

The Bruised Heel Healed

by Theodore Dalrymple (October 2012)

There is a baby in the world that seems never to get beyond its ninth month. It has been following me for at least forty years, but it makes its appearance only when I board a long-distance aircraft, when it is to be found in the row immediately behind or in front of me, and proceeds to scream unconsolably for what seems like an age from the moment of takeoff. All manner of paranoid thoughts then come into my mind: for example that the airline has designedly, though for reasons that I cannot fathom even in my paranoid moments, disturbed my peace and prevented me from reading by seating the baby there, very close to me. In any case, why does that wretched creature never grow up? For if there is one sound in the whole world that cannot be ignored or screened out by attention to something else it is that of a baby crying on an aircraft.