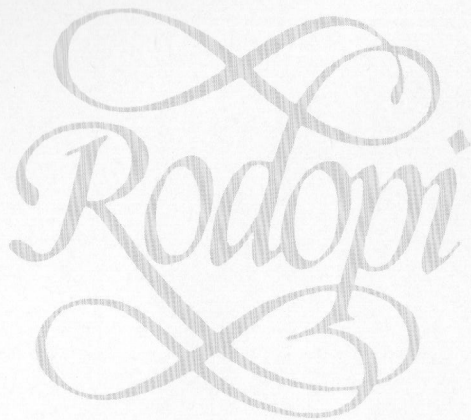


Offprint • Sonderdruck • Tiré à part • Separata



Amsterdam - New York, NY
2002

USA / Canada

Editions Rodopi b.v.

One Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 1420

New York, NY 10020

Phone (212) 265 6360

Fax (212) 265 6402

Call toll-free (U.S. only) 1-800-225-3998

All Other Countries

Editions Rodopi b.v.

Tijnmuiden 7

1046 AK Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Tel.: ++ 31 (0)20 611 48 21

Fax: ++ 31 (0)20 447 29 79

E-mail: orders-queries@rodopi.nl

www.rodopi.nl

Cannibalizing Bossa Nova

GEORGE LANG

Bossa Nova was not a native, let alone nativist product of Brazilian musical culture, rather a creative and commercially successful response to the invasion of American popular music in the 1950s. At the same time, it was bound up with high literary culture, the metatextual practice of which remains key to understanding Brazilian identity. Decidedly "popular" in its orientation, Bossa Nova thus respected the interpretative modes of Brazilian intellectuality; hence its place in both the mid-to-low and the high artistic camps.

"Brazil" is a corruption of the European name for the Malaysian *sapang* tree, from whose reddish wood was drawn an extract not unlike saffron, but which tincts less and has no flavour (*il verzino* in mercantile Italian). When a related species with similar properties was discovered and trafficked from tropical South America (*Caesalpinia echinata* as opposed to *C. Sappan*), that part of the New World metonymically assumed an alien name, the nominally transferred but native sub-species becoming referential for the whole territory. *Pau Brasil*, brazil-wood, was not only the first notable item of export from the land which became Brazil, but designator of the land itself.

The poet Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954) was probably not conversant with this botanical and philological nicety and hence with the ensuing metonym in the previous sentence, but he did sense the metaphoric potential of brazil-wood, inscribing its matter into the title of the first of his modernist manifestos, *Poesia Pau Brasil* (1925). Self-styled "clown of the bourgeoisie," Oswald loved the *poema piada* (joke or mocking poem).¹ He relished montage, collage, the gamut of formal device found in cubism, futurism, primitivism, and all the other European *isms* the Brazilian avant-

¹ See Martins, 182. I follow the Brazilian custom of using first or familiar names for public figures, even in formal writing.

garde embraced enthusiastically after the First World War, beginning, it is usually said, with the fanfare of *A Semana da Arte Moderna* (Week of Modern Art) in São Paulo in 1922. This egregious importation notwithstanding, Oswald hungered for native Brazilian fare. Brazil-wood was his intended symbol for Brazilian culture as an international commodity in its own right; his *Brazil-wood Poetry* was "conceived of as an export product, as something to combat the historical imitation of European models. [His was] a key de-centering gesture of a New World vanguard" (Perrone, *Seven Faces*, 11).² The paradox of forging Brazilian authenticity through foreign modes and fashion clearly haunted Oswald, though there is some measure of the distance between his classic modernist stance and our own "postmodernist" attitudes in the fact we now perceive no special irony therein. To be sure, identitarian projects proliferate around the planet; such is the theme of this book. But identity, the last two decades of rapid cultural change have impressed upon us, is a very contingent, paradoxical and sometimes thing. In the 1920s, though, the perplexing nature of imported modes of self-affirmation remained piquant, especially to intellectuals on the periphery, and three years after *Poesia Pau Brasil*, in 1928, Oswald returned to the problem of how the foreign can, indeed must, feed the self, with a second polemic salvo, "The Cannibalist Manifesto" ("O manifesto antropófago"). Still tinged with primitivism, echoing despite itself Montaigne's classic humanist study of alterity ("Des Cannibales"), Oswald's Cannibalism borrowed the totemic notion of killing and digesting ones enemies in order to fortify oneself, applying it to cultural influence – though his strategy is best read with the provocative spirit of the *piada* in mind. As any specialist in developing economies can attest, the problem with brazil-wood as an ideal item of export is that lumber, though a step up from timber, is still only primary material. Hewers of wood and drawers of water are low in the economic food chain. In telling semiotic terms, to trade the raw, untransformed name of Brazil back to those from whom it was derived in the first place would be without interest, real profit accruing through secondary and tertiary elaboration. At any rate, there were few takers of or calls on "poetic brazil-wood" in the great stock exchange of modernism, and almost no high Brazilian culture on the international marketplace until the path had been cleared after the Second

² For background and for salient detail, readers should not only refer to Charles Perrone's *Seven Faces: Brazilian Poetry since Modernism* (1996), cited here, but also his *Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Song: MPB 1965–1985* (1989).

World War by Brazilian popular culture, which was itself often travestied, exoticized or alienated. The case of *tutti-frutti*-hatted *Cármén Miranda* stands out in this regard, but the stereotypes present in the first internationally successful "Brazilian" film, *Orfeu negro* (1959), have inspired a recent purportedly more authentic remake in Brazil under the direction of poet-lyricist-performer Caetano Veloso. In fact, though shot in Portuguese, *Orfeu negro*'s director Marcel Camus was French, and the predatory exigencies of its foreign financiers were a considerable source of irritation to its composers Tom Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes.³ Within such a context, one in which artists and producers were striving not only to create something uniquely Brazilian but to export it, Bossa Nova was born.

To be sure, Bossa Nova was not a purely native, let alone nativist product of Brazilian culture, rather an exemplary case of cannibalization as Oswald might have imagined it, since it drew not only upon local musical traditions and "high" Brazilian poetry but from American popular, commercial music of the late forties and fifties (in a phase of foreign emulation I call "Crooner Envy"). Hence my preference for the second of Oswald's metaphors for the title of this essay on Bossa Nova as an instance of popular cultural identity, and the trajectory of its movement from endogenous Brazilian to exogenous American sources.

There are various accounts of the birth of the Bossa Nova (or New Wave). Rather than seek an originary point of genesis, let us think about this event dialogically.⁴ Like any phrase which catches on, Bossa Nova initially meant different things to different overlapping speech groups; as for any catchword which becomes marketable, this diversity of connotation was a key ingredient for success. By the end of 1959, the phrase was firmly entrenched in the minds of consumers, impresarios and executives of the recording industry in Rio and São Paulo, yet there remained considerable confusion about what it meant. Some of the ambiguity of its nascent cachet can be detected in the initial reception among even insiders. "What I don't get is this 'Bossa Nova' business," declared the relatively

³ See Castro, 220–21. We owe the score of the film to the fact that the music of the 1957 *Orfeu da Conceição* by Vinícius and Tom that inspired it was already under copyright and therefore subject to royalties the film's producers did not want to pay, which forced them to insist that Vinícius and Tom start from scratch.

⁴ What I have in mind is the sense of verbal volatility conveyed not only by the "heteroglossia," but that of the virtual infinity of speech genres discussed by Bakhtin (60–102).

well-informed father of Nara Leão, herself soon to be proclaimed the Muse of Bossa Nova. "Where is this famous 'wave'?" he asked. "What is it about these musicians that is so different?" (Castro, 235). The short answer is really not much new. Shortly, I shall address its salient musical features, but virtually everything in Bossa Nova was already present on the ground in various combinations and permutations throughout the fifties. Moreover, despite its rapid propagation to North America and Europe (CBS news clips as of 1962), as well as strong sales on the urban Brazilian market, the wave of Bossa Nova crested irregularly. In 1962 Lúcio Rangel, who was editor of the *Revista Brasileira de Música Popular*, cited Vinícius and Tom as "the most successful [composing-writing] team in our popular music," but added that they lacked a "legitimate popular stamp" ("Disco-teca mínima," 146). Though "popular" here had the political cast it possesses in the Romance languages, referring not to commercial "popularity" but appreciation by the right folk, the "real" people, we should conclude that even in its heyday Bossa Nova was considered only one wave among many in Brazil.

How to measure the dialectical moment at which accumulated quantitative change turns qualitative, sloshes become, collectively, a wave, a musical movement a quiddity worth slapping a label on? As Ruy Castro records, the principal players themselves initially had no inkling "Bossa Nova" – the expression as much as the music – was to have a subsequent life of its own. According to Tom Jobim, João Gilberto did imagine that "there was always room for something new and different which could become 'really marketable' ('altamente comercial')." But Joãozinho was a rather unreliable narrator in the early days of 1959 and "no one could have guaranteed that something so *modern* and *sophisticated* would turn out so lucrative" (Castro, 212; my emphasis). At this point we confront a quandary one might liken to the one plaguing physicists, who know that the conditions of observation transform the phenomenon being observed. So is it in cultural studies, but with the following twist: if Bossa Nova had not been commercialized, there would not be any possible present observation of it, however modern and sophisticated the semi-professional and sometimes amateur musical scene in the Zona Sul of Rio in the fifties might have been.

There is a strong normative cast in cultural studies, one inherited from the Marxism of the British wing of its founders, but nourished by the deeply-felt need of a succeeding generation of scholars to set things right in the realm of cultural politics, since things have by all evidence gone so wrong. With Marxism dead and class no longer an operative criterion of

analysis, popular culture, understood as the self-expression of a (working) class with a revolutionary historical role, has been gutted of its emancipatory content, leaving in its place only *ad hoc* projects based on gender and ethnicity, flotsam and jetsam rife with inner contradictions of their own. Popular culture is thus understood as ensnared in a delusory and factitious *mass* culture sustained by the media and driven by commodity fetishism, though Marx's strict sense of this last term no longer applies either. As Jonathan Culler puts it:

Cultural studies dwells in the tension between, on the one hand, the analyst's desire to analyze culture as a hegemonic imposition that alienates people from their interests and creates the desires that they come to have and, on the other hand, the analyst's wish to find in popular culture an authentic expression of value. The central strand of cultural studies would be that which finds a way of negotiating this tension, most often these days by showing that people are able to use the cultural materials foisted upon them by capitalism, its media and entertainment industries in ways that constitute a kind of culture of their own. (338–39)

There is indeed potential for cannibalization in this scheme of things, which is perhaps why Oswald de Andrade remains a figure of interest in North American cultural studies: raiding media mass culture for constitutive elements of an *enabling* popular culture could be thought of as proactive cannibalization. But as the previous paragraph will have made clear, commercialization is a catalyzing and enabling agent in cultural creation – one might as well go ahead and say a *sine qua non*. Without commerce, there can be no cannibalization.

On the other hand, as advertisers know well, the best commercials claim to speak commercial-free. Similarly, though the history of Bossa Nova is fraught with commercial conflict (witness the incident referred to above, n. 3), its lyrics express intimate, personal, and non-negotiable terms in whose "pastoral" frame and setting alone authenticity can be found. Here are the opening and closing lines of the first big Bossa Nova hit, João Gilberto's "Chega de saudade" (No more blues):

Vai minha tristeza e diz a ela quer sem ela não pode ser.
Diz-lhe numa prece que ela regresse, porque eu não posso
mais sofrer...

Não quero mais esse negócio de você longe de mim
Vamos deixar esse negócio de você viverem mim

(*Songbook* 5, 59–60)⁵

(Go, my sadness, tell her that without her you wouldn't exist.
/ Beg her to come back since I can't suffer any more... / I'm
tired of this "business" [*negócio*] of you far away. / Let's leave
behind this business of your living without me.)

The concluding verses play upon a meaning of "business" we also have in English, but the opening image borrows a motif from the medieval European *envoy*. That this heterogeneous mix of the contemporary and the classic, the commercial and the lyric now seems utterly natural is one measure of its success (though Jobim himself winked at this process by allowing in "Desafinado" that "I myself am lying when I claim that this Bossa Nova is something very natural" ("eu mesmo mentindo devo argumentar / que isto é bossa nova, / que isto é muito natural" [*Songbook* 2, 60.]). Likewise, João Gilberto's recording of "Chega de saudade" was initially rejected by producers because his understated, almost recitative voicing made it sound like he was singing with a cold, but what was at first perceived as a flaw was quickly recognized as a personal style with marketing potential, as not only something *new*, as Joãozinho himself had imagined, but something *modern*, a prime value in Brazil of the late fifties just at the moment when the new capital Brasília was being designed from the ground up by Oscar Niemeyer, who had designed the sets of the musical verse play *Orfeu da Conceição* by Vinícius and Tom which inspired the movie. In the words of Ruy Castro, the "new, the modern, which so many had been seeking, had finally been synthesized in that disk" (191).

Thus, despite its idyllic yearnings, Bossa Nova thought of itself as absolutely modern, at ease in a world of commerce, able to play on its terms and with its terminology.⁶

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, Bossa Nova lyrics are drawn from Almir Chediak's *Bossa Nova Songbooks* which are cited by volume and page, as here. Translations are mine.

⁶ The echo of Rimbaud's *il faut être absolument moderne* is not unintentional; Vinícius deliberately echoed the same poet at the end of his bittersweet musical postcard to Tom, fourteen years after they wrote the original lyrics to the play *Orfeu*: "É preciso inventar de novo o amor" ("Carta ao Tom 74" [*Songbook* 1, 60]; cited *in extenso* at the end of this text).

Roberto Guimarães' "Amor certinho" (Certified Love) accordingly proclaims:

O nosso amor já tem patente
tem marca registrada...
Esse tal de amor não foi inventado.
Foi negócio bem bolado,⁷
direitinho par nós dos.

(*Songbook* 5, 32)

(Our love has been patented, / it has a trademark... / This love
of our was not invented. / It was an open deal / between the
two of us.)

This penchant to accept both the conditions and the paraphernalia of modern life is ubiquitous in Bossa Nova, from the infamous brand-name Rollyflex camera in "Desafinado" (a discordant presence in a love song for which Tom Jobim's own mother rebuked him), to the soaring airplane in "Tristeza" ("Tua beleza é um avião," your beauty is an airplane to a poor heart like mine, which watches you fly by above), and the apartment window in "Corcovado."

At this point, it is worth asking exactly what the Bossa Nova style consisted of, musically speaking. Although it is a gross simplification to attribute its "invention" to a single person, both the public record and the internal myths of Bossa Nova emphasize the galvanizing role João Gilberto played in determining its musical conventions, in particular his *violão gago* or "stammering guitar," syncopated guitar chords either anticipating or anticipated by the melody line, itself verging on the chromatic. Although the chords in question were occasionally those popularized in American jazz of the fifties (raised fifths and lowered ninths), it was rather the particular mix of features not any single trait which characterized the style. For example, the vocalist him- or herself was de-emphasized, at least in the initial period, and made to blend into the ensemble as if only another instrument. Hence, the frequency of scat-like nonsense syllables in pieces such as Joãozinho's "Bim-Bom" (the flip side of "Chega de saudade") or "Hô-bá-lá-lá." The advantage was that once the rhythmical gimmick was mastered, one did not have to have a great or a well-trained voice to sing Bossa Nova. This informality changed the more the music became

⁷ Note the echo of "negócio" from "Chega de saudade" in this line.

professionalized, as the subsequent modulated phrasing and range of a Maria Bethânia or Gal Costa show, but the ordinary run-of-the-mill vocal qualities of Joãozinho himself, Astrud Gilberto (in the painful English of the world-wide hit with jazzman Stan Getz, "The Girl from Ipanema"), Vinícius and, eventually, Caetano Veloso, were part and parcel of the familiarity conveyed by the genre. As purists of Brazilian "popular" or folk music would insist, Bossa Nova rhythms have little to do with traditional samba, except in deliberate citations, for example in the *Orfeu negro* soundtrack. The steady throbbing of the binary samba beat was rejected and replaced with diversified strategies of syncopation, best played on the standard band or jazz ensemble snare-and-drum set rather than Afro-Brazilian samba drums. (The "Girl from Ipanema" did not move like the samba, despite the assertion of its awful English lyrics.) As Charles A. Perrone puts it, "Bossa Nova favoured refinement of 'touch' over driving impact or 'punch'" (Perrone, *Masters*, xx), and such restraint reflected the setting in which it was best performed, and to which its lyrics directly referred (for example, the line from "Corcovado": "um cantinho, um violão, esse amor, uma canção" – a niche, a guitar, this love, a song).⁸

Perhaps thinking of that apartment window in "Corcovado" (through which can be seen a scanty patch of sky and the colossal figure of Christ overlooking Rio), Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna observed that Bossa Nova is "to be played within an apartment, not in the street, not in auditoriums, but in small rooms. This restricted and closed universe has a semiological, ideological and social signification, since it reveals the 'closedness' of the I/You (*Eu/Você*) couple towards the reality of third person others" (219). We could equally well claim that this closed dialogue of self and other is the very basis of lyric, as per Jakobson, and has been for millennia. Like most literary critics dealing with Bossa Nova, Sant'Anna has a preferred alternative poetics. The politicized discourse which arose on the heels of Bossa Nova with the 1964 coup and dictatorship lasted for two decades and adopted one of two forms: either the *literatura* (/ *música*) *comprometida* or *engagé* of *Violão da Rua: Poemas para a Liberdade* (Street Guitar: Poems for Freedom), or the "happening" scene of the *Tropicália* movement, which belongs on the other side of the great rift cutting across

⁸ See Perrone (*Masters*, xx) also for a general description of the musical nuts-and-bolts of Bossa Nova. For greater detail, see manuals such as Nelson Faria, *The Brazilian Guitar Book*; Denis Roux, "*Astuces*" de la *guitare brésilienne*; or Chediak, *Songbooks*.

international culture during the late sixties, symbolized politically by tumultuous public events everywhere in 1968 and culturally by that romantic figure of alternative, hallucinogenic communality, the hippie (see Sant'Anna, 223). Bossa Nova critics, who are almost invariably critics of Bossa Nova, never tire of telling us it was irredeemably middle class, the child of privilege; those who followed on its footsteps were usually critical of the "apolitical, inconsequential and frequently banal discourse of mainstream Bossa Nova" (Perrone, *Masters*, xxvi). Thus, for Sant'Anna, Bossa Nova represents "the light and breezy life of the Zona Sul, capturing a minuet only possible in an age in which the word 'pollution' did not exist" (219).

This crypto-Arcadian myth has considerable back-handed power, despite the irony of applying it to densely urban Copacabana and Ipanema. To read or, better, to play and listen to Bossa Nova today, and it doubtless was even in its heyday, is to practice nostalgia of a sort, not just because of the poignant longing and loss its lyrics express, but because of the particular moment it occupies in world cultural history, one in which commercial music originating in the United States could, without apparent conflict, blend and fuse with the literary tastes of a relatively self-assured, cosmopolitan though peripheral middle class. In other words, to seek to situate Bossa Nova in its time and place means to inquire into the grounds of an "identity" with which very few contemporary intellectuals in Brazil and beyond are ideologically comfortable. Although a prime factor in this discomfort is a residual Marxist contempt for the bourgeoisie, especially that abominated sub-class the petty bourgeoisie, there are other factors at play, not the least the ease with which Brazilian literary traditions could graft themselves onto American musical modes, while at the same time accommodating native genres, for which "samba" is the habitual shorthand designation.

Here there arises a methodological issue I have so far left dormant, in part because I find it less troubling than others do. To what extent can we speak of song lyrics as literature or, to use the requisite jargon, as belonging in "the literary sequence," Sant'Anna's *a série literária*? The interaction of song and text does affect how we "read" what we hear sung, but I do not think it is the case that (as Perrone suggests) the "song's occurrence in acoustic, real time ... makes song less accessible than a written text, which can be consulted indefinitely" (*Seven Faces*, 89). The opposite may be more true. As Perrone concedes, we consult songs over and over in our minds, and it is precisely one of the functions of music to impress them upon our memory, as rhyme itself does. In any event, the songs in question, now

digitized, are available in multimedia settings in which the lyrics can be read alongside acoustic and, for that matter, televisual tracks.

Sant'Anna's manner of conjoining the literary and musical realms repose on a theoretical framework I nonetheless embrace, though he was referring to the post-Bossa Nova convergence of styles and themes in *Cinema Novo*, in the theatre sponsored by the *Centro Popular de Cultura*, and in the more public displays of poetic and musical experiment promoted by the *Tropicália* movement. There is no intrinsic reason why its Jakobsonian logic should not apply equally well to Bossa Nova at the beginning of the same decade:

Popular music and culture meet, despite traditional esthetic claims to their autonomy. Each is primarily concerned with the "message" for its own sake. This is why it can be said that in this regard there is not so much an *equivalence* between the literary sequence [*a série literária*] and the musical sequence, but an *identity*. They are not running alongside each other, but are mixed together. (Sant'Anna, 226)

Even stripped of their musical accompaniment, Bossa Nova lyrics display the self-conscious shaping of both form and content of their "message" which marks "high" literature, and to which Jakobson was referring in his famous dictum "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination": for example, "numa prece que ela regresse," in the second line of "Chega de saudade" cited above.⁹ In Bossa Nova lyrics, however, this formal literary status is reinforced by a second strategy, the systematic construction of threads of self-reflective metaliterary reference throughout its corpus, what could be called, depending on the critical approach, intertextuality, influence, allusion or the use of shared theme and motif.

For reasons of space, I shall document only one of these threads sketchily, one beginning with the well-known Carlos Drummond de Andrade poem "In the Middle of the Road" ("No meio do caminho").

No meio do caminho tinha uma pedra
tinha uma pedra no meio do caminho

⁹ Roman Jakobson's poetic function involves focusing on the message for its own sake (see "Linguistics and Poetics," 71).

tinha uma pedra
no meio do caminho tinha uma pedra

Nunca me esquecerei desse acontecimento
no vida de minhas retinas tão fatigadas.
Nunca me esquecerei que no meio do caminho
tinha uma pedra
tinha uma pedra no meio do caminho
no meio do caminho tinha uma pedra.

(In the middle of the road there was a stone / there was a stone
in the middle of the road / there was a stone / in the middle of
the road / there was a stone. // Never should I forget this
event / in the life of my fatigued retinas. / Never should I
forget that in the middle of the road / there was a stone / there
was a stone in the middle of the road in the middle of the road.
there was a stone.)¹⁰

This text, it is generally agreed, is a prime reference for subsequent high literary tradition, those who followed directly in Drummond's wake, the *objectivistas*, but as well the *concretistas* (since, after all, what concretists do is ask the reader to admire the print objects they find in the middle of their reading road). Within the context of "In the Middle of the Road," Tom Jobim's opening line for "Águas de março" (Rains of March) takes on a distinctly intertextual function, alluding not only to Drummond, but Oswald's *Pau Brasil*: "É pau, é pedra, é o fim do caminho, é o resto de toco, é um pouco sozinho..." (It's wood, it's stone, it's the end of the road, it's the rest of a stump, it's a bit lonely... [Songbook 2, 30]). Similarly, Caetano Veloso's "Força estranha" (Strange Force):

Eu vi o menino correndo
eu vi o tempo, brincando ao redor
Do caminho daquele menino
Eu pus os meus pés no riacho
E acho que nunca os tirei

¹⁰ Cited in Elizabeth Bishop's translation (89).

O sol ainda brilha na estrada
E eu nunca passei.¹¹

(I see the child running. / I see time, playing around / the path
traced by that child. / I put my feet into that stream / and think
I'll never pull them out. / The sun is still shining on the road /
and I still haven't moved on.)

Though a figure of later MPB (*Música Popular Brasileira*), Caetano was without a doubt reading the Drummond image through Bossa Nova, and probably with an echo in his mind of Jobim's words in his earlier "Entrada do sol":

É de manhã vem o sol
mas o pingos da chuva que ontem caiu
ainda estão a brilhar, ainda estão a dançar
ao vento alegre que me traz esta canção
Quero que você me dê a mão
que eu vou seguir por aí
sem pensar no que foi
que sonhei que chorei que sofri
pois a nossa manhã
já me fez esquecer.
Me dê a mão vamos sair pra ver o sol

(*Songbook 1*, 80)¹²

(It's morning / but the drops of rain that yesterday fell / still
glisten and dance / in the light breeze which brings me this
song. / Give me your hand / so I can go out there / without
worry about what has been / or what I have dreamed, cried,
suffered, / because our morning / already makes me forget. /
So give me your hand, let's go out and look at the sun.)

This topos of stone and road and sun and rain runs throughout the corpus of Bossa Nova and Bossa Nova-inspired lyrics; alongside it there is an identifiable thematic complex we might summarize as follows: fragile happiness and its opposite, solitude ("Triste é viver em solidão"); dream and

¹¹ Here cited from the Gal Costa album, *Gal Tropical* (Polygram, 1979)

¹² Also recorded on *Gal Tropical*.

illusion; song itself ("Vai minha tristeza e diz a ela"); the tears of unrequited love ("Eu sem você, não tenho porque, porque sem você, não sei nem chorar"), love, a smile and flowers ("O amor, o sorriso e a flor"). The extent and limits of this thematic vocabulary can be explored in Milton Nascimento's "De palavra em palavra" (From Word to Word), a medley of melodic fragments and phrases, each of which easily recognized by fans as drawn from a Bossa Nova classic, the whole being held together by its trademark syncopated beat.

O amor é a coisa mais triste quando se desfaz.
Dói no coração de quem sonhou demais.
Eu vivo sonhando ah! que insensatez
Até você voltar outra vez
Eu tenho esse amor para dar
Agora, o que é que vou fazer?
Porque esse é o maior que você pode encontrar.
Mas de conversa en conversa
Eo só quis dizer
De palavra em palavra
João Gilberto um abraço em você.

(*Songbook 5*, 70.)¹³

There would be little point in translating this medley, since its inner logic is the knitting together of phrases in Portuguese. Note, though, that Milton's homage, far from mocking, rather attests to the solid foundation of convention upon which Bossa Nova, allegedly the most spontaneous and "natural" of musical movements, was constructed, and closes with explicit homage to Gilberto (a hug for you, João). As suggested above, these poetic devices and literary allusions could not have been smuggled in unbeknown to the public which prized Bossa Nova. Rather its middle-class public was savvy enough to recognize, relish and relate them to national literary traditions.

On the matter of foreign "literary" tastes, however, Bossa Nova marked a significant shift and was in many ways a harbinger of "globalization," understood as a synonym for American media influence. Although for another generation the Brazilian intelligentsia continued to absorb influences largely from European and, in particular, French sources, by the

¹³ Released in 1971 by Miltoninho, Maurício Tapajós and Paulo César Pinheiro, this is chronologically MPB, but is understandably included in Bossa Nova.

end of the Second World War, the Brazilian middle-class was actively engaged with American popular culture. To no small extent, this disparity between the intelligentsia and the wider literate public fostered the negative critical reception of Bossa Nova. Already in the Gallic shape and feel of a *série literária*, there is a suggestion of the preferences of the academic coteries into whose hands it was the fate of Bossa Nova to fall, more or less as the nation itself fell victim to the military coup. Franco-philia had long been a part of Brazilian intellectual life, and the structuralist and then semiotic forms its more theoretically-inclined sectors embraced during the sixties and seventies were adumbrated during the fifties by the rise of a *poesia concreta*, itself sometimes considered to be the true fulfillment of Oswald's prescribed literary *Pau Brasil*, avant-garde experimentation successfully launched on the international market. Like concrete poetry, Bossa Nova was well received in France and in general in Europe. I have already mentioned the French-Brazilian film *Orfeu negro*, Cannes Golden Palm winner in 1959, with music by Tom and Vinícius; only a few years later the French director Claude Lelouch incorporated a performance of "Samba de benção" (Praise samba) – the *samba-recitação* Vinícius had composed with the guitarist Baden Powell – almost gratuitously into *Un homme et une femme* (A Man and a Woman, 1965). Yet Bossa Nova sat at the edge of a fault line running through Brazilian and other cultures in the post-war period, one which marks the decline of French as a fundamental point of reference and the ascendance of American popular culture, especially its music and movies. It was not Edith Piaf, Charles Aznavour or Georges Brassens who inspired the initiators of Bossa Nova, but Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole. To "arrive" in fifties Rio was to return successfully from New York or Los Angeles, as did one prodigal son, a Brazilian who did have a brief career as a crooner in New York, Dick Farney (stage name of Farnéio Dutra). Farney was an inspiration for the youth who became both aficionados and practitioners of Bossa Nova, and one of the early *foyers* of Bossa Nova was the so-called Sinatra-Farney Fan Club (Castro, 36). Two particularly prized tracks were Sinatra's version of "Laura" and Nat King Cole's "Unforgettable."¹⁴ Bossa Nova lyrics were rarely as melodramatic as these two pieces, since even rapt desire was ironized in its stylized, self-conscious lyrics, but in the lush orchestrations of "Laura" and "Unforgettable" were musical mannerisms whose imitation

¹⁴ "Laura" is widely available, but can be found on *Frank Sinatra, Night & Day* (SPA, 1992); "Unforgettable" is on *The Greatest Hits, Nat King Cole* (EMI, 1994).

influenced the Brazilian genre, for example the wandering minute-long prelude to Sinatra's entrance in "Laura" and the extension of the diphthong in the vocative "Laura" into a self-naming expression of longing; or the melodic invention of "Unforgettable," with the hiatus between "un" and "forgettable" underscoring its sense. Similar convergences of form and content (or isomorphisms) abound in Bossa Nova.

So if, on the one hand, "modern" meant *modernismo* à la Drummond de Andrade, on the other hand it meant American. As Ruy Castro describes it, "[those who prepared the way for Bossa Nova] all wanted to be modern and so kept up with the very latest groups from the States like the *Hi-Lo's* and the *Pied Pipers*" (57). They suffered from "Crooner Envy" and some small measure of the reach of American corporate culture can be read in the development of a derivative TV culture in Brazil. *Um milhão de melodias* (A Million Melodies), a wildly successful show on Rádio Nacional, was produced to launch Coca-Cola in Brazil. Sylvinha Telles, one of the first established professionals to promote Bossa Nova, had been famous as co-star with her husband in a TV series imitating *I Love Lucy: Música e romance*. Bossa Nova was a music of citation, of knowing allusion, but the scope of its referentiality extended deep into American media culture of the fifties.

Throughout this study, I have tried to locate Bossa Nova in a rather tight time frame, this despite the fact that its stylistic features have been scattered far and wide within Brazil and around the world: there are Japanese Girls from Ipanema. Such a diachronic approach to Bossa Nova is in part motivated by its *critical* reception as having failed to speak directly to the radically changed political circumstances in Brazil after the 1964 Coup, when the ambiance decidedly changed. But Bossa Nova, by virtue of its pastoral and nostalgic tone, was thematically attuned to the irreversible passage of time. Born, or at least conceived, at a moment when the personal and intimate could still legitimately be conflated with the public and political, its organic unity as a lyrical and musical movement dissolved rapidly with its dissemination abroad and with the shift in political regime within.

Hence it seems appropriate to conclude by quoting Vinícius de Moraes' retrospective lament for the passing of Bossa Nova. By 1972, Vinícius was touring world-wide with a repertoire of songs composed with a new generation of musicians, though he continued to work with Tom Jobim. Fourteen years after Tom's "Corcovado," Vinícius played another card in the Bossa Nova deck, using the chord progression and inverting the melody of the 1960 Jobim hit to express, in "Carta ao Tom 74" (Postcard to Tom Jobim 1974), his personal nostalgia and bitterness about the turn

things had taken in Brazil: their "girl" from Ipanema never could have imagined the sorry turn things took in Rio of the early seventies. Yet such a sense of ephemerality came easy to the poet who had written: "tristeza não tem fim, felicidade si":

Rua Nascimento e Silva cento e sete
 Você ensinando pra Eliseth
 As canções de "Canção do amor demais."
 Lembra que tempo feliz, ah! que saudade,
 Ipanema era só felicidade
 Era come se o amor doesse em pax.
 Nossa famosa garota nem sabia
 A que ponto a cidade turbaria,
 esse Rio de amor que se perdeu
 Memso a tristeza da gente era mais bela
 e além disso se via da janela
 Um cantinho de céu e o Redentor.
 E meu amigo só resta uma certeza
 É preciso acabar com essa tristeza.
 É preciso inventar de novo o amor.

(Songbook 1, 60)

(Nascimento e Silva Street 107: / you were teaching Eliseth / to sing the songs of "Canção do amor demais." / Remember that bliss, that *saudade*. / Ipanema was happiness itself, / as if love were slumbering in peace. / Our famous Girl of Ipanema had no idea / how her city would fall apart, / our Rio [river] of love that has been lost. / Even sadness then was beautiful / and, besides, from our window we could see / a little piece of sky and the Redeemer. / So, my friend, there remains but one thing to do: / we have to finish with this sadness. / We have to invent love all over again.)¹⁵

¹⁵ To close with a personal, but also political, note, I was fortunate to attend the Paris performance of the show with Maria Bethânia and Toquinho which was recorded a few months later in Buenos Aires, and is now available on Vinícius de Moraes at "La Fusa" (Ubatuqui, 1992). The audience in Paris was full of enthusiastic Brazilians, many of whom were political exiles.

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, M. M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- Bishop, Elizabeth, and Emanuel Brasil, eds. *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1972.
- Castro, Ruy. *Chega de saudade: a história e as histórias da Bossa Nova*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990.
- Chediak, Almir, ed. *Bossa Nova Songbooks 1-5*. 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 1990.
- Culler, Jonathan. "What is Cultural Studies?" *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretations*. Ed. Mieke Bal. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. 335-47.
- Faria, Nelson. *The Brazilian Guitar Book*. Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 1995.
- Jakobson, Roman. "Linguistics and Poetics." *Language in Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987. 62-94.
- Martins, Wilson. *The Modernist Idea*. Trans. Jack E. Tomlins. New York: New York University Press, 1970.
- Perrone, Charles A. *Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Song: MPB 1965-1985*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.
- . *Seven Faces: Brazilian Poetry since Modernism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Rangel, Lúcio. "Discoteca mínima da música popular brasileira." *Sambistas e Chorões*. São Paulo: Editôra Paulo de Azvedo Lta., 1962. 135-80.
- Roux, Denis. "Astuces" de la guitare brésilienne. Paris: Roux/Ghuzel: 1984.
- Sant'Anna, Affonso Romano. *Música popular e moderna poesia brasileira*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1978.