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## Um Abraço No Tom

## Part Three

For all that he was revered in Brazil, Jobim was criticized there, and he was not averse to criticizing back.

"Some Brazilians," one journalist wrote, "never forgave Jobim for being so extraordinarily successful. He has been described as someone who sold his soul to the United States."

I sometimes think those who most criticize a country are those who love it most, not the conspicuous posturing patriots. Those who truly love a country call on it to adhere to its highest ideals and aspire to even higher. And Jobim said, "I've never seen a more corrupt, more bureaucratic country than ours." I daresay that cost him a few friends. And he said, "We have this misery mania. Brazil cannot see anything that works. Brazil loves Garrincha (a noted soccer player) but it needs to learn to love Pele. He was a success and Garrincha died a pauper." (Jobim was a soccer fan.)

The remark was no doubt in response to the resentment of his success. But this attitude is endemic in the North American jazz world where success is seen as evidence of mediocrity, while failure, a miserable life, alcoholism, or an early drug death empower a certain kind of critic to bestow an essentially condescending praise. Cannonball Adderley, Dave Brubeck, and even Miles Davis have known the sting of this.

Jobim said, "I'm not the one who badmouths Brazil. Brazil badmouths Brazil."

He had even undergone criticism for his music itself, as superb as it is. He said, "The more my music is Brazilian, the more they call me Americanized."

And he said, "I've dedicated my life to Brazilian music, because you already have the French to write French music and Americans to write American music." For myself, I found his music becoming more deeply Brazilian as he grew older and explored a broad range of the musical materials of his country.

He said, "The praise comes from the people, the roguery from the intelligentsia."

There is one point about Jobim's work that I would like to clear up. After his death, I read a Brazilian piece about him that, for all the admiration in its tone, said that he wasn't much of a pianist or a singer. He indeed wasn't much of a singer, but he was a very fine pianist whose simplicity on records was deceptive. Listen to his performance on electric piano of Ary Barroso's *Brazil* on the *Stone Flower* album. And there are some very good examples of his piano on the *Wave* album.

But I have another reason to be aware of the scope of his playing. One day, looking for a cassette on which to record something, I was playing some that were without labels. I heard a pianist playing *Someone to Light Up My Life*. He was playing it beautifully, a little like Bill Evans and with plenty of technique. I could not decide who it was, until the ending, when I recognized

three voices laughing and talking: Gerry Mulligan, Jobim, and me. I remembered an evening in my apartment, just after I had written that lyric. Jobim was demonstrating the song for Gerry. Having no rhythm section, no need to stay out of its way, he was using the full resources of the keyboard. And he was a formidable pianist.

Interviewing him in Brazil in 1990 for the introduction of the 1990 *Tom Jobim Songbook*, Almir Chediak, its editor and compiler, reminded him that Villa-Lobos had been severely criticized in Brazil.

"He sure was," Jobim responded. "His choices got pretty limited: either change his profession, shoot himself, or do what he did. Fortunately, he chose the best alternative: he faced up to all those people who had absolutely no understanding of what he was doing . . . In defense, he put on vainglory, saying, 'I'm a genius,' and that was all. He just pretended to be vain. Eventually he had to leave Brazil. And if he hadn't left, I doubt whether he'd have reached the point of achieving world renown as a composer, which he quite deserves."

Chediak said, "You too."

"Maybe so," Jobim said. "If I'd stayed in Brazil, I wouldn't have made it past the corner bar, where I'd be sitting around drinking beer . . . In the Northern Hemisphere, people take things more seriously. Up there it's cold and people stay indoors, all bundled up. Without anything else to do, they write or compose. And that's why all the great works were created in the Northern Hemisphere. In the tropics, the heat generates a search for water."

But Jobim did not know Canada, where the same qualities he describes in Brazil are to be found. The Canadians tend not to recognize the Canadian artist until he or she has received the endorsement of the Americans. I am convinced that had Jobim not been a major star in the United States, he wouldn't have been one in Brazil either. But the very need that Canadians and apparently Brazilians have for this American endorsement produces a covert resentment of the United States. To succeed in New York City, and by extension Hollywood, is to succeed in the world, and everyone knows it. In 1953, when the couturiere Coco Chanel came out of an eight-year retirement, the French critics destroyed her. Then her work was praised in *Women's Wear Daily*, Americans went wild about it, and then the French took her to their bosom.

So this phenomenon is not limited to Brazil, nor for that is it new. Otherwise you would not find in Matthew 13:32 the sarcastic (and usually misquoted) observation: "The prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house."

There is no question in my mind that Jobim was a Brazilian nationalist. But he was more than that, and of all the things he said, one remains particularly vibrant in my mind. It was a rejection of jingoism, of nationalism, of racism, of parochialism. It seemed to echo something Jesus said (John 8:58), speaking of his spiritual unity with the world: "Before Abraham was, I am."

Jobim said to me, and he said it in English, "I am prior to borders."

Jobim suffered from bladder cancer. In November of 1994, he flew to New York to undergo treatment at Mount Sinai Medical Center. He returned to Brazil, telling reporters there that he had undergone an angioplasty. His heart condition had been discovered during the cancer examination. None of this surprised his doctors, who for years had been warning him about his eating and drinking habits. Gerry Mulligan, who had seen him in Rio a few months earlier, said on returning from Brazil that Jobim's weight worried him.

Jobim had been trying to cut back on his alcohol intake, but some of his friends said he had to have a little Sco-watch at least once a day.

He returned to Mount Sinai, where he underwent surgery. He died Thursday, December 8, in the same hospital in which Bill Evans had died fourteen years earlier. *O Globo*, the large Rio daily, ran a headline saying that he might have died of medical error. His son Paulo, now forty-four, denied this. He said the family knew his heart might not stand up to the operation: he had been suffering from atherosclerosis for at least twenty years.

His body arrived at the International Airport of Galeão at 10:15 a.m. the next day, Friday. A spontaneous demonstration materialized. A firetruck carried his coffin, covered with a Brazilian flag, through the city. This developed into a parade that lasted four hours as Cariocas poured into the streets to bid him farewell. Some sang his songs, some stood in silence. The truck passed in front of Churrascaria Plataforma, a restaurant he particularly liked. Its waiters and clients stood outside, some of them in tears. Its owner was already considering putting a plaque, perhaps bronze, on Jobim's favorite table.

There were hundreds of mourners at the Botanical Gardens, where he liked to walk and near which he had lived in recent years. His body was taken in the evening to São João Batista (Saint John the Baptist) Cemetery, from which you can see Corcovado, and laid in a tomb near the graves of friends such as Vinicius de Moraes. Also buried there is Carmen Miranda Francisco Alves.

A moment for Carmen Miranda. She was born in Portugal and moved to Brazil where, during the 1930s, she was a champion and major performer of great songs in what is considered a golden period of Brazilian song. The Hollywood film industry made a clown and a fool of her. Indeed, on the assumption that the Americans didn't know the difference between Spanish and Portuguese — and they were right about that — they cast her as various nationalities other than Brazilian. She was cast as an Argentine in her first picture, *Down Argentina Way*. And the movie people always had her dancing with a great and foolish grin on her face and those hats made of piled fruit.

The casting of Carmen Miranda, and various other performers from the other, Spanish-speaking, countries of South America, in the movies during the 1930s and '40s and even later, reflected a general condescension toward all the peoples to the south: the lazy *mañana* Mexican dozing under a sombrero against an adobe wall (Mexicans are the hardest-working people I have ever seen) or the

equally ubiquitous grinning Mexican bandit (even to the Frito bandido of later television notoriety), the sundry slick Latin Lover types from various countries, and other ethnic stereotypes. To dominate and if necessary exterminate a people requires their prior demonization or at least debasement, and the portrayal of Latin Americans during that period is almost as ghastly as the Mantan Moreland-Steppin Fetchit movie images of blacks. Carmen Miranda was used to such ends, whether consciously by studio heads and directors or out of a universal ignorance of the nature of Latin America and its nations, so diverse and different.

It was even done in music. Frank Sinatra, during his days at the Columbia label, had a record called *The Coffee Song* that contained such lines as "way down among Brazilians, coffee beans grow by the billions, and they've got to find those extra cups to fit." They've got an awful lot of coffee in Brazil . . . . A politician's daughter was accused of drinking water and was fined a great big fifty-dollar bill. They've got an awful lot of coffee in Brazil." (And if she had paid a fine, it would have been in cruzeiros, not dollars.)

Yet another song, called *The Best President We Ever Had*, similarly patronized Spanish-speaking Latins, with its line, "We're awfully sorry we shot him." All of Latin America put together does not have a record of presidential assassinations and attempted assassinations equal to that of the United States.

Carmen Miranda was, in her Hollywood years, a victim of this institutionalized condescension.

But I must say that her fruity hats led to what at first I thought was a musicians' joke, until I heard at least two persons say they had seen the incident on the TV quiz show *Jeopardy*. A young woman who had chosen popular music as her category was asked, "What famous popular singer was associated with the song *Strange Fruit*?" After frowning her brow for a moment, she brightened and said hopefully, "Carmen Miranda?"

Jobim's genius and Creed Taylor's faith in it, and the success of some other Brazilians, including Sergio Mendes, did much to mitigate the image of Brazil left by movies and the misuse of Carmen Miranda.

The ways in which popular music reflect and affect the political climate of a country are fascinating. Nor, as we have noted, is this phenomenon limited to popular music, as witness the predominance of serialism and its derivatives in postwar Germany, and, given Germany's historical musical prestige, in other countries as well. But popular music is ubiquitous, all but inescapable in our electronic age, and it is very powerful.

As I said, it is not, I think, a coincidence that an exquisite sunburst of great popular music occurred in Brazil during the time of optimism generated there by the Kubitschek administration. After that, the generals. Nor is it coincidence that this bossa nova music took hold in the United States during the Kennedy administration, which in its early days inspired a mood of aspiration and

optimism, whether justified or not. After his assassination, there arose a general unarticulated sense that something had gone terribly historically wrong. And the shriek of distorted guitars and the moral pomposities of Bob Dylan were heard in the land. The popular music of the United States began an accelerating decline into ugliness and illiteracy that has not ended yet.

The day after Jobim's death, the governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro announced a three-day period of mourning.

That night, in the bars, most of the talk was of Jobim. Waiters remembered his heavy drinking. He was said to have given up Scotch, his *uisquinho*, but not beer. A waiter at the bar named Garota de Ipanema — the girl from Ipanema — in honor of the song said that in the past Jobim would have ten glasses of beer a day, then come back the next day to pay his bill. Really? Then he was doing well. Sergio Mendes and I remember when he arrived in California to stay at Sergio's house in Sherman Oaks for a few days. Knowing Jobim's habits, Sergio had filled the refrigerator with Heineken's. By that night, Jobim had gone through thirty-six bottles of it.

The next day, Saturday, the mayor of Rio announced that Avenida Vieira Souto, the boulevard along the Ipanema oceanfront named after a famous engineer, would be renamed Avenida Tom Jobim. Jobim liked to sit on a bench there and watch the girls go by. Jobim said, "I'm already at that age to watch the girls from afar. The bad part is the older you get the prettier the girls become." Indeed, it was there that he saw the gorgeous adolescent who inspired the song that, more than any other, launched the career that made him a millionaire. How Jobim would have felt about this is of course unknown, but we can make a guess: when a street was named after Vinicius de Moraes, he said, "Look what they have done with Vinicius. He has become a street. Now the cars roll over him and the dogs come and pee over him."

The plates bearing Jobim's name went up in January. Residents along this street of luxurious tall apartment buildings immediately complained. They prepared to file a lawsuit against the city government. Helio Cabal, who once was Brazil's ambassador to the United States and, retired now, lives on the street, said, "Can you imagine if the mayor of New York — what's his name, Giuliani? — decided to change the name of Park Avenue to Frank Sinatra Avenue?"

Well, yes, one can imagine it. The name of Idlewild Airport was changed to John F. Kennedy. In Orange County, California, there is John Wayne Airport, and John Wayne is seen as an American hero, rather than as an actor. "Should someone change the name of Fifth Avenue or the Champs Elysees?" Cabal demanded. Well don't count on the French: the names of streets don't seem to mean much in Paris. Sometimes the name of a street changes every few blocks, for the sake of honoring sundry dead dignitaries, and they changed one street name to Quai Kennedy so quickly that I can't remember its original name.

At a more practical level, residents and businessmen along the avenida worried about the cost of changing their stationery, business cards, invoices, advertising, even drivers' licenses.

The mayor recanted and the new signs were taken down, the old ones restored. But the battle was not ended. A number of politicians came up with the idea that Rio's Galeão (it means galleon) Airport should be named after Jobim. This drove travel agents and aviation executives wild: this would necessitate changing computer and ticketing procedures all over the world.

On this issue, I think I can speak for Jobim: in both the Portuguese lyrics and my lyrics to *Samba do Avião* (*Song of the Jet*), we wrote of arriving at the airport of Galeão. How can I change that to arriving at Tom Jobim International Airport? It doesn't have the same ring, and anyway, it cannot possibly be made to fit the music in either language.

Someone else came up with the idea of naming the road from the airport into the city after Jobim. The matter remains unresolved. Nothing yet has been named after him. And somehow I think he would find all this very funny. After all, as far as I know, they haven't got around to naming anything after Dorival Caymmi or Ary Barroso, two of Jobim's friends and certainly his idols.

"Dorival Caymmi," he told me in 1974, "is a very important Brazilian composer. He is from Bahia, so he has a different background from me. He is one of the pillars. He came when he was about twenty-something to Rio de Janeiro, and then back and forth for a period of time, and then he moved permanently to Rio. He tried to live in Bahia, but by now it is a touristic resort. Not only foreigners, but also the Brazilians themselves. He had a house there, but it was like a museum. The bus would stop with the tourists. I think Dorival will never return to Bahia. In the big city he is anonymous. In his beautiful penthouse in a high building, he can fix his hammock. He can have the guitar and think about Bahia as it used to be. Bahia is a painting on the wall.

"Caymmi met Ary Barroso, who wrote *Bahia* and *Brazil*. He did very well with Walt Disney. Barroso was the most famous composer in Brazil. He was a very good friend of mine. He got cirrhosis. He called me. He said, 'Antonio, ain't you gonna visit me?' I said, 'Sure. I read in the newspaper that you were a little sick and I didn't want to disturb you.' He said, 'What do you mean, a little sick? I'm dying, man. You come here *now*. I want to see you.'

"I rushed to his house. He had a beautiful house on a hill. You could see the sea. He had a grand piano. He called Dorival Caymmi too. We got together there. He said, 'Well, my friends, I'm gonna die.' Naturally we said, 'No, come on.' Dorival said, 'No. You have to change your life. You can't go on drinking as you used to do.' He was in his sixties. Dorival convinced him that he was not gonna die. Then he would say, 'No, I'm gonna die.' He was very nice. He said, 'Even if I don't die, what kind of life? I will go to a square to read the newspaper.' Because he always liked to be with the orchestra, drinking Scotch. He liked to live.

"Ary was born in Minas Gerais." It is one of the large states of Brazil. It is north of Rio de Janeiro. Its name means General Mines. "It had such tremendous, beautiful forests, with wild life. Everything was gone. He went there. Tried to get back to the old place. The place is not there any more. The same thing that happened with Dorival. And sometimes now I find myself thinking about Ipanema, like the paradise that I knew, the strip of sand with the lagoon on one side, the sea on the other side, and the blue transparent water, the sun and the surfing. And the fish! The incredible amount of fish. If you would drop a line in the water, you could catch pompano, double A class fish, bluefish, snook. Everything. For nothing. Within half an hour, you would give fish to your friends.

"And Guanabara Bay, that was such a paradise. All that is gone. It's oily. You can see the sewage going to the sea, the industrial things. The fish started to die in the lagoon. They used to come, all kinds of fish, shrimp, they used to come to the lagoon to spawn. The beach was white with this fine, singing sand, that you run, you listen *cling cling cling*. It was so fine that it sings when you run. Now, naturally, Brazil is booming industrially, and all this is gone. The freeway came, and industry pollutes the sea and the air."

About the time Jobim had gone back to Brazil, I had gone back to Canada, or more precisely to a picture in my mind of the days of my youth. And like Jobim's Rio, it had all changed. Now you couldn't swim in Lake Ontario. The glorious orchards of the Niagara Peninsula were disappearing, like those of Michigan. In the nineteenth century, the railways came to transport the food. The towns sprang up along the railways. The doctors diminished death, or rather postponed it. The populations grew. Then came the automobile, and the highways to connect those towns, and the big transport trucks, endless flows of traffic day and night, not only leaving their emissions, but, which everyone forgets, devouring the very oxygen out of the air at the same time we are cutting down the great forests that produce it. At last the shopping malls and the parking lots. I had been as shocked by what was happening to Canada as he was by conditions in Brazil. I told him I had written and recorded a song about it, *What in the World?*:

*This is a place where the pines used to stand.  
What in the world are they doing to the land?*

*This was a field that my dog used to roam.  
What in the world are they doing to my home?*

*This was once a place to watch the silent clouds.  
Now the neon screams at frightened rushing crowds.*

*This is a beach that was lonely and free.  
What in the world are they doing to the sea?*

*This was once a place to watch the herons fly.*

*What's become of them? What's happened to the sky?*

*The hands on the clock read a quarter to twelve  
What in the world are we doing to ourselves?*

The process of recording has changed our perceptions beyond imagination. The dead don't die. If you play back the raw tapes of old record dates, you hear the laughter and the small talk before the takes, the ghosts of old laughter and conversations. Listening to the tape of Jobim and me talking, it is hard for me to believe that he grew old — well, almost old — and is gone. I still see the young man opening the door to me on that rainy night in Rio.

"I agree," Jobim said after I finished the song. "I used to go to the mountains, to what they call the virgin forest that had the huge trees that take four centuries to grow. They're all gone."

"The song we just wrote. . ." He was referring to *Double Rainbow*, which we had finished that very morning. "It's about the rain," he said, "it's about the forest, about the fox. I love nature, you know. I hope she loves me. And naturally, we don't like to see things being destroyed. Now, for instance, they are opening the trans-Amazon highway, these tremendous roads. And the wood will be gone, those big trees, mahogany, precious woods. And the animals will vanish. And yet at the same time they need the land to plant, to grow food, and roads to transport it."

"We are quite a mean animal, an ingenious, destructive animal. We are building a desert."

And then, to throw off the mood, he said, "Let's sing our song."

*Double Rainbow* has had quite a number of recordings in the twenty-one years since that conversation, by Stan Getz and Elis Regina (with our friend Oscar Castro-Neves on guitar) and others. A year or two ago, the remarkable singer Kevin Mahogany had a hit on it. But in my mind's ear, it remains as it was on the day I wrote it and were full of that curious pride and stillness, a vague amazement that you have been able to do it yet again, that come with completing a song, and it was still fragile and new and naive, and we sang it, accompanied only by Jobim's guitar.

*Listen!  
The rain is falling on the roses.  
The fragrance drifts across the garden,  
like the scent of some forgotten melody.*

*This melody belongs to you,  
belongs to me,  
belongs to no one.*

*See the way crimson petals  
scatter when the wind blows.  
Ah, the secret sigh of love that,  
suddenly, the heart knows.*

See now!

*A robin's there among the puddles,  
and, hopping through the misty raindrops,  
has come to tell us that it's spring.*

*Look at the double rainbow!  
The rain is silver in the sunlight.  
A baby fox is in the garden.*

*O rain, sweet loving mother rain  
that soaks the earth,  
that swells the streams  
and cleans the sky,  
that drains the blue.*

See now,  
the jasmine vines are all in blossom.  
A little brook of clever waters  
flows into a vast river . . . .

It was the last song we would ever write together. Like his little brook of clever waters, Jobim has flowed into the river of history.



*I had generous help from many persons in writing this. I must thank them for searching their memories, reading manuscript, and making suggestions. They include Airto Moreira, Flora Purim, Oscar Castro-Neves, and Creed Taylor. Fred Hall transferred an old open-reel tape of my conversation with Jobim to cassette so that I could listen to it. Above all, I thank Harold Santo of Lisbon, Portugal, who lived in São Paulo for twenty years and is a scholar of Brazilian music. It was he who suggested that I write this, and provided me with a large body of documentation. Because of him I relived a part of my life that I had shut away in a drawer. Um abraço com gratidão.*

## Recommended Records

So many people ordered the Robert Farnon albums (and they've all been sent; if you haven't received yours, let me know) and so many urged that a similar service be made available in future that I have arranged to order the records I recommend. And I recommend the following, which I've numbered:

(1) A sampler of Jobim's work is on one of the Jazz Masters series, which I compiled for Verve last year from a number of different albums. It is called simply *Antonio Carlos Jobim*.

(2) *Getz-Gilberto*, Jobim's first American album.

(2) *Antonio Carlos Jobim: The Composer Plays*. The first Claus Ogerman-Jobim collaboration remains as fresh as it was thirty-two

years ago. (4) *Stone Flower* and (5) *Wave* are superb. There are moments on *Wave* when Jobim cuts a little loose and you hear how well he really played piano.

(6) *Passarim*, recorded in 1987, is a from a time when Jobim was traveling with a group that included members of his own family. It shows how far he had gone from bossa nova.

(7) A particular favorite of mine is *Elis and Tom*, which Jobim made with the late Elis Regina. It was produced by Luiz Oliveira, recorded in Los Angeles in February and March of 1974. Elis Regina, twenty-nine at the time, was one of the best singers ever to come out of Brazil. She had the sweetest voice. I find myself thinking of it as a dear voice. She and Jobim are having fun, and it doesn't matter if you don't understand the Portuguese lyrics. Besides, good verbatim translations are provided in the liner notes.

(8) *Francis Albert Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim* and (9) *Sinatra and Company*.

The highly lyrical music of Claus Ogerman is fascinating in its own right. I recommend these albums. (10) *Symbiosis* is a jazz concerto with Bill Evans. (11) In *Bill Evans Trio with Symphony Orchestra*, Claus arranged pieces by Bach, Scriabin, Granados, and Fauré. (12) *Gate of Dreams* is a gorgeous album that partakes of both jazz and classical techniques. I also strongly recommend (13) *Elegia* and (14) *Some Times*. (15) *Amoroso* to the best of my knowledge is the only album João Gilberto made with Claus. Splendid.

The price is a \$18 per CD plus \$2 for packaging, and postage. The closing date for ordering is August 31. I'll put all the orders in at once. Allow three or four weeks after that for delivery. As in the case of the Farnon albums, your checks will not be cashed until the records have been shipped.

If this works out, I'll set up a service to do this for the pertinent material in future articles.

## Grover's Corner Youth Everlasting By Grover Sales

*To know no history is to remain a boy all one's life.*

*Cicero (102-43 BC)*

An overriding phenomenon of the United States after World War II is the discovery of the Fountain of Youth. Or, to put it less charitably, Americans for half a century now have shown a disturbing general tendency to remain frozen in perpetual adolescence.

The emergence and then triumph of pubescent culture was launched by interrelated developments without precedent in history: a population explosion coupled with the sudden breakdown of the "tradition-givers" that once shaped our national psyche: the family, the church, the school. The wartime emergence of latchkey

children and the new mobility of their parents ended The Family as a conveyor of the past. The dizzying decline of our educational system is too apparent to need elaboration here. History has been replaced by courses in Group Awareness, Women's Consciousness, and Forming Resistant Identities. Our so-called school system has graduated a generation that cannot locate Vietnam on the map and doesn't know who was president during the Civil War, but does know who Madonna was playing hide-the-weenie with in any given week.

Commercial television, with an assist from Top Forty radio, has replaced the home, the school, and the church as the giver of tradition. In his excellent collection of essays, *Conscious Objections*, Neil Postman noted that television emphasizes patterns of behavior that psychologists have associated with childishness: compulsive consumerism and the obsessive need for the instant gratification of every whim and desire, regardless of the consequences to oneself or anyone else. "Television," continues Postman, "seems to favor a population that consists of three age groups: on the one end, infancy; on the other, senility; and in between a group of indeterminate age where everyone is somewhere between twenty and thirty and remains that way until dotage descends."

A new generation living under the threat of The Bomb's terminal oblivion fell prey to nameless fears and terrors of childhood exquisitely caught by Interlandi, the forgotten cartoonist of the early Cold War; in a strip unpublishable in those grim twilight years by anyone but Paul Krassner's *The Realist*, Interlandi's button-down Everyman encounters the Nuclear Defense poster with its awesome mushroom cloud and the warning: "When the Bomb falls, what will you do?" Like many soldiers facing combat for the first time, he reverts to infancy: "I'd shit."

Jazz people, particularly those who came of age during the Swing Era "when a lot of popular music was good and a lot of good music was popular," as Gene Lees has put it, have long been aware of the proliferation of lucrative musical garbage media-crafted for vast armies of culturally rootless and aliterate children. (Neal Postman defines the "aliterate" as someone who can read but doesn't. Philip Roth estimated that there are 120,000 serious readers of literature in the United States, prompting one book publisher to comment: "He's an optimist.") The rise of rock, rap, and hip-hop and new age, with their concurrent alienation from the culture of the past, are not confined to music but infect the root and branch of American life.

Examples suggest themselves endlessly. George Lucas, by his own admission, made the *Star Wars Trilogy* with a twelve-year-old audience in mind. The top-grossing rental films of the 1980s were *E.T.*, *The Return of the Jedi*, and *Batman*; and thus far in the 1990s, *Jurassic Park* and *Home Alone*, whose \$250 million grosses will be topped by *Wayne's World* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

The largest selling board game is *Trivial Pursuit*.

A generation that came of age languishing in invincible ignorance of the rich mainstream of cabaret satire from Mort Sahl to Lenny Bruce finds hilarity in Chevy Chase, Jim Carey, and Bevis and Butthead. The urbane wit of Steve Allen once made his night-time television show the most popular in America with teenagers, according to a survey done by a magazine for high-schoolers at the time. We have come down to David Letterman.

As for the glories of network radio, in days when national audiences hung on every word of the erudition of Clifton Fadiman, Oscar Levant, and Franklin P. Adams, fielding truly difficult questions, consider the level of today's TV quiz shows. When he was asked if it was he who said, "Radio was theater of the mind, television is theater of the mindless," Steve Allen replied, "I don't know whether I said it, but I certainly agree with it." The late radio, television, and film director Fletcher Markle called television "the haunted fish tank."

The comic pages have dwindled from *Pogo*, with its sharp political satire and delightfully literate whimsy, to *Garfield*.

But it is music that offers the most ominous examples, with lyrics to match: *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*, *I Can't Get No Satisfaction*, *You Can't Always Get What You Want*, *C'mon God and Buy Me a Mercedes Benz*, and *We Don't Need No Education*.

And the sex goddess of the late 1970s was a child molester's fantasy named Brooke Shields.

This phenomenon of infantile regression permeates the political sphere. Television has converted political discourse in the United States into a form of entertainment. The dominant radical right of the Republican Party hired to impersonate the president a movie actor of notorious limited intellectual resources who performed stunningly that after eight years of an "administration" that rendered political satire obsolete in America, Gallup pollsters found that the overwhelming majority of a distracted electorate, had the Constitution permitted, would have voted a third time for the Great Staggering Booby.

After World War II, a phenomenon unique in history arose in the guise of a vast army of semi-literate children divorced from a sense of history, with vast amounts of money to spend, engaged in a total assault on the culture of their elders. A new multi-national entertainment conglomerate that concentrated capital in increasingly fewer hands obeyed the inflexible laws of entrepreneurial capitalism by not merely maintaining the market but increasing the market, to furnish the new media-manipulated youthcult with children's music, children's movies, children's television, children's politics, and the orchestrated media distractions of the sins of Tonya Harding and the travails of Di and Fergie.

An unimaginable amount of heavy capital has been dedicated to the profitable business of keeping Americans forever lost in childhood.

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✓ *reinforcing feedback!*