains—encompassing sound perspective, time/rhythm, interaction of voices, melody, voice quality/timbre, and modality—and Desblache's (2019, p. 36) model, which identifies nine traditional musical parameters (i.e., form, melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre/orchestration, tempo, dynamics, articulation, and texture). While both are comprehensive, these models often extend into intricate sociocultural dimensions and advanced musicological structures that lie beyond the scope of my inquiry.

By contrast, Bennett's emphasis on direct corporeal mapping—such as how “tempo and volume are increased to mark heightened emotionality” (Bennett, 2002, p. 30)—aligns

more closely with the practical aims of this analysis. Focusing on Bennett's five musical building blocks therefore allows me to demonstrate more precisely the musical techniques employed to translate the peninsula's atmosphere into the structural *DNA* of my composition.³

5.1.1. Tempo

A moderate tempo of 110 bpm in 4/4 (i.e., common time) serves as the rhythmic foundation of *búzios*. (Sound File 1).⁴ This tempo—neither excessively slow nor overly fast—was selected to capture the peninsula's dual atmosphere: the invigorating pulse of street performances and the relaxed ambiance of its beachside environment (see Figure 4). Positioned at this midpoint, the tempo facilitates seamless transitions between moments of heightened intensity (reminiscent of an elevated heart rate at live performances) and more tranquil passages (reflective of the unhurried pace of coastal life).

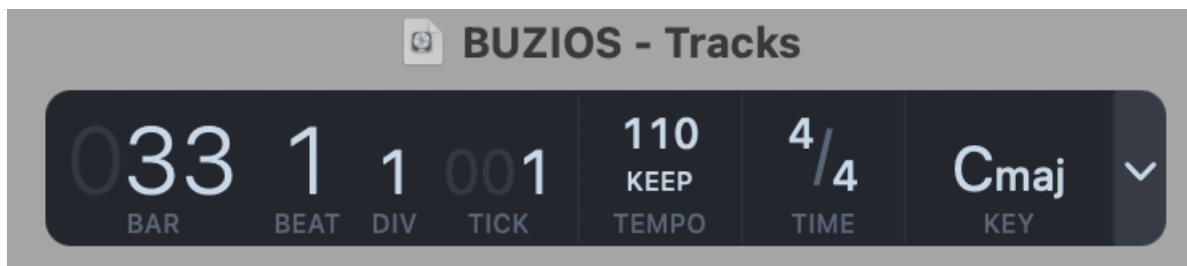


Figure 4. Logic Pro LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) showing the project tempo set at 110 bpm in 4/4.

To reinforce this subtle heartbeat undercurrent, I incorporated an 808 muted kick designed to mimic the steady thump of a physiological pulse (Sound File 2).⁵ This rhythmic foundation not only provides structural cohesion but also serves as a symbolic anchor, grounding the listener in the atmosphere of *Búzios*—a dual sensorial quality that is at once spirited yet tranquil, communal yet introspective. By situating the track's momentum within this moderate range, the composition effectively oscillates between excitement and contemplation, mirroring the dynamic interplay of festivity and relaxation that defines the peninsula's social and environmental rhythms.

5.1.2. Rhythm

Rhythm further refines the expressive potential introduced by tempo, articulating patterns that capture the peninsula's dual atmosphere. Drawing inspiration from *Búzios'* participatory music scene, I incorporated sampled percussion instruments modelled on

³ All audio illustrations referenced in this section are hosted in a dedicated Dropbox folder. Each sound file corresponds to a specific section or musical building block discussed in the text. Hyperlinked references (e.g. Sound File 2) are provided in footnotes.

⁴ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/vc7u7e73srxmqm8v2fg75/1.-Metronome-Click-110-BPM-4-4.mp3?rlkey=wmskug9ywz8kgh4n55u8mj2kz&e=1&st=e7bkl264&dl=0>

⁵ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/q3ecwq8vf4pb11xk4n88b/2.-808-muted-kick.mp3?rlkey=hqizzikhrqwdqro1yrppf8pep&e=1&st=zpir6mao&dl=0>

those played by local musicians (see Figure 5), alongside a vocalised rhythmic layer that includes inhaling and exhaling breaths, lip clicks, and consonant /k/ beats. Additionally, I recorded percussive hits on wooden surfaces such as tables, doors, and stools, crafting a tactile and organic soundscape that contrasts with the artificiality of purely electronic textures (see Figure 6). These layered rhythmic elements reflect Búzios' spirit of spontaneity and its close connection to natural elements (Sound File 3).⁶

The percussive ensemble, however, does not maintain uniform prominence throughout the song. In the verses, I opted for softer, intricately syncopated rhythms that evoke the informal conviviality of beach gatherings—unhurried yet subtly playful, mirroring the spontaneity of casual jam sessions by the shoreline (Sound File 4).⁷ By contrast, in the chorus and bridge, I introduced the full ensemble, intensifying the collective energy (Sound File 5).⁸ This escalation captures the heightened communal engagement characteristic of live performances and street parties, where locals and visitors gather spontaneously to celebrate.

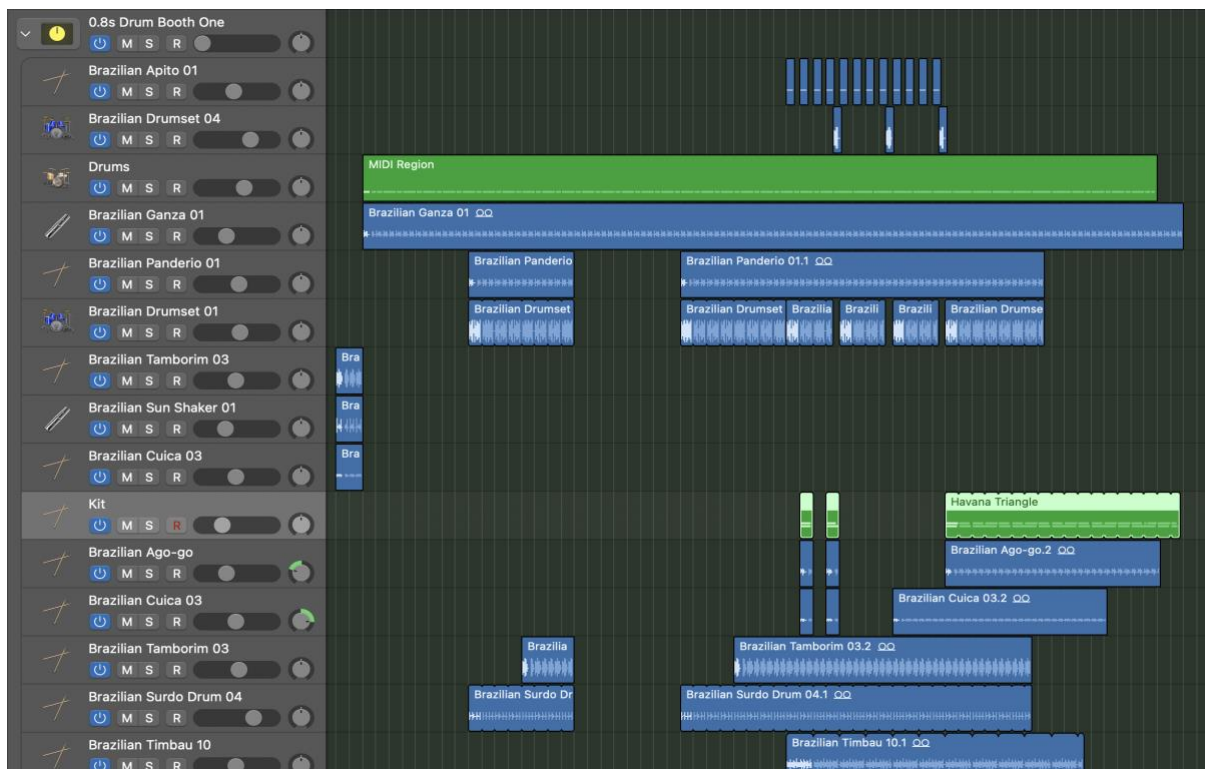


Figure 5. Screenshot of the Logic Pro project showing the percussion ensemble.

⁶ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/wl6yppq41ovt8nhdiw544/Vocalised-and-Object-based-Percussion.mp3?rlkey=3m5jnq6ciw041na2kj1hcsxfk&e=1&st=4ynd60wz&dl=0>

⁷ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/4ost8bxhz02p03f19hy50/3.-Verses-Percussion.mp3?rlkey=gn82p8jkw5tzqkjygwprda5vr&e=1&st=xo5ofxd5&dl=0>

⁸ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/tisrp7gyr5d02uhgduenm/5.-Chorus-and-Bridge-Percussion.mp3?rlkey=m0lhgr2f3ckt6utorcph6vtp&e=1&st=mhanm53z&dl=0>



Figure 6. Screenshot of the Logic Pro project showing vocalised and object-based percussive layers.

Moreover, the act of recording acoustic elements—vocalised rhythms, hand percussion on wooden objects, and other tangible sound-making processes—constitutes a translational practice in itself. These physical gestures, originally rooted in bodily movement, were captured and preserved through the recording process, transforming them into fixed musical components. This shift from ephemeral, performance-based actions to recorded, reproducible sounds underscores how embodied rhythms, once tied to a specific time and place, were recontextualized within the stable framework of a musical recording. In this form, they are not merely documented but embedded as sonic signifiers that shape the composition’s identity, inviting listeners to interpret them through their own experiential lenses.

5.1.3. Pitch

Pitch plays a pivotal role in conveying the *felt* atmosphere of Búzios. For the vocal lead, I sang in a register slightly above my normal speaking range, frequently transitioning between chest and head voice to evoke a sense of lightness and ethereality while simultaneously creating moments of “tension and release” (Bennett, 2002, p. 29). This choice aligns with the idea that an elevated vocal range can signify excitement, dreaminess, or transcendence, paralleling the serene landscapes and gentle ocean breezes of the peninsula (Sound File 6).⁹

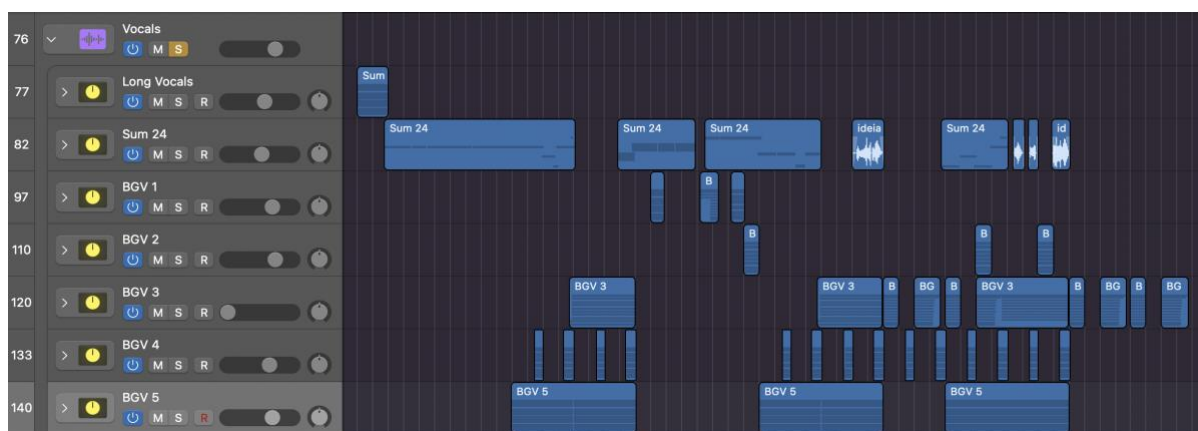


Figure 7. Screenshot of the Logic Pro project showing lead and background vocal stacks.

⁹ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/z6d070tdrct7xkmed8rnj/6.-Lead-BGVs.mp3?rlkey=zhbrgo6ypni4zzpmnbd20g6a2&e=1&st=i0749t0l&dl=0>

To enhance this effect, I incorporated flute-like melismatic phrases that weave fluidly through the composition, reflecting the rhythmic undulations of the coastal environment (Sound File 7).¹⁰ Ascending melodic lines in the chorus create a sense of emotional uplift and anticipation, culminating in a moment of release, whereas descending motifs provide fleeting grounding, echoing the anchoring presence of the horizon. This nuanced approach to melodic contour invites listeners to experience *búzios*. as both a space of tranquil reflection and an arena of heightened communal energy, reinforcing the dual atmosphere of the peninsula (see Figure 7).

5.1.4. Volume

Volume provides an additional layer of emotional articulation throughout the piece, shaping the dynamic interplay between moments of intimacy and communal energy. In particular, subtle dynamic shifts mirror the waxing and waning of social activity that defines the atmosphere of Búzios, a place where days begin with soft exchanges among small groups and gradually build into spirited gatherings.

This contrast is especially evident in the verses, where I maintain a more subdued dynamic level, evoking late-evening calm and intimate interactions—reminiscent of gentle rolling waves and casual beachside conversations (Sound File 8).¹¹ As the composition progresses, however, the chorus and bridge gradually expand in volume, emphasising collective outbursts of joy and reflecting the heightened excitement of live music and public celebrations (Sound File 9).¹²



Figure 8. Screenshot of the Logic Pro project's master track, showing volume dynamics across the composition.

This progression aligns with the physiological parallel in human speech, where volume naturally increases to convey emotional intensity (Bennett, 2002, p. 30). In modulating between these dynamic shifts (see Figure 8), the composition employs amplitude as a semiotic tool, drawing the listener into reflective moments before immersing them in communal fervour. In doing so, volume not only references real-world sonic phenomena—such as speaking softly or loudly—but also constructs symbolic musical signifiers of intimacy and exuberance, reinforcing the duality of Búzios' atmosphere.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/nszsgm8ls4m12tni4zrrt/7.-Flute-like-Melismatic-Phrases.mp3?rlkey=w3bpttgjud67r4v99qtrcykix&e=1&st=1ss687vy&dl=0>

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/o686dy1k47tckabtmjk2s/8.-Volume-of-the-Verse.mp3?rlkey=jrfghuss7umbvz72mds4eqsv&e=1&st=00vt8i3c&dl=0>

¹² Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/wlcd5rugw89ps5ykwpwjo/9.-Volume-Chorus.mp3?rlkey=r27to0pcwo81snlwh9rve5hy4&e=1&st=ruamra7t&dl=0>

5.1.5. Timbre

Finally, timbre—shaped by “choice of instrumentation” (Bennett, 2002, p. 30)—plays a crucial role in conveying the expressive essence of the artefact. To capture the peninsula’s warmth and earthiness, I centred the composition around the acoustic guitar, whose mellow resonance evokes rustic charm and the laid-back spontaneity of improvised beach gatherings. Rather than recording chordal accompaniments in a conventional manner, I recorded individual melodic lines and layered them as one might layer background vocals, experimenting with different stereo placements to create a sense of fullness (Sound File 10).¹³ This technique aims to replicate the communal nature of live performances, where multiple acoustic guitars often interweave in an organic, overlapping fashion (see Figure 9).

In contrast, I introduced strings and brass accents sparingly, allowing sweeping string lines and subtle brass flourishes to suggest fleeting images of sea breezes and shifting tides (Sound File 11).¹⁴ This combination reinforces both the sunlit serenity and the sudden exuberance of the coastal environment. By prioritising acoustic timbres over heavily synthesised textures, I sought to translate Búzios’ physical and sensory landscape—waves, sand, wind—into aural signifiers, inviting listeners to engage with the composition in a way that echoes the tangibility of the place itself.

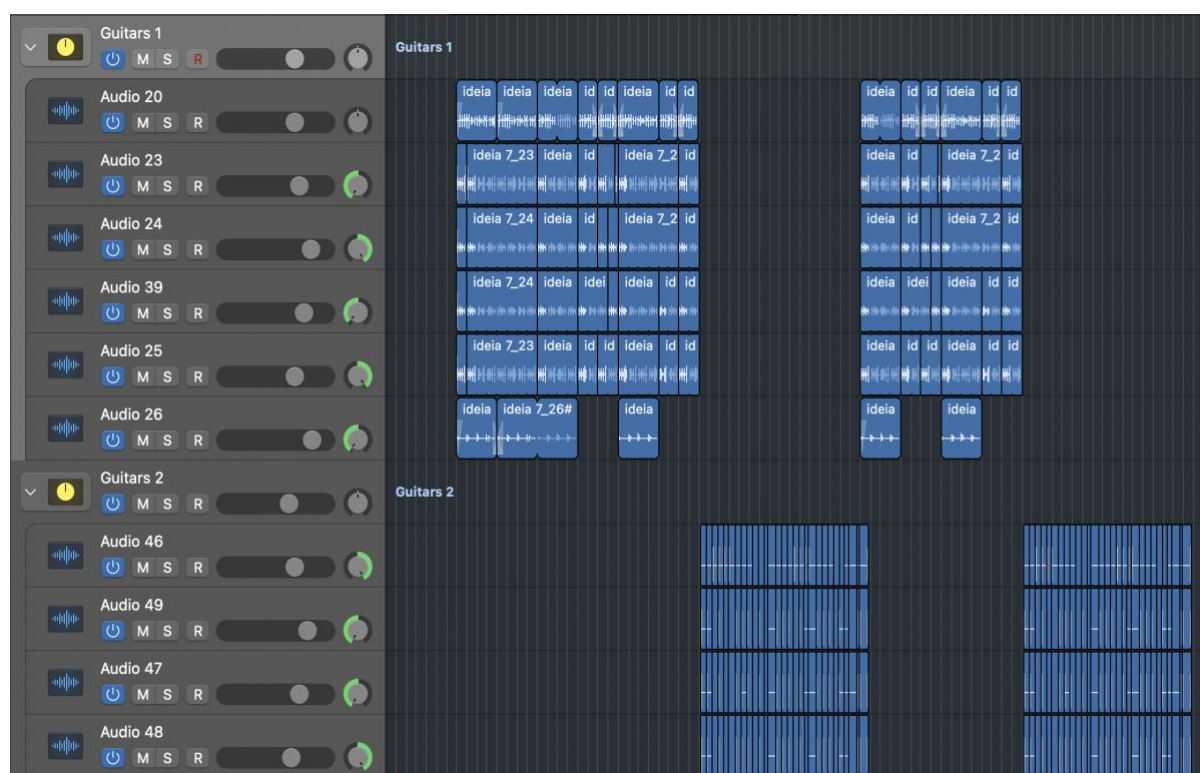


Figure 9. Screenshot of the Logic Pro project showing multiple layered acoustic guitar tracks.

¹³ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/k786pceg9p2t0094ks0d6/10.-Acoustic-Guitars-Timbre.mp3?rlkey=7zi7q3dfn5brnz5wpjarln93b&e=1&st=7gh86fcy&dl=0>

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/x3aao1bnc9rhvqv7dh9j/11.-Strings-and-Brass-accents-Timbre.mp3?rlkey=gturuigkwy9436qqa0ln6u2i&e=1&st=vw0l6x54&dl=0>

5.2. Musical Component: Intermusicality

The concept of intertextuality is particularly relevant when considering music’s ability to absorb and adapt prior material—a dynamic Desblache foregrounds in her assertion that “music, reliant on variations on existing content and often combined with another art form, is essentially intertextual” (2019, p. 322). While traditionally applied to verbal texts, the intertextual principle—that meaning is shaped through dialogic relations with prior works—readily applies to songwriting. Musical pieces, like texts, intersect through citation, collage, and transformation, absorbing and reconfiguring melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic elements from other works.

My songwriting process in *búzios*. exemplifies such intermusical dynamics. In line with Desblache’s observation that “intertextuality can be centred on one or several references” (2019, p. 322), I drew on a short melodic line performed by trumpets in Gal Costa’s *Aquarela do Brasil*—one of the tracks identified via *Shazam* and included in the playlist discussed in section 4.3—thereby invoking what Desblache terms a “reference to the past” (2019, p. 323). I then reworked the phrase by altering its rhythm and pitch, layering it across four vocal tracks in two different octaves (Sound File 12).¹⁵ This transformation — akin to the “variations” Desblache describes (2019, p. 323) — was intended to infuse the composition with an echo of Búzios’ atmosphere, recontextualised within a new sonic frame.

Such reconfiguration does not represent mere quotation. It constitutes a translational gesture: an effort to carry across one of the “agencies” through which atmosphere is constituted (Böhme, 2017, p. 129), by recontextualising a melodic fragment drawn from my auditory experience in Búzios. Intermusicality, in this sense, illustrates one of the translational strategies through which atmosphere was rendered into music, situating the composition within a broader web of cultural and sonic references. In other words, just as intertextuality foregrounds the dialogic interplay of texts, intermusicality highlights the relational and transformative dynamics of musical creation.

5.3. Poetic Component

Following the musical analyses in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, this section turns to the song’s lyrical content, presented below, in order to examine the poetic dimension of the musicopoetic artefact:

Ai, saí sem dizer água vai
A brisa vem e o meu corpo cai
Azul que chama e me pergunta ‘Oi, como vai?’
Batuque toca sedutor
Luz que me abraça com calor
Exala sabor

¹⁵ Available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/fvry5k9dckre7vy9mvmk6z/12.-Melodic-Line-Intermusicality.mp3?rlkey=f52e8pne4c7pa8z52ifawrtx6&e=1&st=55w0swjv&dl=0>

*Ai o amor
Que faz bater cá dentro o coração
Ca cum cum ca ca
Cum cum cum ca ca
Oh, ai o amor
A Búzios cheguei na procura de o encontrar*

*Oh ai, a noite chega devagar
Iluminando o meu caminhar
No vai e vem das ondas
A cantar, a dançar
O mar sussurra ao luar
E traz segredos de um lugar
Que vou abraçar¹⁶*

5.3.1. The Role of the Interjection ‘ai’

One of the linguistic features in the lyrics is the repetition of the interjection *ai*, which not only serves as a sonic element within the musical structure but also functions as a marker of affect in spoken discourse. In Brazilian Portuguese, *ai* is frequently employed to attract the listener’s attention or convey spontaneous emotions (e.g., surprise, urgency). This differs from many European Portuguese contexts, where *ai* more often denotes pain or distress.

Beyond its pragmatic function, *ai* introduces both emotional and sensory qualities to the lyrics. In the opening line—‘*Ai, saí sem dizer água vai*’—the exclamation suggests spontaneity and motion, evoking a sense of fluidity that resonates with both the oceanic setting and the process of arriving in Búzios. Similarly, in the chorus (‘*Oh, ai o amor*’), *ai* amplifies the themes of longing and discovery, punctuating the phrase in a way that captures the immediacy characteristic of spoken Brazilian Portuguese.

5.3.2. Sensory and Environmental Imagery

The lyrics draw heavily on sensory impressions to evoke Búzios’ atmosphere. The ocean is a recurring presence, appearing both in direct references (‘*No vai e vem das ondas*’) and in more abstract imagery, such as the interplay of light, wind, and motion (‘*A brisa vem e o meu corpo cai*’; ‘*Luz que me abraça com calor*’). These layers of breeze, warmth, and light establish an immersive ambiance closely tied to the lived experience of the peninsula.

Furthermore, the lyric ‘*Batuque toca sedutor*’ points to the central role of music within Búzios’ cultural identity. The term *batuque* evokes Afro-Brazilian percussive traditions that remain influential in many coastal regions of Brazil. As noted in section 5.1., these rhythms were prevalent in local gatherings, and the term itself implies a physicality

¹⁶ An English translation is provided in the Epigraph to this special issue.

of drumming that underscores the embodied nature of musical engagement. The choice of ‘*sedutor*’ emphasises that music in Búzios is not just background noise but an active, communal force inviting participation.

5.3.3. Thematic Recurrence of ‘*Amor*’

The song’s central theme revolves around the search for *amor*, a word that frequently arose in conversations with local residents. While *amor* in Portuguese can denote both romantic and platonic attachments, its usage in Búzios often emphasised community, warmth, and a shared *joie de vivre*. This resonance is reframed in the lyrics as both a personal and an existential pursuit (‘*A Búzios cheguei na procura de o encontrar*’). Although *amor* can be interpreted as romantic love, here it also signals broader notions of connection—to people, place, or experience.

The chorus (‘*Ai o amor / Que faz bater cá dentro o coração*’) highlights this idea by linking love to the physical sensation of a heartbeat—mirroring the rhythmic structures described in section 5.1., where the downbeat in local performances often recalled a steady, pulse-like foundation. The onomatopoeic vocalisation (‘*Ca cum cum ca ca / Cum cum cum ca ca*’) further embeds the sense of communal energy characteristic of live music in Búzios, where musicians commonly employ percussive vocalisations alongside instruments.

5.3.4. Temporal Fluidity: Day and Night

Finally, the structure of the lyrics reflects Búzios’ daily rhythm, transitioning between daytime vibrancy and nocturnal serenity. The first verse introduces movement and energy, featuring wind and percussive beats (‘*batuque*’), while the second verse shifts to a more introspective nighttime setting (‘*Oh ai, a noite chega devagar*’). This gradual shift mirrors the way Búzios’ communal spaces transform over the course of the day, from bustling markets and music-filled streets to a quieter but equally immersive shoreline atmosphere at night.

The concluding lines—‘*O mar sussurra ao luar / E traz segredos de um lugar / Que vou abraçar*’—encapsulate this nocturnal ambiance, portraying the ocean as both a physical entity and a carrier of symbolic meaning. The whispering sea, the moonlight, and the hint of hidden ‘secrets’ point to a sense of intimate discovery that further reinforces the song’s overarching themes of connection and place-based experience.

6. Conclusion

This study has proposed an adaptive PaR model for investigating songwriting as a translational practice. In line with Nelson’s insistence that “the articulation of a research inquiry needs to be as clear as possible” (2013, p. 10), the framework deliberately targets a single question: how can the experience of a place’s atmosphere be translated into a musicopoetic artefact? A songwriter-researcher (S-R) working with instrumental music, an acapella texture, or a different experiential source may therefore have to modify or replace

particular constituents. Such variability is both expected and desirable. As Barrett and Bolt remind us, creative-arts researchers “can adapt some of these conventions and will need to add others according to the particular nature of the studio enquiry” (2007, p. 191). The value of the present model therefore lies not in prescriptive detail but in the methodological latitude it affords future practitioners.

Furthermore, the five procedural constituents—*Structural Design*, *Musical Foundation*, *Lyric Development*, *Vocal Layering*, and *Iterative Refinement*—could each be elaborated ad infinitum; creative workflows differ markedly when, for example, lyrics precede melody, or when production is entrusted to collaborators with specialised technical skills. Such idiosyncrasies belong to the individual S-R’s craft and are best documented in project-specific accounts. What the current article offers is a transferable scaffold that identifies where methodological decisions surface and how they may be rendered explicit, thereby supporting the rigour, transparency, and replicability that PaR demands.

By situating songwriting within the outward turn of Translation Studies, the article makes an explicit disciplinary intervention: it demonstrates that translation can operate across modalities, not just as a static, instrumental interlingual transfer. Implicitly, it also equips songwriters and musicians—whether or not they are themselves researchers—with a conceptual and methodological lexicon for articulating their own creative practices. Artists such as Melody Gardot, whose album *The Absence* (2012) transposes place-based experiences into music and lyrics, exemplify a broader community that may benefit from viewing their work through a translational lens. While they may have no interest in scholarly publication, the framework presented here offers a set of terms and procedures through which they can describe, reflect upon, and potentially extend their own practice.

In short, the article contributes a theoretical and methodological framework that is both specific enough to guide a concrete case and flexible enough to invite adaptation. It invites subsequent S-Rs—working with other places, or experiential terrains—to treat the scaffold not as a template to be replicated verbatim, but as a starting point for further experimentation, thereby expanding the scope with which Translation Studies engages with the creative arts.

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