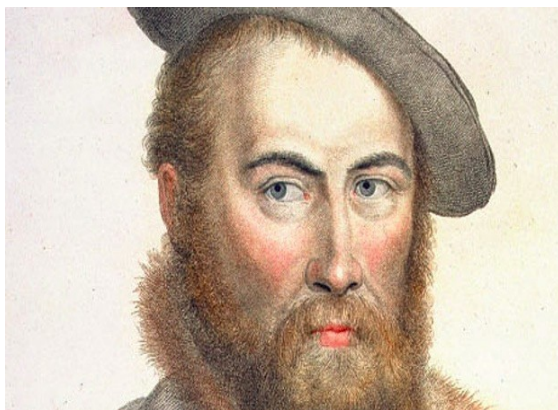


# QUARTERLY PRESS REVIEW

FOR ADVANCED EFL LEARNERS

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## First Encounters

by *Mike Smith*

We'd been sleeping in separate rooms for two months. Denise said she needed to get her head straight. I'd moved into my son's old room and she'd kept our bedroom. Denise said it was only temporary. I took my clothes from the wardrobe and my things out of the bedside table. It was easier, she said. I wouldn't disturb her as I got ready for work.

I still brought her a cup of tea every morning and she still drank it. Denise left the mug beside the bed when she was finished. Brown overlapping rings marked the wooden floor.

One day I didn't see it and as I came in to say goodbye, I kicked it against the wall. It smashed. The children had it made for Mother's Day three years earlier. There was an old picture of them with Denise, taken on our holiday in Cornwall ten years before, in a heart-shaped frame on the side. The picture was shattered. Limbs and faces scattered across the floor. Denise looked up at me. Her eyes were red. Rolling back under the covers, she turned to face the wall.

'Come on, Denise,' I said.

She said nothing.

'Laura called. She was wondering if you'd meet her for lunch,' I said.

'I don't feel up to it, Richard,' she said. Her voice was muffled by the duvet. She hadn't showered in three days.

'What do you want me to tell her?' I said.

'Not today,' she said.

I used to blame the affair. When people asked me what had happened, I said affair, and they nodded. The men patted my shoulders and the women held me. 'You poor man,' they said, and pulled my head toward their chest.

I knew it wasn't the affair. I forgave her. I myself had had many throughout our marriage – some past girlfriends, a few of Denise's now former friends, including her then seventeen-year-old cousin, Lindsay, in the back of my van after our wedding rehearsal dinner – and felt some of my guilt alleviated by it. No, it wasn't the affair. Our youngest daughter, Harriet, had just left home, moving in with friends from university and her latest boyfriend, Danny. But it wasn't that either. It all started when Bobby died.

Bobby was Denise's childhood love. Her first love. They were together for three years, from the age of fifteen to eighteen, and had lost their virginity to each other. Denise had taken many lovers since Bobby. I

was her seventeenth. We told each other our numbers when we got together. I was on ten at the time. But Bobby stuck. He never amounted to much, a bus driver during the day and a cabby at weekends. Yet he was her first and for a woman like Denise that meant something. Bobby committed suicide. He hung himself from an old wooden beam. His parents were away for the weekend. He was meant to be looking after their dogs. When the police arrived at the house, they found an old Polaroid picture of a young woman inside his pocket. They never said who it was.

Two months after Bobby's death, I called a priest. Denise found Christ in a haemorrhage. She was thirty-two. Harriet had just been born. There was blood. It spilt down the side of the bed and formed a red puddle on the floor. When Denise awoke after surgery, she told me that she had been saved, that Jesus had come down in a cloud of light and blessed her.

'I can still feel his hand on my forehead,' she'd said, as a nurse dabbed at her brow with a damp cloth. She had been religious ever since.

The priest came by after Sunday service and talked with her, nodding his head and wrapping his rosary around his fingers. I was sat in a chair in the corner. When Denise finished, the priest stood up and smiled. He told her that what she was mourning was not the death of Bobby, but rather, the death of her naivety toward mortality. The death of this man only made her

realise that one day, she would die too. Denise was an orphan. She'd never met her parents. This was her first encounter with death. It didn't make much sense to me. I never was a religious man.

I left Denise's room and went downstairs to find a brush. As I passed the debris, her eyes stared up at me from a shard of porcelain. The wrinkles were less obvious in those days. I couldn't see the rest of her face. Some pieces had slid under the bed. When I returned, Denise was still facing the wall. I swept up the shattered mug and tipped it into the bin in the corner.

'I'll see if we can get another one made,' I said.

'It doesn't matter,' she said.

'I'm sorry. I didn't see it,' I said. 'You really should have put it on the side. But, like I said, it was an accident.'

'It doesn't matter, Richard,' she said.

Denise sat up and ran a hand through her hair. It was turning grey. It used to be blonde but had faded in the last few years. A loose blue vest top covered her chest. The logo of the gym which she used to be a member of was in the centre of the fabric. I'd cancelled her membership a week earlier. She hadn't been in months. Beneath the vest, I could see her collar bone. Denise looked at me.

'I'm off. I'll be in later,' I said. 'Make yourself something.'

'Goodbye, Richard,' she said. I shut the door behind

me.

I went to the pub, walking in as Guy, the landlord, was setting up the bar. He looked up and smiled.

‘Morning, Rich. How you faring today?’ he said.

‘You know, so, so,’ I said.

The pub was called The Queen’s Head. It was an old building that dated back to the late nineteenth-century. The decor hadn’t been changed since the eighties. The air smelt of stale beer and felt old, not wise, as if a thousand other problems, much worse than mine, had been drunk or were waiting to be drunk away.

‘The usual?’ Guy asked.

‘Please,’ I said.

He handed me a pint of lager and I gave him the money. I walked over to a seat in the corner, put my drink down and picked up a newspaper from the table next to mine.

The headline was another scandal – a politician claiming expenses on a second or third home. A subheading in the corner grabbed my attention. **TRAGEDY ON THE TUBE.**

A young couple had been murdered. So much death, so close to home. Since Bobby’s suicide and Denise’s depression, it seemed to surround me. How did I become so haunted? When did we become so lost? Things between us hadn’t been good for a while. And now three children and twenty-five years later, we

were in too deep. So what did we do? We drank our tea, went about our days and returned to our separate beds.

Denise was once beautiful and I handsome. She’d wake up early every morning to make me breakfast before I went to work. After our second child was born, our son Alex, she started getting up after I had left. She was tired and I understood. But some part of me regretted the loss of what we had. We weren’t dead yet. Why should we sleep apart? Why should we be alone?

I finished my pint and left the pub. As I walked along the street, it started to rain. Water trickled down the sides of my cheeks. I reached the front door and stopped. It hadn’t changed in the twenty years since we moved in, still dark red with the gold coloured knocker and number nailed on at the side. Sixteen. At the bottom, the paint had peeled away revealing the pale wood underneath. Denise had asked me to paint it but I’d never found the time.

I put the key in the lock and turned. It opened. The house was quiet. I stepped inside and shut the door behind me. Slipping off my shoes, I climbed the stairs. Photographs of the family staggered up the wall alongside me. I stopped outside Denise’s door and listened. All was quiet. I went inside.

The room was dark. The curtains had been pulled, a lamp on top of the dressing table, the only source of light. Shadows stretched across the carpet. I approached the bed. Denise sat up.

‘What’re you doing back?’ she said.

I ignored her. Sitting down on the side of the bed, I took off my shirt. Denise lay back down and turned away. I undressed, folding my clothes and placing them in a pile on the floor. Peeling back the covers, I slid into the bed. I was naked. It was warm. Denise said nothing.

Reaching out with the tips of my fingers, I touched her side. She flinched. Her skin felt dry. I edged closer. She didn’t pull away. I wrapped my arms around her waist.

‘You alright?’ I said.

‘I’m okay,’ she said.

‘Would you like to get up now?’

‘No,’ she said.

As I held her there, my mind drifted to Bobby and the old picture he died with. It was Denise, the police didn’t say as much, but it had to be. He was her first. He’d had her in her prime, when her skin was still smooth and moist. I wouldn’t have changed places with him. It wasn’t that. In my eyes, I had inherited a land savaged by conquest. In the early years peace brought us happiness, but as the decades went by and the stretch marks grew, unhealed scars resurfaced, their shadows forming in the folds between dressing gowns, in the shadows behind closed curtains. And there we were, two bodies lying in the darkness together. She’d conquered me in those first few years. I loved her

wholly, with everything I had. But as her first encounter with death proved, she was conquered long before I met her. And so we slept and as I slept I dreamt of Bobby, hanging by his neck from the old beam in his parent’s house: his podium. He was laughing. ♦

## To Kill a King

by *Charles Spencer*

**A**t the end of January 1649 a unique event occurred in London: the King of England was led out onto a specially-built scaffold outside Whitehall and, after a quiet speech and heart-felt prayers, placed his head low, on a six-inch-high block of wood. The masked executioner stepped forward, swung his axe, and with one blow severed Charles I's head. The crowd groaned in shock, and some pushed forward to dip handkerchiefs in the royal blood: many considered Charles to be anointed by God, and believed his vital juices – even after death – could cure their ailments.

After the execution a squadron of cavalry rode through the centre of the capital, from Charing Cross to the Royal Exchange, halting at key junctions so its colonel could loudly proclaim that anyone who so much as questioned the justice of Charles Stuart's death would in turn forfeit their own lives. For many Londoners this was a heavy-handed postscript to an already overwhelming day.

Charles had been condemned by the High Court of

Justice – a body set up specifically to try the king, by those who despaired of trusting the defeated monarch: he had exasperated them with his endless double-dealing. Meanwhile there were increasing fears that foreign rulers might come to his aid. The High Court of Justice was composed of senior military men from the New Model Army (including Oliver Cromwell) who had defeated the Royalist troops, as well as other Parliamentary sympathisers, including figures from the City of London, as well as notables from the shires. These commissioners employed lawyers to prosecute the king – although most of the leading legal figures refused to be part of such a dangerous and controversial business as trying a king, several feigning ill-health in order to be excused. At the end of the hearing, in Westminster Hall, fifty-nine of the judges signed the royal death warrant – two of them, Cromwell and the womanising Henry Marten, were in such high spirits at the signing that they flicked each other with ink from their pens.

The signatories, the prosecutors, and the officers on the scaffold were termed 'regicides' – killers of the king. All in all, there were about eighty such men, intimately involved in Charles I's death. They were hugely controversial figures from the start – lionised by republicans, and others who felt the king had to die if Britain was to have a chance of peace; but beneath contempt to Royalists. John Milton, the great poet, was

employed to write learned defences of their breathtaking deed. These were distributed across Europe.

England now became a republic for more than a decade, with Cromwell at its helm until his sudden death in 1658. No other individual proved capable of succeeding him as supreme leader. Concerned that the power void might lead to chaos, the English quickly reverted to default: crowned rule. The younger Charles Stuart had become an increasingly isolated and impoverished exile in Europe, with almost no hope left of returning to reign. England's need meant he abruptly and unexpectedly found himself heading back to Britain aboard the *Royal Charles* – the ship that had, till very recently, been called the *Naseby*, in memory of the great victory that had effectively destroyed the Royalist cause. (The figurehead of this ship, which was of Cromwell wearing the laurel leaves of victory, was hastily removed from the prow.)

Charles felt compelled to promise not to avenge himself against that half of the nation that had supported the Parliamentary cause. But he left open the possibility that some of those most directly connected to his father's execution could – and should – be held to account. Once he was securely on the throne, Charles grew bolder. With the freshly-elected House of Commons packed with returned Royalists, and the Lords hungrier still for revenge, the killers of the king

found themselves in grave peril. They were the perfect scapegoats for a nation eager to move on from its bloodiest ever conflict: Malcolm Laing, a Scottish historian, would write 200 years ago that: 'The fury of civil wars, when the battle has ceased, is almost invariably reserved for the scaffold'. The regicides would be this conflict's blood sacrifice. From being men of huge power and repute during Parliament's ascendancy, they now experienced raw fear. They quickly appreciated that they were outlaws of the lowest order – hunted for their lives, with the agonising and degrading death of hanging, drawing and quartering the penalty for those caught.

I came across this gripping tale of terror and revenge by chance, when browsing the internet on what turned out to be the 350th anniversary of the death of Colonel John Okey: he and two comrades were put to death with maximum cruelty, for being regicides. I recognized Okey's name in this report straightaway – he was a bit-part player in my last book, a biography of the Royalist general, Prince Rupert. I had not appreciated that Okey's life had ended on the gallows, and felt compelled to learn more about his latter years, as well as to learn who else had a hand in Charles I's death, or had been the recipient of Charles II's retribution.

It transpired that Okey was betrayed by a man to whom he had shown great kindness. George Downing entered Harvard in 1640 – he was in that university's

very first year of graduates, where he was placed second, academically. A keen traveller, Downing crossed the Atlantic to arrive in an England riven by civil war. Penniless, he was taken in by John Okey – who appointed Downing his regimental chaplain.

Downing was an ardent supporter of the Parliamentary cause, and his fiery speeches helped inspire troops to succeed in battle. Less honourably, Downing proved also to be an accurate political weathervane, during a time of fluctuating fortunes for the two leading causes of the time. While MP for Carlisle, Downing was at the forefront of those who urged Cromwell to become king. Later, when it became clear that Charles Stuart would return as king, Downing became a turncoat and offered his services to him. He served as ambassador to the newly-restored king, in the Netherlands.

Okey was among the many killers of the king to flee to Europe, rather than remain at home, vulnerable to arrest, harsh imprisonment, and cruel death. He and a fellow fugitive checked with Downing that they would be left alone, if they entered the Netherlands to greet their wives who would be joining them in exile. Downing offered assurances that this would be fine: they would be safe.

This was a lie. Downing seized both regicides, and an unlucky third (who happened to be visiting them that evening), and smuggled them back to London,

where they were immediately sent to the Tower. There was no need for a trial: the trio's flight from England was seen as a flagrant admission of guilt. They were simply identified, and condemned. Okey, in his final address at Tyburn (modern day Marble Arch – London's main place of execution for traitors, as well as lesser criminals), mentioned the dastardly Downing as 'one – who formerly was my chaplain – that did pursue me to the very death.'

The celebrated diarist Samuel Pepys worked for Downing, and wrote that his master was: a 'perfidious rogue', while claiming that, 'all the world took notice of him [for his betrayal of Okey] for a most ungrateful villain for his pains.'

That said, he was generously rewarded for his useful treachery: Downing was given a baronetcy the following year, and continued accumulating a fortune that allowed him to buy up property in Cambridgeshire and London. His name, of course, is consequently attached to the official address of this country's prime ministers.

Another to suffer the traitor's barbarous end of a public butchering was Gregory Clements. One of the last of the fifty-nine to sign the king's death warrant, Clements was a successful London-based merchant, with overseas business interests that stretched from the Bahamas, to his large landed estate in Ireland. Clements had been a Member of Parliament, until



caught in flagrante with a housemaid – unacceptable behaviour in a time of such rigid Puritanism. This was a regime that saw London's prostitutes arrested in large numbers, the celebration of Christmas forbidden, and the capital's Bankside Bear Gardens – where wild animals had been baited and killed for sport for generations – closed down. (As the final act in this place of animal suffering, the bears were shot by firing squad – except for one, light- coloured, cub that was spared.)

Clements judged that his best hope of avoiding capture was to lie low in London, rather than join the general exodus fleeing through Channel ports: he realised that Royalist authorities were searching for fleeing regicides there. Clements moved to a 'mean house in Purple Lane near Gray's Inn'. But he was unable to curb the expensive tastes acquired during his years of commercial success, and the authorities noticed particularly fine food being delivered to his very modest address. Suspicious, they searched the property. Clements was on the point of getting away when a blind man recognised his voice. He was soon hanged, drawn and quartered.

Many of the king's killers succeeded in avoiding that fate. A colony of them formed in Switzerland, where they were the target of fortune-hunters and assassins, but most persevered till natural death claimed them. Others hid in the American colonies – though some of

these did so in such miserable circumstances (as shown by their pitiful letters home) that you have to wonder if it was worth it. Others were spared their lives, but endured horrific prison conditions – at home, and in foreign outposts such as Tangier. As they suffered the backlash that accompanied the Restoration of Charles II, they must all have thought frequently of the reason they remain so intriguing today – their part in one of the most momentous moments in history, when fourscore men dared to kill a king. ♦

## Children with iPad

by *Hanna Rosin*

On a chilly day last spring, a few dozen developers of children's apps for phones and tablets gathered at an old beach resort in Monterey, California, to show off their games. One developer, a self-described "visionary for puzzles" who looked like a skateboarder-recently-turned-dad, displayed a jacked-up, interactive game called *Puzzingo*, intended for toddlers and inspired by his own son's desire to build and smash. Two 30-something women were eagerly seeking feedback for an app called *Knock Knock Family*, aimed at 1-to-4-year-olds. "We want to make sure it's easy enough for babies to understand," one explained.

The gathering was organized by Warren Buckleitner, a longtime reviewer of interactive children's media who likes to bring together developers, researchers, and interest groups – and often plenty of kids, some still in diapers. It went by the Harry Potter-ish name *Dust or Magic*, and was held in a drafty old stone-and-wood hall barely a mile from the sea, the kind of place where Bathilda Bagshot

might retire after packing up her wand. Buckleitner spent the breaks testing whether his own remote-control helicopter could reach the hall's second story, while various children who had come with their parents looked up in awe and delight. But mostly they looked down, at the iPads and other tablets displayed around the hall like so many open boxes of candy. I walked around and talked with developers, and several paraphrased a famous saying of Maria Montessori's, a quote imported to ennoble a touch-screen age when very young kids, who once could be counted on only to chew on a square of aluminum, are now engaging with it in increasingly sophisticated ways: "The hands are the instruments of man's intelligence."

What, really, would Maria Montessori have made of this scene? The 30 or so children here were not down at the shore poking their fingers in the sand or running them along mossy stones or digging for hermit crabs. Instead they were all inside, alone or in groups of two or three, their faces a few inches from a screen, their hands doing things Montessori surely did not imagine. A couple of 3-year-old girls were leaning against a pair of French doors, reading an interactive story called *Ten Giggly Gorillas* and fighting over which ape to tickle next. A boy in a nearby corner had turned his fingertip into a red marker to draw an ugly picture of his older brother. On an old oak table at the front of the room, a giant stuffed Angry Bird beckoned the children to come

and test out tablets loaded with dozens of new apps. Some of the chairs had pillows strapped to them, since an 18-month-old might not otherwise be able to reach the table, though she'd know how to swipe once she did.

Not that long ago, there was only the television, which theoretically could be kept in the parents' bedroom or locked behind a cabinet. Now there are smartphones and iPads, which wash up in the domestic clutter alongside keys and gum and stray hair ties. "Mom, everyone has technology but me!" my 4-year-old son sometimes wails. And why shouldn't he feel entitled? In the same span of time it took him to learn how to say that sentence, thousands of kids' apps have been developed – the majority aimed at preschoolers like him. To us (his parents, I mean), American childhood has undergone a somewhat alarming transformation in a very short time. But to him, it has always been possible to do so many things with the swipe of a finger, to have hundreds of games packed into a gadget the same size as *Goodnight Moon*.

In 2011, the American Academy of Pediatrics updated its policy on very young children and media. In 1999, the group had discouraged television viewing for children younger than 2, citing research on brain development that showed this age group's critical need for "direct interactions with parents and other significant care givers." The updated report began by

acknowledging that things had changed significantly since then. In 2006, 90 percent of parents said that their children younger than 2 consumed some form of electronic media. Nonetheless, the group took largely the same approach it did in 1999, uniformly discouraging passive media use, on any type of screen, for these kids. (For older children, the academy noted, "high-quality programs" could have "educational benefits.") The 2011 report mentioned "smart cell phone" and "new screen" technologies, but did not address interactive apps. Nor did it broach the possibility that has likely occurred to those 90 percent of American parents, queasy though they might be: that some good might come from those little swiping fingers.

I had come to the developers' conference partly because I hoped that this particular set of parents, enthusiastic as they were about interactive media, might help me out of this conundrum, that they might offer some guiding principle for American parents who are clearly never going to meet the academy's ideals, and at some level do not want to. Perhaps this group would be able to articulate some benefits of the new technology that the more cautious pediatricians weren't ready to address. I nurtured this hope until about lunchtime, when the developers gathering in the dining hall ceased being visionaries and reverted to being ordinary parents, trying to settle their toddlers

in high chairs and get them to eat something besides bread.

I fell into conversation with a woman who had helped develop Montessori Letter Sounds, an app that teaches preschoolers the Montessori methods of spelling.

She was a former Montessori teacher and a mother of four. I myself have three children who are all fans of the touch screen. What games did her kids like to play?, I asked, hoping for suggestions I could take home.

“They don’t play all that much.”

Really? Why not?

“Because I don’t allow it. We have a rule of no screen time during the week,” unless it’s clearly educational.

No screen time? None at all? That seems at the outer edge of restrictive, even by the standards of my overcontrolling parenting set.

“On the weekends, they can play. I give them a limit of half an hour and then stop. Enough. It can be too addictive, too stimulating for the brain.”

Her answer so surprised me that I decided to ask some of the other developers who were also parents what their domestic ground rules for screen time were. One said only on airplanes and long car rides. Another said Wednesdays and weekends, for half an hour. The most permissive said half an hour a day, which was about my rule at home. At one point I sat with one of

the biggest developers of e-book apps for kids, and his family. The toddler was starting to fuss in her high chair, so the mom did what many of us have done at that moment – stuck an iPad in front of her and played a short movie so everyone else could enjoy their lunch. When she saw me watching, she gave me the universal tense look of mothers who feel they are being judged. “At home,” she assured me, “I only let her watch movies in Spanish.”

By their pinched reactions, these parents illuminated for me the neurosis of our age: as technology becomes ubiquitous in our lives, American parents are becoming more, not less, wary of what it might be doing to their children. Technological competence and sophistication have not, for parents, translated into comfort and ease. They have merely created yet another sphere that parents feel they have to navigate in exactly the right way. On the one hand, parents want their children to swim expertly in the digital stream that they will have to navigate all their lives; on the other hand, they fear that too much digital media, too early, will sink them. Parents end up treating tablets like precision surgical instruments, gadgets that might perform miracles for their child’s IQ and help him win some nifty robotics competition – but only if they are used just so. Otherwise, their child could end up one of those sad, pale creatures who can’t make eye contact and has an avatar for a girlfriend.

Norman Rockwell never painted *Boy Swiping Finger on Screen*, and our own vision of a perfect childhood has never adjusted to accommodate that now-common tableau. Add to that our modern fear that every parenting decision may have lasting consequences – that every minute of enrichment lost or mindless entertainment indulged will add up to some permanent handicap in the future – and you have deep guilt and confusion. To date, no body of research has definitively proved that the iPad will make your preschooler smarter or teach her to speak Chinese, or alternatively that it will rust her neural circuitry – the device has been out for only a few years, not much more than the time it takes some academics to find funding and gather research subjects. So what’s a parent to do?

In 2001, the education and technology writer Marc Prensky popularized the term *digital natives* to describe the first generations of children growing up fluent in the language of computers, video games, and other technologies. (The rest of us are *digital immigrants*, struggling to understand.) This term took on a whole new significance in April 2010, when the iPad was released. iPhones had already been tempting young children, but the screens were a little small for pudgy toddler hands to navigate with ease and accuracy. Plus, parents tended to be more possessive of their phones, hiding them in pockets or purses. The iPad was big and bright, and a case could be made that

it belonged to the family. Researchers who study children’s media immediately recognized it as a game changer.

Previously, young children had to be shown by their parents how to use a mouse or a remote, and the connection between what they were doing with their hand and what was happening on the screen took some time to grasp. But with the iPad, the connection is obvious, even to toddlers. Touch technology follows the same logic as shaking a rattle or knocking down a pile of blocks: the child swipes, and something immediately happens. A “rattle on steroids,” is what Buckleitner calls it. “All of a sudden a finger could move a bus or smash an insect or turn into a big wet gloopy paintbrush.” To a toddler, this is less magic than intuition. At a very young age, children become capable of what the psychologist Jerome Bruner called “enactive representation”; they classify objects in the world not by using words or symbols but by making gestures – say, holding an imaginary cup to their lips to signify that they want a drink. Their hands are a natural extension of their thoughts.

I have two older children who fit the early idea of a digital native – they learned how to use a mouse or a keyboard with some help from their parents and were well into school before they felt comfortable with a device in their lap. (Now, of course, at ages 9 and 12, they can create a Web site in the time it takes me to

slice an onion.) My youngest child is a whole different story. He was not yet 2 when the iPad was released. As soon as he got his hands on it, he located the Talking Baby Hippo app that one of my older children had downloaded. The little purple hippo repeats whatever you say in his own squeaky voice, and responds to other cues. My son said his name (“Giddy!”); Baby Hippo repeated it back. Gideon poked Baby Hippo; Baby Hippo laughed. Over and over, it was funny every time. Pretty soon he discovered other apps. Old MacDonald, by Duck Duck Moose, was a favorite. At first he would get frustrated trying to zoom between screens, or not knowing what to do when a message popped up. But after about two weeks, he figured all that out. I must admit, it was eerie to see a child still in diapers so competent and intent, as if he were forecasting his own adulthood. Technically I was the owner of the iPad, but in some ontological way it felt much more his than mine.

Without seeming to think much about it or resolve how they felt, parents began giving their devices over to their children to mollify, pacify, or otherwise entertain them. By 2010, two-thirds of children ages 4 to 7 had used an iPhone, according to the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, which studies children’s media. The vast majority of those phones had been lent by a family member; the center’s researchers labeled this the “pass-back effect,” a name that captures well the

reluctant zone between denying and giving.

The market immediately picked up on the pass-back effect, and the opportunities it presented. In 2008, when Apple opened up its App Store, the games started arriving at the rate of dozens a day, thousands a year. For the first 23 years of his career, Buckleitner had tried to be comprehensive and cover every children’s game in his publication, *Children’s Technology Review*. Now, by Buckleitner’s loose count, more than 40,000 kids’ games are available on iTunes, plus thousands more on Google Play. In the iTunes “Education” category, the majority of the top-selling apps target preschool or elementary-age children. By age 3, Gideon would go to preschool and tune in to what was cool in toddler world, then come home, locate the iPad, drop it in my lap, and ask for certain games by their approximate description: “Tea? Spill?” (That’s Toca Tea Party.)

As these delights and diversions for young children have proliferated, the pass-back has become more uncomfortable, even unsustainable, for many parents:

He’d gone to this state where you’d call his name and he wouldn’t respond to it, or you could snap your fingers in front of his face ...

Ben Worthen, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, explained recently to NPR’s Diane Rehm why he took the iPad away from his son, even though it was the only thing that could hold the boy’s attention for long

periods, and it seemed to be sparking an interest in numbers and letters. Most parents can sympathize with the disturbing sight of a toddler, who five minutes earlier had been jumping off the couch, now subdued and staring at a screen, seemingly hypnotized. In the somewhat alarmist *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think – and What We Can Do About It*, author Jane Healy even gives the phenomenon a name, the “‘zombie’ effect,” and raises the possibility that television might “suppress mental activity by putting viewers in a trance.”

Ever since viewing screens entered the home, many observers have worried that they put our brains into a stupor. An early strain of research claimed that when we watch television, our brains mostly exhibit slow alpha waves – indicating a low level of arousal, similar to when we are daydreaming. These findings have been largely discarded by the scientific community, but the myth persists that watching television is the mental equivalent of, as one Web site put it, “staring at a blank wall.” These common metaphors are misleading, argues Heather Kirkorian, who studies media and attention at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. A more accurate point of comparison for a TV viewer’s physiological state would be that of someone deep in a book, says Kirkorian, because during both activities we are still, undistracted, and mentally active.

Because interactive media are so new, most of the

existing research looks at children and television. By now, “there is universal agreement that by at least age 2 and a half, children are very cognitively active when they are watching TV,” says Dan Anderson, a children’s-media expert at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In the 1980s, Anderson put the zombie theory to the test, by subjecting roughly 100 children to a form of TV hell. He showed a group of children ages 2 to 5 a scrambled version of *Sesame Street*: he pieced together scenes in random order, and had the characters speak backwards or in Greek. Then he spliced the doctored segments with unedited ones and noted how well the kids paid attention. The children looked away much more frequently during the scrambled parts of the show, and some complained that the TV was broken. Anderson later repeated the experiment with babies ages 6 months to 24 months, using *Teletubbies*. Once again he had the characters speak backwards and chopped the action sequences into a nonsensical order – showing, say, one of the Teletubbies catching a ball and then, after that, another one throwing it. The 6- and 12-month-olds seemed unable to tell the difference, but by 18 months the babies started looking away, and by 24 months they were turned off by programming that did not make sense.

Anderson’s series of experiments provided the first clue that even very young children can be

discriminating viewers – that they are not in fact brain-dead, but rather work hard to make sense of what they see and turn it into a coherent narrative that reflects what they already know of the world. Now, 30 years later, we understand that children “can make a lot of inferences and process the information,” says Anderson. “And they can learn a lot, both positive and negative.” Researchers never abandoned the idea that parental interaction is critical for the development of very young children. But they started to see TV watching in shades of gray. If a child never interacts with adults and always watches TV, well, that is a problem. But if a child is watching TV instead of, say, playing with toys, then that is a tougher comparison, because TV, in the right circumstances, has something to offer.

How do small children actually experience electronic media, and what does that experience do to their development? Since the '80s, researchers have spent more and more time consulting with television programmers to study and shape TV content. By tracking children's reactions, they have identified certain rules that promote engagement: stories have to be linear and easy to follow, cuts and time lapses have to be used very sparingly, and language has to be pared down and repeated. A perfect example of a well-engineered show is Nick Jr.'s *Blue's Clues*, which aired from 1996 to 2006. Each episode features Steve (or Joe,

in later seasons) and Blue, a cartoon puppy, solving a mystery. Steve talks slowly and simply; he repeats words and then writes them down in his handy-dandy notebook. There are almost no cuts or unexplained gaps in time. The great innovation of *Blue's Clues* is something called the “pause.” Steve asks a question and then pauses for about five seconds to let the viewer shout out an answer. Small children feel much more engaged and invested when they think they have a role to play, when they believe they are actually helping Steve and Blue piece together the clues. A longitudinal study of children older than 2 and a half showed that the ones who watched *Blue's Clues* made measurably larger gains in flexible thinking and problem solving over two years of watching the show.

For toddlers, however, the situation seems slightly different. Children younger than 2 and a half exhibit what researchers call a “video deficit.” This means that they have a much easier time processing information delivered by a real person than by a person on videotape. In one series of studies, conducted by Georgene Troseth, a developmental psychologist at Vanderbilt University, children watched on a live video monitor as a person in the next room hid a stuffed dog. Others watched the exact same scene unfold directly, through a window between the rooms. The children were then unleashed into the room to find the toy. Almost all the kids who viewed the hiding through the



window found the toy, but the ones who watched on the monitor had a much harder time.

A natural assumption is that toddlers are not yet cognitively equipped to handle symbolic representation. (I remember my older son, when he was 3, asking me if he could go into the TV and pet Blue.) But there is another way to interpret this particular phase of development. Toddlers are skilled at seeking out what researchers call “socially relevant information.” They tune in to people and situations that help them make a coherent narrative of the world around them. In the real world, fresh grass smells and popcorn tumbles and grown-ups smile at you or say something back when you ask them a question. On TV, nothing like that happens. A TV is static and lacks one of the most important things to toddlers, which is a “two-way exchange of information,” argues Troseth.

A few years after the original puppy-hiding experiment, in 2004, Troseth reran it, only she changed a few things. She turned the puppy into a stuffed Piglet (from the Winnie the Pooh stories). More important, she made the video demonstration explicitly interactive. Toddlers and their parents came into a room where they could see a person – the researcher – on a monitor. The researcher was in the room where Piglet would be hidden, and could in turn see the children on a monitor. Before hiding Piglet, the researcher effectively engaged the children in a form of

media training. She asked them questions about their siblings, pets, and toys. She played Simon Says with them and invited them to sing popular songs with her. She told them to look for a sticker under a chair in their room. She gave them the distinct impression that she – this person on the screen – could interact with them, and that what she had to say was relevant to the world they lived in. Then the researcher told the children she was going to hide the toy and, after she did so, came back on the screen to instruct them where to find it. That exchange was enough to nearly erase the video deficit. The majority of the toddlers who participated in the live video demonstration found the toy.

*Blue's Clues* was on the right track. The pause could trick children into thinking that Steve was responsive to them. But the holy grail would be creating a scenario in which the guy on the screen did actually respond – in which the toddler did something and the character reliably jumped or laughed or started to dance or talk back.

Like, for example, when Gideon said “Giddy” and Talking Baby Hippo said “Giddy” back, without fail, every time. That kind of contingent interaction (I do something, you respond) is what captivates a toddler and can be a significant source of learning for even very young children – learning that researchers hope the children can carry into the real world. It's not

exactly the ideal social partner the American Academy of Pediatrics craves. It's certainly not a parent or caregiver. But it's as good an approximation as we've ever come up with on a screen, and it's why children's-media researchers are so excited about the iPad's potential.

A couple researchers from the Children's Media Center at Georgetown University show up at my house, carrying an iPad wrapped in a bright-orange case, the better to tempt Gideon with. They are here at the behest of Sandra Calvert, the center's director, to conduct one of several ongoing studies on toddlers and iPads. Gideon is one of their research subjects. This study is designed to test whether a child is more likely to learn when the information he hears comes from a beloved and trusted source. The researchers put the iPad on a kitchen chair; Gideon immediately notices it, turns it on, and looks for his favorite app. They point him to the one they have invented for the experiment, and he dutifully opens it with his finger.

Onto the screen comes a floppy kangaroo-like puppet, introduced as "DoDo." He is a nobody in the child universe, the puppet equivalent of some random guy on late-night public-access TV. Gideon barely acknowledges him. Then the narrator introduces Elmo. "Hi," says Elmo, waving. Gideon says hi and waves back.

An image pops up on the screen, and the narrator

asks, "What is this?" (It's a banana.)

"This is a banana," says DoDo.

"This is a grape," says Elmo.

I smile with the inner glow of a mother who knows her child is about to impress a couple strangers. My little darling knows what a banana is. Of course he does! Gideon presses on Elmo. (The narrator says, "No, not Elmo. Try again.") As far as I know, he's never watched *Sesame Street*, never loved an Elmo doll or even coveted one at the toy store. Nonetheless, he is tuned in to the signals of toddler world and, apparently, has somehow figured out that Elmo is a supreme moral authority. His relationship with Elmo is more important to him than what he knows to be the truth. On and on the game goes, and sometimes Gideon picks Elmo even when Elmo says an orange is a pear. Later, when the characters both give made-up names for exotic fruits that few children would know by their real name, Gideon keeps doubling down on Elmo, even though DoDo has been more reliable.

As it happens, Gideon was not in the majority. This summer, Calvert and her team will release the results of their study, which show that most of the time, children around age 32 months go with the character who is telling the truth, whether it's Elmo or DoDo – and quickly come to trust the one who's been more accurate when the children don't already know the answer. But Calvert says this merely suggests that

toddlers have become even more savvy users of technology than we had imagined. She had been working off attachment theory, and thought toddlers might value an emotional bond over the correct answer. But her guess is that something about tapping the screen, about getting feedback and being corrected in real time, is itself instructive, and enables the toddlers to absorb information accurately, regardless of its source.

Calvert takes a balanced view of technology: she works in an office surrounded by hardcover books, and she sometimes edits her drafts with pen and paper. But she is very interested in how the iPad can reach children even before they're old enough to access these traditional media.

"People say we are experimenting with our children," she told me. "But from my perspective, it's already happened, and there's no way to turn it back. Children's lives are filled with media at younger and younger ages, and we need to take advantage of what these technologies have to offer. I'm not a Pollyanna. I'm pretty much a realist. I look at what kids are doing and try to figure out how to make the best of it."

Despite the participation of Elmo, Calvert's research is designed to answer a series of very responsible, high-minded questions: Can toddlers learn from iPads? Can they transfer what they learn to the real world? What effect does interactivity have on learning? What role do

familiar characters play in children's learning from iPads? All worthy questions, and important, but also all considered entirely from an adult's point of view. The reason many kids' apps are grouped under "Education" in the iTunes store, I suspect, is to assuage parents' guilt (though I also suspect that in the long run, all those "educational" apps merely perpetuate our neurotic relationship with technology, by reinforcing the idea that they must be sorted vigilantly into "good" or "bad"). If small children had more input, many "Education" apps would logically fall under a category called "Kids" or "Kids' Games." And many more of the games would probably look something like the apps designed by a Swedish game studio named Toca Boca.

The founders, Emil Ovemar and Björn Jeffery, work for Bonnier, a Swedish media company. Ovemar, an interactive-design expert, describes himself as someone who never grew up. He is still interested in superheroes, Legos, and animated movies, and says he would rather play stuck-on-an-island with his two kids and their cousins than talk to almost any adult. Jeffery is the company's strategist and front man; I first met him at the conference in California, where he was handing out little temporary tattoos of the Toca Boca logo, a mouth open and grinning, showing off rainbow-colored teeth.

In late 2010, Ovemar and Jeffery began working on a new digital project for Bonnier, and they came up

with the idea of entering the app market for kids. Ovemar began by looking into the apps available at the time. Most of them were disappointingly “instructive,” he found – “drag the butterfly into the net, that sort of thing. They were missing creativity and imagination.” Hunting for inspiration, he came upon Frank and Theresa Caplan’s 1973 book *The Power of Play*, a quote from which he later e-mailed to me:

What is it that often puts the B student ahead of the A student in adult life, especially in business and creative professions? Certainly it is more than verbal skill. To create, one must have a sense of adventure and playfulness. One needs toughness to experiment and hazard the risk of failure. One has to be strong enough to start all over again if need be and alert enough to learn from whatever happens. One needs a strong ego to be propelled forward in one’s drive toward an untried goal. Above all, one has to possess the ability to play!

Ovemar and Jeffery hunted down toy catalogs from as early as the 1950s, before the age of exploding brand tie-ins. They made a list of the blockbusters over the decades – the first Tonka trucks, the Frisbee, the Hula-Hoop, the Rubik’s Cube. Then they made a list of what these toys had in common: None really involved winning or losing against an opponent. None were part of an effort to create a separate child world that adults were excluded from, and probably hostile toward; they

were designed more for family fun. Also, they were not really meant to teach you something specific – they existed mostly in the service of having fun.

In 2011 the two developers launched Toca Tea Party. The game is not all that different from a real tea party. The iPad functions almost like a tea table without legs, and the kids have to invent the rest by, for example, seating their own plushies or dolls, one on each side, and then setting the theater in motion. First, choose one of three tablecloths. Then choose plates, cups, and treats. The treats are not what your mom would feed you. They are chocolate cakes, frosted doughnuts, cookies. It’s very easy to spill the tea when you pour or take a sip, a feature added based on kids’ suggestions during a test play (kids love spills, but spilling is something you can’t do all that often at a real tea party, or you’ll get yelled at). At the end, a sink filled with soapy suds appears, and you wash the dishes, which is also part of the fun, and then start again. That’s it. The game is either very boring or terrifically exciting, depending on what you make of it. Ovemar and Jeffery knew that some parents wouldn’t get it, but for kids, the game would be fun every time, because it’s dependent entirely on imagination. Maybe today the stuffed bear will be naughty and do the spilling, while naked Barbie will pile her plate high with sweets. The child can take on the voice of a character or a scolding parent, or both. There’s no winning, and there’s no

reward. Like a game of stuck-on-an-island, it can go on for five minutes or forever.

Soon after the release of Toca Tea Party, the pair introduced Toca Hair Salon, which is still to my mind the most fun game out there. The salon is no Fifth Avenue spa. It's a rundown-looking place with cracks in the wall. The aim is not beauty but subversion. Cutting off hair, like spilling, is on the list of things kids are not supposed to do. You choose one of the odd-looking people or creatures and have your way with its hair, trimming it or dyeing it or growing it out. The blow-dryer is genius; it achieves the same effect as Tadao Cern's Blow Job portraits, which depict people's faces getting wildly distorted by high winds. In August 2011, Toca Boca gave away Hair Salon for free for nearly two weeks. It was downloaded more than 1 million times in the first week, and the company took off. Today, many Toca Boca games show up on lists of the most popular education apps.

Are they educational? "That's the perspective of the parents," Jeffery told me at the back of the grand hall in Monterey. "Is running around on the lawn educational? Every part of a child's life can't be held up to that standard." As we talked, two girls were playing Toca Tea Party on the floor nearby. One had her stuffed dragon at a plate, and he was being especially naughty, grabbing all the chocolate cake and spilling everything. Her friend had taken a little Lego

construction man and made him the good guy who ate neatly and helped do the dishes. Should they have been outside at the beach? Maybe, but the day would be long, and they could go outside later.

The more I talked with the developers, the more elusive and unhelpful the "Education" category seemed. (Is *Where the Wild Things Are* educational? Would you make your child read a textbook at bedtime? Do you watch only educational television? And why don't children deserve high-quality fun?) Buckleitner calls his conference Dust or Magic to teach app developers a more subtle concept than pedagogy. By *magic*, Buckleitner has in mind an app that makes children's fingers move and their eyes light up. By *dust*, he means something that was obviously (and ploddingly) designed by an adult. Some educational apps, I wouldn't wish on the naughtiest toddler. Take, for example, Counting With the Very Hungry Caterpillar, which turns a perfectly cute book into a tedious app that asks you to "please eat 1 piece of chocolate cake" so you can count to one.

Before the conference, Buckleitner had turned me on to Noodle Words, an app created by the California designer and children's-book writer Mark Schlichting. The app is explicitly educational. It teaches you about active verbs – *spin*, *sparkle*, *stretch*. It also happens to be fabulous. You tap a box, and a verb pops up and gets acted out by two insect friends who have the slapstick

sensibility of the Three Stooges. If the word is *shake*, they shake until their eyeballs rattle. I tracked down Schlichting at the conference, and he turned out to be a little like Maurice Sendak – like many good children’s writers, that is: ruled by id and not quite tamed into adulthood. The app, he told me, was inspired by a dream he’d had in which he saw the word *and* floating in the air and sticking to other words like a magnet. He woke up and thought, *What if words were toys?*

During the course of reporting this story, I downloaded dozens of apps and let my children test them out. They didn’t much care whether the apps were marketed as educational or not, as long as they were fun. Without my prompting, Gideon fixated on a game called LetterSchool, which teaches you how to write letters more effectively and with more imagination than any penmanship textbooks I’ve ever encountered. He loves the Toca Boca games, the Duck Duck Moose games, and random games like Bugs and Buttons. My older kids love The Numberlys, a dark fantasy creation of illustrators who have worked with Pixar that happens to teach the alphabet. And all my kids, including Gideon, play Cut the Rope a lot, which is not exclusively marketed as a kids’ game. I could convince myself that the game is teaching them certain principles of physics – it’s not easy to know the exact right place to slice the rope. But do I really need that extra convincing? I like playing the game; why

shouldn’t they?

Every new medium has, within a short time of its introduction, been condemned as a threat to young people. Pulp novels would destroy their morals, TV would wreck their eyesight, video games would make them violent. Each one has been accused of seducing kids into wasting time that would otherwise be spent learning about the presidents, playing with friends, or digging their toes into the sand. In our generation, the worries focus on kids’ brainpower, about unused synapses withering as children stare at the screen. People fret about television and ADHD, although that concern is largely based on a single study that has been roundly criticized and doesn’t jibe with anything we know about the disorder.

There are legitimate broader questions about how American children spend their time, but all you can do is keep them in mind as you decide what rules to set down for your own child. The statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics assumes a zero-sum game: an hour spent watching TV is an hour not spent with a parent. But parents know this is not how life works. There are enough hours in a day to go to school, play a game, and spend time with a parent, and generally these are different hours. Some people can get so drawn into screens that they want to do nothing else but play games. Experts say excessive video gaming is a real problem, but they debate whether it

can be called an addiction and, if so, whether the term can be used for anything but a small portion of the population. If your child shows signs of having an addictive personality, you will probably know it. One of my kids is like that; I set stricter limits for him than for the others, and he seems to understand why.

In her excellent book *Screen Time*, the journalist Lisa Guernsey lays out a useful framework – what she calls the three C’s – for thinking about media consumption: content, context, and your child. She poses a series of questions – Do you think the content is appropriate? Is screen time a “relatively small part of your child’s interaction with you and the real world?” – and suggests tailoring your rules to the answers, child by child. One of the most interesting points Guernsey makes is about the importance of parents’ attitudes toward media. If they treat screen time like junk food, or “like a magazine at the hair salon” – good for passing the time in a frivolous way but nothing more – then the child will fully absorb that attitude, and the neurosis will be passed to the next generation.

“The war is over. The natives won.” So says Marc Prensky, the education and technology writer, who has the most extreme parenting philosophy of anyone I encountered in my reporting. Prensky’s 7-year-old son has access to books, TV, Legos, Wii – and Prensky treats them all the same. He does not limit access to any of them. Sometimes his son plays with a new app

for hours, but then, Prensky told me, he gets tired of it. He lets his son watch TV even when he personally thinks it’s a “stupid waste.” *SpongeBob SquarePants*, for example, seems like an annoying, pointless show, but Prensky says he used the relationship between SpongeBob and Patrick, his starfish sidekick, to teach his son a lesson about friendship. “We live in a screen age, and to say to a kid, ‘I’d love for you to look at a book but I hate it when you look at the screen’ is just bizarre. It reflects our own prejudices and comfort zone. It’s nothing but fear of change, of being left out.”

Prensky’s worldview really stuck with me. Are books always, in every situation, inherently better than screens? My daughter, after all, often uses books as a way to avoid social interaction, while my son uses the Wii to bond with friends. I have to admit, I had the exact same experience with *SpongeBob*. For a long time I couldn’t stand the show, until one day I got past the fact that the show was so loud and frenetic and paid more attention to the story line, and realized I too could use it to talk with my son about friendship. After I first interviewed Prensky, I decided to conduct an experiment. For six months, I would let my toddler live by the Prensky rules. I would put the iPad in the toy basket, along with the remote-control car and the Legos. Whenever he wanted to play with it, I would let him.

Gideon tested me the very first day. He saw the iPad

in his space and asked if he could play. It was 8 a.m. and we had to get ready for school. I said yes. For 45 minutes he sat on a chair and played as I got him dressed, got his backpack ready, and failed to feed him breakfast. This was extremely annoying and obviously untenable. The week went on like this – Gideon grabbing the iPad for two-hour stretches, in the morning, after school, at bedtime. Then, after about 10 days, the iPad fell out of his rotation, just like every other toy does. He dropped it under the bed and never looked for it. It was completely forgotten for about six weeks.

Now he picks it up every once in a while, but not all that often. He has just started learning letters in school, so he's back to playing LetterSchool. A few weeks ago his older brother played with him, helping him get all the way through the uppercase and then lowercase letters. It did not seem beyond the range of possibility that if Norman Rockwell were alive, he would paint the two curly-haired boys bent over the screen, one small finger guiding a smaller one across, down, and across again to make, in their triumphant finale, the small z. ♦

## Sir Thomas Wyatt

by *Norman Buller*

Sir Thomas Wyatt is appreciated today principally for his poetry. In his own time, however, as well as producing some of the best poetry of the sixteenth century, he was active in the King's service and led a very dangerous life. As foreign emissary for Henry VIII he could be seen as the James Bond of his time. Yet the danger he lived under emanated not so much from his missions abroad as from his membership of King Henry's court. It was as if Bond had more to fear from 'M' than from Dr. No.

Being a member of Henry VIII's court came with a serious health warning. The King grew increasingly egotistical and paranoid and, in his mind, friends could become foes and loyalty become treachery at the flick of his finger. The court was a place of plotting and intrigue between bitter rival factions, each spreading innuendo and calculated falsehood with the aim of trying to influence the King and gain



advantage over the others. The phrase 'heads will roll' could have been coined to sum up the ethos of Henry's court. And Wyatt was right in the middle of it.

Thomas Wyatt was born in or around 1503, the first of three children. His father was Sir Henry Wyatt, a man who had supported Henry Tudor against Richard III and had been tortured and imprisoned by the latter for his pains. He continued to serve Henry Tudor after the latter became Henry VIII, mainly as controller of the King's finances, and when the King's son became Henry VIII Sir Henry's abilities were recognised and retained. Under the new King's patronage he prospered greatly, becoming a Privy Councillor and Knight of the Bath. He also grew very rich and was one of the principal landowners in Kent. His seat, Allington Castle, near Maidstone, was only one of his several prosperous estates. In 1502, aged forty, he married Anne Skinner of Reigate, Surrey and their son Thomas was born about a year later. The young Thomas was blessed with high intelligence, good looks, social grace and ready wit, qualities which his father recognised would shine at court and could bring more lustre to his family.

The name Thomas Wyatt appears in the records of St John's College, Cambridge, as one of the new

intake of students in 1516. Although he would have been a ridiculously young undergraduate by today's practice, things were done very differently then and the name is thought genuinely to be that of Sir Henry Wyatt's eldest son. There is no evidence of his ever having graduated.

Thomas's father lost no time in getting his son admitted to court. Young Thomas began at a modest level and, no doubt with Sir Henry pulling strings in the background, made rapid progress. Around 1520, while Thomas was still in his mid-teens, his father arranged an early marriage for him with Elizabeth Brooke, daughter of Lord Cobham, a wealthy and influential Kentish neighbour. The young couple's son, also Thomas, was born about a year later. The marriage turned out to be a failure and around 1525 Wyatt formally separated from his wife, charging her with adultery. It would not be the end of Thomas Wyatt's problems with the opposite sex.

Henry VII had handed on to Henry VIII not only the unquestioned supremacy of the king over the nobility but also the process of turning the court into an influential artistic as well as administrative centre. As both a poet of the court and a foreign emissary of the King, Thomas Wyatt had a foot in both camps.

The leading fashion of lyric poetry at the time was

very much in the tradition of European courtly love. This had begun in the twelfth century with the songs of the troubadours in southern France. Their poetry represented a change in the relationship between men and women. Women began to be idealised above the status of a mere chattel of the male and, not least in poetry, became an object of veneration and desire. However ardently wooed, the lady remained inviolably – and hence, from the lover’s point of view, cruelly – chaste.

When not engaged in diplomatic duties abroad, there was not much for Wyatt to do at court. It was a small community of probably not more than a hundred or so men and women, with little to engage them except each other’s company. Apart from jousting and other manly pursuits, poetry, music and (inevitably) flirtation were pleasing distractions from an otherwise boring existence. With the possible exception of flirting, Wyatt, it seems, was good at all of them.

It must have been sometime during the 1520s that Wyatt discovered his poetic vocation. As a good example of his early work, here is the beginning (in modernised spelling) of Song XCIX in the Penguin *Complete Poems* edited by R. A. Rebholz (1978).

*Heaven and earth and all that hear me plain  
Do well perceive what care doth cause me cry,  
Save you alone to whom I cry in vain,  
‘Mercy, madam, alas, I die, I die!’  
It is the last trouble that ye shall have  
Of me, madam, to hear my last complaint.  
Pity at least your poor unhappy slave  
For in despair, alas, I faint, I faint.*

There it all is, the helpless male suitor and the cruel, unyielding lady, stuck forever in the convention like something petrified on Keats’s Grecian Urn. How much of this was simply conforming with the courtly love tradition, and how much was Wyatt’s own real experience, only his poetry can tell us.

Wyatt’s foreign excursions and his gift for languages gave him an entrée to Italian verse, especially that of Petrarch, whose innovative work was making the running in European poetry at the time and with which Wyatt was much impressed. It was largely Wyatt’s translations that introduced the poetry of Petrarch and other Italians into England, notably though not exclusively in the sonnet form, which greatly helped the development of English verse.

Lyric poetry in mid-Tudor England was, of course,

a much more enclosed and restricted practice than it is today. These poems were invariably handwritten, considered unsuitable for airing weighty subjects and not written for publication. For the most part they were light, personal ditties circulated among fellow courtiers with an element of open secrecy which added a certain piquancy to their contents. They were usually written on single pieces of paper and passed, often surreptitiously, from hand to hand.

Because the court was a closed and intimate society in which everyone knew everyone else, even if a poem was unsigned the author would almost certainly be identified from its style and characteristics and, often, so would the lady involved. It was all part of the courtly game; the lady was supposed never to acquiesce and thus her ostensible chastity was preserved. It was a practice in which thwarted desire might, at least outwardly, be relieved. Inevitably these games would, at times, be merely a cover for the real thing.

It would not have taken Wyatt long to discover the many drawbacks of being one of Tudor England's diplomats. One reason why Henry VIII or his chief minister would have had to pick only wealthy men for the job was that those appointed had to meet their own expenses. Although they were there on His Majesty's Service, His Majesty was not willing to

pick up the tab. After his father's death in 1537 Wyatt became one of the richest men in England but until then he must often have needed, and presumably received, a hefty family bailout. Even when vastly wealthy in his own right, Wyatt was notoriously poor at handling money and often ran into financial difficulties. One can only suppose that he went on serving the King in order to stay in the latter's notoriously fickle favour.

In 1526 Wyatt accompanied Sir Thomas Cheyney on a diplomatic mission to France and acquitted himself well. In the following year he joined Sir John Russell on an important mission to the papal court in Rome. After a few weeks there Russell was injured in a fall, leaving Wyatt to conduct the mission alone. While visiting some of Italy's major cities Wyatt was taken prisoner by the Imperialist forces of the Emperor Charles V. The huge ransom for his release was eventually paid by Henry VIII who held Wyatt liable for the money. Russell and Wyatt failed in their main mission to prevent Charles V's conquests in Italy. After his return to England Wyatt probably learned of the King's serious interest in Anne Boleyn.

It is possible that Wyatt became involved with Anne Boleyn before she married Henry VIII. Wyatt's service as High Marshal of Calais during 1528 to 1530 could have been his exile from court imposed by

the King for his suspected association with Anne Boleyn. What is certain is that in May 1536 Wyatt was arrested and sent to the Tower on suspicion of adultery with Anne at the time she was arraigned on the charge of adultery with five other men, including her own brother. In that month Queen Anne and her five alleged lovers were beheaded and the King married Jane Seymour. Wyatt, however, was subsequently released without charge. He may have been within a hair's breadth of losing his head.

Some commentators have drawn attention to a small number of Wyatt's poems which could be construed as possible evidence of a liaison between him and Anne. But this is to overlook the nature of courtly love poetry. There is no existing documentary evidence that a sexual relationship did occur between Wyatt and Anne Boleyn. Wyatt had several enemies at court and King Henry was capable of believing anything, especially if it suited his purpose. Unless valid proof ultimately comes to light, the question must remain unanswered.

If Wyatt bore a charmed life at this time it probably had a lot to do with Thomas Cromwell, who had become Henry VIII's chief minister in 1534. Cromwell was a very able lawyer who, under the King, had risen from virtually nothing to the highest position in the land by doing everything possible to

achieve what the King wanted. To get round the problem of a uncooperative Pope, he devised the plan to destroy Rome's power in England by replacing it with the King's supremacy in the church. His establishment, in the King's name, of the sovereign national state brought about the English Reformation. Mentally Cromwell was of the highest calibre, a gifted 'fixer', a man of wide reading and culture and fluent in four languages. They didn't come any smarter and he soon recognized that Wyatt was a man of the same ilk. He moved Wyatt into his orbit and bestowed his protection upon him.

In his role as England's arch-Protestant reformer, Cromwell inevitably created many enemies, among whom were the Roman Catholic Duke of Norfolk, the Duke of Suffolk, the Earl of Southampton and Thomas Wriothesley, the latter a slimy and embittered functionary who had no compunction in turning against his former master, Cromwell. Henry VIII was notoriously ambivalent about the Protestant Reformation. He supported it politically because it helped him to get round the problem of the Pope's opposition to his will, but he retained a soft spot for the 'old religion' and this could be tapped into and exploited by those intent on doing so. This factor was an important element in the alliances and enmities of the court and, being a Cromwell man,

there was no way that Wyatt could be exempt from its effects.

In 1539 there were fears, encouraged by a renegade English cleric, Cardinal Reginald Pole, that the emperor Charles V and Francis I of France were intending to form an alliance in preparation for a joint invasion of England. Wyatt was required to sound out the situation and report back. Meanwhile, after the death of Henry's Queen, Jane Seymour, Cromwell devised a scheme for securing the support of German Protestant princes by inducing Henry VIII to marry Anne of Cleves. But when King Henry met Anne he was displeased, not only by her appearance but even more by her lack of grace, wit and sophistication. Political considerations aside, he didn't want a homely girl, he wanted a captivating lover.

As a matter of political expediency, Cromwell persuaded the King to press on with his marriage to Anne of Cleves, which Henry reluctantly did in January 1540. Small wonder, then, that when it became clear that Charles V and Francis I had no intention of invading England, and therefore that German support was not needed, Henry realised that he had been lumbered with a wife he despised for no good reason. As always with Henry VIII, somebody had to pay, and who else but Cromwell? Where

Henry VIII was concerned, failure on his behalf was tantamount to treason. The King had Cromwell arrested; the royal marriage to Anne of Cleves was annulled on 12th July 1540 and on 28th July Cromwell was executed without trial. On that same day the King married Catherine Howard.

With Cromwell gone, Wyatt had lost his protector. Wyatt's enemies, flushed with anti-Reformation fever and personal animosity, closed in for what they expected would be another kill. In January 1541 Wyatt was arrested, handcuffed, bound and thrown into the Tower. His treatment this time was far harsher than his previous incarceration. Edmund Bonner, soon to be Bishop of London and a merciless scourge of Protestants and the Reformation, had in 1538 testified that Wyatt was not only gravely immoral in his personal conduct and scornful in his attitude to colleagues (i.e. Bonner) but had undertaken unauthorized dealings with the traitor Cardinal Pole and valued his relationship with the emperor Charles V more than his service to Henry VIII. These charges were now resurrected, all of which, with further embellishment, amounted to treason. Wyatt's enemies must have felt they had a watertight case.

Wyatt's situation was now dire. In response to the 'indictment and evidence' based on Bonner's

accusations, Wyatt produced a defence document, the articulate comprehension and thoroughness of which would have made his late master Thomas Cromwell proud. He began by appealing to the judges to bear in mind what the law was and, in examining it, to 'listen to the words'. Here he was speaking as a poet as well as a man of learning. He challenged the issues raised in the indictment point by point and made out a case for dismissing those issues, not only on the grounds of false testimony but also of its having been inspired by nothing more than spiteful personal malice on the part of his accusers, particularly Edmund Bonner.

It was a document obviously prepared for a trial but there is no evidence that a trial ever took place. Whether the King, or even the Queen, had read it is not known. On 26th March 1541 the Privy Council issued a statement that the King, out of his own mercy, and at the express plea of the Queen, Catherine Howard, had pardoned Wyatt. His life had again hung by a thread and again the thread had held. He was released in March 1541 with all his confiscated possessions restored and soon resumed duties in the King's service as if nothing had happened. In February 1542 Queen Catherine and four of her associates were executed on a charge of adultery and high treason. Five years later King

Henry was dead.

On 3rd October 1542 Wyatt was ordered by the King to make haste to Falmouth to meet the Emperor Charles's envoy and escort him to London. The autumn weather was unusually warm and the hard ride caused Wyatt to become overheated. His health had been troubling him for some time and, feeling ill, he stopped at Clifton Maubank, the home of his friend Sir John Horsey at Sherborne in Dorset, where he lapsed into a worsening fever. Unable to continue his journey he died, aged only thirty-nine, in his host's care on 11th October and is believed to be buried in the Horsey family tomb at Sherborne.

We owe our possession of Sir Thomas Wyatt's lyric poems today partly to their merit and partly to chance. They were clearly a cut very much above the run-of-the-mill verses circulated at court, which explains why many of them were copied into the commonplace books of courtiers, some of which have survived to this day. In 1557 a publisher, Richard Tottel, produced a book entitled *Songs and Sonnetts* containing many of Wyatt's poems along with some by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and others. This book, known as *Tottel's Miscellany*, was republished many times in Elizabeth's reign and became widely popular, ensuring that Wyatt's work would not be forgotten.

But Tottel, like others since, assumed that Wyatt's 'rough' texture and scansion was due to lack of skill and ventured to 'improve' and regularise many of his lines. Some scholars and critics, however, by examining Wyatt's own corrections, have demonstrated that he could have written his lines in regular metre if he'd wanted to, and indeed originally did so, but preferred to express himself in less-regular rhythm the better to re-present his experience. It is not difficult to see that the irregular rhythm of the verse, just as Wyatt wrote it, contributes significantly to the overall effect.

Two poems by Wyatt should make clear the qualities that have elevated his work above the average level of early Tudor verse. The first is Song XCVI in the Rebholz Complete Poems.

*Madam, withouten many words  
Once I am sure ye will or no.  
And if ye will then leave your bourds  
And use your wit and show it so  
And with a beck ye shall me call.  
And if of one that burneth always  
Ye have any pity at all  
Answer him fair with yea or nay.  
If it be yea I shall be fain.  
If it be nay friends as before.*

*Ye shall another man obtain  
And I mine own and yours no more.*

What should strike the reader, even at first reading, is the direct, nonsensical attitude of the language. Can this really be a courtly love poem? True, in the second stanza he confesses to being always burning with love for the lady and asks if she has any pity for him in that condition. But of the 'plaining' and dejection of the helpless lover there is no sign. He is determined to be rid of all play-acting and pretence and, in their courtship, to give as good as he gets.

In the first stanza he makes clear that neither he nor the lady should fob each other off with unnecessary words. To hell with courtly love – he wants a plain answer, yes or no. To that end, will she please give up her jokes and amusing prevarications (bourds) and make such intelligence as she has (wit) manifest (show it so). If she wants him (yea) she only has to beckon and he'll be hers. But if she doesn't (nay), for heaven's sake let her say so plainly and let neither of them bear any umbrage in reverting to being 'just good friends.'

This second poem is Ballade LXXX in the Rebholz Complete Poems.

*They flee from me that sometime did me seek  
With naked foot stalking in my chamber.  
I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek  
That now are wild and do not remember  
That sometime they put themself in danger  
To take bread at my hand; and now they range  
Busily seeking with a continual change.  
Thanked be fortune it hath been otherwise  
Twenty times better, but once in special,  
In thin array after a pleasant guise,  
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall  
And she me caught in her arms long and small,  
Therewithal sweetly did me kiss  
And softly said, 'Dear heart, how like you this?'  
It was no dream: I lay broad waking.  
But all is turned thorough my gentleness  
Into a strange fashion of forsaking.  
And I have leave to go of her goodness  
And she also to use newfangleness.  
But since that I so kindly am served  
I would fain know what she hath deserved.*

This is Wyatt's best-known poem and turns up almost unfailingly in anthologies of English verse. It is also, by common consent, the best thing he ever wrote and is therefore worth considering in detail.

Despite its conversational flow, it is not a poem written spontaneously in the heat of the moment. It is a scrupulously crafted piece of work using the stanza known as rhyme royal, a strict verse form first employed by Chaucer, consisting of seven five-stressed lines with the line-end rhyme scheme ababbcc. Wyatt, however, handles the pentameter line with some flexibility. All these qualities would have been well-appreciated by Wyatt's readers at court.

Subtle though its threads of thought are, its main rational import is not hard to grasp. Although the poem begins with the word 'They', the emphasis in the poem is unmistakably on one woman and Wyatt may have used the plural to help disguise the woman's identity. She is represented in terms of a number of birds or other creatures who in the past amorously sought his company but who now shun him. At that time they came compliantly to do his bidding but have since grown uncontrollable and hostile. They have seemingly forgotten how they once even took risks to receive his favours. Now they are off in all directions in search of ever-new liaisons.

With a touch of defensive boastfulness, he is grateful to have known amorous relationships 'Twenty times better' than this one. He remembers one particular occasion when his then mistress (no



doubt 'With naked foot stalking in my chamber') wearing very little, probably after a court game of dressing up ('a pleasant guise'), and behaving very amorously, letting her gown fall from her shoulders, taking him in her 'arms long and small' (slender), kissing him tenderly and asking how he liked her erotic approaches. This is startlingly modern and hardly fits the courtly love image in which the initiative was the male prerogative.

So unresponsive is she now, he or anyone reading his poem might think that he had dreamed it all. He is, however, adamant that he was not dreaming; he 'lay broad waking'. He thinks it likely that she was turned off him 'thorough my gentleness', that being because he lacked macho aggression (apropos Sylvia Plath's comment in her poem 'Daddy' 'Every woman adores a fascist'). As a gentleman of the court he has to abide by the rules of the game and, though not without a touch of bitter sarcasm, accept her rejection of him and leave her free 'to use newfangleness', that is, to pursue her promiscuous ways. But he is smarting at what he believes has been her selfish and unfeeling treatment of him and wonders what her just deserts might be. It is not known when the poem was written but it is tempting to think that he might have had Anne Boleyn in mind.

When one considers the amount of experience Wyatt has managed to re-present in these twenty-one lines within the demanding and highly wrought verse structure, which in itself contributes to the tension in its rhythm and movement, one realizes what a high quality achievement it is. What Wyatt's poem really laments is the lack of interest among women of his acquaintance in a loving and lasting partnership in life, preferring the thrill of the chase in short-term flirtatious liaisons typical of superficial life at court.

It has been shown that some of Wyatt's poems express themselves differently from his standard courtly love pieces. In the former, though he is still rejected, Wyatt had abandoned the courtly love tradition because he had found a truer and better way of re-presenting his experience without it. In this he was reaching forward to the seventeenth century and the greater achievements of Shakespeare and the Metaphysical poets. ♦

*Side by...*

## The Collectors (I)

by *Rohinton Mistry*

WHEN DR BURJOR MODY was transferred from Mysore to assume the principalship of the Bombay Veterinary College, he moved into Firozsha Baag with his wife and son Pesi. They occupied the vacant flat on the third floor of C Block, next to the Bulsara family.

Dr Mody did not know it then, but he would be seeing a lot of Jehangir, the Bulsara boy; the boy who sat silent and brooding, every evening, watching the others at play, and called *chaarikhao* by them – quite unfairly, since he never tattled or told tales – (Dr Mody would call him, affectionately, the observer of C Block). And Dr Mody did not know this, either, at the time of moving, that Jehangir Bulsara's visits at ten AM. every Sunday would become a source of profound joy for himself. Or that just when he would think he had found someone to share his hobby with, someone to mitigate the perpetual disappointment about his son Pesi, he would lose his precious Spanish dancing lady stamp and renounce Jehangir's friendship, both in quick succession. And then two years later, he himself would – but that is never knowable.

*...by side*

## Bélyeggyűjtés (1. rész)

fordította *Tárnok Attila*

AMIKOR DOKTOR BURJOR MODYT áthelyezték Mysore-ból a bombayi Állatorvosi Főiskola élére, feleségével és fiával, Pesivel Firozsha Baagba költöztek. A C épület harmadik emeletén levő üres lakást foglalták el, a Bulsara család szomszédjában.

Dr. Mody ekkor még nem gondolta, hogy a Bulsara fiúval, Jehangirral majd jóban lesz. A fiú csendben, szomorúan figyelte esténként a többiek játékát. Azok a *chaarikhao* gúnyos jelzőt akasztották rá, igazságtalannul, hisz ő sosem pletykált és handabandázott. Dr. Mody szeretetteljesen a C blokk megfigyelőjének hívta. Mr Mody azt sem sejtette még a költözés idején, hogy Jehangir vasárnap délelőtt tízkor sorra kerülő látogatói annyi örömet nyújtanak majd számára. Ahogy azt sem, hogy épp, amikor abba a hitbe ringatná magát, hogy végre talált valakit, akivel megoszthatja szenvedélyét, és akivel enyhíthetné a Pesi fia okozta folyamatos csalódást, el is veszi majd a spanyol táncosnőt ábrázoló bélyeget, és Jehangir barátságát is visszautasítja majd. Hogy aztán két évvel később, ő maga..., de ezt soha nem fogjuk megtudni.

Soon after moving in, Dr Burjor Mody became the pride of the Parsis in C Block. C Block, like the rest of Firozsha Baag, had a surfeit of low-paid bank clerks and bookkeepers, and the arrival of Dr Mody permitted them to feel a little better about themselves. More importantly in A Block lived a prominent priest, and B Block boasted a chartered accountant. Now C Block had a voice in Baag matters as important as the others did.

While C Block went about its routine business, confirming and authenticating the sturdiness of the object of their pride, the doctor's big-boned son Pesi established himself as leader of the rowdier elements among the Baag's ten-to-sixteen population. For Pesi, too, it was routine business; he was following a course he had mapped out for himself ever since the family began moving from city to city on the whims and megrims of his father's employer, the government.

To account for Pesi's success was the fact of his brutish strength. But he was also the practitioner of a number of minor talents which appealed to the crowd where he would be leader. The one no doubt complemented the other, the talents serving to dissemble the brutish qualifier of strength, and the brutish strength encouraging the crowd to perceive the appeal of his talents.

Hawking, for instance, was one of them. Pesi could summon up prodigious quantities of phlegm at will, accompanied by sounds such as the boys had seldom heard except in accomplished adults: deep, throaty, rasping, resonating rolls which culminated in a pthoo, with the

Röviddel beköltözése után dr. Burjor Mody a C háztömbben lakó párszik büszkesége lett. A C épület, ahogy Firozsha Baag jó része, rosszul fizetett banki alkalmazottaktól és könyvelőktől hemzsegett, de dr. Mody érkezése nyomán az itt élők kezdtek kissé jobban hinni magukban. Sőt, míg az A lakótömbben egy befolyásos egyházi személy élt, és a B egy könyvvizsgálóval büszkélkedhetett, most a C épület is ugyanúgy hallathatta a hangját Baag-ügyekben.

Mialatt a C tömb lakói megszilárdították pozíciójukat büszkeségük tárgyát illetően, a doktor nagytestű Pesi fia a Baag kamasz populációjának szilajabb tagjaiból verbuválódott banda vezérévé nőtte ki magát. Pesi a saját maga számára kijelölt utat járta, mivel apja munkáltatója, a kormány jóvoltából a család városról városra költözködött.

Pesi sikerének záloga brutális erejében rejlett. Túl ezen számos apróbb készségben nyilvánult meg tehetsége, melyek a bandák szemében méltó vezérré emelték. Semmi kétség, egyik a másikat kiegészítette: a készségek segítettek lerombolni a brutális erő keltette félelmet, míg a brutális erő felmagasztalta ezeket a képességeket a többi fiú szemében.

Egyik képessége például a krákogás volt. Pesi annyi mennyiségű váladékot volt képes felgyűjteni a szájában, olyan hangok kíséretében, amelyet a gyerekek csak érett felnőttektől hallottak. Mély, reszelő, visszhangzó, gurgulázó torokhangokat, amelyek egy irdatlan köpésben kulminálódtak, amely trófeaként landolt a lábuk előtt a

impressive trophy landing in the dust at their feet, its size leaving them all slightly envious. Pesi could also break wind that sounded like questions, exclamations, fragments of the chromatic scale, and clarion calls, while the others sniffed and discussed the merits of pungency versus tonality. This ability earned him the appellation of Pesi paadmaroo, and he wore the sobriquet with pride.

Perhaps his single most important talent was his ability to improvise. The peculiarities of a locale were the raw material for his inventions. In Firozsha Baag, behind the three buildings, or blocks, as they were called, were spacious yards shared by all three blocks. These yards planted in Pesi's fecund mind the seed from which grew a new game: stoning-the-cats.

Till the arrival of the Mody family the yards were home for stray and happy felines, well fed on scraps and leftovers disgorged regularly as clockwork, after meal-times, by the three blocks. The ground floors were the only ones who refrained. They voiced their protests in a periodic cycle of reasoning, pleading, and screaming of obscenities, because the garbage collected outside their windows where the cats took up permanent residency, miaowing, feasting and caterwauling day and night. If the cascade of food was more than the cats could devour, the remainder fell to the fortune of the rats. Finally, flies and insects buzzed and hovered over the dregs, little pools of pulses and curries fermenting and frothing, till the kuchrawalli came next morning and swept it all away.

porban, amelynek puszta mérete csodálatra ragadtatta a fiúkat. Pesi a gázoktól is felhangokkal szabadult, durrantása kérdést vagy felkiáltást, a kromatikus hangsor skálahangjait formázta, kürtök hangját, míg a többiek a levegőbe szimatolva a bűz és a tonalitás közti ellentétén és a kettő feszültségén vitatkoztak. Ezek a képességek Pesit a *paadmaroo* jelzővel ruházták fel, amelyet ő büszkén viselt.

Talán a legfontosabb képessége az improvizáció volt. Az adott hely sajátosságai adták invenciói nyersanyagát. Firozsha Baag három épülete mögött egy széles tér rült el. Ez a tér Pesi termékeny fantáziájában elültette egy új játék gondolatát, a macskák kövezését.

A Mody család érkezése előtt a tér boldog kóbor macskaféléknek adott otthont, ezek bőséges táplálékhoz jutottak a három épület által az étkezések után óramű pontossággal kidobált szemétből és ételmaradékokból. A szokás alól egyedül a földszinti lakások lakói tartózkodtak. Ők időről időre felszólaltak e gyakorlat ellen, néha érvelve, néha trágárságokat kiabálva, mert a szemét az ablakuk alatt gyűlt, ahol a lakmározó macskák jelenléte nyávigással, macskazenével párosult. Ha az ételmaradékok zuhataga a macskák étvágyát meghaladta, a felesleget patkányok falták be. Végül legyek és rovarok köröztek és lepték el az üledéket, a hüvelyesek és a curry kis foltjait, amelyek erjedni és habosodni kezdtek, amíg a *kuchrawalli* össze nem söpört mindent másnap reggel.

A Firozsha Baag mögötti tér jelenítette meg a lakó-

The backyards of Firozsha Baag constituted its squalid underbelly. And this would be the scenario for stoning-the-cats, Pesi decided. But there was one hitch: the backyards were off limits to the boys. The only way in was through the kuchrawalli's little shack standing beyond A Block, where her huge ferocious dog, tied to the gate, kept the boys at bay. So Pesi decreed that the boys gather at the rear windows of their homes, preferably at a time of day when the adults were scarce, with the fathers away at work and the mothers not yet finished with their afternoon naps. Each boy brought a pile of small stones and took turns, chucking three stones each. The game could just as easily have been stoning-the-rats; but stoned rats quietly walked away to safety, whereas the yowls of cats provided primal satisfaction and verified direct hits: no yowl, no point.

The game added to Pesi's popularity – he called it a howling success. But the parents (except the ground floor) complained to Dr Mody about his son instigating their children to torment poor dumb and helpless creatures. For a veterinarian's son to harass animals was shameful, they said.

As might be supposed, Pesi was the despair of his parents. Over the years Dr Mody had become inured to the initial embarrassment in each new place they moved to. The routine was familiar: first, a spate of complaints from indignant parents claiming their sons bugree nay dhoor thai gaya – were corrupted to become useless as dust; next, the protestations giving way to sympathy

tömbök hastáji részeit, és ez a színhely kínálkozott Pesi szemében alkalmasnak a macskák megkövezésére. Ám volt egy kis bökkenő: a térre nem mehettek be a gyerekek, az egyetlen elérési útvonal a *kuchrawalli* A épület mögött álló bungallóján keresztül vezetett, de a kapunál megkötött óriási, vad kutya távol tartotta a fiúkat. Pesi úgy határozott, hogy a fiúk a házak hátsó ablakainál gyülekezzenek, lehetőleg olyan időpontban, amikor kevés felnőtt tartózkodik kint, amikor az apák még munkában vannak, az anyák pedig még nem ébredtek fel délutáni álmukból. Mindegyik fiú egy marék követ hozott, és felváltva, három kavicsenként hajították őket a macskák irányába. A játék könnyen lehetett volna patkánykövezés is, de a patkányok hang nélkül vonultak fedezékbe, ha eltalálták őket, míg a macskák nyávogása elsőrendű kielégülést szerzett a fiúknak, és egyben jelezte is a találatot: ha a macska nem jajdult fel, nem ért pontot a dobás.

A játék növelte Pesi népszerűségét, amit ő sikerként nyugtázott. Ám a szülők – kivéve a földszinten lakókat – panasszal éltek dr. Modynál, mondván: a fia ráveszi a gyerekeket, hogy ártatlan, szegény, szerencsétlen lényeket kínozzanak. Szégyen, tették hozzá, hogy egy állatorvos fia állatokat molesztál.

Mondani sem kell, Pesi komoly aggodalmat szerzett szüleinek. Az évek során dr. Mody hozzáedződött a kellemetlenségekhez, amelyek minden új lakóhelyükön érték őket. A folyamat mindig ugyanaz volt: először a felháborodott szülők panaszáradata, amelyben lehordták

when the neighbours saw that Pesi was the worm in the Modys' mango.

And so it was in Firozsha Baag. After the furor about stoning-the-cats had died down, the people of the Baag liked Dr Mody more than ever. He earned their respect for the initiative he took in Baag matters, dealing with the management for things like broken lifts, leaking water tanks, crumbling plaster, and faulty wiring. It was at his urging that the massive iron gate, set in the stone wall which ran all around the buildings, compound and backyards, was repaired, and a watchman installed to stop beggars and riffraff. (And although Dr Mody would be dead by the time of the Shiv Sena riots, the tenants would remember him for the gate which would keep out the rampaging mobs.) When the Bombay Municipality tried to appropriate a section of Baag property for its road-widening scheme, Dr Mody was in the forefront of the battle, winning a compromise whereby the Baag only lost half the proposed area. But the Baag's esteem did nothing to lighten the despair for Pesi that hung around the doctor.

At the birth of his son, Dr Mody had deliberated long and hard about the naming. Peshotan, in the Persian epic, Shah-Nameh, was the brother of the great Asfandyar, and a noble general, lover of art and learning, and man of wise counsel. Dr Mody had decided his son would play the violin, acquire the best from the cultures of East and West, thrill to the words of Tagore and Shakespeare, appreciate Mozart and Indian ragas; and one day, at the

Pesit – *bugree nay dhoor thai gaya*, mondták –, ami az-zá fajult, hogy haszontalannak nevezték a gyereket, az utca porához hasonlítva őt, aztán a panaszok szimpátiába fordultak át, amikor a szomszédok rájöttek, hogy Pesi az egyetlen kukac a Mody család mangófáján.

És ez így történt Firozsha Baagban is. Miután a fiúk lelkesedése a macskakövezés iránt alábbhagyott, a lakók becsülni kezdték dr. Modyt. Kivívta ezt náluk azzal a kezdeményezéssel, ahogy magára vállalta, hogy intézkedik a tömb ügyeiben, az elromlott lift, a lyukas víztartályok, az omló vakolat és a hibás villanyvezetékek ügyében. Az ő kezdeményezésére került sor az egész épületegyüttest a térrel együtt körülvevő kőkerítésbe ültetett kapu helyrehozatalára, és neki volt köszönhető, hogy sor került egy fizetett őr alkalmazására, aki távol tartotta a koldusokat és a hajléktalanokat. (És jöllehet, dr. Mody már nem élt a Shiv Sen tüntetések idején, a lakók emlékeztek rá, hogy az általa helyrehozott kapu védelte meg őket a randalírozóktól.) Amikor a bombayi városháza az utak szélesítése alkalmával igényt tartott a Baaghoz tartozó terület egy részére, dr. Mody élen járt a hatósággal folytatott küzdelemben, és elérte, hogy a kisajátítás a korábban tervezett területnek csupán a felére terjedt ki. Azonban a Baagban elért megbecsülés semmit sem enyhített azon az elkeseredésen, amit Pesi okozott a doktor számára.

Dr. Mody rengeteget töprengett a névadáson fia születésekor. A perzsa elbeszélő költeményben, a Shah-Nameh-ban szereplő Peshotan a nagy Asfandyar testvé-

proper moment, he would introduce him to his dearest activity, stamp-collecting.

But the years passed in their own way. Fate denied fruition to all of Dr Mody's plans; and when he talked about stamps, Pesi laughed and mocked his beloved hobby. This was the point at which, hurt and confused, he surrendered his son to whatever destiny was in store. A perpetual grief entered to occupy the void left behind after the aspirations for his son were evicted.

The weight of grief was heaviest around Dr Mody when he returned from work in the evenings. As the car turned into the compound he usually saw Pesi before Pesi saw him, in scenes which made him despair, scenes in which his son was abusing someone, fighting, or making lewd gestures.

But Dr Mody was careful not to make a public spectacle of his despair. While the car made its way sluggishly over the uneven flagstones of the compound, the boys would stand back and wave him through. With his droll comments and jovial countenance he was welcome to disrupt their play, unlike two other car-owners of Firozsha Baag the priest in A Block and the chartered accountant in B who habitually berated, from inside their vehicles, the sons of bank clerks and bookkeepers for blocking the driveway with their games. Their well-worn curses had become so predictable and ineffective that sometimes the boys chanted gleefully, in unison with their nemeses: "Worse than saala animals!" or "junglee dogs. cats have more sense!" or "you sataans

reként nemes harci vezető volt, a művészetek és a tudományok kedvelője, és bölcs döntéseiről vált nevezetessé. Dr. Mody reményei szerint a fia majd hegedülni tanul, Kelet és Nyugat kultúrájában egyaránt otthon lesz, beleborzong majd Tagore és Shakespeare szavaiba, értéke-li majd Mozartot és az indiai ragákat, és egy napon, ha majd itt lesz az ideje, apja bevezeti legkedvesebb elfogalaltsága, a bélyeggyűjtés rejtelmébe.

De az évek múltak, és a sors megtagadta dr. Modytól, hogy tervei gyümölcsözzenek. Ha Pesinek a bélyegekről mesélt, az csak nevetett, és kigúnyolta apja szenvedélyét. Ezen a ponton az apa fájó és összezavart érzések közepette ugyan, de elengedte magától a fiát, bármit tartogasson is számára a sors. Örökös fájdalom költözött az üresség helyére, amelyet a fia fejlődésébe vetett bizalom hagyott maga után.

Legfájóbban esténként lepték meg ezek az érzések dr. Modyt, amikor a munkából hazaért. Ahogy az autóval befordult az épületek között, általában előbb pillantotta meg Pesit, mint az őt, többnyire olyan jelenetek szereplőjeként, amelyek végképp elkésérítették: éppen molesztált egy kisebb gyereket, verekedett vagy obszcén gesztust tett.

Ám dr. Mody óvakodott attól, hogy jelenetet rendezzen, hogy elkésérését felfedje mások előtt. Ahogy autója lassan végiggyurult az épületek közötti egyenetlen kőlapokon, a fiúk félrehúzódtak és integettek. Nem bánták, ha dr. Mody tréfás megjegyzéseivel és bohókás arc-kifejezéssel félbeszakította a játékot, ellentétben a má-

ever have any lesson-paani to do or not!”

There was one boy who always stayed apart from his peers – the Bulsara boy, from the family next door to the Modys. Jehangir sat on the stone steps every evening while the gentle land breezes, drying and cooling the sweaty skins of the boys at play, blew out to sea. He sat alone through the long dusk, a source of discomfiture to the others. They resented his melancholy, watching presence.

Dr Mody noticed Jehangir, too, on the stone steps of C Block, the delicate boy with the build much too slight for his age. Next to a hulk like Pesi he was diminutive, but things other than size underlined his frail looks: he had slender hands, and forearms with fine downy hair. And while facial fuzz was incipient in most boys of his age (and Pesi was positively hirsute), Jehangir’s chin and upper lip were smooth as a young woman’s. But it pleased Dr Mody to see him evening after evening. The quiet contemplation of the boy on the steps and the noise and activity of the others at play came together in the kind of balance that Dr Mody was always looking for and was quick to appreciate.

Jehangir, in his turn, observed the burly Dr Mody closely as he walked past him each evening. When he approached the steps after parking his car, Jehangir would say “Sahibji” in greeting, and smile wanly. He saw that despite Dr Mody’s constant jocularities there was something painfully empty about his eyes. He noticed the peculiar way he scratched the greyish-red patches of

sik két autótulajdonossal, az A épületben lakó pappal és a könyvelővel a B-ből, akik általában lehordták a banki alkalmazottak gyerekeit, amiért akadályozzák a forgalmat. Elkoptatott szitkaik olyan kiszámíthatókká és hatástalanokká váltak, hogy a gyerekek már kórusban kántáltak, amint azok kocsija megjelent: „Rosszabbak, mint a *saala* állatok!” Vagy: „A Junglee kutyáknak és macskáknak több eszük van!” Vagy hogy „Ti *sataan* kölykök, soha nincs valami *lecke-paani*?”

Volt egy fiú, aki mindig elkülönült a kortársaitól: a Bulsara-fiú a Mody család szomszédjában. Jehangir a kőlépcsőkön ült esténként, amikor a tenger irányába fújó lágy szellő a többi fiú játéktól felhevült testét hűtötte. Egyedül ült a hosszú estében, melankolikus, figyelő jelenléte kényelmetlenség érzetét keltette a többi gyerekben.

Dr. Mody is felfigyelt a C blokk kőlépcsőin üldögélő, a korához képest csenevész fiúra. Pesi robusztus alakja mellett Jehangir eltörpült, de nem csak testének méretei keltették törékenységek benyomását; karcsú karján finom vattaszerű szőrzet nőtt, ám amíg a többi fiúnál az arc kezdeti szőrzetei voltak megfigyelhetők, Pesié pedig egyenesen bozontos volt, Jehangir álla és felső ajka olyan sima volt, akár egy fiatal nőé. Dr. Mody örült, hogy minden este találkozik a fiúval. Az csöndben figyelte a többiek harsány játékát, a két mentalitás ellentéte dr. Mody szemében hamar megbecsülésnek örvendett.

Jehangir is közről szemügyre vette a jól megtermett



psoriasis on his elbows, both elbows simultaneously, by folding his arms across his chest. Sometimes Jehangir would arise from the stone steps and the two would go up together to the third floor. Dr Mody asked him once, “You don’t like playing with the other boys? You just sit and watch them?” The boy shook his head and blushed, and Dr Mody did not bring up the matter after that.

Gradually, a friendship of sorts grew between the two. Jehangir touched a chord inside the doctor which had lain silent for much too long. Now affection for the boy developed and started to linger around the region hitherto occupied by grief bearing Pesi’s name. ♦

*(To be continued)*



dr. Modyt, ahogy az esténként elhaladt mellette. Miután a doktor leparkolt, és a lépcsőhöz közeledett, Jehangir jó előre köszönt neki, halvány mosollyal az arcán: Sahibji! A fiú észlelte, hogy dr. Mody szemében – állandó viccelődése ellenére – valami fájdalmas üresség bujkál. Megfigyelte, hogyan vakarja meg karjait keresztbe fonva a mellén mindkét könyökén egyszerre a kisebese-  
dések szürkés-vörös foltjait. Megesett, hogy Jehangir felkelt ültéből és felkísérte a doktort a harmadikra. Dr. Mody egyszer rákérdezett:

– Nem szeretsz a többiekkel játszani? Csak ülsz és nézed őket.

A fiú elpirulva nemet intett a fejével. Dr. Mody nem hozta fel többet a kérdést.

Fokozatosan egyfajta barátság szövődött kettejük között. Jehangir olyan szívet érintett meg a doktor lelkében, amely benne túl régóta szunnyadt: a Pesi okozta fájdalom helyén a fiú iránti szeretet telepedett meg. ♦

*(Folytatás a következő számban)*