

"The samba," he said at a much later date,

is basically a negro-European thing. It has roots very similar to the roots of jazz: The Portuguese song has the negro beat and the negro feeling. And also samba is not just samba. There are ten or twelve different beats of samba. But that's the main stream. We have other things, like baião, like maracatu, many different rhythms.

But samba is the main stream, the main road. bossa nova could be called a branch, one of the many branches that samba has.

The regular samba, the street samba, the Carnaval samba, has all kinds of percussion instruments, and cans and tambours and tambourines, whatever you can think. The bossa nova had this advantage: It was kind of washed, more concise, less noisy, [with] less things going on, easier to record in a studio. Because I had had tremendous experience recording *Black Orpheus* (a film Jobim scored with Bonfá). With twenty guys playing percussion, it sounds like the sea. The holes are filled, there's no space left. [Then] bossa nova came with a very detached beat, that cleaned the whole thing. It was easier. And maybe because of that it became more universal.

I listened that first time to Gilberto and Jobim rehearse. The former was singing "Só Danço Samba" ("I Dance Only Samba"), a humorous little song about someone who says he has danced the twist too much, has danced calypso and cha-cha-cha, and now wants to dance only samba. It was a matter of months before he and Jobim would record that with Stan Getz in New York.

The lyrics of the songs were almost as fascinating as the music. I was intrigued by all of the fresh (to me) rhymes I was discovering, failing at first to see that as songs have clichés in English, so do songs in Portuguese. Brazilians endlessly rhyme song, guitar, and heart — *canção*, *violão* (which means not violin but guitar), and *coração*. Heart and song are rhymed in Spanish, too: *corazón* and *cancion*. For the most part, however, I found a poetic freshness in the songs, some of which had