
M.H. Bowker
The Anguished and the Enchanted
The Little Prince, Revisited

THE ANGUISHED AND THE ENCHANTED

Advance praise for *The Anguished and the Enchanted*:

The story behind this new translation of *The Little Prince* is as fascinating as the story itself. Going through some papers of his grandfather's, Bowker discovers a Finnish translation from the French. Drawing on the original and the translation, Bowker creates a hybrid version of the original, emphasizing the call of childhood within us all, freed from the responsibilities of adulthood. Not just a children's story, *The Little Prince* becomes an account of the often dark and destructive forces of the unconscious. Heavily annotated, the translation preserves the charm of the original, while opening it to multiple interpretations. It is simply a wonderful book, a familiar story told from a new and liberating perspective.

— C. Fred Alford, Professor Emeritus,
University of Maryland, College Park

In this short book, M.H. Bowker offers a thought-provoking essay on *The Little Prince* together with a new translation. The book should be of considerable value to anyone interested in the psychodynamic study of *The Little Prince* and of the issues of maturation central to it. Bowker's essay on the transition to adulthood focuses our attention on the vitally important struggle to retain the child's capacity for creativity into adult life and on the consequences of his or her failure to do so. In exploring this issue, Bowker identifies larger themes that account for the continuing power of the fantasy presented in the story.

— David Levine, Professor Emeritus,
University of Denver

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Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion

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The Anguished and the Enchanted

by Eino Matinpoika

Based on
Le petit prince (1943)
by Antoine de
Saint-Exupéry

Translated and
Annotated
by M.H. Bowker

For Zoe,
who knows
what she is looking for

Contents

"And the soul, O ganders, being lonely, flies
Beyond your chilly chariots, to the skies."

— Wallace Stevens, "Invective against Swans"

Translator's Preface

I discovered this short book in an unkempt storage facility some months after my father's death in 2014. It lay near the bottom of a box, unopened for decades, labeled simply "Judith," the name of my mother and my father's first wife. The box contained more or less what one would expect: scrapbooks from my mother's childhood, diplomas, withered photographs, and papers related to my grandparents's emigration from Finland. But it also contained approximately one hundred and twenty unbound pages, handwritten in Finnish, to which someone had fastened an index card that read simply: "Eino's story of Father's." Eino Matinpoika was my maternal grandfather, a man I never met, who immigrated to America with his wife Maria and his daughter Jehudit [Judith] in 1953.

Notes on the Text

After reading several pages of the text, it became clear Matinpoika had composed a Finnish translation of the world-renowned classic, *Le petit prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, in which a downed pilot meets a magical boy in the desert. The boy tells the pilot of his adventures and teaches him, in his way, about the preciousness of life. The date of the manuscript is unclear, although Matinpoika's life in America was relatively brief. I am tempted to imagine that Matinpoika encountered this book as

a boy or young man, and even that it had been read to him by his father, Matti Näkkäläjärvi, who would have had to translate it into Finnish as he read.

It is true that Finns have done well to keep alive our tradition of oral narrative: memorizing and performing stories, fables, myths, and histories. In the nineteenth century, *The Kalevala* — comprising ancient songs and tales transmitted orally for centuries — was arranged, printed, and almost immediately adopted by Finns as our 'official' national epic. It seems unlikely, however, that a complete translation such as Matinpoika's could have been composed from oral/aural memory alone. It is more likely that Matinpoika translated the work by other means: via a French or English copy and/or with the assistance of a fellow Finnish-American. Regardless, if Matinpoika was introduced to the story in Finnish — he would have been taught some French as part of his schooling in Finland, but he did not learn English until he arrived in America — his hearings, in conjunction with his own experiences and emotions at the time of those hearings, likely influenced his understanding of the work.

More interesting, of course, than the process by which Matinpoika translated the text is the impact of his translation, which, in my view, is nothing short of the most significant achievement in translating Saint-Exupéry to date. To understand something of his accomplishment, I must relate a few facts about Saint-Exupéry and his work.

It is well-known that Saint-Exupéry, a pilot, survived a plane crash in 1935 in the Libyan desert, where he experienced days of powerful hallucinations triggered mainly by dehydration (see, e.g., Tagliabue 2008). This event played a crucial role in his subsequent life and work, including the crafting of the characters and themes of *Le petit prince* (Larroche-Kodama 2015, 19). Saint-Exupéry wrote, in some detail, about his 1935 experience in his memoir *Terre des hommes* [*Wind, Sand, and Stars*] (1939; 1939b), just as his wife, Consuela, wrote of its influence on her husband in her own book, *The Tale of the Rose* (2003).

To be sure, Saint-Exupéry did not craft his most famous book to be yet another account of his near-death experience in

the desert. Rather, it is what we could call, in English, a 'fairy tale'; indeed, an exemplary one, with powerful sentimentality, lovable characters, and both inspiring and cautionary messages, intended not for very young children but for young adults and adults alike. The widely held belief that Saint-Exupéry intended to keep the 'reality' of the little prince alive within the text is supported not only by the text, itself, but by the relatively recent discovery of a completed illustration of the narrator (a pilot) asleep or unconscious next to his downed plane. That this illustration was excluded from the final version of the text strongly suggests that Exupéry wished to avoid any possible inference by the reader that the tale was merely a sleeping man's dreams or a dying man's delusions (see Adler 2014).

What is special about Matinpoika's translation is that it opens up 'spaces,' as it were — including the space to wonder if one is, in fact, reading an account of a dehydrated man's delusions — for more complex, richer, and more ambivalent readings of *Le petit prince* than any other text I have known, including the original work. One might say of *Le petit prince* that its regressive undercurrents and multiple meanings are hidden, even, or perhaps especially, from the author. Most translations of the work only further repress its multiplicity, striving instead for that elusive yet perilous quality that haunts translators: 'accuracy.' And yet, the tale's characters, dramatic action, and themes are laden with meaning, even if one does not read the work "against the grain," as Terry Eagleton puts it (in *1986*).

While other translations of *Le petit prince* (at least, those written in languages I am able to read) typically offer a flat and one-dimensional reading, and while literary and psychoanalytic analyses of the book offer alternative, critical interpretations in expository form (see, e.g., Drewermann 1993; Franz 1970), what is special about Matinpoika's translation is that it *integrates* multiple interpretive possibilities into the text itself, making room for a fecund and layered reading. In comparison, for instance, to the standard-bearing English translation by Katherine Woods (1943b), Matinpoika takes advantage of virtually every opportunity in the story to offer the reader a whiff of doubt, a dash of

uncertainty, a hint of ambivalence. By contrast, Woods's text, which, in many places, also fails to meet the standard of accuracy, forecloses all readings of the text but the most childish and 'fable-esque.'

The Absurdity of Adults

In any language, Saint-Exupéry's *Le petit prince* presents a moving, if not saccharine, critique of the modern, adult world and its 'disenchantment' (see, e.g., Weber 1991). It laments the inability or unwillingness of adults [*les grands personnes*] to recognize what is sacred and beautiful about life.[1] At the same time, however, *Le petit prince* contains another story: a story of the struggles and the failures of a child and a man, if not a rather childish man [in Finnish: *lapsellinen mies*], to discover ways to be alive and content in the adult world.

The pilot, along with the boy whose tale he narrates, discover in each other reliable sources of confirmation of the need to imbue the adult world with absurdity, futility, and grief (see Bowker 2014), an activity not without its share of aggression.[2] Together, the pilot and the boy regard, and sometimes treat, all adults as hopelessly lonely, foolish, and contemptible, preoccupied with themselves and with nonsensical activities, such as counting the stars in order to "own" them, or, more familiarly, travelling back and forth, half-asleep, on commuter trains. In this respect, as Christine de Larroche-Kodama has wisely noted, the immoderate sentimentality of the text, as in other cases

1 Matinpoika refuses to engage in Saint-Exupéry's childish language when he has the boy refer to adults as *les grandes personnes* [literally, 'big people,' but, commonly, 'grown-ups']. Instead, he translates each instance as 'adults' [*aikuiset*]. This is a matter of some importance when considering the attitude or point of view Matinpoika recommends in his translation, just as it affects our understanding of certain critical themes, such as the drawing of a snake eating an elephant, discussed below.

2 Of course, whether we accept these two individuals as distinct entities, as per the reality of the story, or understand the boy to be a projection of the pilot's younger self, is a central ambiguity of the work, an ambiguity accentuated by what seem to be deliberate translative decisions taken by Matinpoika.

of excessive sentimentality, "covers up" a repressed impulse toward "brutality" (2015, 11–12).

Before he 'descends' to Earth, the unnamed boy visits six adults on six different planets.[3] In these encounters we find manifestly disappointing adults and shattered fantasies of adulthood. That is, these encounters may be understood as failed attempts by the boy, and perhaps the pilot, to imagine adults who have discovered a way of living in the world that feels real, important, and meaningful. Of course, the boy finds only ridiculous figures, engaged in monotonous and empty activities. These individuals are often incapable of reason, of establishing equilibria with their natural environments, and of intervening with agency in their own lives, so as to create meaningful experiences.

If we were to posit that the boy's attempts to find examples of meaningful lives are, at least unconsciously, *intended* to fail, then his 'flights of fancy' to the six planets would be, rather than sincere explorations, excuses to persist in a 'global' rejection of adulthood. On this reading, even before the boy descends to Earth, he is already convinced that the universe is ill-suited to him, that it is absurd and perhaps insane, and that it is inhabited only by ludicrous and trifling beings who do not understand the most essential [*essentiel*] things.

In spite of, or beneath, the boy's apparent pride and vanity — emphasized by Matinpoika by his addition of the adjectives *itserakas* and *turhaan,* respectively — the boy deeply dreads being 'unimportant' for, as he admits, he has spent his life on a tiny [*très petite*], insignificant planet, pulling up baobab roots, tending to what turns out to be a common flower, and watching the sun set, again and again. On any psychoanalytic reading, the boy's fear that his own life may amount to little certainly figures into how he comes to regard those around him. That is, for a boy

3 The French verb used most frequently by Saint-Exupéry here is *tomber*: to fall or drop. Best translated as 'descent,' the boy's travels do have a *downward* trajectory, for not only will he fall, i.e., crash his spaceship on Earth, but will later, in death, fall to the ground, and, we might even say, 'descend' to the underworld.

who fears unimportance, it would be intolerable to find others who *are* important, whereas his injured ego is assuaged to find either that insignificance is shared by all, or, better yet, that he possesses a secret to which others are not privy, making others even more trivial, more absurd than he.

Put another way, the lessons the boy draws from his travels are nothing new. They are, rather, affirmations of what he *already knows*, which is that growing up and grown-ups are 'bad.' As in the case of the baobab trees, which the boy dreads most of all, growing up means overrunning the child's world. Should a baobab tree ever reach maturity, it would, according to the boy, literally cut through his tiny planet, destroying it forever. Thus, the boy must be forever on guard, uprooting all fledgling baobabs as soon as he perceives them.

The baobabs both precede and do not precede the boy. While they are, in a sense, *already there,* they do not exist in 'grown-up' form, looming large, like adult figures: a detail missed by virtually all critical commentators on the tale. Sadly, this missed detail had led to a nearly universal mistaking of the symbolism of the baobab tree. All commentaries of which I am aware equate the baobab tree with an impinging parent or caregiver. But baobabs are threatening not because they suppress childhood expression or creativity in the present, but because they have the potential to extinguish what might remain of the child's world in the future. That is, they are invisible, ubiquitous, and terrifying *potentialities*. They supposedly 'infest' the boy's planet, but only as hidden seedlings, waiting to surprise the boy one day by popping up to the surface and starting to grow.

The baobab trees represent, I would argue, rather than ominous adults, the boy's *own impulses to develop and grow.* The boy has come to regard growing up not as an opportunity to make his creative potentialities and capacities manifest in the adult world, but instead as a soul-splitting process that is mutually exclusive with childhood experience. We can imagine any number of reasons why a child might come to this unfortunate conclusion, some of which do include the presence of a repressive, abusive, neglectful, or narcissistic adult figure. Thus, the boy wishes

to remain a child forever (*puer aeternus*) and therefore must remain vigilant against a threat — the threat of developing into an adult — he can only defeat through his own premature death.

Ambivalences of Development

The project of growing up may come to entail, for all of us, what W.R. Bion calls a "hatred of development" alongside considerable envy of those who are or seem to be already developed, who seem able to contain the overwhelming emotions and terrors perceived by the child (1959, 1962). This envy may be directed both outwardly and inwardly: outwardly, as aggressive attempts to convince others that they, too, are condemned to hopelessness, and inwardly, as grief and shame. Moments in which hatred and envy appear between the lines of otherwise sweet and sentimental passages are common if not frequent, both in the original French text and in Matinpoika's and my translations.

The wisdom of the railroad switchman, for instance, in a passage often overlooked by commentators, is that "nobody is happy where he is." Such a claim, while it might resonate with a restless child or even an angry adolescent, is, on a mature level, a universal attribution of alienation and self-alienation. Of course, the boy agrees with and accepts this statement as absolute truth, conceiving every adult as inexorably lonely and compulsively running away from "where he is," no matter where that place may be. It is no wonder, of course, that this description also seems to fit the activities of the boy and, possibly, the pilot as well, whose travels then may be imagined as flights into mania.

The railroad switchman declares that all adults are unhappy in the world, senselessly riding trains back and forth, desperately seeking change in scenery which, when they arrive, are never so much as noticed. This depressed and anxious state is contrasted with the condition of the children in the railcars, who look with wonder out the windows, instinctively knowing "what they are looking for." If such claims were true, Wallace Stevens would not have been wrong to suggest that the greatest mercy one could bestow on adult "solitaires" would be to let them reside forever in a place of "perpetual undulation," such as a train

switchyard, where there would be "no cessation / Of motion, or of the noise of motion" (1990, 60). But of course, as any reader will know, adults do not ride commuter trains just to change the scenery: Mainly, they ride trains go to work, work that may be meaningful if not simply prudent. Then, they ride trains again to go home, sometimes to happy families. Nonetheless, of this life, the boy and the switchman conclude: "It's not worth it" [*Ce n'est pas la peine*].

At this point, without being too pedestrian, it is well to conduct a 'reality-check' on the story. Even admitting that we are reading a fairy tale, the pilot is now relating to us a memory told to him by a mysterious boy who appeared in the Sahara desert, having descended after touring several small planets in outer space. This boy has, inexplicably, walked hundreds if not thousands of miles out of the desert, to a metropolitan area, and has met there a railroad switchman, with whom he watches speeding trains pass. In doing so, he accepts the sweeping, unsubstantiated judgments about the psychic lives of the passengers inside — individuals neither the boy nor the switchman can see much less know — only to declare that adult life is not worth living. How is the reader to accept this tale-within-a-tale as something other than a reverie? How is the reader not to wonder if the details of the story, such as the scene of the speeding railcars, are akin to moving screens onto which the pilot has projected his own impressions of adult life?

To be fair, the pilot and the switchman are not entirely wrong in their attributions. Many adults *do* live their lives as if asleep, unhappy where they are, and chasing after what they know not. What is striking is that, in spite of or because of the substantial psychological distance between this reverie and objective reality, the pilot and the boy arrive at the conclusion that adult life is so tedious as to make it completely valueless: "not worth" living. While the switchman's assertion could be found in elaborated form in a variety of critiques of modernity (see, e.g., Bermann 1983; Marcuse 1964), the judgment it occasions suggests a profound melancholy and a sense of hopelessness about coping with the demands of the adult world, demands that sometimes

include riding on commuter trains. Today, we might call such reactions, including passive suicidal ideation, to quotidian adult duties and responsibilities, hallmarks of 'severe depression.'

After the boy leaves the switchman, he and the pilot discover a perfectly functioning water well, which appears at just the right time in the middle of the desert. Two crucial lines are uttered at this moment. First, the boy, whom the pilot has carried through the desert as if he were a fragile treasure, asks for a drink. When the pilot hears his request, he exclaims: "And I knew exactly what he was looking for!" [*Et je compris ce qu'il avait cherché!*]. Since we know that the boy does not need water, this odd announcement and its exclamatory punctuation strongly suggest that what the pilot *'knows'* the boy to be looking for is someone to hold him, to cherish him as a fragile treasure, to nourish him, and to take care of him as if he were an infant.

Second, after he and the boy drink the water, the pilot tells us that he feels better and finally breathes easily. And yet, he asks himself: "Why must I feel this anguish?" For psychoanalytic readings of the text, this question — *"Pourquoi fallait-il que j'eusse de la peine?"* — is *the* question, for the pilot and the boy seem to have always suffered a certain anguish, an anguish they cannot escape, leaving them "unhappy where they are," no matter where they are, in spite of both of their extensive travels. This anguish is made both more acute and less comprehensible by the fact that neither the pilot or the boy seem to have the first clue about its source. Instead, the pilot and the boy have devoted their lives to 'taking flight' from the world, and have perhaps even risked their lives to find evidence that it is the world, and not they, that is faulty.

The pilot's mysterious anguish lies not only in a vague apprehension regarding the boy's departure but in the unconscious, repressed experience of his own lost boyhood, and in the unconscious, repressed knowledge that this loss will remain with him, wherever he goes, throughout his life.[4] If the boy is a sur-

4 If it seems odd to speak of "(unconscious, repressed) knowledge," it may be useful to imagine the distinction drawn by Christopher Bollas (1987)

rogate or stand-in for the pilot's lost childhood, then his wish to be 'important' is identical to the pilot's wish to have mattered. Sadly, the pilot's attachment to the boy holds out only false hope for recovering what he has lost and never found, since the boy merely echoes the same defense that the pilot has already mastered: the rejection of adult life as hopelessly meaningless. The persistent anguish of the pilot is, in fact, affirmed by his own verdict that life is not "worth the trouble" [*la peine*] of living.

It is essential to avoid over-simplifying the pilot's and the boy's feelings about development. They both hate and love it: They are, in a word, *ambivalent.* The opening lines of the book, in which the pilot tells of his own childhood experience of looking in amazement at an image of a boa constrictor devouring an animal, and then drawing his own picture of a boa digesting an elephant, hold an essential clue to the tale. Most psychoanalytically inclined critics immediately presume that the image of the snake eating an animal, in the context of a book such as *Le petit prince,* is a symbol of a "devouring mother and, in deeper sense, of the unconscious, which suffocates life and prevents the human being from developing" (Marie-Louise von Franz quoted in Larroche-Kodoma 2015, 2). Franz explains that the image of the elephant consumed by the snake signifies the thwarted individuation of Saint-Exupéry, which is "swallowed and unable to come out again."

In the simplest terms, I believe Franz has gotten it backwards. It would not be difficult, although it would be irksome, to review the vast literature suggesting symbolic affinities between the developing male child, the snake, and the phallus. What is more, as most Kleinian theorists would agree (see, e.g., Klein 1988), the prevalence and psychic significance in the maturational process of fantasies of 'devouring the mother' can hardly be overstated.

But if the image symbolized a child being consumed by a parent, it is hard to understand why, according to the text, the boy

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between what is *known* and what is (and what can be) *thought,* a distinction that makes room for unconscious knowledge or 'the unthought known.'

would not be frightened by it, but, instead, would find it 'magnificent' [*magnifique*] — a term that, even in French, cannot be read without hearing the connotations of greatness, power, and magnitude. Instead, the young pilot proudly shows his drawing to adults, presuming that it will frighten *them*.[5] What is 'magnificent' about the image, and what the young pilot imagines to be likely to frighten adults, is the idea that a relatively small snake could consume a comparatively enormous elephant. Later, the boy will make fun of the snake he meets in the desert as being tiny, skinny, and powerless. But it is the fantasy above about the snake devouring the elephant that not only opens the book but drives its action.

That a snake can consume its prey "without chewing" also adds detail to the desire at the heart of this fantasy: That is, in this fantasy, the young pilot need not imagine biting, masticating, or decimating an adult, piece by piece, in a horrific or violent fashion. Instead, the snake/child can simply *incorporate* the elephant/adult — along with all that it signifies and possesses — and keep it inside. In Saint-Exupéry's illustration, the elephant appears not even to be dead, for it is depicted standing upright and with eyes open.

The point of undertaking this analysis is not merely to upturn a longstanding (mis)interpretation of a symbol that opens the text, but to suggest that, right from the start, we are introduced to the pilot's — and, perhaps, the boy's — ambivalent conflict about growing up. He wishes to incorporate adult knowledge and experience, but, in order to accomplish this, he needs to undertake a process of maturation for which he is ill-prepared and, subsequently, which he regards as degrading to his child-self. By fantasizing about consuming an adult (or adulthood) simply and *tout entier,* he imagines himself capable of skipping over the

5 Here, Matinpoika strikes at the very first sentence of Saint-Exupéry's text by substituting a word that means, in general, 'powerful' and, more precisely, 'forceful' or 'strong' for *magnifique*. The two Finnish terms Matinpoika employs — *vahva* and *lumoava* — to translate terms such as 'powerful' or 'impressive' [*puissant / impressionnant*] I discuss in greater detail in the annotated translation, itself.

difficult work of developing and, instead, of being capable of remaining a child while, at the same time, possessing the wisdom and power of an adult. Put simply: He wishes to be developed without developing.

Here, one is tempted to think of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Experience," in which experience is valorized as the royal road to truth and is frequently analogized with consumption. "If a man should consider the nicety of the passage of a piece of bread down his throat," opines Emerson, "he would starve" (2009, 313). Emerson here stands against thought and reason in favor of an orientation to the world in which pure and im-mediate experience is simply and wholly 'ingested.' Experience is best incorporated, on his account, by incorporating what is at hand via simple, unreflective consumption, not by the (far more difficult) processes of learning, thinking, questioning, and relating. "If we will take the good we find, asking no questions," Emerson declares, "we shall have heaping measures. The great gifts are not got by analysis. Everything good is on the highway" (315).

Emerson writes, in a passage that could very well be uttered by a character in *Le petit prince,*

> Do not craze yourself with thinking, but go about your business anywhere. Life is not intellectual or critical, but sturdy. Its chief good is for well-mixed people who can enjoy what they find, without question. Nature hates peeping, and our mothers speak her very sense when they say, 'Children, eat your victuals, and say no more of it.' (2009, 314)

If thinking, questioning, choosing, communicating, and 'peeping' (i.e., expressing curiosity and interest) all disrupt the process of incorporating the experience we need to develop, then it must be because the self that conducts all of these activities is either inept or corrupt (see Bowker 2016).

Oddly, on this line of thought, the many activities in which we must engage, in order to grow and mature, must be thwarted in order to accept the sort of passive experience that putatively allows us to mature. Instead of deciding or choosing or acting,

we simply take in what we are given *just as it is given*. Of course, to "eat your victuals" while being forbidden to speak may be to be physically nourished, but it is to be emotionally and intellectually starved. To accept this understanding of human development is to accept a relationship with the world that resembles a relationship with a narcissistic object, in which the very presence of the self is (paradoxically and cruelly) imagined to interfere with the growth and development of the self.

Narcissistic Love

The pilot and the boy are not *consciously* aware of why the universe seems to be populated only with unhappy, solitary, absurd adults. The problem is understood by the boy and other important figures, such as the switchman and the fox, in terms of their (i.e., the adults') 'forgetting' of the wonder and instinctual knowledge of the child. With this loss of memory, which might be understood as a loss of contact with the child self, adults withdraw their *interest* from the world and from what is truly magical, meaningful, and beautiful in it (see Bowker 2019b). Of course, one reason why the pilot and the boy are *unconsciously* driven to make the world absurd is because it is they who have 'forgotten' their deep-seated envy and resentment of adults.

Consider, on this matter, the one individual visited by the boy who is found to be least absurd. This individual is one who follows orders dutifully, and who is devoted to something other than himself. Of course, I am speaking about the boy's explicit sympathy for — one might also call it an emotional identification with — the lamplighter, who was, apparently, once "ordered" to light and extinguish a streetlamp each morning and evening.[6]

These orders were issued long ago, but now, as the lamplighter's planet has begun to rotate more and more rapidly, the lamplighter must light and extinguish his lamp every minute in

6 One may be reminded here, since absurdity is at issue throughout the book, of the crime committed by the condemned man in Franz Kafka's great story, "In the Penal Colony" (1971). He is condemned to die (but, of course, does not die) for having failed to follow his orders to wake up every hour, on the hour, and salute his captain's door.

order to keep to his regimen. In spite of this, he never abandons his duty, a duty set upon him by someone or something who is never revealed and, apparently, a duty the lamplighter has never questioned or challenged, in spite of its inane nature and agonizing effects, which include, of course, the impossibility that the lamplighter will ever know a moment's rest. I would suggest, here, that what the boy identifies with in the lamplighter is not only the man and his (manic) activity — although these are important — but the context in which the man lives and works. The lamplighter's world has changed around him. His world is, literally, moving faster than he can handle. And yet, he does not change his routine. The clash between his world and his duty has created an untenable situation within which he lives, never abandoning his orders and, seemingly, never openly rebelling against them or their mysterious source.

There is a Sisyphean element in this work, of course, and, more to the point, his life is reminiscent of the famous advice offered by Albert Camus concerning how to live in an absurd world. To live amidst absurdity, according to Camus, requires "an aspiration to order" (1956, 23), as well as a refusal to show that this very order is the cause of our anguish. We hide our anguish by living "without appeal" to any external authority (1955, 53), which is to say, in part, that we do not shift the burden of our responsibilities, no matter how absurd, onto someone or something else, but rather comply or even over-comply with them. The individual must live "solely with what he knows" (1955, 53), ever "faithful to the absurd commandments," so that he "preserves" even that which "crushes" him (1955, 34).

Just as we are surprised when Camus insists that we must imagine Sisyphus to be happy (see Bowker 2014), we are surprised that, although the lamplighter is exhausted and miserable, the boy describes his predicament as "funny" and declares his occupation to be both "beautiful" [*très jolie*] and meaningful [*a … un sens*]: Indeed, he finds it "meaningful because it's beautiful" [*véritablement utile puisque c'est joli*]. Why is this type of selfless devotion so crucial to the boy's sense of both beauty and meaning? There seems to be a very fine line, in the mind of the boy

(and the mind of the pilot, and the mind of Saint-Exupéry) between the rote repetitions of 'adults' on commuter trains and the lamplighter's obdurate following of orders. The clue to this subtle difference, and, in some ways, the clue to the central theme of Saint-Exupéry's text, may be found in the boy's relationship with his flower, his rose.

The rose that appears one day in the boy's world never shows or tells the boy that he is loved, cared about, or valued. The rose never relates to him as if he matters in his own right. The rose makes exorbitant demands of him, emotionally manipulates him with guilt, threatens to fall ill or die from neglect, and hides its emotions out of vanity when it could, instead, share them with the boy. Nevertheless, the boy serves his rose dutifully, and it is this unrequited, faithful service that defines their relationship.

The relationship I have just described might well be considered a 'textbook' description of a narcissistic and abusive relationship (see, e.g., Miller 1997). If there is love in the relationship, it is a *narcissistic* love that, *pace* Consuela de Saint-Exupéry, is modeled not on a tumultuous, adult romantic relationship but, rather, on a relationship between a child and a narcissistic parent, perhaps a female figure or mother, since the boy gives the flower a feminine gender (a practice Matinpoika refuses, interestingly).

If we imagine the rose as a mother-figure (who, of course, needn't be female), we may understand the boy's absolute devotion to his rose, as well as his equation of love with the anguish and the enchantment of belonging that resembles enslavement: The boy's devotion is essential to the rose's survival, and the rose's survival *is* the boy's survival. Without a relationship to the 'mother' (as neglectful and abusive as 'she' may be), the boy would be left with utter desolation.[7] The prospect of this unthinkable catastrophe is ever-present in the rose's "extravagant, totalitarian demands that he [the boy] love her boundlessly"

7 Indeed, "there is nothing more frightening for a child than a mother's threat to die" (Larroche-Kodama 2015, 25).

(Drewermann 1993, 90), which the boy understands to be the only way to keep the rose, and therefore himself, alive.

If the boy were to attend to himself and not to the rose, or if he were to abandon the rose, or, worst of all, if he were to free himself from the rose by becoming conscious of the abusive nature of their relationship and by developing into an autonomous adult, he — i.e., his child-self — would die. That the boy *does* eventually depart from his planet to visit others, ostensibly in the hope of "gaining knowledge and finding a suitable occupation" [*pour y chercher une occupation et pour s'instruire*], is certainly a sign of progress. He leaves his rose physically, but his never-ending emotional devotion to her — represented in virtually everything he does on Earth, from his initial 'descent' and 'crash' to his demand that the pilot draw a muzzle for his sheep, to, ultimately, his plan to reunite with his rose in death — reflects the fact that his emancipation from this narcissistic object is far from complete.[8]

Hopelessness and Envy

Thus, *Le petit prince* tells not one tale but many. It presents — or, rather, has the potential to present — many sides of the complex project of becoming an adult. This project entails a willingness to abandon certain beliefs and fantasies associated with childhood and to discover a way of living as an adult among other adults — a way that, nonetheless, still offers the individual a sense of continuity with his or her own creative experience (established, ideally, in childhood) and with his or her inner or fantasy world. It is this continuity between the child's sense of creativity, vitality, meaning, and the "feeling of real" (Winnicott

8 Without delving too deeply into psychoanalytic object-relations theory, it may be rightly said that, although the boy does physically separate himself from his rose, and, in so doing, destroys his rose in a certain sense, in the boy's mind the rose *does not survive his destruction* of it, and therefore, it continues to fail him as a facilitating object through which he might come to discover both his capacity to exist as a subject and to find externality, which is to say, to learn about other objects as non-subjective objects. On this matter, see Bowker and Buzby 2017 and Winnicott 1971.

1965) that, ideally, permits the child to imbue adult life, activities, and relationships with "importance." The French word, repeated throughout Saint-Exupéry's text, is the same: *importance*.

Needless to say, the process of maturation into adulthood can be complicated or altogether derailed by failures in the child's early environment: most often, failures in the care and love provided — or not provided, or conditionally provided, or unpredictably provided — by the child's primary caregiver(s). If, for instance, a child is abandoned, physically or emotionally, then the child will likely experience a profound sense of hopelessness about finding what a secure attachment-figure represents, which is nothing less than *a whole world* that holds out the possibility that the child can *matter,* i.e., that the child is real and 'important.' Such a child will carry this hopelessness into adult life, and may well reject even auspicious prospects of caring relationships, meaningful work, and genuine contact with his or her self, since, in the adult world, relationships, work, and self-contact do not operate according to the child's rigid and absolute terms.

On this issue, I consider rather significant that neither Saint-Exupéry's text, nor any translation of it of which I am aware, nor even the best-known criticisms of it, have adequately remarked on the brutality, lopsidedness, and self-destructive qualities of the philosophy of the fox, to be discussed immediately below. As I have suggested above, the quest to find a place for the self in the adult world may be understood as the quest *to matter,* or, to find a way of living that feels 'important.' Apart from the late-coming rose, the boy never speaks of parents or parental figures. We might presume that he has erased or forgotten them because, whether they actually existed or not, he has had no early experience of parental love, holding, facilitation, or guidance that might permit him to experience childhood as a foundation for — rather than the antithesis of — maturation.

And since the rose, as a surrogate parent, only does more damage on this front, the boy is ready to accept the false and tragic bargain suggested by the fox, whom he meets shortly after he descends to Earth. The bargain suggested by the fox is this:

Either (a) the boy must become an 'adult' (in his own quite pejorative sense) and give up the hope of experiencing child-like delight and wonder, or (b) he must allow himself to be 'tamed' or 'mastered,' such that he belongs to another. If he accepts the latter, what the boy receives is the enchantment of belonging, such that he delights in, wonders at, loves, lives, and dies for a special other, while his own life holds little or no intrinsic value.

The bond or tie forged by being *apprivoisé* (Saint-Exupéry's term for being 'tamed,' 'domesticated,' or 'mastered') has known its share of apologists. At first glance, or for those who do not read French, it may seem merely to refer to the domestication of a wild animal, and, indeed, that is the most common French usage. Metaphorically, then, one might permit the term merely to denote the establishment of that bond that overcomes the distinct needs, experiences, and, one might say, 'natures' of wild animals and human beings.

Yet no one, to my knowledge, has sufficiently critiqued the autonomy-effacing qualities of this term and the idea that lies, thinly veiled, behind it. The word derives from the Latin *prīvus,* and is, etymologically, the antithesis of being singular or private. To be *apprivoisé* is to be deprived of one's own-ness, to lose self-ownership, to cease to belong to oneself. Perhaps something of the danger in celebrating the project of taming and being tamed would be more clear to English readers if it were compared with the term, 'civilizing,' as that term was used — just as *apprivoiser* was used — to justify centuries of colonial projects in 'wild' lands that, the colonialists said, 'belonged to no one,' were inhabited only by 'wild people' who needed to be civilized because, without being *apprivoisés,* they would, tragically, never 'belong' to the modern world or the Christian God.

What is more, no reader or commentator, to my knowledge, has adequately critiqued either the asymmetry involved in the 'taming' project nor the confusion about who tames whom, and, as a result, who escapes the anguish of isolation and who finds what I have called 'the enchantment of belonging.' The bond that ties the servant to the master, or the colonized to the colonizer, or the animal to its domesticator, is clearly infused with power

and domination. But what seems to have fooled audiences and critics alike is that the boy is encouraged to allow himself *to be tamed,* to subjugate himself to another. Although the boy does 'tame' the fox and so becomes his 'master,' the 'philosophy of the fox' is organized around the corollary process: that of subjugating oneself by finding a master to serve.

Of course, as any student of Hegel will appreciate, a master needs a servant in order to be a master; so we say, rightly, that the master needs the servant as much, if not more, than the servant needs the master. What is missing from the two terrible choices outlined above is a third option: to belong to oneself in such a way that one's own spirit or, we might say, one's own 'inner child' enriches one's own adult self, one's activities, and one's relationships, infusing them with meaning and importance, without the need for servitude.

Earlier, I argued that audiences and critics of *Le petit prince* had been, in a word, fooled. But the same mistake has been made well outside of the context of this particular book. Here, I am referring, of course, to the influential and overlapping moral, political, and scholarly discourses in which we are exhorted to bind ourselves to 'the other' (or the 'Other') in just the way that the fox describes, either because such enthrallment is thought to be a source of a divine enchantment, or because it is imagined to be the only way not to erase others' realities, or simply because we know ourselves to be so thoroughly dependent upon others that, to put it bluntly, we may as well embrace it and give up on fantasies of mature, autonomous subjectivity (see Bowker 2015, 2016, 2017).

One can find ample evidence of the 'philosophy of the fox' in the most prominent political and ethical thought of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, in the works of thinkers such as Georges Bataille (1988), Walter Benjamin (1999), Judith Butler (2000), Albert Camus (1956), Cathy Caruth (1996), Jacques Derrida (1989, 2001), Emmanuel Levinas (1969, 1998), Slavoj Žižek (1989), and many more. With respect to the work of Levinas, Fred Alford aptly names the ethos of all-encompassing subjection to others' "hostage being" (2002, 29). The desire to

be held hostage by another, and the way in which this desire relies on an identification with the aggressor (Freud 1993), is ultimately born out of envy at those who have achieved the kind of maturity that permits them to act as masters.

At the risk of offending the politically correct, to borrow a term from today's discourses of identity, the masters are 'the privileged.' They are 'privileged' — in the sense which I intend here — not primarily because they possess social, cultural, and economic advantages that make life safer and easier for them, but because they have been 'privileged' enough to have had healthy and loving growing-up experiences, which have permitted them to develop mature, autonomous identities (see Bowker and Levine 2018; Bowker 2019). Envy directed at such persons — which co-exists uncomfortably with the postmodern ethical call to revere and serve them — may take the form of entreaties, inveiglements, or even demands to regard the world as absurd, such that others share in the self's inability to find meaning and importance.

Put another way: Without belonging to oneself, there can be no meaning or mattering. And without meaning and mattering, it is intolerable that others should mean or matter. Thus, the aim — or at least one aim — in the 'philosophy of the fox' is to make the world a place of meaninglessness and insignificance for everyone. Of course, this project is underwritten by the even deeper, and more personal, threat of anguish and desolation that thwarted healthy maturation in the first place (see Levine and Bowker 2019). On this point, it would have to be considered 'uncanny' that, of all places, the boy and the pilot *meet in the desert,* and not just any desert, but the most barren and inhospitable desert on Earth: the Sahara.

Another reason we are 'enthralled' by the idea of being 'enthralled to others' is that behind this possibility looms the ambivalent hope and dread of returning to the enchanting yet agonizing world we once knew, the familiar (and familial) first world, a world where something approximating love was discoverable but contingent upon being *for* another and so upon *not* being oneself. We might even say that the narcissistic, sadis-

tic, master-servant paradigm championed by the fox — and by countless influential cultural and social leaders today — requires that we return to early moments of psychic death or near-death, again and again, mainly because, in spite of their destructiveness, these moments are also the only moments in which we seemed to matter (to another). The impulse to return to moments of early psychic death or near-death is a subject about which a great deal has been written (see, e.g., Freud 1920, 1957), and is unfortunately beyond the scope of this Preface. But it may suffice to say that it is both thrilling and terrifying, a source of both anguish and enchantment.

Translative Interventions and Forbearances

Matinpoika's translation is special for several reasons, but primarily because, as I have noted above, it opens up 'spaces' in which the reader is free to question the reality of the story's characters and events, the reliability of the pilot's account, and the meaning, maturity, and reasonableness of the themes and messages proffered. If one were pinned down, one would have to say that Matinpoika's text suggests, at the very least, that the reader approach the tale with suspicion. Through his word choices, subtle shifts in emphasis and phrasing, omissions and re-arrangements of passages, changes in perspective, and even outright additions to Saint-Exupéry's text, Matinpoika presents the story as both an inner and an outer reality, as both a fairy tale and a critique, as both a 'likely story' and a journey into the psyche of a man who is 'lost' in more than one respect.

I have titled the work *The Anguished and the Enchanted* not only because I believe this title directs the reader to the central themes of the text, but because Matinpoika refuses to call the boy 'the little prince,' or even a 'prince' [*prinssi*] at all. Instead, throughout the work — until the final pages where Matinpoika translates *petit bonhomme* as 'little man' — Matinpoika refers to 'the little prince' simply as 'the boy.' As a reader and a translator, I was not tempted to correct this aspect of his translation and, indeed, I ought to confess, I am sympathetic to Matin-

poika's decision on this matter. In fact, when I realized what he had done — something that had not occurred to me even after reading *Le petit prince* countless times in both French and English — I was abashed at my own thoughtlessness.

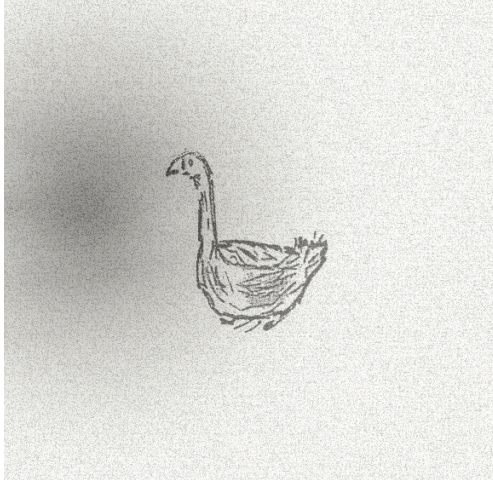
By right, there is no reason to consider the boy a prince. He never refers to himself as a prince and he claims no royal parentage. Even deep within the reality presented by Saint-Exupéry's text, not everyone who lives alone on a planet is the ruler of that planet, for we encounter a vain man who is neither a prince nor king, and a businessman who similarly makes no claim to royalty. On the contrary, it is suggested throughout the book that one *is* what one *does,* just as the king is a king because he issues commands, and the drunkard is a drunkard because he drinks too much. Given the boy's primary occupation in his small world, he and the book would perhaps be more aptly named: 'The little groundskeeper.' This, the name, 'little prince' is a really term of affection and, very likely, of identification and idealization.

With respect to the structure of the book, the twenty-seven short chapters of *Le petit prince* are here presented in six lengthier 'parts' and an Epilogue, although Matinpoika did not divide or name them as such, but merely began writing at the top of a new page when he seemed to wish to end one section and to begin another. The titles of the parts are entirely my own, and I have given myself some degree of poetic license on this front; hopefully, not so much as to distract from the text or from Matinpoika's interpretation of it.

Perhaps because the story told by Matinpoika is now related in the third person, or perhaps because his first encounters with the book may not have been visual but oral/aural, the famous illustrations of *Le petit prince* are not reproduced in Matinpoika's pages and are, in fact, underemphasized when discussed in the written text. The only illustration to be found amidst Matinpoika's pages appears to be nothing more than a doodle on page 90 of his work: a small, marginal sketch of a goose. This drawing is not related or attached to any text and there is no reason to believe that Matinpoika wished for it to be integrated in the work.

Nevertheless, I have restored the image to the best of my ability so as to reproduce it here (Fig. 1).

The epigraph by Wallace Stevens is entirely my own addition, yet it seems to me to add as much as any epigraph can add,



while doing nothing to detract from the themes highlighted in the text. It is doubtful, but not at all impossible, that Matinpoika knew of this poem or of Wallace Stevens, but the lines were so present in my own mind as I read Matinpoika's text that I felt strongly that they belonged, somehow, in the present work.

In situations where it is helpful to share with the reader the Finnish term employed by Matinpoika, I have placed it in brackets immediately following my English translation. And in cases where it is informative to share both Matinpoika's Finnish and Saint-Exupéry's French, I have bracketed both terms — the Finnish, then the French — separated with a forward slash: [/].

In sum, the text I have rendered in English has been translated with deference not primarily to the French of Saint-Exupéry — with which I am quite familiar and which I have, of course, consulted at great length in preparing this book — but to the Finnish of Matinpoika. I have taken my foremost duty as a

translator to preserve the 'spaces' opened by Matinpoika's translation, spaces that, as I have now suggested more than once, permit us both to read and to reflect, both to engage and to critique, the symbols, themes, and meanings of *Le petit prince*.

Biographical Note: The Life of Eino Matinpoika

"Eino" has been a common given name in Finland for some time, but holds no particular meaning of which I am aware, apart from the fact that it is derived from the root "ein" which, in many languages, means simply "one." I have, at times, wondered why Eino was not named "Aino," pronounced only slightly differently, and a prominent name in the *Kalevala,* meaning not "one" but "the only one." I have wondered, given the scant details of his life I know, if his name — Eino Matinpoika [literally 'one child of Matti', i.e., a patronymic] — contained some clue about his place in the family, or in the world, as if, somehow, he were fated to struggle to forge a robust identity, or a personal sense of mattering.

I never knew Eino Matinpoika personally, but I do possess a golden locket that belonged to his wife, Maria, with an old and very small profile photograph of Matinpoika inside, where he looks a bit like the gaunt, elder Friedrich Nietzsche. In this way and others, it seems, Matinpoika was contrasted with his father, Matti, who was descended from the Sámi (the primary indigenous Finno-Ugric ethnic group hailing from the North), and who was a veritable colossus, standing over two meters tall and weighing a muscular 130 kilos, with a capacious mind to match. It is fabled that Matti's enormous hands weighed ten kilos each, to account for his 'adroitness' at everything from building, to fighting, to playing Rachmaninoff, Liszt, and, most importantly, Sibelius on the harpsichord.

Matti was bright, brave, and tireless. He was, to adopt a Yiddish idiom, a *mensch.* He fought the Communists ("The Reds") in the Finnish Civil War of 1918, where he suffered an injury in his upper thigh that left him with a noticeable but not ignoble stagger. In the interwar period, Matti studied and traveled wide-

ly throughout Europe. In Paris, he met the woman who would become his wife, Riia Taanila, a Finn (although not Sámi) from a well-to-do family, visiting France on holiday.

Matti became proficient in a variety of subjects, from philosophy to literature to physics, and mastered at least five languages: Finnish, English, French, German, and Dutch. When he returned to Finland to become a schoolteacher, and later a Head of School, he bought a sizeable, wooded plot of land in the West, complete with a large pond. There he built the family home, purportedly with his own enormous hands.

In 1929, Eino Matinpoika was born a premature and sickly child. In certain ways, he did not develop properly. His frequent ailments kept him away from others, yet he was said not to have minded his relative solitude. He ended up a slight and physically awkward man, but not an uncoordinated one, just as he was honest to the point of naivety, but not at all stupid. He won the favor of others mainly by way of his absolute sincerity.

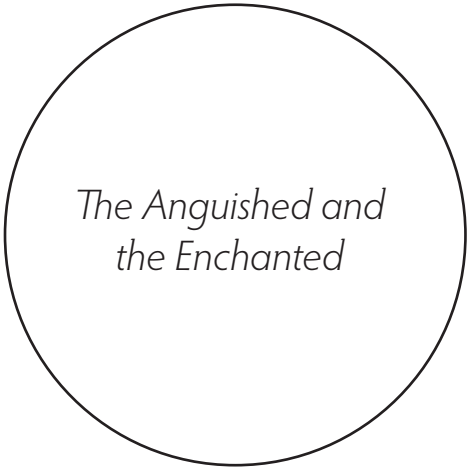
Having failed to advance out of the early stages of his schooling and lacking the industriousness with which most Finns like to characterize themselves, the young Matinpoika lived an undisturbed, if not uneventful, existence in Finland, where he was said to have spent most of his time in leisure at the pond, which was frequented by small grey geese and enormous whooper swans. If one were to indulge in a bit of armchair psychoanalytic speculation, one might not be surprised to learn that Matinpoika was particularly fond of the plain, diminutive geese, and somewhat less fond of the glorious, loud swans. In fact, he is said to have tended to the geese avidly, ensuring that their food sources were safe, and trying, always in vain, to entice them to forsake their imperative to migrate and to stay at home with him through the long winters. His family thought him a bit eccentric for his habit of leaving trails of rye bread to lure the geese into large, teepee-like structures he built with birch tree branches. The geese, of course, enjoyed the rye bread, but never followed his trails quite far enough for Matinpoika to make them his own.

When Matinpoika and his family arrived in America, he — to the surprise of his wife and daughter, one presumes — declared

their surname not to be 'Matinpoika' but 'Hanhilampi,' which means, literally, 'goose pond.' Sadly, as with so many immigrants, the exact spelling and pronunciation of his name was treated with relative indifference by immigration officials and the family's surname was registered as 'Hanhillammi' — a more common Finnish surname — before being quickly anglicized to 'Hamilton.' In any event, if Matinpoika saw in his voyage to America a chance to separate himself from his father and his life in Finland, he must have also wished to hold on to at least one important aspect of that: his relationship with the geese that he loved. Indeed, one might say that, by changing the family name in this way, he expressed a wish to belong to the geese, or, perhaps, for the geese to belong to him.

Upon moving to Ashtabula, Ohio, Matinpoika — who learned English but still attended Finnish-language worship services at the Bethany Lutheran Church on Michigan Avenue — found that he was unqualified or ill-suited for most available jobs. Eventually, he found work on railroad crews in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. One of the few surviving stories about Matinpoika runs that his shift boss once asked him to work on a Sunday. Matinpoika, who may or may not have been devout but who was, if nothing else, a man of routine, refused. The boss threatened, "If you don't come in on Sunday, don't bother showing up on Monday either!" to which Matinpoika replied, "I understand," only to present himself ready for work the following Tuesday. His boss was so amused by Matinpoika's sincerity that he kept him on his crews, in spite of his physical limitations, for nine more years, until Matinpoika suffered a deadly aneurism, possibly from the demands of his labor, for which he was not well-suited, but about which he was never known to complain.

Matthew Hamilton Bowker, May 12, 2019


The Anguished and
the Enchanted

I

The Life of the Pilot

One day, a six-year-old boy saw a powerful [*vahva*] image in a book about a virgin forest called "True Stories of Nature." It was of a boa constrictor swallowing an animal.

The book said, "Boa constrictors swallow animals whole, without chewing. After, they cannot move, and sleep for months to digest."

The boy thought about this for a long time. He drew a picture of boa constrictor that had swallowed an elephant, but the picture looked like a hat.

When he showed his drawing to adults [*aikuiset / les grandes personnes*], he always asked if it scared them.[1]

They laughed and said: "Why would we be scared by a hat?"

So the boy made a new drawing, of the elephant inside the boa, and showed it to them again.

1 As discussed in the Preface, Matinpoika refuses to take on the voice or the position of the boy in using a child's term for adults, such as 'grown-ups' or 'big people' [*les grandes personnes*]. On the difference between being a 'grown-up' and being an 'adult,' raised within the text immediately below, there also exists a delightful short text by Serge Lesourd (2013).

They told him to forget about drawing and to focus, instead, on his studies: geography, history, mathematics, languages.

The boy was anguished [*tuskallinen*] by his failure as an artist.[2] He was too childish [*lapsellinen*] to express himself well, yet too proud [*itserakas*] to explain his intentions.

The boy grew up to be a pilot and flew all over the world. The adults had been right, it seemed, that geography was more useful than drawing. He could tell China from California at a glance.

The pilot was now a man, but not quite an adult.[3] He lived among adults and watched them closely, but despised them [*halveksivat heitä*].

Each time he met someone who seemed intelligent, he would share his old drawing of a boa. And each time, the reply came back the same: "That is a hat."

Then, the pilot would instantly break off the conversation, or, at least, would not speak with that person about boas, or virgin forests, or stars, but only about games, or politics, or fashions.

§

2 Saint-Exupéry's term is *découragé*. Later, Saint-Exupéry will use the terms 'unhappy' [*malheureux*], 'sad' [*triste*], and other common adjectives to describe feelings of dejection or upset. In some cases, Matinpoika has translated these terms directly to the most common Finnish equivalents, while, in most cases, he returns, perhaps deliberately, to form of the adjective, *tuskainen,* meaning 'agonized' or, better, 'anguished.'

3 The Finnish here is: *Hän oli täysikasvuinen, mutta ei aikuinen* [He was fully grown, but not (an) adult]. This sentence, whose meaning is, at best, gently implied in the surrounding passage, is nowhere to be found in Saint-Exupéry's text.

The pilot lived in solitude [*yksinäisyys*], without a single friend in whom he could confide, until he crashed his plane in the Sahara Desert. His engine was broken, and, without enough water, he was left to die alone as well [*kuin hanhi kalliolla*].[4]

The first night, he slept on the sand, a thousand miles from anyone. At sunrise, he thought he heard a small voice that said: "Draw me a sheep!"

The pilot leapt up in shock, rubbed his eyes, and saw an extraordinary, golden-haired boy.

He worried he was hallucinating, seeing an apparition [*aave*] of himself as a child. But the boy seemed real enough, even though he was not thirsty, hot, or tired.

The pilot asked the boy: "What are you doing here?"

But the boy only replied: "Please draw me a sheep."

For the pilot, an enchanting [*lumoava*] mystery was something not to be ignored.[5] So, one thousand miles from anyone, anguished, exhausted, and dying from thirst, the pilot tried to draw a sheep, but failed. He said: "I can't draw a sheep."

The boy answered him: "That doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep."

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4 Here, Matinpoika employs a variation on the Finnish idiom, *kuin allit kalliolla,* which means, literally, 'like a long-tailed duck on a cliff' and, figuratively, 'abandoned in a hopeless place.' Matinpoika has substituted 'geese' for 'long-tailed ducks' in his text.

5 Here, Matinpoika uses the word, *lumoava* [enchanting, spellbinding], where Saint-Exupéry uses the phrase *trop impressionnant* ['too impressive,' in the sense of 'imposing'] and where Katherine Woods employs "too overpowering." As discussed in the Preface, throughout the text, Matinpoika employs two different terms for 'powerful': *lumoava* (that which acts upon the imagination through seduction or magic) and *vahva* (concretely, physically forceful or strong).

The pilot had never drawn a sheep, so he drew one of the only two pictures he knew: a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. He showed it to the boy, and the boy said: "No! I don't want an elephant inside a snake. Snakes are dangerous, and elephants are extremely large. Where I come from [*isänmaa / chez moi*] is very small. That is why I need a sheep. Draw me a sheep."

So the pilot made a new drawing of a sheep.

The boy looked at it and said: "This sheep looks ugly and sick. Make me a better one."

So the pilot made another drawing.

The boy smiled and said: "That's not a sheep. That's a ram. It has horns."

So the pilot made yet another drawing.

But the boy said: "This sheep is too old. I want one that'll live a long time."

Now the pilot was getting annoyed by the boy, and wanted to return to fixing his engine, so he quickly drew a box and said: "Here's a box. There's a sheep inside it."

To his surprise, the boy said: "That's exactly what I wanted. Do you think the sheep will eat a lot of grass?"

"Why?" asked the pilot, still annoyed.

"Because, where I'm from, there is not much grass; everything is tiny."

The pilot said brusquely: "There'll be enough grass. It's a small sheep."

Then the boy looked at the box and decided that the sheep had gone to sleep.

§

It took the pilot a long time to understand where the boy came from.[6] The boy asked a lot of questions, but never listened to anything the pilot said, as if no one but he mattered [*elää kuin pellossa*].[7] It was only by chance, and little by little, that the boy's story was revealed.

For example, the first time the boy saw the pilot's airplane, he asked: "What's that thing?"

The pilot replied: "That's not a *thing*. It *flies*. It's an airplane. It's *my* airplane."

The pilot was proud to say that he could fly.

But the boy said: "What? You fell from the sky?"

"Yes," admitted the pilot.

"That's funny!" said the boy, laughing at the pilot, which angered him tremendously, for he was faced with a grave problem.

Then the boy said: "Do you come from the sky? Which one is your planet?"

6 In a marginal note, Matinpoika writes, perhaps only to himself: *Joka on pojan isä?* ["Who is the boy's father?"].

7 This phrase is an addition of Matinpoika's and is a common Finnish idiom that means 'to live as if in a field,' i.e., to live as if one were accountable to no one when, in fact, one's negligent or thoughtless actions have consequences for others. An English equivalent would something like 'being born in a barn.'

At that instant, the pilot glimpsed again the powerful [*lumoava*] mystery of the boy and asked: "Do *you* come from another planet?"

But the boy did not answer him. He said merely: "That airplane could not have taken you very far."

Then the boy fell silent for a long time, looking at the drawing of the box, as if it were a treasure.

The pilot was a rightly dubious about the idea of 'coming from another planet,' so he asked the boy directly: "Where do you come from? Where do you live? Where do you want to take your sheep?"

But the boy only looked at him in silence.

After a while, the boy said: "The box you gave me is perfect because the sheep can use it as a house at night."

The pilot decided to indulge him and said: "Yes, and if you are good, I will give you a string, too, so you can tie him up during the day."

The boy was surprised by this idea. "Why would I tie him up?"

The pilot replied: "Well, because if you don't, he'll wander away and get lost."

But the boy laughed at the pilot and said: "Where would he go?"

And the pilot said: "Anywhere. Even just…straight ahead."

Then the boy said: "That doesn't matter. Where I come from, everything is very small."

And the boy looked upset at that moment when he added: "Where I come from, no one can go far at all."

§

So the pilot learned that the boy came from a quite small place, no bigger than a house.

But that did not surprise him. He imagined that, if there were large and small animals, there must also be large and small places, and even large and small planets, such that large planets were given great names, like Earth and Mars, and small planets only numbers, such as "Asteroid 2351."[8]

The pilot came to believe that the boy once lived on Asteroid B-261, which had been seen only once through a telescope by a Turkish astronomer in 1809.

When the astronomer spotted the asteroid, he gave a speech to the world's top scientists, but since he wore Turkish clothing, everyone laughed at him.

Later, after a Turkish Sultan made a law that all citizens must dress like Europeans, with neckties and so on, in 1820, the astronomer told the scientific world again and this time everyone believed him.

These reveries caused the pilot, who never saw eye to eye with adults [*kuin hajuvesi lihapulliin*], to realize that people always ask the wrong questions. To get to know someone, for instance, no one asked how that person laughed or what games he played. They asked only how old he was or how much money his father made.

8 There is nothing in Saint-Exupéry's text about "large and small animals."

Thus, the pilot felt abandoned [*hylännyt*] in the world of others and in the desert, alike. If he wanted to tell someone, for instance, that he once saw a beautiful house with a garden of lilies and doves on the roof, he knew that no one would ever understand. He could only say, "It was a beautiful house," by saying, "It cost 100,000 markkas."[9]

Likewise, if the pilot were to say of the boy, "The evidence that the boy is real is that he is charming, that he laughs at me, and that he wants a drawing of a sheep. You can't want a drawing of a sheep without existing," no one would ever understand.

It is true that, faced with such a claim, most reasonable people would conclude that the pilot was a fool [*typerys*].

But if the pilot announced that he had discovered a boy who came from Asteroid B-261, then the world would be convinced and would ask of him no further questions.

The pilot tried to accept that others thought differently. He even tried not to scorn them for it [*halveksivat heitä siitä*]. When the pilot later told his story, it was not to be believed but only to remember his time with the boy, since forgetting him made him terribly sad [*masentunut*].

"Not everyone has a friend," thought the pilot, and he knew that, if he ever forgot his friend, he would be transformed into an adult on the spot.

9 Saint-Exupéry's figure is "cent mille [100,000] francs," a figure translated variously as 'one hundred (British) pounds,' and elsewhere, as 'twenty-thousand (US) dollars.'

II

Trouble at Home: The Baobabs and the Flower

One day, the boy told the pilot about the dreadful [*hirvittävät*] baobab trees [*le drame des baobabs*].

As if taken by fright, the boy asked if sheep ate small bushes.

"Sure," the pilot said.

And the boy replied: "Then they must also eat baobab trees."

But the pilot told the boy that baobabs were not small bushes. They were actually quite large, and could not be eaten even by a herd of elephants.

The idea of a herd of elephants made the whole desert ring out with the sound of the child's laughter.

"I would have to stack them on top of each other," said the boy, mysteriously, adding, "Before baobabs grow, they start small."

The pilot asked why the boy wanted the sheep to eat small baobabs and the boy explained that, where he came from, there were good and bad plants. Good seeds came from good plants

and bad seeds came from bad plants, just like people [*kuten ihmisten*].[1]

"But seeds," he said, "are invisible. They hide away deep in the soil, until one of them wakes up and reaches out toward the sun. If the seed becomes a radish or rose bush, it can grow wherever it likes. But if it is a bad seed, and becomes a bad plant, then it must be destroyed instantly and at all costs."

The most evil seeds were the seeds of the baobab tree. The soil of Asteroid B-261 was infested with them. And you can never get rid of a baobab tree if you do not kill it in its infancy. It spreads over the whole planet, cutting through the very core. And if the planet is small, like the boy's, its roots will split the planet in two.

"It is a matter of being disciplined [*kuritusta*]," said the boy. "After you have washed up in the morning [*pesun aamulla*], then you must wash up your planet. You must pull out all baobabs, as soon as you can see them, which is very difficult, because, when they are young, they look just like rosebushes."

The boy then told the pilot to make a drawing of baobabs so that the children of Earth might learn that putting off work is all right sometimes, but when it concerns baobabs and bad things, doing so leads to catastrophe.

So the pilot made his drawing, and it was the greatest drawing he had ever made. He vowed to warn children of the dangers of baobabs.

Indeed, he was anguished [*tuskallinen*] to realize that everyone he knew, and he, himself, had been neglectful of baobabs their entire lives, and had therefore been living in terrible danger.

1 The addition of the comparison to people is not in Saint-Exupéry's text, but may well be implied, depending upon one's reading.

As the pilot drew the baobab, he felt himself driven by a sense of urgency that was extraordinarily powerful [*erityisen vahva*].

§

The pilot learned that the boy had lived a small, sad life. His only pleasure had been to watch the sun set, and when the boy asked the pilot to join him in watching a sunset in plain daylight, the pilot had to remind him that, on Earth, you have to wait until it is almost night.

The boy replied, "I always forget I am not at home!" and the pilot understood immediately what he meant. In the boy's tiny world, you can see a sunset, and another, and another, whenever you like.

The boy said that, one day, he watched fifty sunsets: "I love to watch the sunset," he said, "especially when I am sad."

"Why are you sad?" asked the pilot, but the boy didn't answer.

§

The next day, the boy asked the pilot if sheep ate flowers as well as bushes.

The pilot answered that sheep will eat anything they can find.

"Even flowers with thorns?" the boy asked.

"Yes," the pilot replied.

"Then what use are the thorns?" wondered the boy.

The pilot was trying to loosen a bolt on his engine. He was worried that the damage to his plane was beyond his ability to re-

pair. And his dwindling water supply left him with a constant terror of death [*kuoleman kauhu*].

The boy, who never let go of a question once he got it in his head, insisted, despite the circumstances: "What use are the thorns?!"

Out of frustration, the pilot replied in a fit of pique: "They're of no use at all! Flowers have them just for spite."

The boy seemed very upset: "I don't believe you. Flowers are helpless. They must believe their thorns make them powerful."

The pilot did not answer because he was preoccupied with his engine.

The boy interrupted him again and asked about the flowers.

Now the pilot became furious at the boy and wished he would vanish into the desert and leave him in peace. He shouted: "I'm busy with important things!"

The boy stared at him for what seemed like an eternity, finally to say: "Now you sound just like an adult."

At the sound of these words, the pilot felt deeply ashamed.

The boy continued: "You mix everything up! You get everything wrong!"

The pilot was not sure what the boy meant, but he felt a familiar anguish growing inside of him.

"I know a man who has never smelled a flower" the boy continued. "He has never even looked at a star. He has never loved anyone. He has never done anything but add up numbers, repeating, just like you, 'I'm busy with important things!'"

The boy was now pale with rage: "Flowers have been growing thorns for millions of years. Sheep have been eating them for millions of years. And you think it's not important to understand why flowers grow thorns? The war between flowers and sheep is not important? If I knew of a singular flower that grew nowhere but on my planet, and one sheep could kill it with a single bite, without even realizing what it was doing, would you think that is also not important?!"

Then the boy blushed, but continued: "If somebody loves a flower that lives on only one star in all the universe, he'll be happy when he looks at all the stars. He'll say, 'My flower is out there, somewhere.' But if a sheep eats the flower, then the light of every star will be extinguished. And you think that is not important?!"

The boy could speak no more. He broke down in tears.

Night had fallen and the pilot had already dropped his tools to the ground.

In that moment, the boy's anger was enchanting, and the pilot felt free of care for his hammer and his bolt, for his engine, for his thirst, even for his own life, because, on Earth, at that moment, there was a boy who needed comforting. So the pilot hugged him tightly and said: "I won't let your flower die. I'll make a muzzle for your sheep and a fence to put around your flower."

But the pilot couldn't comfort the boy. He couldn't reach him, for it is a mysterious and secret place: the world of a child's tears [lapsen *kyynelien maailma* / *le pays des larmes*]."

§

The pilot thought a great deal about the flower of which the boy had spoken. Where the boy came from, flowers were typically

small and unremarkable. They would appear in the morning, and, by night, they would pass away.

One day, the boy told, a twig sprouted from the soil, and the boy watched it carefully, as it seemed different from other twigs and might have been a new form of baobab.

But the twig stopped growing, and, instead, started to flourish. The boy knew he was witnessing something miraculous, for the flower took ages to grow. It was as if the flower were not content to be small and unremarkable, as if it were choosing each of its colors and the orientation of each of its petals one by one. Its coquetry [*kotelo / très coquette*] stretched out the process for weeks.

Then, one morning, at dawn, it showed itself and said, yawning: "Please forgive my appearance. I have just woken up and am most unkempt."

The boy could not contain his admiration: "How beautiful you are!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, indeed," said the flower. "And I was born at the same time as the sun."

Although the boy could see that the flower was anything but modest, he found it so lovely!

"It is time for breakfast now," the flower said. "Please find something for me and kindly consider my needs with care."

The boy obliged, found some fresh water, and served the flower.

But soon the boy began to get annoyed by the flower's vanity [*turhamaisuus*]. The flower dared tigers to attack it, for it assumed its thorns to be immensely powerful [*vahva*].

The boy said there were no tigers on his planet and that, anyway, tigers did not eat weeds.

The flower objected that it was nothing like a weed and said: "I am not afraid of tigers, but I am terrified of wind. Will you build a windscreen for me?"

"This flower is very complicated," thought the boy. "A plant afraid of wind…that's odd."

"And at night," the flower demanded, "you must put me under a glass cover. It is cold here. Where I come from…."

But then the flower had to interrupt itself, humiliated, for it had never been anywhere else, and was caught in a lie. It coughed exaggeratedly three times to return the boy's attention to its needs and to the boy's negligence.

"My windscreen?" it prodded.

And the flower coughed again.

So the boy, who loved the flower, also came to hate it. He had been fooled by its beauty, and he became deeply unhappy [*masentunut / malheureux*].

"I should not have listened to it," the boy told the pilot. "You should never listen to flowers, only look at them and smell them. My flower made my entire planet smell good. But I didn't know how to love it only in this way.

"The flower's fear of cold and wind, which annoyed me so much, should have made me feel only more love. I didn't understand!

"I should have ignored its vanity and thanked it for its beauty and scent. I should never have left it. I should have known that it cared for me even though it never showed it. Flowers are so confusing. I didn't know."

§

The boy escaped his planet with the help of a flock of migrating geese.[2] First, he set his house in order. He cleaned out his two active volcanoes, which were useful in warming his breakfasts. He also cleaned his dormant volcano, for, as he said: "One never knows." He pulled up all visible roots of baobab, all the while knowing that, after he left, they would overrun his planet.

When he picked up the flower's glass cover for the final time, he found himself on the verge of tears.

He said goodbye to the flower, but the flower said nothing.

"Goodbye" the boy repeated, but the flower only forced out some coughs, as it had done before.

But then, the flower said, "I have been foolish [*typerä*]. Forgive me. Go and be happy."

The boy was surprised that the flower didn't reproach him or make him feel guilty, as it had done all its life.

"I love you," said the flower. "It's my fault that you haven't known all this time. But you have been foolish, too, like me. Go and be happy. Don't put the glass cover over me. I don't want it."

The boy objected that the wind and the animals might hurt the flower, but the flower replied: "I am not really sick. The fresh air will do me good. I'm a flower, after all. And as for the animals, you have to tolerate a few caterpillars if you want to get to know a butterfly. Who else will visit me after you leave? For the other animals, I have my thorns."

2 In Saint-Exupéry's text, there is no indication that the migrating birds were geese, merely *oiseaux sauvages* [wild birds].

Then, quite powerfully [*vahvasti*], it shouted: "Stop drooping like that. It's annoying. You have decided to leave me. So, go!"

The boy supposed that the flower said all this because it didn't want be seen crying, as it was truly a vain flower [*todella turha kukka / fleur tellement orgueilleuse*].

III

The Solitaires

The boy started out by visiting nearby planets, in the hope of gaining knowledge and finding a suitable occupation. On the first planet he saw a king, wearing purple and fine furs, seated on a majestic throne.

When the king saw the boy, he exclaimed, "Finally, a subject!"

For kings, everyone is a subject.

"Come closer, so I may see you better," commanded the king.

The boy was tired from his travels and yawned until the king said: "It is rude to yawn before a king. I forbid it!"

The boy replied: "I can't help it. I've traveled very far, and haven't slept."

"In that case," said the king, "I command you to yawn. I have not seen anyone yawn in years. It's a curiosity to me. Yawn again. I command it!"

Then the boy was intimidated and couldn't yawn any more.

"In that case," said the king, "I command to you to yawn sometimes."

The boy felt that the king was reasonable, for he only insisted that his authority be respected, and he commanded nothing impossible.

When the boy asked if he could sit down to rest, the king commanded him to sit.

Then the boy asked: "Sire, if I may: Over what do you rule?"

"Over everything," said the king with a grand gesture.

"Over everything?" asked the boy.

"Over everything," said the king.

"And the stars obey you?"

"Of course," said the king. "I do not tolerate indiscipline [*kurittomuus*]."

The boy marveled at the immense power [*vahvuus*] of the king. He thought, if he had such power, he could have watched not fifty but one hundred, or even two hundred sunsets a day.

Then he felt sad because he remembered his abandoned planet. He asked the king to order the sun to set, so he could watch it once more.

But the king replied: "If I ordered a general to fly like a butterfly, or to write a great tragedy, or to become a goose, and if this

general failed to obey my commands, which of us would be in the wrong?"[1]

"You would, sir," the boy answered.

"Exactly. You can only ask from others what they are able to give. Authority depends, primarily, on reason. If you command all your subjects to throw themselves into the sea, they will revolt. I have the right to demand obedience, but only if my commands are reasonable."

"And my sunset?" asked the boy, who never let go of a question once he got it in his head.

The king replied that he would have it, but only when the conditions were favorable, say, in the evening, at about seven-thirty.

The boy yawned again. He thought about all the sunsets he was missing, and was bored by the king, so he told the king he would leave.

The king became upset: "Don't go!" he shouted. "I will make you a Minister of Justice if you stay."

"But there is no one here to judge," said the boy.

"That is not certain," said the king, "for I've never seen my entire kingdom. I'm very old and it hurts me to walk."

"But I have looked," said the boy. "There is no one else."

"Then you must judge yourself," said the king. "That is the most difficult of all, much more difficult than judging others. If you can judge yourself correctly, then you are truly wise."

1 Here, Saint-Exupéry's term is *oiseau de mer* [sea bird]. Once again, a bird has been changed to a goose by Matinpoika.

The king tried again to get the boy to stay, but the boy was intent on leaving, so, in spite of his invitations, the boy departed, thinking: "Adults are strange indeed."

§

On the second planet the boy found a vain man [*turhaan mies / un vaniteux*].

When this man saw the boy, he cried out: "Ah, a visit from an admirer!"

As with a king and his subjects, to a vain man, everyone is an admirer.

"Good day" said the boy, but then added insolently [*röyhkeästi*], "You have a ridiculous hat."

The man said: "It is a hat to raise in salute when people applaud me. Sadly, no one comes by this way anymore."

"Is that so?" asked the boy.

"Clap your hands together," the man instructed.

So the boy clapped, and the man raised his hat in salute.

The boy clapped again, and the man raised his hat again.

After five minutes of this, the boy again became bored.

"What if I want to knock your hat off your head?" asked the boy, insolently.

But the man wasn't listening. Vain men only listen to applause, just as people only listen to what they want to hear.[2]

Instead, the vain man asked: "Do you admire me greatly?"

The boy asked, as if he did not know, what 'admire' means.

"To admire," the man said, "means to recognize that I am the most beautiful, best dressed, wealthiest, and most intelligent man on the planet."

The boy said: "But you are the only man on this planet," to which the man replied: "Admire me anyway."

The boy reluctantly agreed and told the man that he admired him, but did not understand why being admired interested the man so much.

As he departed, he thought, once again: "Adults are strange indeed."

§

On the next planet lived a drunkard. The boy's visit to his planet was short but, for some reason, left him feeling deeply dejected [*ahdistunut*].

"Why are you here?" the boy asked the drunkard.

"I'm drinking."

"Why are you drinking?" asked the boy.

2 The final phrase, *ihmiset kuuntelevat vain sitä, mitä he haluavat kuulla* [people only listen to what they want to hear] is added by Matinpoika, but is clearly implied in the text.

"To forget."

"To forget what?" asked the boy, with a disrespectful tone.

"To forget my shame," replied the drunkard, lowering his head.

"What are you ashamed of?" asked the boy, who suddenly felt the urge to help the drunkard.

"I am ashamed of my drinking!" the drunkard confessed, and fell silent.

So, once again, the boy departed thinking: "Adults are strange indeed."

§

The fourth planet belonged to a businessman [*liikemies / businessman*] who was so occupied with his work that he didn't even notice the boy.

"Good day," said the boy. "Your cigarette is out."

But the man only replied: "Two and three make five. Five and seven twelve. Twelve and three fifteen. Hello. Fifteen and seven twenty-two. Twenty-two and six twenty-eight. No time to relight it. Twenty-six and five thirty-one. So: Five hundred and one million, six hundred and eighty thousand, seven hundred and thirty-one."

"Five hundred million what?" asked the boy.

"Are you still there?" asked the businessman, annoyed at being disturbed. "Five hundred million…I can't remember. I have a lot of work to do. I don't have time for foolishness [*typeryyttä*]."

Again, the boy, who never let go of a question once he got it in his head, insisted: "Five hundred million what?"

The businessman glowered at the boy and said: "In my whole life, I have only been disturbed three times. First, twenty years ago, a goose fell on me from God knows where.[3] He made an awful sound and I made mistakes in my calculations. The second time, eleven years ago, I got sick. And the third time…well, here you are!"

"Millions. Of. *What?*" repeated the boy, quite insolently.

The businessman, who finally realized that the child would never relent, said reluctantly: "Millions of those little objects you see in the sky."

"Flies?" the boy asked.

"No," said the businessman. "Little shiny things."

"Bees?"

"No, said the businessman. "Little glittering golden objects that fools [*tyhmät*] daydream about. But I have important work to do. I don't have time to daydream."

"Do you mean the stars?" asked the boy.

"Yes, the stars," replied the businessman quickly.

"And what do you do with five hundred million stars?"

"You mean five hundred and one million, six hundred and eighty thousand, seven hundred and thirty-one. I have to be precise."

3 Here, the *hanneton* [goose] is a goose in Saint-Exupéry's original text.

"What do you do with them?" repeated the boy.

"Nothing. I own them," the businessman said.

"You own the stars?"

"Yes."

"But," protested the boy, "I have already met a king who —"

The businessman interrupted him: "Kings don't 'own.' They 'reign.' It's different."

"What's the point of owning stars?" asked the boy.

"The point is to make me rich," said the businessman.

"And what's the point of being rich?"

"To buy more stars, any time they are discovered."

The boy thought this businessman reasoned like a drunkard. He also felt it wasn't really possible to own stars. But the businessman said he owned the stars because he was the first to lay claim to them. Just as with a diamond or an island, when you are the first to find it, it belongs to you.

"Even an idea," the businessman said, "when you have it first and get it patented, it's yours. And I own the stars because no one else ever dreamed of owning them."

The boy had to agree with the businessman's logic and asked: "What exactly do you do with them?"

"I manage them. I count and re-count them. It's difficult but important work."

"I have a silk scarf," said the boy, "that I wear around my neck. And I have a flower, which I can pick up and take with me. But you can't wear or pick up stars."

"No," said the businessman, "but I can put them in the bank."

"And that's it?" asked the boy.

"That's it!" said the businessman.

The boy thought that counting the stars was poetic, in a way, but not really important. The boy, like the pilot, held beliefs about what was important that were quite different from those of the adults he met.

He said to the businessman, in departing: "I water my flower every day. I have three volcanoes that I clean every week. I even clean the one that is dormant, since one never knows. I serve the things I own and am important to them: to my volcanoes, and to my flower. But you are not important to the stars."

The businessman said nothing to this, so the boy departed again, thinking, "Adults are strange indeed."

§

The fifth planet the boy visited was the strangest and smallest of all. There was only enough room on it for a streetlamp and a lamplighter. The boy couldn't imagine whom the lamp was for, and thought:

"This man is absurd [*järjetön*].[4] But, even so, he is less absurd than the king, the vain man, the drunkard, and the businessman. At least his work means something [*merkityksellistä*]:

4 *Järjetön* carries a connotation not only of absurdity but of madness or insanity.

when he lights his lamp, he gives birth to a star, or a flower. And when he puts it out, he puts the star or the flower to bed. It's a beautiful [*ihana / très jolie*] occupation, and because it's beautiful, it's meaningful."

The boy greeted the lamplighter.

"Good day," he said, and asked, "Why have you just put out your lamp?"

The man replied, simply: "My orders. Good day."

"What are your orders?" asked the boy.

"To put out my lamp. Good night," answered the lamplighter, only to relight his lamp.

"But then why have you just relit it?" asked the boy.

"My orders," the lamplighter said.

"I don't understand," said the boy.

"There's nothing to understand," replied the lamplighter. "Orders are orders. Good day."

And he put out his lamp once again.

Finally, the lamplighter wiped the sweat off his forehead and took a moment to explain: "Look, I have a terrible job. Before, it wasn't so bad. I put out the lamp in the morning and lit it in the evening. I had the rest of the day to do what I wanted and the rest of the night to sleep."

"But since then," the boy asked, "your orders have changed?"

"No," said the lamplighter firmly, "my orders have not changed. That's the problem! Every year, the planet turns faster and faster, but my orders haven't changed! Now, it makes a full rotation every minute, and I can't get a moment's rest. I have to light it and put it out every single minute!"

"That's funny," said the boy, "your days last only a minute!"

"It is not funny at all," said the lamplighter. "It has already been a month since we began speaking."

"A month?"

"Yes. Thirty minutes, thirty days. Good night."

And the lamplighter lit his lamp once again.

The boy liked this lamplighter who was so devoted [*omistettu*] to his orders, even though they made no sense. The lamplighter reminded him of the sunsets he used to chase around his tiny world, and of something else he could not put his finger on. He decided he wanted to help.

"You know," said the boy, "I can give you a way to rest when you like."

"I would love some rest," said the lamplighter.

"Just walk very slowly and remain forever in the sun, suggested the boy. "That way, the day can last as long as you like."

But the lamplighter replied:

"Sadly, that doesn't help me much. What I love most in life is to sleep."

"That's a shame," said the boy.

"It's a shame," agreed the lamplighter. And he put out his lamp.

As the boy prepared yet another departure, he considered how the lamplighter would be scorned by the king, the vain man, the drunkard, and the businessman. And yet the lamplighter was the only man he had met who did not strike him as completely foolish [*typerää*]. At least the lamplighter was devoted [*omistettiin*] to something other than himself.

He felt a pang of regret and thought:

"This man is the only person I've met with whom I could be friends. But his planet is too small. There isn't enough room for two."

What the boy didn't dare to admit, even to himself, was that he missed his own home and envied the lamplighter's planet for its one thousand four hundred and forty sunsets per day.

§

The sixth planet was ten times larger than the last. On it lived an old gentleman who wrote long books.

"Ah, an explorer!" the gentleman said, when he saw the boy approaching.

The boy sat down, out of breath.

"Where are you from?" asked the gentleman.

But the boy ignored his question and asked: "What is that giant book?" and "What do you do here?"

"I'm a geographer," said the gentleman.

"What's a geographer?" asked the boy.

"A geographer is a scholar who knows the location of the seas, the rivers, the cities, the mountains, and the deserts."

"Fascinating [*lumoava*]!" said the boy. "At last, a truly worthwhile [*mielenkiintoinen*] occupation!"

The boy looked over the geographer's planet. He had never seen such a majestic land.

"Your planet is very beautiful," said the boy. "Does it have oceans?"

"I don't know," replied the geographer.

Disappointed, the boy asked: "…or mountains?"

"I don't know."

"…or cities or rivers or deserts?"

"I don't know."

"But you are a geographer!" cried the boy.

"Exactly," said the geographer. "I am geographer, not an explorer. There is a dearth of explorers here. Geographers don't go around looking for cities, rivers, mountains, seas, and oceans. We're too important for that. We must never leave our desks. But we take visits from explorers, question them, and note their recollections. And if an explorer has a recollection that seems interesting, we conduct a moral inquiry."

"Why?" asked the boy.

"Because a lying explorer would be a catastrophe, for obvious reasons, and a drunk explorer would see two of everything."

"I know someone," said the boy, "who would make a very bad explorer."

"It's possible," said he geographer. "But when the morality of the explorer appears to be good, we conduct a further inquiry into his discoveries."

"You go to see them?"

"No, no. That's too complicated. You ask the explorer to furnish evidence. If, for example, the discovery is of a great mountain, then we ask him to bring back some large rocks."

Suddenly, the geographer realized his stroke of luck and said to the boy: "But you — You come from far away! You are an explorer! You must tell me all about your planet!"

And the geographer opened his register and took out his pencil. Apparently, first, geographers take notes in pencil, waiting to see the evidence of any discoveries before writing over them in ink.

"Well?" asked the geographer. "Oh," said the boy, "my planet isn't really interesting. It's pretty small. I have three volcanoes — two active, one dormant — but one never knows. I also have a flower."

"We don't make records of flowers," said the geographer.

"Why not?" demanded the boy. "She's the prettiest of all."

"Because flowers are ephemeral [*lyhytaikaisia*]," said the geographer.

"What does 'ephemeral' mean?" asked the boy.

And the geographer explained: "Geographies are the most important [*tärkein*] books of all. They never become obsolete.

Mountains do not come and go. Geographers write of eternal things."

"But dormant volcanoes can become active again," the boy interrupted, and repeated: "What does 'ephemeral' mean?"

"Whether volcanoes are active or inactive doesn't matter to us," said the geographer. "What matters is the mountain. The mountain doesn't change."

"But what does 'ephemeral' mean?" asked the boy, who never let go of a question once he got it in his head.

"It means to be likely to disappear quickly."

"My flower is likely to disappear quickly?" asked the boy, surprised by a truth he already knew [*yllättynyt totuudesta, jonka hän jo tiesi*].[5]

"Of course!" said the geographer.

"Of course my flower is ephemeral," the boy thought to himself. "And I've abandoned it with only four thorns to defend itself against the world! I've left it all alone!"

He knew then, for the first time, the true feeling of regret [*pahoillani*] and departed, thinking, this time, not about adults, but about his flower.

5 This phrase is an addition of Matinpoika's but is not out of place in the text, since the boy has already worried and wept over the likelihood (nay, the certainty) that his flower will not survive his abandonment.

IV

On Earth

Finally, the boy descended to Earth. He fell straight through the atmosphere and landed in the desert.

The Earth is extraordinarily large and holds hundreds of kings, thousands of geographers, millions of businessmen, tens of millions of drunkards, and hundreds of millions of vain men. In sum: billions of adults.

In truth, however, people occupy very little space on Earth. They imagine they're all over, but, in fact, you could crowd them together onto an island and leave the rest of the planet to the trees and the animals.

When the boy first landed, he saw a golden snake in the desert sand.

"Where am I?" asked the boy.

"On Earth, in Africa," replied the snake.

"Are there no people on Earth?" asked the boy.

"This is the desert," said the snake. "There are no people in the desert. The Earth is big."

The boy sat down on a rock and looked up at the sky: "I wonder," he said, "if the stars are bright so that everyone can find his own. Look at my planet. It is directly above us...but so far away!"

"It's beautiful," said the snake. "What are you doing here?"

The boy replied: "I had some trouble with a flower."

And they both fell silent.

After a while, the boy asked again, "Where are all the people? It's lonely in the desert."

The snake answered, "It is also lonely in company."

The boy thought about this for a long time, finally to say: "You are a funny creature, thin as a finger."

"But I am more powerful [*vahva*] than the finger of a king," replied the snake.

"You aren't powerful at all," said the prince crudely [*karkeasti*], with a laugh. "You can't even walk."

But the snake replied: "Nevertheless, I can take you farther than the greatest ship."

The snake entwined himself around the boy's ankle, like a golden bracelet, and said: "Anyone I touch I can return to the ground [*palaan maahan / je rends à la terre*] from which he came. But you come from a star."

The boy said nothing.

"I pity you," continued the snake, "you've been abandoned here on Earth, which is cruel and unforgiving. I can help you, if you want, if your homesickness becomes too much for you. I can…."

"Yes, yes — I understand," interrupted the boy.

And they both fell silent.

§

The boy crossed the desert and saw only one flower. It had three petals. It was nothing at all.

"Hello," he said. "Where are all the people?"

"People?" replied the flower. "There are only four or five of them in the world. I saw them many years ago but you can't find them. They have no roots and travel with the wind."

"Goodbye," said the boy.

"Goodbye," said the flower.

§

Next, the boy climbed a mountain, much larger than the tiny mountains he had known. He thought that, from the top of the mountain, he might see the whole Earth, along with all its people, but he saw nothing and no one.

He called out into the emptiness: "Hello!"

And his voice echoed, repeating: "Hello – lo – lo."

"Who are you?"

And his echo repeated: "Who are you – you – you?"

"I hope you will be my friend, as I am all alone," the boy said.

"All alone – lone – lone," repeated the echo.

"What a funny planet," the boy thought. "Everything is dry, and sharp, and salty."

Plus, because he mistook the echo for people, he thought the people of Earth were boring and stupid, and he missed his flower, who often struck up conversations with him.

§

After walking for a long time, the boy finally reached the edge of the desert and came upon a road. He was very hopeful, since roads usually lead to people.

He followed the road and soon found himself standing in a garden of roses.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello," said the roses.

The boy looked at them carefully. They looked exactly like his flower.

"Who are you?" asked the boy, utterly stupefied [*ulkona kuin lumiukko / stupéfait*].[1]

"We are roses."

1 Here, Matinpoika makes use of a Finnish idiom to describe being dumbstruck because of one's own ignorance and not because of any truly surprising aspects of that which has rendered one 'out like a snowman.'

And the boy felt as if he were drowning in anguish [*tuska hukkua / très malheureux*]. His flower had told him it was the only one of its kind the universe. But here were five thousand others just like it. In a single garden!

"My flower would be overwrought [*hyvin huolestunut / bien vexée*] at the sight of these roses," the boy thought. "It would cough exaggeratedly and pretend to be sick just to avoid being humiliated. And I would have to play along and nurse it to health or else, in order to include me in its shame and humiliation, it would let itself die for real."

He continued: "I thought I was rich, that I had a flower that was unique and special, but I had nothing but an ordinary rose. One rose and three tiny volcanoes, one of which is dormant, add up to nothing. With so little, I have no hope of ever being important [*tärkeä*]."

And the boy fell to the ground and wept.

V

The Enchantment of Belonging

One day, a fox suddenly appeared. The boy asked the fox to play with him, as he was terribly depressed [*masentunut*].

But the fox said: "I cannot play with you: I am wild [*villi*]; no one has mastered me [*minulla ei ole mestaria / je ne suis pas apprivoisé*]."

"What does it mean to master [*mestaria / apprivoiser*]?" asked the boy.

"It's something no one thinks about, but it is very important, said the fox. "It means to belong to another [*kuulua toiseen*]."

"To belong to another?" repeated the boy.

"Yes, said the fox. "So long as you belong to yourself, you'll be nothing. Just a boy like every other boy. I'll have no use for you. And, until I belong to you, you'll have no use for me. I'll be a fox like every other fox. But if you tame me [*hallitset minua*] and become my master, we will need each other. To me, you'll be the most important creature in the whole world, and to you, I'll be the same."

The boy was confused. He said: "I had a flower who tamed me. I belonged to it and it was my master."

"Perhaps," said the fox. "On Earth one sees all sorts of things."

"Oh, but it was not on Earth," said the boy.

This intrigued the fox, who asked: "On another planet?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"Are there hunters on your planet?" asked the fox.

"No" replied the boy.

"That's interesting…and chickens?"

"No."

"Well, nothing's perfect," sighed the fox.

The fox then returned to his point: "My life is awfully monotonous. I hunt chickens. Men hunt me. All the chickens are alike and all the men are alike. It's quite boring, you see? But if you become my master, it will be like the sun has finally smiled on me.[1] The sound of your footsteps will be different from all others. Yours alone will enchant me like music, and call me out of my hole."

The fox continued: "And look! Do you see, just there, the fields of wheat? I don't eat bread, so, for me, wheat is useless. It means nothing to me. But you have golden hair. So think how marvelous it will be when I belong to you! The golden wheat will remind me of you, and I will love the sound of the wind in the wheat."

1 The French is *ma vie sera come ensoleillée.*

The fox fell silent and stared at the boy for a long time before demanding, loudly and suddenly: "Please! Tame me!"

"I would like to, replied the boy, but I don't have much time. I have friends to discover and things to learn."

The fox replied: "You can only understand the things you've tamed.[2] People have no time any more, no time for taming, no time for learning. They buy ready-made things in shops and live all alone. If you really want to learn, if you really want a friend, tame me!"

"How?" asked the boy. "You must be very patient, said the fox. "First, sit far away from me in the field. Rest assured: I'll keep you in the corner of me eye. It's very important then that you say nothing at all, since words are the source of all misunderstanding. Instead, every day, just move a bit closer to me."

The next day, the boy returned to begin to tame the fox, and the fox chastised him: "It's much better if you arrive at the same time every day. If you arrive, say, at four o'clock in the afternoon, by three o'clock I'll start getting excited. As the hour advances, I'll become happier and happier. Right at four o'clock, I'll be agitated and distressed. Each day, I'll rediscover every day the price of happiness! But if you come at any time whatsoever, I'll never know how to prepare my heart….We must keep to our rites."

2 In Saint-Exupéry's text, no tension is remarked between the different roles of master and servant, tamer and tamed. Matinpoika seems to wish to address this matter by adding text that point out the confusion, if not outright tension, between the fox's claim that taming a thing causes the master to become responsible for the thing tamed, and the boy's (initial) understanding of this relationship, which is inverse: that his flower tamed him and, therefore, that he belongs to and is responsible for his flower. Ultimately, what Saint-Exupéry, along with many readers and critics, have failed to remark is that mastering or taming is not a mutual or reciprocal process, in which two equal parties belong to each other equally and become 'friends.' More analysis of this matter may be found in the Translator's Preface.

"What's a rite?" asked the boy.

"It's something no one thinks about," said the fox, "but it's what makes one day different from another, one hour from another. My hunters, for example, have a rite: Every Thursday, they dance with the girls of their village. Thursdays are the most marvelous days! I can run all the way to the vineyard. But if the hunters danced whenever they pleased, my days would all be alike, and I would never get a break."

So the boy obeyed, doing just as he was told [*olla lammas*], and tamed the fox.[3]

When it came time for the boy to leave, the fox said: "Now I will cry!"

"It's your own fault," said the boy. "I never wanted to harm you, but you demanded to be tamed."

"Of course," said the fox.

"But you are about to cry!" said the boy.

"Of course," said the fox, again.

"So all this has done you no good!"

But the fox replied: "It has done me good, because of the color of the wheat. Return to the roses. You will see that your flower was,

3 Here, Matinpoika further sets into relief the confusion and tension noted above by making use of the Finnish idiom, *olla lammas* [to be a sheep or lamb], meaning, to follow or do what one is told. The thematic perplex is highlighted here, not only because the boy introduces himself to the pilot by demanding a drawing of a sheep — an order that the pilot obeys — but because the boy is being ordered to become a master — an order that the boy (sheepishly) obeys.

indeed, unique in all the world. Afterwards, come back and say goodbye, and I will tell you a secret as a parting gift."

So the boy went to look at the roses again and said to them, crudely [*karkeasti*]: "You are nothing like my rose. You are nothing at all, for no one belongs to you and you belong to no one. You are as my fox once was: nothing but a fox, identical to one hundred thousand others. But now I am his master and therefore he is unique in the world."

The roses were deeply hurt [*tuskissa*].

The boy continued: "You are beautiful but empty. No one could ever die for you. Of course, a stranger might think that my rose was just like you. But my rose is more important [*tärkeä*] than all of you put together because I watered it. Because I sheltered it with a windscreen. Because I killed caterpillars for it. Because I listened to its complaints, and its vain boasting, and even its silence. Because it is my rose."

And the boy returned to the fox to say goodbye.

The fox then told the boy his secret: "My secret is very simple: You can only see things with your heart. What's important [*tärkeä*] is invisible."[4]

"What's important is invisible," repeated the boy, as if he might forget.

4 Possibly the best-known and most beloved line from *Le petit prince, l'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux* [what is essential/important is invisible for/to the eyes] is quite awkward and even ugly in French. It is redundant, since invisibility already entails the impossibility of seeing with the eyes. Worse, a more natural and elegant manner of speaking about what is apparent or available "to the eyes" in French is *à l'oeil* [literally, to the eye]. Sadly, Saint-Exupéry's intentions for this awkward phrase are also, in some sense, 'invisible.'

"It's all the time you have wasted on your flower that makes it so important," said the fox.

"It's all the time I have wasted…," repeated the boy, so he would remember.

"People have forgotten this," said the fox. "But you must never forget it: You belong to what you master."

"I belong to my rose," repeated the boy, once again, so he would remember.[5]

§

Later, the boy met a railroad switchman.

He asked what he did and the switchman replied: "I sort travelers, by the thousands. I run the trains that carry them, sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right."

As the switchman was speaking, a train roared by with the sound of thunder.

"They're in such a rush. What are they looking for?" asked the boy.

"Not even the engineer knows," replied the switchman.

Another train roared by, this time in the opposite direction.

"Are they coming back so soon?" asked the boy.

5 Again, on the questions of and (Hegelian) complexities regarding who is master and who is servant, and of who belongs to whom, see footnotes 18 and 19 in/and the Translator's Preface.

"Those are not the same travelers," said the switchman. "It's a kind of exchange."

"Were they not happy where they were?" asked the boy.

"Nobody is happy where he is," said the switchman.

A third train roared by.

"Are they looking for the first travelers?" asked the boy.

"They aren't looking for anything at all," said the switchman. "They're asleep on the trains, or if not, they're yawning. Only the children are looking out the windows."

"Only the children know what they're looking for," said the boy. "They waste their time fussing over a doll until it becomes very important to them, and if someone takes it away, they cry."

"They are fortunate, then," said the switchman, and the boy agreed.

§

The boy then met a merchant who sold pills to quench thirst. One pill every week and you don't need water.

"Why are you selling these?" asked the boy.

"Because they save a lot of time," said the merchant. "Studies have found that these pills can save you fifty-three minutes per week."

"And what do you do with those fifty-three minutes?" asked the boy.

"Anything you want," replied the merchant.

"If I had an extra fifty-three minutes to do whatever I wanted," said the boy, "I would walk very slowly toward a fountain."

VI

The Final Descent

It had now been eight days since the pilot's plane crashed in the desert, and he listened to the boy's story of the merchant in a state of madness [*hulluuden tila*], sucking the last dregs of water from his canteen.[1]

He said to the boy: "These memories are delightful, but I have not yet been able to fix my engine and I've run out of water, so I, too, would like to walk very slowly toward a fountain."

"The fox—" the boy began to say.

But the pilot promptly interrupted him and said: "Your fox does not matter! I'm dying of thirst!"

The boy replied: "It is good to have a friend, even if you are about to die. As for me, I'm glad to have a fox as a friend."

The boy did not understand the danger. He was never hungry or thirsty. A little sunlight seemed to be all he needed.

1 Unlike the earlier use of *järjetön,* here Matinpoika uses a term derived from the adjective *hullua,* which holds a much stronger connotation than inanity, 'foolishness,' or 'absurdity.' The phrase, *hulluuden tila,* means to be in a genuine state of insanity.

Eventually the boy said: "I'm thirsty, too. Let's go find a well."

Although it was mad [*järjetön*] to wander through the desert, hoping to happen upon a well by chance, the pilot and the boy started walking.

After several hours of walking in silence, night fell, and the stars began to shine. The pilot saw them as if he were dreaming, perhaps because he was delirious from thirst. The boy's words danced before his mind.

"So you are thirsty, too?" he asked.

But the boy did not answer. He said simply: "Water can also be good for the heart."

The pilot didn't understand but kept quiet. He knew that any effort to question the boy would be fruitless.

The boy was tired, so he and the pilot sat down, and after a lengthy silence, the boy said: "The stars are beautiful because of an invisible flower."

The pilot replied, "Sure," and stared at the sand in the moonlight.

"The desert is beautiful, too," added the boy.

It was true: The pilot had always liked the desert. If you sit on a sand dune, you see nothing, you hear nothing, and yet something shines through the silence [*jotain säteilee hiljaa / quelque chose rayonne en silence*].

"What makes the desert beautiful," said the boy, "is that somewhere it hides a well."

At that moment, the pilot was surprised by himself. He suddenly understood the mysterious [*lumoava*] shining of the sand. When he was a boy, he lived in an old house, underneath which, according to legend, there was buried treasure. Of course, no one knew for certain. No one so much as looked for it. But it was enough to enchant the entire house.

"Yes," the pilot said, "whether it's a house, the stars, or a desert, what gives a thing its beauty is invisible."

The boy was glad, he said, that the pilot agreed with the fox.

Once the boy fell asleep, the pilot picked him up and continued to walk through the desert. He was touched by a powerful [*vahva*] emotion at that instant. He felt that he was carrying the most precious [*herkkä / fragile*] of all treasures, that there might be nothing more precious on Earth. He looked at the boy, in the moonlight, at his pale face, at his closed eyes, at his hair trembling in the wind, and said to himself: "What I see here is only a shell. What's important is invisible."

The boy's half-opened lips looked like a smile, and the pilot said to himself: "What touches me so deeply about this sleeping boy is his flower. It's the image of a rose that shines in him like the light of a lamp, even as he sleeps."

With these words, the boy appeared to the pilot to be even more precious than before. "You have to take care of a lamp," he thought, "as even a slight breeze can put it out."

Eventually, walking and reflecting as he was, at dawn, the pilot miraculously happened upon a well.

§

"People roar around on trains but do not know what they are looking for," said the boy. "They rush, get upset, and just turn

around and around. It's not worth it [*Se ei ole sen arvoista / Ce n'est pas la peine*]."

The well they had found was not a simple Saharan well — a hole in the sand — but a proper well, even though there were no villages nearby.

"It's strange," said the boy. "Everything's ready: the pulley, the bucket, and the rope."

He laughed, touched the rope, and played with the pulley. The rusty pulley squeaked like an old weather vane after several windless days.

"Do you hear?" asked the boy. "We awakened the well and it's singing to us."

The pilot, not wanting the boy to hurt himself pulling up the water, said: "Let me do it. It's too heavy for you."

Slowly and with some difficulty, the pilot hoisted the bucket to the edge of the well and set it down carefully. He could still hear the song of the rusty pulley and, in the rippling water, he saw a rippling sun.

"I'm thirsty," said the boy. "Give me a drink."

And the pilot knew exactly what the boy had been looking for![2]

2 This statement, *Et je compris ce qu'il avait cherché!,* and especially its exclamatory punctuation may be taken either as a sign of deliriousness — i.e., labile emotions and loose associations at an otherwise urgent moment — or as a crucial statement about the meaning of the text: that what the boy was looking for, and what the pilot was looking for, was simply someone to hold, nourish, and take care of him. Or, perhaps, as both. (See also the Translator's Preface.)

He lifted the bucket to the boy's lips, and the boy drank with eyes closed. This water was as sweet as a confection [*makea kuin makeinen / doux comme un fête*]. It was made from their long march under the stars, the song of the pulley, and the effort of his arms. It was indeed good for the heart.

When he was a boy, the pilot recalled, the lights of the Christmas tree, the music of the midnight Mass, and the tenderness of his Father's smile were what made his Christmas present truly shine.

"The people of Earth," declared the boy, "grow five thousand roses in a garden but never find what they are looking for."

"They never find it," repeated the pilot, dreamily.

"Yet what they are looking for could be found in a single rose or in a single drop of water," said the boy. "Their eyes are blind. They must look with their hearts."

The pilot drank the water. He breathed easily. The sand, at sunrise, was the color of honey. Yet he wondered: "Why must I feel this anguish?"[3]

"You have to keep your promise, you know," said the boy, as he sat down next to the pilot.

"What promise?"

"You know: a muzzle for my sheep. I have to take care of my flower!"

3 This crucial line, *Ce n'est pas la peine,* is especially important for a psychoanalytic reading of the tale, as discussed in detail in the Translator's Preface.

The pilot took out his collection of drawings. The boy looked at them and laughed, saying: "Your baobabs…they look like cabbages!"

"Oh?" said the pilot, disappointed, being rather proud of his baobabs.

"And your fox…his ears…they look like corn cobs…they are so long!"

And he laughed at the pilot again.

"Don't be so mean," said the pilot. "All I know how to draw are boas' outsides and insides."

"Oh, it's fine," said the boy. "Children know."

So the pilot drew a muzzle. But as he gave it to the boy, his heart was breaking.

He said to the boy: "You have plans I don't know about."

But the boy did not answer him. He said only: "The day I fell to Earth…tomorrow will be its anniversary."

Then, after a pause, he said: "I fell right around here," and he blushed.

Without understanding why, the pilot felt a terrible fear [*pelko*] and grief [*suru*]. Nevertheless, he asked the boy a question:

"So, it was not just by chance that, the morning we met, eight days ago, you were walking around like that, all alone, a thousand miles from anyone? You were returning to the place of your crash?"

The boy blushed again. He never answered questions, but when someone blushes, it means 'yes.'

"Oh!" the pilot exclaimed. "Now I'm scared."

But the boy replied: "You have to get back to work. You have to get back to your engine. I'll wait for you here. Come back tomorrow evening."

But the pilot was not at all reassured. He tried to remember the fox. Weeping is a risk you take if you allow yourself to be tamed.

§

When the pilot returned the following evening, he saw the boy sitting on an old stone wall, talking to someone. He couldn't see who it was, but he listened.

"So you don't remember? It's not here," the boy said.

And someone must have answered him, because he replied: "Yes, yes. It's the right day, but not the right place."

The pilot continued to approach the wall but couldn't see or hear anyone.

The boy answered again: "Of course. You'll see my tracks in the sand. Just wait for me. I'll be there tonight."

The pilot was twenty meters from the wall and still couldn't see anyone.

After a brief silence, the boy said: "Do you have strong venom? Are you sure I won't suffer too long?"

And the pilot stopped, heartbroken [*sydäntä*], even though he still didn't understand.

"Now go," said the boy, "I want to come down."

The pilot glanced toward the bottom of the wall and jumped back with fright. There, facing the boy, was one of those golden snakes that can kill you in thirty seconds flat. While fumbling around in his pocket for his revolver, the pilot ran toward it, but, because of the noise he made, the snake slipped quietly through the sand and tucked himself away within some faraway rocks.

The pilot got to the wall just in time to catch the boy leaping from the wall. He was as pale as snow.

"What's going on?!" asked the pilot. "Now you are talking to snakes?!"

The pilot untied the boy's scarf. He wet his temples and gave him some water. He didn't dare ask any more questions. The boy had a serious look in his eye and suddenly hugged the pilot, wrapping his arms tightly around his neck. The boy's heart was pounding like the heart of a goose shot by a hunter's rifle.[4] Finally, he said: "I am happy you figured out what was wrong with your engine. Now you can go home."

"How did you know?" asked the pilot, who was just about to tell the boy that he had managed to fix his plane.

The boy did not answer but added: "I'm going home today, too, although it is much farther, and much more difficult."

The pilot sensed that something extraordinary was going on with the boy. He was holding him tight like a baby, and yet it seemed that this baby, and perhaps he himself, were falling into an abyss from which there was no escape.

4 The French term here is *oiseau* [bird]. "Goose" is, once again, Matinpoika's addition.

"I have your sheep," the boy said, smiling meekly. "And I have his box, and his muzzle."

The pilot stayed with the boy for a long time. When his color returned a little, the pilot said: "Little man [*Pikkumies / Petit bonhomme*], you're so scared."[5]

Of course he was scared! But he laughed sweetly anyway and replied: "I'll be even more scared tonight."

Once again, the pilot felt a chill run down his neck, as he sensed that something was hopelessly wrong. He could not tolerate the thought of never again hearing the boy's laugh. It had become, for him, a fountain in the desert.

"Little man," the pilot said, "I want to hear you laugh again."

But the boy said: "Tonight it will be one year. My star will be right above the spot where I fell."

"Little man," the pilot said, "please tell me this is all a bad dream: this business about the snake and the meeting-place and the star."

5 *Pikkumies* means, literally, 'little man.' For the first time, the pilot now calls the boy something other than 'boy.' As noted in the Translator's Preface, the pilot never refers to the boy as a prince, but neither does he, until now, refer to him as a man of any kind, even in the form of a colloquialism such as *petit bonhomme,* which may be translated in a variety of ways (including 'little one,' 'sweet boy,' and more), but is, most literally, 'little man.' It seems important to render into English a term that includes 'man,' for it is at this decisive moment that the pilot and the boy consummate their more or less complete *identification* with each other: They are both, although in different ways, 'little men.' Here we also find a strong suggestion that the boy's suicide *is* the pilot's death, or that the boy's descent into the abyss is the pilot's decent into madness, or that the boy's suicide is the pilot's suicide, or at least the pilot's suicidal fantasy.

But the boy did not answer. He said: "What's important can't be seen."

"Of course," the pilot agreed.

"It's like my flower," said the boy. "If you love a flower that lives on a star, it is amazing to look at the sky at night, because all the stars have flowers. And it's like the water. The water you gave me was like music, because of the rusty pulley and the rope. You remember…it was good."

"Of course."

"At night you will look at the stars. Where I lived was so small that I can't show you how to find it, but it's better that way. My star will be, for you, one of the stars, and, therefore, all the stars. You will love to look at them all. They will all be your friends. Later, I'll give you a present."

And he laughed again.

"Oh, little man," exclaimed the pilot, "I love the sound of your laugh!"

And the boy replied: "That's precisely my present for you….It'll be like the water."

"What do you mean?"

"Stars are different for everyone," the boy said. "For travelers, stars are guides. For others, they are just little lights. For scholars, they are problems. For my businessman, they were like money in the bank. But all their stars are silent. You will have stars unlike anyone else's."

"What do you mean?" asked the pilot, again.

"When you look at the night sky, you can imagine that I am living on one of the stars, and laughing on one of the stars, so it will be like all the stars are laughing. You alone will have stars that know how to laugh!"

The boy laughed again and continued: "When you get over your grief, you'll be glad. You'll always be my friend. You'll want to laugh with me. And sometimes you'll open your window and your friends will be shocked to see you laughing at the night sky. And you'll say to them: 'The stars always make me laugh.' And they'll think you've gone mad. It's quite a gift I've given you, eh?"

And the boy laughed again.

"It'll be like I've given you, instead of stars, millions of tiny bells that know how to laugh."

And he laughed once more, before becoming very serious:

"Tonight," he said, "you must not come."

But the pilot replied simply: "I won't leave you."

The boy replied: "It won't be pretty. I'm going to look like death. It's like that. Don't come and see that, it's not worth it [*Se ei ole sen arvoista / Ce n'est pas la peine*]."

The pilot repeated: "I won't leave you."

"Listen," the boy said: "It's also because of the snake. He could kill you. Snakes are wicked. He could kill you just for fun."

But, again, the pilot said, plainly: "I won't leave you."

At last, the boy recalled something that reassured him: Snakes don't have enough venom for two lethal bites.

That evening, the boy slipped away without a sound, so that the pilot wouldn't hear him leave. When the pilot caught up with him, he was walking quickly and decisively. He said only: "Oh, there you are," and he took the pilot's hand, but continued to worry. He said: "You're making a mistake. You'll suffer. I'm going to look dead even before I am."

The pilot remained silent.

"You know, where I'm going is too far. I won't be able to take my body with me. It's too heavy."

Still, the pilot remained silent.

"So my body will be like an old, abandoned shell. Old abandoned shells aren't sad."

The pilot remained silent.

The boy seemed discouraged but made one final attempt to change the pilot's mind: "It will be nice for me, too, you know. I look at the stars, too. All of them will have wells with rusty pulleys. All the stars will give me water."

The pilot remained silent.

"It will be hilarious! You will have five hundred million bells and I will have five hundred million fountains."

And then the boy fell silent as well, as he began to cry.

"There's the place," he said. "Give me a moment alone."

And the boy had to sit because he was so terrified.

Then he said: "You know…my flower…I am responsible for it. I belong to it. And it is so weak. It is so naive. Its thorns won't protect it."

The pilot sat down next to him, in part because he, too, could no longer stand.

Eventually, the boy said: "Okay. This is it."

He hesitated a little at first, but finally stood and took a step. The pilot was frozen with dread.

There was nothing but a flash of golden light around the boy's ankle. Then, the boy was motionless for a second. He never cried out. He fell as gently as a tree falls. When his body collapsed, it didn't even make a sound.

Epilogue

They say it took six years for the pilot to tell anyone his story. Of course, his friends were thrilled just to see him alive. He remained mute and depressed [*masentunut*] for a long time, but told everyone it was just fatigue.

Later, his grief abated a little, which is to say: never completely. But he came to believe that the boy had returned to his planet because, the morning after the snake bit him, his body was nowhere to be found. "Maybe," he thought, "it wasn't so heavy after all."

The pilot listened to the stars every night. They were like five hundred million bells.

But then something extraordinary happened. The pilot realized that he had forgotten to add a leather strap to the muzzle he had drawn! It would never stay on the sheep!

In this way, the pilot tormented himself with absurd worries and questions: "What was happening on his planet?

"Could the sheep have already eaten the flower? Surely not. Every night the boy puts the glass cover over the flower, and watches the sheep carefully."

With such thoughts, he could be happy for a time. All the stars would laugh sweetly.

But, then, he would think to himself: "Anyone can get distracted at one time or another. And that's all it takes. Say he forgot, one night, the glass case, or the sheep snuck out of his box."

And the five hundred million bells would turn into five hundred million tears.

The status of Asteroid B-261 became for the pilot a terrible obsession.

Nothing in the universe could ever be the same for the pilot if he did not know whether a drawing of a sheep had eaten an abandoned rose.

The pilot looked at the sky and posited 'yes' and 'no,' and with each answer, everything changed inside him.

Although he was certain that no adult would ever understand, he exhorted others who traveled to Africa, and, not only that, to walk deep into the desert, and to linger there under a certain star, and to keep watch for a boy who laughs and never answers questions, and in this way to give the pilot hope of being relieved of his unrelenting anguish by promising to send correspondence at once, should the boy should ever return.

The End

Postface

As the reader may or may not have guessed, the story of Eino Matinpoika and his handwritten translation is a fiction. I hope the reader will not feel terribly deceived by this contrivance, for, if I may beg the reader's indulgence and just a few more moments, I can explain why it was necessary.

As is well-known, *Le petit prince* is written in the first person. The narrator is not named or referenced in the text because he is not only the narrator but a main character (some might say, *the* main character) as well as the author, Saint-Exupéry, himself. One of the most important tasks, if one seeks to revisit a classic text anew, is to distance the text and the reader from the cult of personality surrounding the original author: in this case, Saint-Exupéry and his well-documented, controversial, troubled, and mysterious life and death.

Most readers of *Le petit prince* remark immediately that the narrator is, in a profound yet unexplained way, connected to 'the little prince.' For instance, we are told that the narrator was six years old when he first drew and then gave up drawing. After visiting six different planets, the prince — whose age is never specified but for whom six years seems about right — immediately demands that the narrator take up his childhood activity of drawing. Moreover, it takes six years for the narrator to begin to heal from his grief at the boy's death (and/or his ascension, depending on how you read the tale) and to be able to tell his

story. In this time, it might seem that the boy is being figuratively re-born, year by year, coming to life again in the narrator's imagination and arriving at that special age when the narrator's creativity and hope both came alive and were shattered—when he, therefore, needed a savior, a prince, the most. Thus, the narrator's final, and rather insane, exhortation that others linger in the Sahara Desert and write to him if a child presents himself suggests that part of his own healing has to do with the hope — a tragic hope, full of *pathos* — that the child (and the child in him) can somehow be re-born.

Saint-Exupéry's first-person narrative establishes a close identification between reader and author. The transformation of *Le petit prince* into a third-person account with an omniscient narrator therefore represents a major perspectival shift with considerable consequences, consequences that include, for example, a greater psychic distance between the reader and the pilot as a character. If some small contrivance were not invented to offer another individual to 'tell the story,' someone whom the reader is invited to think about and with whom the reader is invited to identify, to some degree or other, the characters and the tale would lose some of their magic and multiple meanings would be flattened.

To this end, I have offered a few minor details of the life of my grandfather, some of which are true, but many of which are false. This character was invented to be sympathetic to most audiences, but certainly not to be so charismatic as to encroach upon the distance between author, translator, and reader that is necessary if one wishes to leave room for genuine thought and reflection.

Most importantly, it was essential that the character of Eino Matinpoika *not* be identical to the pilot or to Saint-Exupéry. Rather, I have drawn him to be an ambivalent person who, himself, bears an ambivalent relation to the ambivalent themes in the work. Anything less would fail to advance the overarching goal of this new translation, which is, of course, from the original French: to bring into relief the multiple, layered, con-

trasting, and at times contradictory meanings and possibilities worthy of exploration within *Le petit prince*.

Matthew Hamilton Bowker, August 1, 2019

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