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SAINT-EXUPERY'S CONCEPT OF IMAGE AND SYMBOL

AND ITS APPLICATION IN COURRIER-SUD

DISSERATION

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS PERTINENT TO THE CREATION OF COURRIER-SUD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I SAINT-EXUPÉRY'S THEORIES OF LANGUAGE, TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II THE EVOLUTION AND NATURE OF COURRIER-SUD</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MAJOR THEMES OF COURRIER-SUD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III AUTHENTICITY OF THOUGHT AND BEHAVIOR</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV DOMESTICITY, ADVENTURE, AND RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V TIME AND DECAY</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI TIME AND REGENERATION</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII OPPRESSION, FLIGHT, AND DETACHMENT</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII CLARITY, OBSCURITY, AND BERNIS' MYSTERIOUS QUEST</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPLICATIONS OF KEY PASSAGES IN COURRIER-SUD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX THE PRIEST'S SERMON</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X THE CISTERN AND ATTIC RECOLLECTIONS</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI THE DEATH OF GENEVIEVE</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII THE DEATH OF BERNIS</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTOBIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

All page references to Saint-Exupéry's own works are integrated into the text. Titles are abbreviated in the following fashion:

Courrier-Sud — CS
Vol de nuit — VN
Terre des hommes — TH
Pilote de guerre — PG
Lettre à un otage — LO

Le Petit Prince — PP
Citadelle — CD
Lettres de jeunesse — LJ
Lettres à sa mère — LM
Carnets — CN

Un sens à la vie — SV

The particular editions consulted are described in the bibliography.
Most of the abundant critical attention given to the work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry has been directed primarily at the content of his philosophy. This concentration of interest is perhaps not surprising in the case of a writer who said: "Écrire est une conséquence [de vivre]" (LI, 35),¹ and whose writing constitutes one of the richest repositories of the humanistic thought which has given direction to French literature since the 1930's. In his recent book L'Esthétique de Saint-Exupéry, M. Carlo François points out, on the other hand, how very prejudicial the philosophical approach has been for an understanding of the author's artistic qualities.² M. François' work goes a long way toward correcting this disproportion of critical emphasis. It is intended that the present study, which involves a deeper and more detailed exploration of a single work, should be a step in the same direction.

In selecting for study Saint-Exupéry's use of image and symbol we have chosen what is generally recognized to be a most essential aspect of his style. His thought and musings in real life were filled with imagery, as we may see from numerous passages and the very construction of Pilote de guerre. Images are also present in his works

¹Throughout this study we have incorporated into the text all simple references to the author's own works. An explanation of the abbreviations used will be found in the prefatory material, while the editions referred to are described in the bibliography.

²(Neuchâtel et Paris), pp. 15–21.
in remarkable number, crowded often one upon the other. To study a
writer's imagery is not, of course, to concentrate attention upon
ornaments of style to the exclusion or neglect of content. It is al­
most universally recognized today that literary form and substance are
inextricably related and interdependent and that there can be no in­
vestigation of one without consideration of the other. Even the aspect
of Saint-Exupéry's work which has been studied most abundantly hereto­
fore, his humanistic philosophy, is dependent upon the use of imagery
not only for its expression but for its very meaning. In her study
of the didactic images of Henri Bergson, Mlle Lydie Adolphe speaks of
the "dialectique des images" by which that philosopher leads his read­
ers down previously unexplored paths of thought. We might use the
same phrase to describe the way in which the ideas of Saint-Exupéry
are presented throughout his works.

It is true that we have chosen for special examination the author's
first book, and the one where his didacticism is least important. We
shall attempt to demonstrate that Courrier-Sud does not simply rep­
resent a first awkward effort by Saint-Exupéry to express his philosoph­
ical ideas but is an extraordinarily rich and artistically successful
novel. Image and symbol carry in this book perhaps a greater share of
the total meaning than in any other. While we shall be studying par­
ticularly their role in the expression of character and mood, we shall

3 For a pointed recent discussion of this question with special
reference to the novel, see the chapter "Four Related Questions"
31-52.

be concerned also with their part in the general interpretation. In this latter concern, as well as in the examination of the characters' thoughts, we shall necessarily be in contact with the author's own humanistic ideas, which, though they are not the center of interest in Courrier-Sud, are nevertheless very much in evidence. Our study of the novel will include discussions of the principal themes of meaning and a series of explications bearing chiefly upon imagery and symbolism, of those major passages where the various themes are brought together.

We have preceded the main study by a survey of Saint-Exupéry's own conceptions regarding imaginative and symbolic thought and expression. While this survey is meant to serve as an introduction to the analysis which follows, it is designed also to have an independent value. M. François has already made, in his previously mentioned book, a very valuable summary of the author's ideas concerning imagery and symbolism, and we shall have occasion several times to cite it for areas not so well covered in our own study. His examination is, however, based almost entirely upon Citadelle since neither the Carnets nor the two volumes of correspondence, all of which contain a wealth of pertinent material, had been published when his main text was composed. We have elected to prepare a new discussion with attention to Saint-Exupéry's ideas concerning imagery and symbolism in thought as well as in language. This is an area which M. François — largely, no doubt,
because of the unavailability to him of the Carnets — fails to cover adequately.

Our definition of the literary or poetic image for the purpose of this study is a very inclusive one. We cannot present it better than by quoting Miss Caroline Spurgeon's own definition for her book *Shakespeare's Imagery: What It Tells Us*:

I use the term "image" here as the only available word to cover every kind of simile, as well as every kind of what is really compressed simile — metaphor. I suggest that we divest our minds of the hint the term carries with it of visual image only and think of it, for the present purpose, as connoting any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every kind of way, which may have come to the poet, not only through his senses, but through his mind and emotions as well, and which he uses, in the forms of simile and metaphor, in their evident sense, for purposes of analogy.\(^6\)

This definition will still not cover all the material studied, however, and we have therefore included in our title the word "symbol."\(^7\)

We shall use this term to designate every feature or detail of the novel which has another meaning besides its literal or superficial one, providing only that this double meaning not be totally arbitrary but have its basis in analogy of some sort. A fuller discussion of our specific use of both terms and of our approach in general will be found in the conclusions to the survey of Saint-Exupéry's own conceptions.

It is probably pertinent to say that the principal aim of our

\(^6\) *Cambridge, 1952*, p. 5.

\(^7\) In this we follow the example of our director, Professor Don L. Demorest, in his *L'expression figurée et symbolique dans l'œuvre de Gustave Flaubert* (*Paris, 1931*), which also treats, among other things, the novelistic role of all kinds of symbolism.
investigation is not to explore the profundities of Saint-Exupéry's personality, though such can be a major accomplishment of certain types of image study. We have not concerned ourselves primarily, either, with the sources of the author's imagery, though it is nearly always necessary to take them into account. Our study has to do rather with the artistic and novelistic use of image and symbol or, stated differently, with their meaning for the reader.

8. This is one of the great values, for example, of Miss Spurgeon's study of Shakespeare and also of M. Pierre Nardin's investigation of imagery in *La langue et le style de Jules Renard* (Paris, 1942).
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS PERTINENT TO THE CREATION

OF COURRIER-SUD
CHAPTER I

SAINT-EXUPÉRY'S THEORIES OF TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE, AND LANGUAGE

In the course of this discussion of Saint-Exupéry's theories, we shall show, after giving evidence of his extraordinary interest in language, that his apparent distrust of words is based upon a more general conviction concerning the relativity of truth as it can be grasped by finite beings. Then we shall summarize his ideas about the apprehension of truth through knowledge and its expression through language, arriving thus at his conceptions of symbol and image. This summary will be followed by brief remarks about his theory of mysticism in regard to language and about his pragmatic conception of beauty. Saint-Exupéry's distrust of language will then be reconsidered in the light of the foregoing discussion. In a second section we shall attempt to place his conceptions in relation to those of several great symbolic poets and novelists who preceded him. The final section will be devoted to a summary of the pertinence of all these observations for the study of Courrier-Sud which is to follow.

Saint-Exupéry's interest in the nature and working of language is possibly surpassed by that of no other French or foreign writer. Evidence of his preoccupation runs from the very early letters all through the works to reach maximum intensity in the posthumously published Citadelle and Carnets. We should like to insist upon the fact of his examining such profound philosophical questions while still a
student and a young man, for the approach he seems to have had to them then remained essentially the same throughout his life. In the introduction to her published correspondence with the author, Mile Renée de Saussine has told of his early fondness for discussion with friends in cafés. One letter in which he excuses himself for having become too vehement in such a discussion affords an example of his manner of argument at that time. His biographers are unanimous in emphasizing the youthful eagerness and exuberance which characterized him even in his later years, and these traits are evident even in the style of the Carnets. One finds there the same enthusiasm and willingness to attack the oldest and most fundamental of problems, the same absence of pretentiousness, and the same tendency to develop a personal terminology at the expense of technical jargon. This intellectual daring and refusal to be daunted by the frustration of one’s predecessors is a quality commonly associated with adolescence and student years, but it was never lost by Saint-Exupéry.

An eagerness to think through for himself old and profound problems is manifest also in his approach to many other subjects besides language and knowledge, both of which are close to his central preoccupations as a writer. In Citadelle and the Carnets he reflects fundamentally about a great variety of ethical, political, economic,
and scientific problems. With all these intellectual concerns he was perhaps nevertheless a man of action before all else. Such a wide scope of interests and occupations was common among men of letters in the Renaissance and in the eighteenth century and has become familiar again in France with the appearance in literature of such scientists, philosophers or men of action as Duhamel, Malraux, and Camus. Whether Saint-Exupéry is considered to be a universal genius in the mold of Leonardo and Pascal, or whether he is supposed simply to have carried a youthful daring and enthusiasm over into the years of maturity, these traits of his character are fundamental. In spite of his distrust of neat systèmes, a distrust which will be noted often in this chapter, he was indefatigably hopeful, not to say naïve, in his efforts to discover and to formulate clearly the real nature of profound problems.

The most salient impression that one derives from his remarks about language and words concerns their insufficiency and infidelity as vehicles for the transmission of thought. As early as 1923 he recorded in a letter to his mother the following pertinent observation:

4 Among the men whose theories or teachings are discussed in the Carnets we may mention as examples André Malraux, André Gide, Sir Isaac Newton, Saint Paul, the French physicist Jean Perrin, and the British astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington. In his chapter called "De l'Inventeur," M. Georges Pellissier discusses in detail Saint-Exupéry's lifelong mechanical interests and talents, while in the first part of his book M. Carlo François demonstrates the importance for the author of his interest in the Bible and in the theories of Gide, Nietzsche, and Elie Faure. (The latter figure was primarily an art historian, but his interests seem to have been almost as wide as those of Saint-Exupéry himself.) The author had personal experience also in several fields besides that of aviation. He studied architecture for two years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, had some experience in business during
J'ai remarqué que les gens quand ils parlent ou écrivent abandonnent de suite toute pensée pour faire des déductions artificielles. Ils se servent des mots comme d'une machine à calculer d'où doit sortir une vérité. C'est idiot. Il faut apprendre non à raisonner, mais à ne plus raisonner. On n'a pas besoin de passer par une succession de mots pour comprendre quelque chose, ou bien ils faussent tout: on leur fait confiance. (IM, 140)

In a long epistle of that same year, meant to teach Renée de Saussine how to write sincerely, one notes some advice about how to express a certain human mood "à laquelle nul mot ne s'applique exactement."

(LJ, 37). Excusing himself to his mother in 1924 for not writing more often, he says: "La vie intérieure est difficile à dire, il y a une sorte de pudeur. C'est si prétentieux d'en parler" (IM, 153), and again in 1925: "...rien ne vaut votre tendresse. Mais ce sont des choses inexprimables et que je n'ai jamais su dire...." (LM, 155).

The first novel Courrier-Sud contains a great concentration of such reflections on the inadequacy and treachery of language. We shall note here only a few typical ones. Bernis finds it impossible to talk about the countries he sees on his flights because there is only "un aspect fugitif que l'on devine sans comprendre, qui ne se traduit pas" (CS, 50). Of his last visit to Geneviève in the country he will retain only "un souvenir qui ne peut pas se raconter, 'couleur..."

his two years as a salesman of trucks, and dealt in active politics as agent of the airline in the Rio de Oro and in Argentina. All of these various personal and vicarious experiences affected Saint-Exupéry's thinking — in many cases, perhaps, even his imaginative thinking.

Throughout this study we have used four periods (....) to indicate our own ellipses in quotations. A series of three periods (...) is always reproduced from the author's own work, where this stylistic device is very common.
de lune; 'couleur du temps'" (CS, 64). Geneviève herself, remembering the birth of her child, thinks that "les mots n'existaient pas pour décrire ce qu'elle avait tout de suite éprouvé" (CS, 27). (It is true that in the following paragraph she expresses particularly well what she had felt.) The narrator himself interrupts his letter of advice to Bernis — an eloquent one — with the reflection: "Mais absurde ou injuste, tout ça n'est qu'un langage" (CS, 33). Finally, the most important psychological action of the novel, the couple's decision to return to Paris and to give up their romantic plans, is effected "sans échange de mots" (CS, 43). In Vol de nuit there is less insistence upon this point of view towards language, but it appears here too, especially in the thoughts of Rivière: "Il était indifférent à Rivière de paraître juste ou injuste. Peut-être ces mots-là n'avaient-ils même pas de sens pour lui" (VN, 92). Again: "Victoire ... défaite ... ces mots n'ont point de sens. La vie est au-dessous de ces images, et déjà prépare de nouvelles images" (VN, 136). Rivière has, also, in relations with his men, a pudeur which is more eloquent than language.

In the later works there are also many such observations. The fox who wishes to be tamed by the Little Prince admonishes him not to speak because "le langage est source de malentendus" (PP, 471). In Citadelle and in the Carnets the author complains that language can only "signifier" and not "saisir" (CD, 613; CN, 133), and he speaks of artificial "litiges de langage" (CD, 558).

All these remarks upon the insufficiency and unreliability of words, which are of course in tune with a main stream of French
critical thought in this century, reflect a much deeper and more general concern. From the 1923 letter to his mother already quoted it would be possible to infer that Saint-Exupéry believed in an absolute truth which is only confused by language, and one might receive the same impression from an undated letter, probably of the same year, written to Renée de Saussine about Pirandello's play Così è se vapore. In a café discussion the young man had outraged his companions, particularly Mlle de Saussine, by a violent denunciation of the playwright's "métaphysique de concierge." In that letter, brought to his friend's door at 8:00 AM, he tries to justify his attitude by the contention that Pirandello had confused the everyday and metaphysical meanings of the word "truth":

Pirandello a fait une belle salade russe avec les différents sens du mot "vérité", je me refuse à trouver cela intéressant. Et son espèce de héros qu'il a voulu ironique, supérieur et sceptique, est simplement idiot. La première qualité d'un homme intelligent est de comprendre le langage des autres et de le leur parler. Mais comme personne dans cette pièce ne sait exactement ce qu'il veut dire, ça peut durer longtemps. (LJ, 64)

Language had, it seems, cast mystery over a very simple matter, and Saint-Exupéry insists a bit later in the letter upon the necessity of a "justesse de pensée" (LM, 67). His distrust of language was in

6 M. Régis Michaud states that "the searching of the true nature of words and of the part they play in literary expression and composition is the key to the new art of writing. While traditional writers took the words for granted and differed only in the way they handled them and grouped them in a sentence, the new writers began to reflect on the nature and function of words and to try new verbal experiments." Vingtième siècle: An Anthology of the New French Prose and Poetry (New York and London, 1933), p. 392. In the "supplement" of this book M. Michaud has assembled a great number of quotations from modern writers and critics concerning language and imagery (pp. 375–445).
fact joined very early to a sense of the relativity of truth. Thus when Bernis, of Courrier-Sud, is led into Notre-Dame by doubt and despair he thinks: "Si je trouve une formule qui m'exprime, qui me ressemble, pour moi ce sera vrai" (CS, 44). Rivière has an even clearer revelation of this sort when he has to receive the wife of Fabien:

Elle exigeait son bien et elle avait raison. Et lui aussi, Rivière, avait raison, mais il ne pouvait rien opposer à la vérité de cette femme. Il découvrait sa propre vérité, à la lumière d'une humble lampe domestique, inexprimable et inhumaine. (VN, 120).

In the later works denials of absolute truth are numberless: "N'objectez point non plus l'évidence de vos vérités, vous avez raison. Vous avez tous raison" (SV, 155). "...car il n'est point de vérité ni d'erreur" (CN, 37). "Rien n'est en soi ni vrai ni faux" (CN, 136). "Une décision ne peut être mauvaise: elle crée bien ou mal sa vérité" (CN, 153). The author even goes so far as to speak of the adverse truths of soldiers facing each other in war (L0, 49–50), attaining thus, in appearance, a philosophy of total relativity.

Such an impression of his views fits in well with the acknowledged fact of his astonishing tolerance, which manifested itself in the appreciation of the aims of both sides in the Spanish Civil War and, what is even more remarkable, in the understanding of the positions represented both by Vichy and by Free France. His tolerance and skepticism are not, however, absolute, and neither is his distrust of...
language. The two concerns are, as we have already shown, closely related, and an understanding of one is necessary for that of the other. We shall therefore precede the examination of Saint-Exupéry's positive view of language with a consideration of his conception of knowledge.

It should be noted first that he distinguishes two kinds of truth — experimental and intellectual:

Je nomme vérité expérimentale celle qui s'observe. ..... ..... ..... C'est à la théorie à rendre compte de la vie. Non à la précéder. ..... ..... ..... La vérité expérimentale, c'est par exemple la cathédrale. A moi, d'en dégager le sens. (CN, 139-40).

Aussi les empiristes ont-ils raison de dire qu'il n'est de leçon à tirer que de l'expérience et que toute construction purement intellectuelle est vaine. Ce qu'ils ne voient point — et ceci est capital — c'est que, fondé pour rendre compte de données purement expérimentales, démontré par la seule expérience affrontée, le concept qui, à une époque, l'exprime valablement, loin d'être expérimental, est purement intellectuel. Ce n'est point une vérité d'expérience. (CN, 166)

His epistemological interest is primarily for the second, intellectual truth, since its nature is more likely to be misunderstood.

For Saint-Exupéry the word "intelligence" (Latin, inter † ligere) retains its etymological meaning of "tying together": "Les relations seules sont vérité. Mais tout réseau complexe peut être vu sous des jours divers" (CN, 102). These bits of relations which may be perceived are called in the author's vocabulary "structures": "Ce que l'on peut prétexter saisir et traduire et transmettre du monde extérieure ou intérieure, ce sont des rapports. Des 'structures,' comme diraient les physiciens" (SV, 249). Pursuant to his interest in psychoanalysis, he formulates thus the deepest layer of knowledge: "L'inconscient, c'est l'ensemble des structures qui constituent l'in-
dividu" (CN, 110). He says again: "... je ne puis pas savoir directement ce qui me plaît par exemple ou me déplaît, car ce qui me plaît ou me déplaît n'est point un fait ou une image mais une structure" (CN, 105). These unconscious or unformulated bits of knowledge are often held in common by many people; thus the author is able to say that before the advent of fascism and communism the West was governed by "la divinité de belles structures permanentes" (CN, 97).

They are changed, on the other hand, in creative thinking: "L'opération créatrice réside dans la possibilité de changer de structure...." (CN, 102).

The area of conscious formulated knowledge is distinguished in Saint-Exupéry's thinking from the foregoing "structures." Once in the Carnets he poses the following question: "Comment une structure se condense-t-elle en objet pensé? Ou: un objet pensé ne serait-il que structure?" (CN, 101). His answer to the latter query is definitely negative: "La conscience, c'est ce quelque chose qui non seulement subit le système de relations mais en quelque sorte l'invente, le domine, en fait un être...."8 Once it rises into the conscious, the "structure" becomes a "concept": "Un concept, c'est l'individualisation d'un tout ou plus exactement d'une structure" (CN, 103). "La conscience ajoute à ces structures les catégories verbales" (CN, 110). "Le concept contient la définition mais lui

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8 CN, 102. Saint-Exupéry does not, however, see the possibility of an opposition between the conscious and the unconscious areas of the mind. Indeed his main objection to psychoanalysis has to do with this theory (CN, 110-111).
est antérieur. Le concept, c'est l'idée de définir ça" (CN, 103).

Rather often the author speaks also of these formulated ensembles as "visages": "Quand je crée un ensemble dans du disparate, c’est un visage que je montre" (CN, 101). He refers metaphorically in this way to the concept of France: "La patrie invisible, la seule: ce visage de la France que dessinent les routes campagnardes... Révolutions, me recréerez-vous un autre visage?" (CN, 49). The term is also used for Anne Lindbergh's concept of her own experience: "Tout ça, c'est de la gangue, quel visage en a-t-elle tiré?" (SV, 250).

He also assigns to the concept the quality of an "être": "Un être est né...." (CN, 101). "Un concept.... ....je me sers ensuite de ce nouvel être comme d'un invariant" (CN, 103). Finally, mental concepts, like verbal ones, may be called "images" (CN, 113).

Human conceptual progress — that is, the creation of new, more "fertile" (v. CN, 106) concepts — is not entirely, or even mainly, an individual matter. One profits by the transmission of concepts from man to man and generation to generation; indeed, "....les concepts transmis comptent seuls" (CN, 39). This observation brings us to the third kind of knowledge, that of actual language. Learning from other people is easier than personal creative thought: "Le mode de connaissance par images verbales purge du malaise qu'impose le mode de connaissance par images organiques ou fortes" (CN, 113). It is this sort of learning which permits the general evolutionary progress of the race: "Je retrouve ici, en tout cas, les mobiles du progrès, de l'ascension de l'animal à l'homme et les gains conceptuels de l'homme" (CN, 113). Elsewhere Saint-Exupéry tells how, while watching
a class of adult peasants in Spain, he had understood the nature of
human progress: "Ainsi j'avais assisté à cette ascension de la con-
sience semblable à une montée de sève et qui, née de la glaise, dans
la nuit de la préhistoire, s'était peu à peu élevée jusqu'à Descartes,
Bach ou Pascal, ces hautes cimes" (SV, 161).

These last two categories of knowledge, the conscious and the
expressed, are not always distinguished either in Saint-Exupéry's
thought or in his terminology. The capital distinction is between
"structures" and "concepts." He does give considerable attention to
the verbal expression of concepts — a matter which we shall consider
latef — but the term "langage" usually includes for him both con-
sciousness and expression, or a bridge between the unconscions and
both of these:

Ce qui me décourage à l'avance de créer c'est que je ne
sais pas ce que je vais dire, ou plutôt je ne sais pas comment
bâtir mon pont entre le monde informulé et la conscience.
C'est un langage que je dois m'inventer. (L'opération est
intérieure; me rendre conscient.) (CN, 92)

He says again, more plainly: "...[le concept] est un langage"
(CN, 160). It is in this light that one should understand his spec-
ulation that science may be only a language (CN, 122). Similarly,
when he speaks of a "faillite du langage" in Pilote de guerre (p. 380),
and when he says in an article about the Spanish Civil War: "... ce
qui nous unit, nous n'avons pas encore de langage pour nous le dire"
(SV, 160), he is lamenting a lack of ideas as well as of words. This
language does not, of course, represent all of man's feelings. "Le
langage est loin de tout charrier ou de tout contenir, car il est
des structures non dénommées et sans doute innombrables" (CN, 106).
It does however represent all conscious and expressed structures, and the author points out often that spiritual progress is synonymous with the progress of this language: "L'homme progresse en forgeant un langage pour penser le monde de son temps" (SV, 153). "On croit sur la foi d'apparences que l'habileté mène le monde, quand c'est le langage" (CN, 94). Individual progress is not different in nature from the general one: "Le but [pour les hommes] .... doit être de grandir et de parler un jour, comme Beethoven, un langage universel. .... C'est vers la conscience que marche la vie" (SV, 180). "Je prends possession du monde par les mots" (CN, 121).

In the Carnets Saint-Exupéry says: "Je ne sais point prévoir les progrès du langage" (CN, 162), but it is plain that he hopes his own work will serve that cause well. That same section of the published notes begins with the statement: "Je ne puis faire entendre aux hommes quelle serait leur commodité s'ils possédaient un langage" (CN, 91), and he reflects later: "Je puis seulement proposer mon langage comme plus apte à saisir le monde. Voyez, jugez et choisissez..." (CN, 132). The Prince of Citadelle declares: "Langage de mon peuple, je te sauverai de pourrir" (CD, 522).

It is pertinent to consider in some detail what Saint-Exupéry conceived this evolution in language to be. Such progressive change takes place, essentially, in the resolution of "contradictions," which constitute obstacles to the attainment of a complete conception of the universe. The author says concerning the problem of war: "Mais il me semble que d'abord est absurde un langage qui oblige les hommes à se contredire" (SV, 155). These contradictions arise from
the confrontation of opposing conceptual truths or, what is essentially the same thing, from the invalidation of a conceptual truth by an experimental one, sometimes called "la vie" (CN, 159). Man strives naturally to resolve them: "....ce goût de la cohérence est si vif que l'homme, tôt ou tard, accepte le langage qui le lui fournit" (CN, 95); indeed the malaise which they occasion has perhaps been the spur of all his progress (CN, 112). Saint-Exupéry seems to believe that suffering from perceived contradictions is peculiar to man (CN, 111) and that it began only when he started to communicate and to reason: "....seul le langage .... complique [l'individu]...." (CN, 107). Children, who have not been confused by verbal and logical categories, do not suffer from these contradictions, "balbutiements d'un langage qui ne peut encore saisir son objet," and they alone "understand" (CN, 133). It would be wrong, of course, to suppose that the author wishes merely to restore a childish sort of understanding. Children see many things more clearly (cf. Petit Prince), but they are not in possession of a supreme concept, on the path to which contradictions constitute inevitable obstacles. These are not at all impassable obstacles: "Des événements non enchaînés sur un plan, rien n'empêche qu'ils soient enchaînés sur un autre plan...." (CN, 164). When a contradiction is overcome the world is simplified (SV, 153).

M. François declares that Saint-Exupéry recognized two kinds of litiges or contradictions: linguistic and real ones.  

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that one finds in the Carnets the question: "Que signifierait litige organique?" (CN, 113), but the author nowhere gives it an answer. Saint-Exupéry makes it very clear that one will not wear himself out against contradictions without hope of overcoming them: "Car il [mon ordre] m'oblige à fonder ce langage qui absorbera les contradictions" (CD, 586). He says again: "....l'erreur est de croire que n'est pas ce qui ne peut d'abord s'enoncer" (CD, 600).

In the Carnets he discusses at some length the proper human reaction to contradictions:

Il est deux méthodes pour sortir des contradictions. L'une consiste à se forger un système simple quel qu'il soit et à dénommer erreur l'opposé de sa vérité. C'est l'univers du fanatique....

L'autre méthode consiste à admettre la contradiction même si elle est intolérable à l'esprit humain. Et justement parce qu'elle est intolérable. L'esprit qui accepte par honnêteté, deux vérités expérimentales contradictoires ne tolérant pas la contradiction, lutte pour la découverte d'un langage qui absorbe sans en rien refuser les deux vérités à la fois....

(CN, 138-139)

In another passage the author expresses this essentially optimistic point of view in terms which may have been meant to constitute an implicit criticism of some of his contemporaries: "Ils cherchent à tirer les lois de l'absurde, à relier les termes, quand simplement il est un langage à trouver dans l'ordre duquel il n'y a plus d'absurde" (CN, 91). Saint-Exupéry seems actually to have seen the possibility of an unlimited perfection of language and consciousness which, though it could never lead to a possession of all truth, might bring coherence and an end to mental conflicts. Contradictions may of course be more or less profound and more or less difficult to resolve, but none of them are inherent and permanent per se.
Creative and progressive language, both mental and expressed, is the weapon with which all of them must be attacked.  

The actual manner in which contradictions are resolved, on both the verbal and the conceptual planes, is the subject of an impressive amount of reflection by Saint-Exupéry. It clearly serves no purpose simply to juxtapose opposing truths, as he accused Pirandello of doing (LJ, 69), and as he declares some French Communists have done (CN, 167). Still, one must not either avoid such confrontations:

"Quiconque craint la contradiction et demeure logique tue en lui la vie...." (CN, 133) — but must seek them out in hope of a new, synthetic concept. This is "true creation" (CN, 136), and it cannot be effected at will: "Le concept, je n'ai qu'à attendre qu'il naissa en moi. Je n'ai aucun moyen de l'aller chercher. .... Il n'est que des actes brusques, puis un exposé général plus vaste, dans le nouveau langage" (CN, 127-128). Such creation is not the product of logical thinking; indeed, "....il n'y a .... création que dans la mesure où précisément est inefficace la logique" (CN, 152). The author insists, however, upon the necessity of a calm and critical examination of a new synthèse once it has presented itself (CN, 142).

The creative act is, in conformity with what we have already noted about truth and concepts, an "expression de .... rapports" (CN, 137), and its process is analogy. In the Carnets, where Saint-Exupéry devotes the most space to this problem of unexpected analogical

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10. M. François seems himself to imply this in his subsequent discussion of language as an instrument of knowledge, pp. 124-126.
creation, it is in one place compared to an electrical short cir-
cuit: 11

Penser à observer exige le non-conformisme de l'observ-
ateur. S'il a fait un gain, si léger soit-il, dans la con-
science du monde, c'est d'abord parce qu'a été possible cette
sorte de court-circuit entre deux notions que les concepts en
jeu ne reliaient pas, ou même niaient. L'étonnant est qu'il
se soit produit un court-circuit de hasard.... (CN, 123-124).

The author goes on to observe that most short circuits are completely
useless and to reflect that the few creative ones may, in some obscure
way, be directed by the conscious. He considers that even science ad-
vances by way of analogy (CN, 125). In the Carnets one finds a spec-
ific and pertinent example of a false analogy: that between growth
in a tree and in an art form (CN, 147), which is immediately reminis-
cent of Ferdinand Brunetière and his Evolution des genres. The
author indicates, too, that analogies may be carried too far and says
that they, like the concepts they found, must often be invalidated
by a new experimental truth (CN, 125).

Saint-Exupéry recognizes that sensation is at the basis of all
thought and, thereby, of all mental imagery: "Il ne peut pas ne pas
y avoir action du milieu sur le psychisme" (CN, 108). In accordance
with his philosophical insistence upon the necessity of participating
in life, he believes that all kinds of experience are valuable in the
development of the mind's conceptual and imaginative apparatus, sug-
gest ing, for example, that life in the country probably contributed
to Newton's scientific thought (CN, 79). If, however, the images

11 This is an excellent example of influence upon Saint-Exupéry's
mental imagery of his interest in science.
which present themselves "spontaneously" at certain times are made possible by past experience, habits of thinking also affect one's interpretation of experience: "....il y a évidemment des observations, et certaines d'entre elles sont provoquées par mes concepts. Et ce ci, serait-ce au nom de l'Analogie?" (CN, 125). We shall see in the discussion of Courrier-Sud that characters often interpret events and surroundings in terms of a symbolism determined by their own moods and situations. In these instances symbols and images may come not only from the "reservoir" of their minds but also from perceptions of the moment. Saint-Exupéry does not, of course, believe in the philosophical soundness of empathy or of the "pathetic fallacy": ".....l'espace,.... la nature vivante et sans conscience spirituelle se moque bien des individus" (CN, 98). He is plainly conscious, on the other hand, of the subjective interpretation of milieu and events as a frequent psychological phenomenon, and recognizes its extraordinary value as a literary device.

Saint-Exupéry's discussions of actual linguistic expression as distinguished from thought relate perfectly to his theory of concepts and no radically new ideas are added. "Le mot n'est que l'extension à des opérations musculaires (paroles) ou auditives, par réflexe conditionné, d'un système de relations" (CN, 102). Yet this extension is a very critical operation: "C'est dans la liaison du langage social et du terrain organique que se posent les problèmes" (CN, 107). Again, "Le miracle, c'est de définir par un mot un système fixe de relations" (CN, 102). Only verbalized, transmitted concepts, as we have already had occasion to note, serve the cause of advancing man's
consciousness and knowledge. Expression is indeed an actual part of knowledge: "Prendre conscience .... c'est d'abord acquérir un style" (CD, 821). Just as he is more interested in subjective than purely experimental truth, so Saint-Exupéry's reflections on style are virtually all concerned with the expression of new, unclassified concepts. He is opposed to inventing new words or borrowing from another language. One risks not being understood (CD, 705) and, also, there are not enough words to designate concepts more numerous than the grains of sand along the sea (CD, 704). He objects as well that "reference to the dictionary" is a sorry substitute for the creative act, the "sortir de soi .... ce que précisément il n'est point de mot pour dire...." (CD, 704). What he proposes instead is, in effect, the use of figurative language, of poetic images. In Chapter CXLIX of Cité-delle the Prince reflects that he would be wrong to invent a new word to replace the expression "soleil d'octobre":

....je ne vois point ce que j'y gagne. Je découvre au contraire que j'y perds l'expression de cette dépendance qui me relie octobre et les fruits d'octobre et sa fraîcheur à ce soleil qui n'en vient plus si bien à bout, car il s'y est déjà usé.12

The term "jealousy" is cited as one of the few simple words which express of themselves a set of relationships obtaining in many different situations; in the phrase "jalousie de l'eau" is contained the whole attitude of people dying of thirst — not only their desire for water

12CD, 821. The Prince decides here that the phrase "soleil d'octobre" cannot have many valid applications because it is "trop particulier." In Chapter CCIII he cites it again, however, as an efficacious expression of "telle mélancholie d'une destinée frappée à mort bien que glorieuse encore" (CD, 948).
but also their hatred of other people who still have water and their feeling of being betrayed by the waste of water (CD, 821).

Just as the efficacy of concepts depends upon their simplifying and unifying the world, so that of creative language is dependent upon its "liens," "rapports," or "dépendances" (PG, 314; SV, 249-250; CD, 705, 821; and CN, 148-149). Truths transmitted through figurative language are enclosed as in a "piège." In Chapter CXLIX of Citadelle, mentioned above, the Caid recommends, instead of an increase of vocabularly, "des démarches qui te permettent, en usant de mots qui sont les mêmes, de construire des pièges différents, et bons pour toutes les captures" (CD, 821; also SV, 250 and CD, 792 and 948). What is contained is however distinct from the trap itself — "La capture est d'une autre essence que le piège" (SV, 250) — and even distinct from the "lien" — "Ce n'est pas non plus le lien qui est poétique. Comme n'est pas poétique" (CN, 149-150). Saint-Exupéry elaborates upon this conception both in the Carnets and in the preface to Anne Lindbergh's novel:

Considérez l'image poétique. Sa valeur se situe sur un autre plan que celui des mots employés. Elle ne réside dans aucun des deux éléments que l'on associe ou compare, mais dans le type de liaison qu'elle spécifie, dans l'attitude interne particulière qu'une telle structure nous impose. L'image est un acte qui, à son insu, noue le lecteur. On ne touche pas le lecteur : on l'envoûte. (SV, 249-250)

De la création dans l'image poétique : si j'associe deux notions n'ayant pas de lien évident entre elles (et cependant point sans possibilité d'intercommunication) dans un même membre de phrase à articulation logique, mon esprit tend par habitude à se situer dans un univers où ce rapport arbitraire est validé. Cet univers, ou plus exactement cette attitude intérieure vis-à-vis de l'univers, est de plus ou moins haute qualité. Procure un plus ou moins grand bien-être. C'est la qualité de cet univers (ou de cette attitude)
qui conditionne celle de l'image — et non chacun des deux éléments exprimés — et non la qualité du lien. (CN, 148)

He states again, more directly: "La valeur de l'image poétique est celle de cet univers latent et non celle des éléments ni de leur lien" (CN, 151).

Like the creative concept, the poetic image is born irrationally: "La logique est incapable d'expliquer l'image. Elle l'est encore plus de la proposer" (CN, 151). "La vie, c'est l'étincelle créatrice qui allume et aucune logique n'en rend compte." Yet a writer must weigh and judge his images before deciding to keep them; Saint-Exupéry twice does so "aloud" in Pilote de guerre for the phrases "les horloges en panne" (p. 288) and "la robe à traîne" (pp. 299, 311). He gives other examples of worthless images, for example "nuages dorés" (SV, 255), which he likes to call "paco tille" (PG, 299; SV, 255). We must assume that the "universe" offered by these rejected images is of poor quality. M. François has pointed out that Saint-Exupéry differs from the Surrealists in this insistence upon judging the irrationally born image and in his opposition to "purple patches" and to shocking effects. In Citadelle the Prince warns his poets: "....il ne faut pas me le choisir [le mot] trop vigoureux sinon il mange l'image. Ni même l'image sinon elle mange le style" (CD, 793). The fact is that Saint-Exupéry requires of the creator,

13 CN, 152, V. also a letter from Saint-Exupéry to Benjamin Crémieux, reproduced by the latter in his column of Les annales politiques et littéraires, VIIème année (15 décembre, 1931), p. 534.

for all the illogicality and unpredictability of his inspiration, an
extraordinary lucidity and sense of proportion: "L'opération créatrice
réside dans la possibilité de changer de type de structure, ce qui,
sur le plan verbal, exige du créateur qu'il ne soit pas dupe des
mots, et, sur le plan conceptuel, qu'il ne le soit pas des concepts"
(CN, 102).

When a concept becomes familiar and is no longer questioned,
the act of its creation is forgotten and it attains the status of an
"évidence" (CN, 137) or an "invariant" (CN, 103). The Prince of
Citadelle ridicules it is true, excessive confidence in such "évidences"
(CD, 856), and the author declares in Pilote de guerre that "Il
n'y a point d'évidences naturelles" (p. 370). Images may also acquire
standing as "évidences" or "invariants" (CD, 680), and we have not
found in Saint-Exupéry's works any parallel word of caution about
using them over in this way. It is obvious, of course, that he him­
self adopted certain images and symbols and used them over and over
again. In recommending this practice he does not mean, in any case,
that the meaning of an image so used will remain static. In Citadelle,
for example, he defines in this way an eminently efficacious one:
"La grande image ne se remarque point comme image. Elle est. Ou
plus exactement tu t'y trouves" (CD, 680). The successful image cor­
responds to and expresses something essential in an individual con­
sciousness or universe and is an instrument of self-knowledge. Just
as Saint-Exupéry insists in his moral theories upon the necessity for
personal development or devenir, so he points out as well that "toute
image forte devient.\(^\text{15}\)

These last observations bring us necessarily to the question of mysticism in language. Though only a philosophical study could do justice to the problem, no careful reader can fail to notice that Saint-Exupéry sometimes shows, both in theory and in practice, a conception of language which approaches that of a religious prophet. It is a very long way from the recommendation to describe "impressions ressenties" which he gave Mlle de Saussine in 1923 (IJ, 37) to the Prince's prayer for an "image contre laquelle ils [le peuple] s'échangent" (CD, 557), and just as far from the "bergerie d'enfant" of Courrier-Sud (p. 6) to "l'Esprit qui souffle sur la glaise" of Terre des hommes (p. 261).\(^\text{16}\) In the Carnets Saint-Exupéry explains what he considers mysticism to be:

Nous sommes tous d'accord que l'homme est plus grand quand il est mystique qu'égoïste. Etre mystique, c'est ici se donner une commune mesure en dehors de soi. On se rejoint mieux d'homme à homme à travers Dieu, l'universel ou le drapeau ou même le jeu de billard qu'en se cherchant l'un l'autre (la commune mesure n'est-ce pas l'essence du langage?)

(CN, 94)

He goes on to say, however, that the "proclamation d'un Signe" is not the primary need of man for it remedies the effect instead of the cause of human confusion. The first need is for a coherent new language which must be presented "dans toute son universalité" (CN, 95).

\(^{15}\)CD, 680. M. François discusses this conception of evolution in images and language (pp. 105, 125) and also traces briefly the development in meaning of several of the author's favorite images (pp. 106-119).

\(^{16}\)This evolution is not, however, a wholly chronological one; we shall see that even the first novel contains symbols such as "le trésor" and "le navire" which have mystical content.
Then, and then only, one may infer, is it permitted to lift up signs which are well integrated into this language. The author reflects once in the Carnets upon the possibility of attaining sainthood, of apprehending a supreme concept which embraces all of reality: "La béatitude, c'est la possession du concept souverain, l'accession à un point de vue qui unifie l'univers" (CN, 113). This is almost surely the sense also of his statement in Citadelle that "Dieu d'abord est sens de ton langage et ton langage s'il prend un sens te montre Dieu" (CD, 701). According to this point of view mysticism appears as the final step of the linguistic and synthetic progress whose theory we have just been examining. Such an interpretation seems to apply very satisfactorily indeed to the author's own literary creation, wherein he rises from a host of reconciliations and illustrations to the proclamation of such a supreme humanistic concept as "l'Homme" and to the attempt at a final concept of civilization which is Citadelle.

Saint-Exupéry says that an image has only one standard: its efficacy (CN, 152), and he emphasizes in Citadelle (pp. 799, 801) that a poem or a poetic image is an "action" on the reader. He speaks nowhere of beauty for its own sake or of a special dispensation for belles-lettres. The passage in Vol de nuit (pp. 104-105) which describes the beautiful, gnarled hands of an old mechanic has a significant echo in Citadelle:

Tu me dis laide cette main de pierre, laquelle est épaisse et grumeleuse. Je ne puis t'approver. Je veux connaître la statue avant de connaître la main. S'agit [sic] d'une jeune fille en larmes? Tu as raison. S'agit [sic] d'un forgeron noueux? La main est belle. (CD, 947)
The works of the last decade of Saint-Exupéry's life — Terre des hommes, Pilote de guerre, Citadelle, and even Le Petit Prince — all have rather plainly a practical, exhortatory purpose. One may doubt, on the other hand, that his pragmatism was so absolute at the time he wrote Courrier-Sud. Nor, of course, did even his final attitude require a real exclusion of beauty. His definition, in the Carnets, of the act of conversion, general aim of all writing, is cast in terms very favorable for the pragmatic importance of beauty:

Convertir: cette opération seule consiste non à démontrer, ce qui serait fait en cinq minutes, mais à amener à des points de vue tels qu'à leur lumière le monde s'ordonne ou l'homme se sente plus riche. (CN, 143)

In Citadelle he makes it plain as well that if beauty of language is not an end in itself, neither is it simply a means of conversion:

Si tu veux comprendre le mot, il faut l'entendre comme récompense et non comme but, car alors il n'a point de signification. Pareillement je sais qu'une chose est belle, mais je refuse la beauté comme un but. .... Car la beauté .... n'est point un but mais une récompense. (CD, 696)

He says again in another connection: "Ne te souviens-tu pas de ce que les conditions de la beauté ne sont jamais recherche de la beauté?" (CD, 828). This conception of beauty as an indirect aim or as a "reward" is in truth far from a purely pragmatic one. It leaves the door open, so to speak, for the genuinely artistic attitude which Saint-Exupéry evinces in practice.

It is proper, finally, to re-examine the author's distrust of language in the light of his theory of symbolic and poetic expression. In the Carnets, where the image is given most attention, there is less insistence upon the inadequacy of words than in the other
books. Yet in Pilote de guerre he says flatly: "Aucune explication ne remplace jamais la contemplation" (PG, 377). In all the books he exalts the supreme expressive power of certain non-verbal phenomena: a smile (LO, 398), colors (CS, 64; SV, 251), taste (LO, 403), and, especially, silence (LO, 494; SV, 240; PP, 471). It is surely very significant, however, that in the preface to Anne Lindbergh's book these very expressive phenomena are compared to what an author hopes to convey through words in a book:

Tout ça, c'est de la gangue, quel visage en a-t-elle tiré?

Le vrai livre est comme un filet dont les mots composent les mailles.

Qu'a-t-elle ramené, Anne Lindbergh, de son univers intérieur?

Je me souviens aussi du sens, sinon du texte, d'une étrange remarque de Flaubert sur sa propre Madame Bovary:

"Ce livre? J'ai cherché avant tout à y exprimer cette certaine couleur jaune de ces angles de murs où se nichent parfois les cafards." (Italics mine) (SV, 251)

In this passage the trap, or "filet de mailles," constituted by the words of a book seems just as capable of catching and transmitting the "ineffable" as are smiles, tastes and other non-linguistic phenomena.

On the occasions when the author speaks most directly of symbolism in thought and language, he seems also to recognize the possibility of completeness in the most felicitous of linguistic expressions. He believes that the most fundamental thinking is done in symbols and approves the school of psychoanalysis for having insisted upon this fact: "...la psychoanalyse a mis en valeur l'importance du symbolisme, l'universalité des symboles (les symboles superposés); elle a mis à sa place la nature dans la cascade des symboles qui
l'expriment" (CN, 116). In a letter to Benjamin Crémieux he asserts that when one "lets his flesh think" — that is, when one thinks in symbols — the symbols contain everything. After having observed in the Carnets that one thinks entirely in symbols when fatigued, he adds: "...et je sais que ces symboles sont plus complets que l'expression verbale maladroite" (CN, 115). In the Carnets he also takes the next logical step in declaring that it is natural to express oneself in symbols: "C'est tout naturellement que je m'exprime par symboles. Loi de la plus grande pente de l'expression" (CN, 110).

In his well-known comparison of truth to an iceberg partially submerged in the sea, he makes the same claim for the communicative power of verbal symbols that he had made for the conceptual power of mental ones: "La parole qui agit n'est point celle qui s'adresse à la faible part éclairée mais qui exprime la part obscure encore et qui n'a point encore de langage" (CD, 853). This confidence in symbols is expressed also as a belief in poetry:

Je crois tellement à la vérité de la poésie. (Il m'a aidé, Eddington, quand il parle des ordonnances symboliques différentes.) Le poète n'est pas plus futile que le physicien. L'un et l'autre recoupent des vérités mais celle du poète est plus urgente car il s'agit de sa propre conscience. (CN, 152)

Saint-Exupéry's distrust of words is, then, clearly not absolute. He recognizes, on the contrary, no inherent limitations for the expressive capacity of figurative and symbolic language.

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17 See Note 13 above.
We have already stated at the beginning of this chapter that in Saint-Exupéry's youth psychological and literary symbolism had already been a subject of general concern and discussion for many years. We shall try briefly to place his own conceptions in perspective with this general development of symbolic theory and practice, less with the intention of discovering influences — which are surely present — than in order to make some significant distinctions.

M. Marcel Raymond describes in the following way the essential change of attitude toward language which accompanied romanticism:

Ainsi, tandis que l'écrivain classique, désireux de se connaître, se faisaît à l'introspection et transposait le résultat de ses observations sur le plan de l'intelligence discursive, le poète romantique, renonçant à une connaissance qui ne serait pas en même temps un sentiment et une jouissance de soi — et un sentiment de l'univers, éprouvé comme une présence — charge son imagination de composer le portrait métaphorique, symbolique, de lui-même, en ses métamorphoses. 18

The famous "pathetic fallacy" was, in effect, an early step toward a symbolic concept of thought and language. Emphasis upon the symbolic expression of the soul is intensified with Baudelaire, who realizes the close kinship of the physical and the spiritual and who sees in the "forêt de symboles" of nature "non pas un réel existant par elle-même et pour elle-même, mais un immense réservoir d'analogies et aussi une espèce d'excitant pour l'imagination." 19

Out of the varied material of his perceptions and memory, he works to create an order which is "l'expression infaillible de son âme." 20


19 Ibid., p. 21. 20 Ibid., p. 22.
The analogies and correspondences which he discovers in nature are transformed into poetry as metaphors, symbols, similes, and allegory. Baudelaire's whole object is, however, more than a purely lyrical one, more than that of understanding and expressing the self; he actually hopes to achieve a sort of understanding and expression of the universe. The countless analogies which he perceives seem to be proof of an original unity of all reality, and his interest in his own mind is but a part of this much larger interest: "S'il se penche sur son esprit comme sur un miroir, s'il essaye d'augmenter à tout prix — et par des artifices même — sa plasticité, son 'agilité,' sa transparence c'est que quelque chose en lui espère obscurément y découvrir un jour, et y déchiffrer, l'image de l'univers entier." He was in this sense a seeker and creator of really mystical knowledge.

M. Raymond considers that the spiritual descendants of Baudelaire may be grouped roughly into two lines: that of the artistes and that of the voyants. With Mallarmé, who falls into the first category, the emphasis upon the discovery of general truth grows and the lyrical preoccupations become correspondingly less important. His approach is superficially closer to that of an objective thinker, though the two really seek quite different things: "....si la tâche du poète est parallèle à celle du savant, elle ne se confond pas avec

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21. Ernst Cassirer says, concerning primitive man's attitude toward language: "....we can easily understand the use and specific function of the magic word. The belief in magic is based upon a deep conviction of the solidarity of ié."

22. Raymond, op. cit., p. 28.
elle; les analogies qu'ils recherchent l'un et l'autre ne sont pas du même ordre et les univers qu'ils construisent reposent sur des bases différentes."

M. Raymond considers, nevertheless, that this poet's project for explaining the world through analogy and symbolism was the most ambitious ever conceived by a French writer.

In Rimbaud the lyrical, Dionysiac side of Baudelaire is continued and made dominant, and it is a question of a "dérèglement de tous les sens" and of becoming a "voyant." The emphasis is again upon personal moods and feelings and, though these feelings permit the poet to attain "l'inconnu," there is scarcely any concern with reaching a mystical understanding of the universe: "Mage plutôt que mystique, son égoïsme, un égoïsme transcendant, ne se laisse oublier de lui que par intermittences."  

M. Raymond insists that his distinctions between these two descendants of Baudelaire are far from absolute and points out their essential kinship in the common desire to "se libérer des choses et .... à rejoindre une patrie infiniment lointaine." Though this aspiration is a characteristic of mysticism, it is joined, for both lines of poets, to a dependence upon exterior reality which is foreign to true mysticism: "Seul, le goût de la chair et un attachement voluptueux à ses sensations lui permettront [au poète] d'ensemencer sa mémoire de la moisson d'images qui peupleront son œuvre. Le vrai mystique, au contraire, s'efforce de mourir au sensible...."  

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23 Ibid., p. 31.  
24 Ibid., p. 41.  
25 Ibid., p. 43.  
26 Ibid., p. 43.
Saint-Exupéry's theories of symbolism are obviously among the direct progeny of those of Baudelaire. The perception of analogies or correspondences between different physical qualities and, especially, between abstract and physical qualities, is the basis of his whole interpretation of thought and language. He too is in search of an underlying unity of reality or, in his own terms, of a language which expresses this unity. In this sense he is also a mystic thinker, though, again like the poet, he is dependent upon the world of sensation for the subject matter of thought and expression. Yet there is between his speculations and those of Baudelaire — and more particularly those of Rimbaud — an essential difference of emphasis and of tone. The concept of poetic creation in a sort of delirium is almost absent from his theory, and in _Citadelle_ he seems to denounce the idea explicitly:

Certes, il n'est que magie et il est du rôle du cérémonial de te conduire vers des captures qui ne sont point de l'essence des pièges, comme il en est de la brûlure de coeur que ceux du Nord tirent une fois l'an d'un mélange de résine, de bois verni et de cire chaude. Mais je dis fausse magie et paresse et incohérence ta trituration dans ta soupière d'ingrédients de hasard, dans l'attente d'un miracle que tu n'aurais point préparé.  

In the same chapter of _Citadelle_ the author inveighs against excessive and irresponsible innovations in language (CD, 888). We have already noted, on the other hand, his emphatic distrust of logic, and his theories clearly require a certain inventiveness in language. He is

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27 CD, 889. Cf. for this discussion François, pp. 95-97, where he suggests that Saint-Exupéry's disdain is only for twentieth-century imitators of Rimbaud and Baudelaire, particularly the Surrealists.
also particularly convinced of the value of symbols born in dream or in contemplation, as the already cited letter to Benjamin Crémieux and numerous passages in his novels indicate. If Saint-Exupéry nowhere describes in detail the ideal creative mood, it seems probable that he envisages something between a logical, reasoning frame of mind and the "dérèglement de tous les sens" advocated by Rimbaud. The phrase "volonté d'hyperconscience" with which M. Raymond describes the attitude of Mallarmé might perhaps come near to describing that of Saint-Exupéry as well.

One notes also in his speculations a relative lack of emphasis upon understanding and expressing the moi and a consequently greater one upon discovering and expressing the unity of the universe. We have seen that for Baudelaire these two interests really merge—as they scarcely do for Rimbaud — but the different emphasis in the thought of Saint-Exupéry is nevertheless significant. Again a somewhat closer relationship is indicated to Mallarmé, for whom the lyrical tendency became less and less important and of whose sonnet "Le Cygne" M. Raymond says: "Le symbole est ici synthèse et la poésie du moi se mue en une poésie de l'esprit." Mallarmé's ambition to write a book

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28 For example a passage in Chapter XXVII of Pilote de guerre in the course of which Saint-Exupéry declares: "Aucune explication verbale ne remplace jamais la contemplation" (PG, 377).


30 The already quoted statement about the best poetic images ("Tu trouves" CD, 680) is evidence, however, that he was genuinely concerned with self-knowledge and self-expression. Bernis of Courrier-Sud is definitely interested in understanding himself ("Bernis songe qu'il se connaît mal." CS, 69) and Geneviève as well.

"qui fût 'Le Livre'," and which would sum up the universe is comparable to Saint-Exupéry's own ambition in undertaking *Citadelle*. The two writers also resemble each other in their insistence upon the importance of art in creation and upon the necessity of obtaining from words their "pleine efficacité."

Differences between them are also, of course, very evident and very important. Saint-Exupéry believed passionately that the poet should participate, and even lead, in the practical affairs of life, while Mallarmé was famous for his detached, quasi-monastic life. Saint-Exupéry saw in the poet a man different from his fellows not so much in essence as by the degree of his creativity. His own writing, which may justly be called poetic prose because of the density of its symbolic and figurative meaning, still does not attain the incredible density of Mallarmé's "quintessences," for which, we are told, he had a "curiosité émerveillée." Comparison of the two still has considerable meaning, and if Saint-Exupéry is to be affiliated with one of the two lines of Baudelaire's descendents distinguished by M. Raymond, it is in the file of artists rather than that of *voyants* that he fits more naturally.

The role of image and symbol in lyric poetry and in the novel are

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33 Cf. Raymond, pp. 31-33, and our own previous discussion of this preoccupation for Saint-Exupéry.

34 Cf. M. François's discussion (pp. 92-98) of Saint-Exupéry's conception of the poet as revealed in *Citadelle*.

35 Pélissier, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
not entirely different since it is in both instances a question of expressing or of evoking what cannot be designated so well by literal language. In so far as the prose writer is expressing himself or a personal view of life, the distinction between his and the poet's use of words is tenuous and may indeed be purely formal. The novelist has also, however, to present the thoughts and feelings of fictional characters and perhaps to suggest as well the interpretation of a story or series of events. The use of imagery and symbolism to these ends is not at all a recent development. One of the greatest of all novels of symbolic expression, Flaubert's Madame Bovary, was published in the same year as the Fleurs du mal and was destined to be as fruitful for the development of its own genre as Baudelaire's verses have been for that of poetry. It will be useful to note briefly to what extent Saint-Exupéry's conceptions were already present in the theory and practice of his great predecessor.

Flaubert was inclined by nature towards the perception and creation of images and he believed fervently in their great power of expression. His key principle concerning the unity of forme and fond led him, however, to scrutinize all his images with great care for pertinence and general effect. He plainly realized that people are apt

36 This is also likely to be true, of course, for a dramatist. In his A Treatise on the Novel, Robert Liddell suggests that the spiritual ancestry of the modern novel should probably be sought in the drama rather than in the romances of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. (Oxford, 1947), pp. 16-20.

37 V. for these remarks Don L. Demorest, L'expression figurée et symbolique dans l'oeuvre de Gustave Flaubert (Paris, 1931), pp. 26-50.
to think in images, for his characters do so with great frequency and the "terms" of their imaginative thought are keys to their natures. 38 The images in his characters' minds are not always presented in the text as metaphor or simile but may be symbolic details of other kinds. Actual surroundings or events may take on analogical and symbolic meaning. In his study of Flaubert's imagery and symbolism, Professor Demorest emphasizes the psychological importance of these details:

L'emploi de ces détails, leur réapparition au bon moment, entrent bien dans la conception de la symétrie artiste qu'avait Flaubert, mais aussi ils s'accordent parfaitement avec la conception psychologique sur laquelle sont basés ses livres, sur le fonctionnement tantôt clair, tantôt obscur et mystérieux, de toutes ces associations, de toutes ces correspondances, qui tyrannisent et qui enchantent l'humanité, qui mènent à la douleur et au désespoir, et à la folie, comme elles mènent aux jouissances les plus pures, aux créations les plus nobles.39

As the beginning of the foregoing quotation implies, Flaubert was also a master of using images and symbolic detail as leitmotiv.40 Such devices not only give structure to the novel but also play a role in the general interpretation.

All of these conceptions and practices are evident in the novel of Saint-Exupéry which we shall examine in this study. Since his theories expressed in the Carnets and elsewhere concern more often

38 Professor Demorest has noted that in Madame Bovary the most effective image or symbol is often "celui qui exprime le plus précisément ou suggère le plus finement non seulement la pensée ou le sentiment du personnage, mais aussi sa tournure d'esprit, le genre de son imagination, sa condition sociale ou professionnelle, ses forces intellectuelles, morales, sentimentales, imaginatives." Op. cit., p. 480.

39 Ibid., p. 639.

the mechanism of thought than literary practice, one finds no direct references to the novelistic importance of symbolic detail and leit-motiv. It is easy, however, to infer a belief in their efficacy of expression from his general theory of symbolism.

The symbolic interpretation of exterior reality received a powerful new form in Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*, a novel with which, we shall see, Courrier-Sud has great similarities of tone and even of plot. In his discussion of the influence of symbolism upon this author, 41 M. Albert Léonard speaks of his intuition of a second landscape behind the objective one and of his ability to interpret reality in a purely personal way:

...le climat où il vivait avait quelque chose d'irréel, de supra-terrestre, d'aérien. 42

Alain-Fournier .... se mit à approfondir ses idées personnelles, à donner corps à ce don prodigieux qu'il avait de voir le monde sous un angle bien personnel. Il savait bien, lui, que le monde était vraiment la construction, le reflet de son âme, de ses rêves, de sa fantaisie. Pour lui, tout était possible. Il regardait la nature avec les yeux de l'enfance, émerveillé d'y découvrir ce que nous y chercherions en vain, toujours tourné vers l'illusion, croyant fermement à "l'immanence du miracle," jouant du monde et de la réalité concrète. 43

Such an attitude seems almost incompatible with the meticulous, hyper-critical examination of one's mental images recommended by Saint-Exupéry in his theoretical writings. Yet he also believed, as we have seen, in the special perspicacity of a child's view of things, and


Bernis of Courrier-Sud regards the exterior world, especially in boyhood, in a way which is strikingly reminiscent of "le grand Meaulnes."

It is also useful, for the purposes of distinction and mise en relief, to compare Saint-Exupéry's conceptions to those of Marcel Proust, whose novelistic production ended just before his own began. M. Arnaud Dandieu defines thus the special character of the Proustian metaphor:

C'est une véritable action sacrée. La recherche du Temps perdu, c'est-à-dire l'évocation du passé, est rendue possible grâce à un certain nombre de moments privilégiés dont Proust a fait la charpente de toute son oeuvre qui n'est elle-même qu'une métaphore.44

The "états privilégiés" in which such metaphor becomes operative are involuntary, though Proust reflects consciously and voluntarily upon their meaning. All of his spiritual revelations are provoked, in effect, by physical sensations which contain for him the very essence of the reality which they recall. This "expérience affective de la resurrection du passé" is called by M. Dandieu "la métaphore proustienne."45 It is based upon a very special sort of analogy which M. Dandieu terms "sentimentale,"46 meaning, apparently, not only that it is dependent upon sensations but also that it is quite subjective.

This conception and those of Saint-Exupéry have both similarities

44 Marcel Proust; sa révélation psychologique (Paris, 1930), pp. 18-19.


46 Ibid., p. 18. M. Emeric Fiser states too that for Proust "toute sensation est un mouvement d'âme" and calls this metaphorical relationship a "spiritualisation du réel." L'esthétique de Marcel Proust (Paris, 1933), pp. 23 and 44.
and differences. We have seen the latter writer's fascination with the peculiar expressive power of such non-linguistic phenomena as a smile, a taste, or a smell, and, if he does not speak directly in his theoretical writings of involuntary memory, his characters often experience a form of it. When she is about to begin her escapist adventure with Bernis, Geneviève remembers her childhood home and way of life. The mechanism of memory is, however, quite different. Geneviève is reminded of her old home in its quality of superficial solidity and durability, a quality which is lacking in the physical and spiritual atmosphere of Bernis' apartment. The underlying analogy in this case -- as for Saint-Exupéry's metaphors and symbols in general -- is not a sentimental one in the full sense of M. Dandieu's definition of Proust's metaphor. Though all mental concepts and symbolic images are, according to Saint-Exupéry, based upon personal experience, they have an intellectual, not to say a logical, analogy at their origin. In the detail of his writing, of course, Proust also employed the more objective sort of metaphor, as M. Dandieu seems to recognize. It is pertinent nevertheless to distinguish his central and more famous conception from that of Saint-Exupéry.

This brief survey will have served to demonstrate the richness of the symbolic tradition in French literature upon which Saint-Exupéry had to draw. In the course of it we have pointed out with some insistence the comparative objectivity and matter-of-factness of

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his approach to imagery and symbolism. This insistence is not meant to obscure the fact of his very real artistic fascination with these poetic concerns, a fascination which always provided a sort of check upon his didactic and pragmatic tendencies. In his first novel, which we shall analyze in this study, he is still, perhaps, more a disinterested artist than a teacher, but even in the later works — including Citadelle — this first character of his literary approach continues strong in the face of the tremendous growth of the second.

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This survey of Saint-Exupéry's reflections upon thought and language has been prepared in part for the purpose of elucidating and justifying our critical approach to his first novel. It is therefore pertinent to summarize this initial chapter's implications for the main study. In the detailed analysis which follows the introductory discussion of Courrier-Sud as a novel, we shall be concerned essentially with two matters: with both the static and the changing inner lives of the individual characters, and with a general interpretation of the whole action. For both investigations a familiarity with the substance and even the terminology of the author's theories is invaluable. His idea of the unconscious structures and conscious concepts and images which are organized into more or less consistent languages or universes is clearly very pertinent for the understanding of character. Geneviève, Bernis, and the narrator of Courrier-Sud all have personal languages or universes which are revealed through direct or indirect presentation of their thoughts and feelings and, only a little less frequently, in their efforts to understand each other.
The universes of the characters are composed and "tied together" by images symbolic of concepts. The rapide and the navire, for example, are elaborate mental images which represent well-conceived ideas. Certain ideas of physical qualities, such as douceur and tiédeur, may also, upon being extended analogically into the spiritual realm, become imaginative, symbolic conceptions. Abstract ideas, such as ordre and nécessité, do not ordinarily involve any analogy or symbolism, and, like the example of honneur given in the Carnets (pp. 105-106), are in normal thinking "never anything but structures." Such structures may, however, become tools of conscious, creative thought if evoked in unexpected circumstances. Thus Bernis thinks of the familiar countryside on his return trip to Paris with Geneviève as a "cadre nécessaire qui montait au jour" (CS, 42), and even reflects a little later: "...toujours cette image de nécessité" (CS, 43). Abstractions conceived thus analogically are indeed almost imaginative.

It must be noted that we are concerned in this study both with the figurative thought of the characters and with figurative language in the text, and that the two do not always correspond. Our definition of the literary or poetic image is, as stated in the Introduction, a very wide one meant to include every possible form of simile

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48 See Chapter V.
49 See Chapter IV.
50 Ibid.
51 See Chapter VI.
and metaphor, or analogical language of every sort. Even so, the term cannot include all the details studied since the characters' analogical and symbolic thought does not always express itself as figures of speech in the text. Very often actual occurrences or physical surroundings take on analogical and symbolic meaning in their minds. (We have seen in the foregoing discussion that Saint-Exupéry recognized the existence of this psychological phenomenon.) During the elopement, for example, the faulty motor of Bernis's automobile symbolizes for both lovers the unnaturalness of their situation (CS, 37-38). Occasionally one notes symbolic details, such as the name of the city of Sens, which seem to have meaning only for the author and the reader. These are, however, quite rare in Courrier-Sud where, we shall show, virtually all general interpretation comes via the minds of the narrator and the characters.

We shall in all cases be dealing with analogical thought, and to separate arbitrarily poetic images from other symbolic details would be to do violence to the novel. The characters think according to key imaginative concepts or obsessions, and these obsessions manifest themselves in attitudes towards exterior reality as well as in thoughts appearing in the text as metaphor or simile. The general interpretation suggested by the narrator is also couched in both sorts of symbolic expression.

Extremely important for this general interpretation of the novel is the author's theory of the resolution of contradictions through poetic images. The universes of Geneviève and Bernis come into direct conflict, and the author seeks in certain passages to lead the reader
into a third universe where there is no more litige or contradiction. This purpose is usually accomplished in terms of the characters' own imaginative concepts; Geneviève, Bernis, and the narrator all try to understand the confusing world around them and within them. Their attempts to resolve contradictions are, in effect, steps toward the grand, coherent universe of concepts envisaged in Saint-Exupéry's mysticism.

The organization of our discussion is meant to correspond to the principal themes of meaning — that is, both to the main obsessions of the characters and to the main lines of interpretation which are based upon these. We have found, not unexpectedly, that images and symbols related in source or according to literal meaning are usually related in deeper meaning as well. Thus nearly all ship and sea images are discussed for the theme of "Time and Decay." We did not begin this study with pre-conceived themes in mind but have, in every case, allowed the discovered meanings of image and symbol to determine our grouping. It is necessarily, however, somewhat arbitrary, since complicated thought does not permit itself to be analyzed and classified perfectly. We have tried to point out in special remarks and in the conclusions the main relationships not indicated by our arrangement.

It is probably unnecessary to say that the themes of characterization and interpretation are never complete or wholly conclusive. It is not to be expected, from the psychological point of view, that any of the characters or, for that matter, the author himself should have resolved all the contradictions in life and have attained a supreme, coherent concept. It should be remembered, too, from the
literary standpoint, that a work of art is not a cryptogram and that an artist — especially one dealing with the shadowy realm of the human soul — communicates rather by suggestion than through exact formulae. By the liberal use of symbolic expression, Saint-Exupéry has presented suggestively the attitudes or Weltanschauungen of his characters and, less firmly, an interpretation of their careers.

More for Courrier-Sud than for Vol de nuit and Terre des hommes, the very substance and action are presented symbolically. Our analysis and re-synthesis is performed in the hope of illuminating the novel's meaning but not, of course, with the pretensions of improving it or even of capturing it in its entirety. What the study may effect with most authority and originality is a demonstration of the most essential area of the author's artistry — his use of image and symbol.
CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION AND NATURE OF COURRIER-SUD

In this introduction to the study of images and symbolic expression in Courrier-Sud, we shall first summarize the beginnings of Saint-Exupéry's literary career and the biographical background of his first novel. After giving some attention to previous critical estimates, we shall examine the book's over-all structure and attempt to distinguish the several layers of its plot, invoking for this latter discussion some of Benedetto Croce's distinctions between the different sorts of literary appeal.

There is reason to believe that Saint-Exupéry began to write at an extraordinarily early age and that he turned naturally at first to poetry. His sister Simone recalls that he used to awaken the family to read to them some of his verses even before he was ten years old, and Patrick Kessel reproduces photographically in his book the manuscript of a poem written in adolescence. Painstakingly copied and ornamented with flowers, it is called "L'Adieu" and expresses the sentiments of a disappointed lover. The boy was also much given to composing stories; Mlle de Crisenoy mentions, for example, an "histoire de spectre" to which he treated his classmates at the

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Jesuit school in Montgré. That this penchant for the melodramatic and romanesque was also enduring is evidenced in certain recollections by Mlle de Saussine of the author as a lycée student:

Nous savions qu'Antoine écrivait. Aussi dans l'après-midi nous lut-il un drame poétique de sa composition. Des princes brigands y évoluaient dans un royaume imaginaire qu'ils éblouissaient, terrorisaient. ... L'auteur déclamait, une mèche de cheveux noirs sur l'œil et coupe-papier à la main. Quel poignard! (LJ, 11-12)

His orientation towards more serious writing seems to have coincided, on the other hand, with the initiation into flying. M. Delange suggests that these first experiences in aviation found expression almost immediately in literary form. It is known in any case that Saint-Exupéry worked on his first composition about flying (and first major writing) during the unhappy years spent at the Tuileries de Boiron and as a traveling salesman for the Saurer company. In undated letters of 1923 he makes the following remarks to his mother: "Mon roman chôme un peu" (LM, 126), and "Mon roman mûrit page par page" (LM, 132). Again the same year he mentions that his "conte" is about to be typewritten (LM, 136).

During this period of desultory writing, of amateur flying, and of not very successful efforts to sell trucks, Saint-Exupéry's literary orientations were also becoming fixed. His cousin Yvonne de Lestrange, Duchesse de Trévise, maintained in Paris during 1925 and 1926 a veritable literary salon. The young man was able to meet there

a number of writers, among them André Gide, and, through these new relationships, to become acquainted with the staff of the *Nouvelle revue française*. Jean Prévost, who was charged with finding new authors for several reviews, became interested in Saint-Exupéry and published fragments of a story, called "L'Aviateur," in the April, 1926 number of *Le Navire d'argent*. These twenty-eight pages are reproduced in the volume *Un sens à la vie*, where M. Claude Reynal states in the preface that the original long story in manuscript called "L'Evasion de Jacques Bernis" has been lost. It is impossible to be sure in what measure this story was a first version of *Courrier-Sud*, but speculation about its contents has some importance since it has been suggested that Saint-Exupéry artificially fused the first material with something new and different in order to put together a novel. What has been preserved in the published story consists mainly of impressions in flight attributed to Bernis and a student pilot, but one also sees the former moving in a more conventional milieu — out of his place, to be sure — and the death of both pilots is described. These latter two elements, along with the fact of the original title "L'Evasion de Jacques Bernis,"

5 Mlle de Saussine suggests, in her preface to the *Lettres de jeunesse* (Paris, 1953), pp. 20-21, that it was at this moment that Saint-Exupéry decided to write a novel about flying, but the earlier mentions, cited above, in letters to his mother indicate that the plan was much older.


imply the existence of a rather substantial plot and psychological preoccupation. There is no evidence of Geneviève's having existed in the first version, but we may be sure that neither, for that matter, was there any mention of "La Ligne," since Saint-Exupéry did not enter commercial aviation until October, 1926. Though a number of the descriptions of flying in the published "L'Aviateur" were preserved virtually intact in Courrier-Sud, the whole account of Bernis' professional experience was plainly reworked. The final writing was done, we know, at Cap Juby, where Saint-Exupéry showed passages of it to friends, notably to Mermoz. Whatever changes he made at that time -- and there were surely important ones -- they cannot be summed up, as Mr. Maxwell Smith implies, in terms of the grafting of a conventional love story onto a genuine and experienced tale of flying. Besides the reasons already mentioned, it should be noted, on one hand, that even Saint-Exupéry's first-hand knowledge of flying had to be adapted for fiction and that, on the other, the picture of Geneviève in the novel is surely not a product of pure imagination. She and her world are too clearly reminiscent of the author's family, especially his sister Didi, and of his general childhood surroundings. Moreover the early correspondence contains clear evidence that he was interested in understanding and in describing the world to which Geneviève belongs. The principal defense of his inclusion of a

8 I bid., pp. 50-51.  
9 I bid., p. 63.  
10 We cite as an example this passage from a letter written in 1924 where the author distinguishes his character from that of his mother in terms of expressions found also in Courrier-Sud:

Je vous aime vraiment de fond du coeur ma petite Maman.  
Il faut me pardonner de n'être pas facilement à la sur-
sentimental intrigue must derive, of course, from a detailed examina-
tion of the text such as we shall shortly undertake. Only then will
it be possible to consider the question of the book's unity.

Though other critics have not discounted Courrier-Sud in terms
so damaging as those of Mr. Smith, nearly all of them have searched
it for the qualities particular to the later works and have been es-
pecially concerned about its documentary genuineness. M. Delange
says, for example, that Saint-Exupéry was already intent, in the 1926
tale, upon "témoignage," and M. Daniel Anet implies — with less
emphasis, it is true — the same thing for Courrier-Sud. Such
observations may be useful for understanding the author's work as a
whole, but to take them as the starting point for the examination of
a novel is surely prejudicial. M. Anet goes on to say indeed that
Saint-Exupéry "était encore loin de nous dans Courrier-Sud" and even
to deplore his hiding behind characters. If one may legitimately

face des choses et de rester tout en dedans. On est
comme on peut et c'est même quelquefois un peu lourd.
....Vous êtes vraiment celle .... qui connaissez un peu
l'envers de ce type bavard et superficiel que je donne
à Y.... .... (Italics ours) (LM, 154-155)

11. Besides the critics cited below André Gascht, L'humanisme
cosmique d'Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (Bruges, 1947), pp. 13-15, and
Maria de Crisenoy, op. cit., p. 73.


13. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: poète, romancier, moraliste (Paris,
1946), p. 66.

14. Ibid. In his preface to the Pléiade edition of the Œuvres (Paris, 1953), p. xiii, M. Roger Caillois admits that the milieux and
characters of Courrier-Sud are "décrits pour eux-mêmes" but then re-
joins his own thesis of témoignage by declaring: "Cependant ces pre-
mières œuvres sont déjà des reportages, plutôt que des romans. La
transposition de la réalité y est faible." He discourages in this way
any primarily novelistic consideration of the first two books.
regret that the author's direct, didactic voice is not heard in this book as in the later ones, it is hardly justifiable to place so little importance upon the fictional characters he has created.

We are not aware that Saint-Exupéry ever protested against the strongly philosophical and biographical slants with which critics have approached his work. In his later period, à propos of such a book as Terre des hommes, protest would have been less appropriate than for Courrier-Sud, though even there the values of personal témoignage and of philosophical teaching are far from the only ones. He was no longer alive, actually, when literary judges began trying to make all parts of his work conform to a single conception. We may, however, quote pertinently on the subject of this critical practice another twentieth-century writer, Albert Camus:

Celui qui cherche encore, on veut qu'il ait conclu. Mille voix lui annoncent déjà ce qu'il a trouvé pourtant, il le sait, ce n'est pas cela.  

L'idée que tout écrivain écrit forcément sur lui-même et se peint dans ses livres est une des puérilités que le romantisme nous a léguées. Il n'est pas du tout exclu, au contraire, qu'un artiste s'intéresse d'abord aux autres, ou à son époque, ou à des mythes familiers.

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15. In his recent book L'esthétique de Saint-Exupéry, already cited, M. Carlo François has indicated very forcefully the excesses of the biographical and philosophical approaches which have been the rule for criticism of Saint-Exupéry's works. His book is particularly efficacious in correcting the popular picture of the author as a man of action who wrote "messages" with little concern for form or for the literary tradition in which he was to find a place. Our own approach differs from that of M. François not so much in essence as by the greater attention which it gives to an individual work and to the role of image and symbol.


If a writer has plainly tried to create a work of art, a novel,\textsuperscript{18} he may rightly expect a reader and a critic to consider it without such prejudices as those of which Camus so justifiably complains. We shall try to approach \textit{Courrier-Sud} without pre-conceptions, not because of any lack of interest in the author's opinions and experiences, which are surely present in implicit form, but because to isolate these from the substance of the novel quite deforms the total impression.

Our next observations have to do with the over-all form of \textit{Courrier-Sud}. It seems to us that the most basic of these remarks is that the novel is narrated by a participant in its action. This fact becomes evident in the first-page description of the atmosphere at Cap Juby. The narrator is not, however, one of the principal characters, and he is not present at the most significant events of the book. Most of his knowledge of the plot has its origin in a letter from Bernis and in a conversation with him at Juby. His recollections

\textsuperscript{18}In this study we use "novel" as a loose, but not meaningless, term designating a fictional work of art in prose whose chief interests have to do with character and plot, and with what are really the subordinates of these, motive and background. While these conceptions may be proved to be somewhat arbitrary, they have no substitutes and the distinctions which they imply are essential ones. Robert Liddell says, for example, in his already mentioned \textit{Treatise on the Novel}:

The fact remains that novelists have generally conceived it to be their business to draw characters, and to make them behave within the limits of some sort of plot. It is therefore temerarious in the extreme to reject these terms, and to put out of court all the evidence that can be collected about the way in which novelists have set about their business (p. 28).

Probably novelists most often work with the full and naive conviction that the whole meaning of a novel lies in the plot and characters; and probably those who no longer hold this full and naive conviction would do well to act as if they did (p. 29).
of a common childhood with both Bernis and Geneviève are the source of his familiarity with their characters and general preoccupations. Only in the search for Bernis, which comes in the final episode of the novel, does he learn about any part of the action from a third person (the sergeant in the desert) and from immediately contemporary personal experience.

The narrator's role is then essentially that of confidant to Bernis, but there are some very important complicating factors. He reflects emotionally about Geneviève's and Bernis' actions and gives the latter some advice in a letter. When he finds Bernis dead in the desert, his thoughts are a sort of key for a general interpretation of the novel. This key is, to be sure, an ambiguous and purely symbolic one, and his reflections in the course of the book also lack the tone of sureness and omniscience which a narrator assumes in, say, such a novel as Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh. The following excerpt from his impressions of the story Bernis tells at Juby illustrates very well the general tone of musing wonder and interrogation:

Où vas-tu maintenant chercher le trésor, plongeur des Indes qui touches les perles, mais ne sais pas les ramener au jour? Ce désert sur lequel je marche, moi qui suis retenu, comme un plomb, au sol, je n'y saurais rien découvrir. Mais il n'est pour toi, magicien, qu'un voile de sable, qu'une apparence...

(CS, 68)

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19 This tone is very much reminiscent of the one obtaining in Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes, whose narrator is also somewhat awed by the character and adventures of the hero. We shall indicate in the general discussion more specific parallels between certain episodes of the two novels.
This passage is typical of the capital passages of interpretation.\textsuperscript{20}

Their general tone is indicative of a sort of emotional involvement on the part of the narrator, a fact which is indeed attested very clearly in a paragraph which begins the second part of the novel:

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Quand les événements que je vais dire auront peu à peu terminé leur faible remous, leurs cercles concentriques, sur ceux des personnages qu'ils ont simplement effacés, comme l'eau refermée d'un lac, quand seront amorties les émotions poignantes, puis moins poignantes, puis douces que je leur dois, le monde de nouveau me paraîtra sûr. (CS, 15)
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As M. François implies in his discussion of the novel,\textsuperscript{21} its over-all construction is partially dependent upon the progress of the narrator's own moral experience, which constitutes one layer of the novel's development. A brief summary of the plot will demonstrate this observation. At the beginning of Part I, Bernis is leaving Toulouse for the flight toward Africa as the narrator at Juby evokes the air of expectancy for the arrival of the plane. After presenting Bernis' first impressions in flight, he recalls a visit the two had paid to their old collège, and then turns again to the feelings of his hero in flight. Part II, considerably more unified, contains in chronological order almost the whole relation of Bernis' leave in France. He finds at first that his friends have made new lives in which he has no part and feels very much out of place in the frivolous milieux of Paris which he visits. All of these impressions are transmitted in a letter to the narrator, a letter in which he also tells

\textsuperscript{20}One should not overlook, on the other hand, an occasional more confident and more categorical statement such as this one: "Qu'as-tu appris plus tard à courir le monde, Jacques Bernis? L'avion? On avance lentement en creusant son trou dans un cristal dur" (CS, 9).

of his joy at finding Genevieve unchanged. The reading of this letter causes the narrator to reminisce about his and Bernis' relations to Geneviève in childhood. He then recounts directly and in chronological order Bernis' discovery of the shallow and egotistic character of Geneviève's husband Herlin, the illness and death of her child, and her consequent turning to Bernis for consolation. At this point he gives the text of a letter written by him to warn Bernis against taking Geneviève away from her accustomed surroundings. Then he tells of the pair's abortive elopement and of Bernis' despair which leads him to seek help or escape first in Notre-Dame and then in Montmartre. At the beginning of Part III the reader is alternately shown Bernis in his plane and Juby awaiting his arrival. These glimpses are followed by the most symbolically significant of the narrator's recollections: those of his and Bernis' boyhood visits to the old cistern and to the attic. Bernis then lands at Juby, where, presumably, he tells his friend what has happened in France and on his return journey. We are told explicitly that he gives there an account of his final visit to Geneviève, which the narrator then recounts for us. After a brief quotation of Bernis' symbolically expressed résumé of the whole adventure, there is a relation of what happens to him after the departure from Juby up through his stay with the old sergeant in the desert. The final pages are then given over to the narrator's account of his search for the missing Bernis and to his reflections upon finding him dead in the desert.

This organization does derive generally, as M. François says,
without elaboration, from three stages of memory. In the first part the narrator is concerned largely, even in his memories of the visit to the collège, with the nature and meaning of the life of flying which he and Bernis have chosen. In telling of the events of Bernis' leave in the second part, he is occupied mainly with understanding the conflict between Geneviève's and Bernis' worlds. The final part consists principally of reflections about Bernis' and Geneviève's whole careers, reflections which naturally sum up all the others. These divisions are not exclusive; impressions of flying are found in both the first and the last parts, and the subject matter of the narrator's recollections in the different sections is not confined to the general preoccupations which we have assigned to them.

These seeming irregularities are not very important, and it is not they which prevent Courrier-Sud from being primarily a novel of the narrator's own moral experience in the mold of Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu or of Saint-Exupéry's own later Pilote de guerre. This difference derives rather from the rarity and unobtrusiveness of the narrator's references to his own feelings and, especially, from the wondering and interrogative tone of his impressions in the last pages. The presence of an intellectual and emotional drama in his mind is nevertheless basically important; it helps determine the over-all structure of the novel, and we shall have to take cognizance of it in our attempted interpretation.

In discussing the next layer of the book's structure and substance we shall return briefly to the question of personal témoignage.

\[^{22}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 177.\]
and documentary reportage which was broached in the first section of this chapter. There does indeed exist an aspect of the work which may be called documentary, and this aspect is related to a particular element of its structure. Rather often we are given specific details about the métier of flying the mail, about the pilot's experiences in flight, and about his and his associates' life around French and foreign airfields. These details are presented generally in connection with Bernis' flight from Toulouse to Africa. The vicissitudes of this journey provide a surface plot which, like the narrator's moral experience, embraces the whole novel. We learn of them in glimpses of Bernis in his airplane and of the author at Juby and, most strikingly, through the narrative device of radio messages sent from one post to another. The first of these, which announces Bernis' departure from Toulouse, opens the book, and the last of them, which reports his death in the desert and the safe delivery of the mail by another pilot, closes it. M. Jean Prévost was doubtless thinking of these numerous dispatches when he spoke of the telegraphic style of Courrier-Sud. M. Roger Caillois may even have had them in mind primarily when he used the word "reportage" to describe the book's principal merit. Another critic attaches special importance to the last

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23 In his preface to Vol de nuit (Paris, 1931), p. 16, André Gide speaks of the importance of that book's "valeur d'un document." He might have spoken similarly of Courrier-Sud.

24 Compte-rendu of Courrier-Sud in the Nouvelle revue française, XXXIII (September, 1929), 417.

message as an indication that life goes on after personal tragedy.  

In this observation he alludes tacitly to the fact that Bernis' flight has itself two elements of interest — the personal fortune of the pilot and the drama of the whole "Ligne," that is, the struggle to get the mail through. This evident plot, on which the book's title is based, is not strong enough to make Courrier-Sud primarily a novel of adventure in flying. There lie under this surface a significant moral experience of the narrator, as we have already seen, and, more importantly, an extremely strong and searching characterization of Bernis and Geneviève and interpretation of their careers. In a letter to his mother in 1928, Saint-Exupéry referred to the various elements he wished to insert into the novel: "J'ai déjà une centaine de pages et suis assez empêtré sur sa construction. J'y veux faire entrer trop de choses et points de vue différents" (LM, 189). In a letter written five years before he had, however, already indicated, à propos of the first form of Courrier-Sud, the primary importance of what we have presented as the third layer, that is, the presentation of character and interpretation of action: "Toute ma pédagogie se précise et j'en fais mon livre. C'est le drame intérieur d'un type qui émerge" (LM, 140). (We may be sure that the "type" referred to is Bernis and not the narrator.)

In order to discuss further these principal elements or layers of Courrier-Sud we shall bring into service some of the distinctions and

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26 Maxwell Smith, op. cit., p. 69.
and conceptions employed by Benedetto Croce. He has, we know, defined and classified the different kinds of human expression with special attention to poetry and literature. While his divisions are naturally open to question and cannot be taken as absolute categories, the criteria he adopts are essential ones which go to the very heart of problems of appreciation and criticism. They seem to us particularly helpful in the analysis of a novel like Courrier-Sud, which contains many different elements.

Croce has distinguished four basic kinds of expression: the sentimental (or direct), the poetic, the prosaic (or expository), and the oratorical, this last being further divided into expression for persuasion and for entertainment (intrattenimento). The poetic expression of which he speaks is not a general category for all literature since there is rather in his terminology a capital distinction between poetic and literary works. He considers eligible for the former class very few authors indeed, only such ones as may be considered sublime. (Prominent among those whom he does admit are Homer, Ariosto, and Shakespeare.) He requires of pure poetry an extraordinary serenity, as we may best demonstrate with the following quotations:

27 Our citations and references in this discussion are taken from La Poesia; Introduzione alla critica e storia della poesia e della letteratura (Bari, 1953). In this book written near the end of Croce's life, he re-examines and summarizes the pertinence of his esthetic theories for literary criticism.

28 Croce's conception of "la poesia" is similar in several ways to that which Erich Auerbach has of literature in the classical or Homeric tradition, also characterized, according to him, by an "externalization" of all elements and by a lack of suspense and background. V. Chapter I of Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard Trask (Garden City, 1957), pp. 1-20.
...diversamente dal sentimento ... la poesia riannoda il particolare all' universale, accoglie sorpassandoli del pari dolore et piacere, e di sopra il cozzare delle parti contro le parti innalza la visione delle parti nel tutto, sul contrasto l' armonia, sull' angustia del lato la distesa dell' infinito. ...la poesia non si attua senza la lotta dello spirito entro sé stesso e ... è segnata dalla raggiunta sirena, nella quale pur trema ancora la commozione come una lacrima sul sorriso che l' ha rischiara, e dal nuovo e catartico sen- mento, che è la gioia della bellezza. 29

A rendere l' impressione che la poesia lascia di sé nelle anime, è affiorata spontanea sulle labbra la parola "malinconia". ... Un velo de mestizia par che avvolga la Bellezza, e non è velo, ma il volto stesso della Bellezza. 30

Croce insists upon the remoteness of the poetic atmosphere from that of practical life and upon the calmness of its tone, which is in essence that of leisurely memory ("l' euthanasia del ricordo"). 31 (In this he approaches Wordsworth's famous formula of "Emotion recollected in tranquility.") Criticism and judgment are absent from pure poetry, 32 and the poet's and reader's attitude, one of contemplation, is eternally fresh: "... quel mondo sommerso riemerge, [nella memoria] simile e pur diverso, fresco e primitivo, non più pensato e attuato e non ancora risottomesso al travaglio del pensiero né risospinto alle lotte dell'azione: contemplato." 33

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30 Ibid., p. 12.
31 Ibid.
32 Professor Auerbach remarks that the Homeric heroes "wake up every morning as if it were the first day of their lives...." Op. cit., p. 10.
33 Croce, op. cit., p. 32.
between the immagini of poetry and the simboli of philosophy, which are "segni di concetti." 34

Literary expression is, unlike poetry, a product of education and civilization. It consists in the "hybridization" of poetic expression with one of the others, "nell'attuata armonia tra le espressioni non-poetiche, cioè le passionali, prosastiche e oratorie o eccitanti, e quelle poetiche, in modo che le prime, nel loro corso, pur senza rin- negare sé stesse, non offendano la coscienza poetica e artistica." 35

In literature, as contrasted with pure poetry, the distinguishing concepts of style and content are valid. 36 Literature is not characterized by an "abbandono all'universale" but by a consciousness of purpose and of an intended audience. 37

The first "domain" of literature is that of lyricism or the elaboration of feeling, an aim accomplished "mercè la mediazione della riflessione, che scioglie un determinato sentimento dalla fantasia che già lo avvolgeva e idealizzava, e lo ristabilisce nella sua realtà, una realtà che si vuol tener ferma nel ricordo...." 38 Thus placed in its realistic surroundings, sentiment is not, however, judged but simply enjoyed. Oratorical literature has as its aim judgment and persuasion and may exist in any genre. Literature of entertainment

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34 Ibid., p. 16.
35 Ibid., p. 34.
36 Ibid., p. 36.
37 Ibid., p. 37.
38 Ibid., pp. 41-42.
(intrattenimento) is characterized by suspense, by the reader's identification of himself with the people portrayed, and by "compiacimento in immaginazione." In "didascalic" literature, whose purpose is to explain or interpret (but not to persuade), logic and poetry are fused. This, says the critic, is the proper domain of objective symbols, or of immagini-segni.

Croce implies that several of these modes of expression may co-exist in a single work, though one of them must dominate the others. It seems to us evident that they may and actually are almost certain to do so in the novel, which has often been called a fusion of the other genres. For the purposes of our demonstration, we shall assume that they do in Courrier-Sud. The three layers of plot and structure which we have distinguished may be qualified significantly according to Croce's criteria. Bernis' mail flight to Africa, which is at once the most evident and least important of these layers, partakes of suspense and is entertaining literature of a fairly elementary kind. The reader is concerned, however, not only for the fate of Bernis but also for that of the mail, and one may discern a certain "oratorical" or exhortatory purpose behind the insistence on the neces-

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39 Ibid., p. 47.
40 Ibid., p. 48.
41 We may offer as evidence for this interpretation his statement (p. 43) that Manzoni's Promessi sposi must, for all its poetic qualities, be considered an oratorical work because of the author's aims of social reform.

42 M. Roger Caillois says, for example, in his Puissances du roman (Marseille, 1942), p. 18: "Presque sans conscience, naïvement, mais avec sûreté, il [le roman] annexe peu à peu les genres qui autrefois se partageaient les lettres: épopée, satire, ou pamphlet. Il hérite de leur manière, de leur nature, de leur esprit."
sity of getting the mail through.

The narrator's own inner experience as he reflects upon the main action carries, on the contrary, very little suspense, since the reader is hardly concerned with his personal fortunes. Because the narrator is emotionally involved in the action, his thoughts sometimes have a sentimental or lyrical content. They also have a strong value of interpretation (espressione letteraria didascalica) and a much less important one of judgment (espressione letteraria oratorica). His judgments are never emphatic but are usually rather hesitating, since his attitude towards Bernis is one of great sympathy and even of admiration. His interpretation is evident everywhere, on the other hand, not only in direct reflections but in the entire narration.

The story of Geneviève and Bernis, which is the subject matter of the narrator's thoughts, is the main layer or element of the book. The fortunes of these characters do not create a great deal of suspense. The really climactic moments, such as their decision to go away together and their later decision to separate, are often not presented directly and, as we have already noted, the events are not always given in chronological order. Direct speech of the characters is rare and dramatic dialogue almost totally absent. Descriptive details, even many concerning Bernis' métier, usually have a symbolic rather than a documentary value. Physical and historical background is not of primary importance in the novel; if Bernis had been a sailor during the Age of Discovery instead of a twentieth-century pilot his moral experience might have been essentially the same. (Since, however, his mental symbols are derived from his environment they would
have been quite different.) Psychological background is, on the other hand, of capital importance; Bernis' personal drama could not be the same if he were, say, a clerk in a shop. Both Geneviève's and Bernis' characters are universal ones, but they are also rather complex and do not have the simplicity which Croce thinks necessary for the subjects of pure poetry.

The effect of the whole presentation is that the reader observes and interprets the story of Geneviève and Bernis along with the narrator. The emphasis is definitely upon sympathetic understanding rather than on either suspense or judgment. The narrator's own direct and indirect interpretations, which are strategically placed and have a great importance, are supplemented by the interpretations which he perceives in the minds of the characters themselves. Geneviève and, to a much greater extent, Bernis try to understand their own and each other's attitudes and actions, while the narrator, by virtue of his acuteness and familiarity with both characters, is able to present these efforts to us. The richest passages of the novel are, in effect, presentations of states of mind, principally through the device of the style indirect libre.

The book's main literary quality and appeal are then, in a sense, those of Croce's espressione letteraria didascalica. Yet the author's explanation is not really like that of a scientist or a moralizing philosopher, and the reader certainly does not seek to interpret this novel as he would a work which expounds objective truth. The crux of this confusion lies perhaps in Croce's distinction between the images of poetry, which are to be contemplated, and the immagini—
sign of didascalic writing, which are to be interpreted. We have already noted in Part I the author's conception of the role of imaginative symbols both in individual thought and in the communication of truth; imaginative and symbolic language appears in his first book with a concentration and a share of the whole meaning scarcely equaled in any of the subsequent ones except, perhaps, in Le Petit Prince and Citadelle. If one pays insufficient attention to this form of expression, the only things of interest are a scanty plot and a very few direct moralistic pronouncements. Both the characters and the narrator think in images, and these images recur as keys to their whole attitudes toward life, their Weltanschauungen. The recurring images and groups of images also constitute, from the reader's point of view, literary themes analogous to those of music. Together these themes and images do indeed suggest an interpretation of the novel. Yet it is not really a question of immagini-segni which have objective and conventional meaning. Geneviève's "superficiality" is not at all, for example, the quality normally denoted by this metaphorical term. These images do not simply communicate truth but actually create it, a function of imaginative language which we have also noted in the discussion of Saint-Exupéry's theories. At the same time they have an esthetic value and interest which does not derive wholly from their novelistic role, so that we may say, echoing again one of the author's conceptions, that they constitute their own truth. The contemplative approach which Croce noted in his enjoyment of pure poetry is, then, not wholly invalid for the appreciation of Courrier-Sud. These observations, along with the previous ones concerning the book's lack of
suspense, the relative unimportance of its historical background, and the wondering, undogmatic attitude of its narrator, indicate an element of Crocean pure poetry which exists beside the small sentimental and entertaining elements and the major "didascalic" one. (We shall see that Courrier-Sud is definitely, in the usual, non-Crocean sense of the term, a "poetic" novel.)

These remarks about the images of Courrier-Sud recall an observation made at the conclusion of Chapter I: namely, that we are dealing in this study not only with symbols in the characters' minds but also with images in a literary text. Its organization is dependent generally upon the first aspect since images have been grouped, not without some arbitrariness, according to meaning. We shall now discuss these individual and related images in detail, with the double intention of arriving at a general interpretation of the novel and of illuminating Saint-Exupéry's most important trait of style.
THE MAJOR THEMES OF COURRIER-SUD
CHAPTER III
AUTHENTICITY OF THOUGHT AND BEHAVIOR

We have noted in Chapter I that Saint-Exupéry refers often in Courrier-Sud to the fact that his characters think in images. Since these images usually derive from equally true — or equally subjective — personal "universes," they cannot usually be qualified as authentic or unauthentic. Not all of them are expressions of genuine personal views of life, however, and the author often implies, especially in regard to the highly imaginative thought of Bernis, that they do not always have a substantial basis.

In childhood Bernis and the narrator had melodramatically called the lizards on the cistern wall snakes, "aimant déjà jusqu'à l'image\textsuperscript{1} de cette fuite qui est la mort" (60).\textsuperscript{2} As adults engaged in the métier of commercial aviation, they continue to think in images, and generally in more valid ones. The narrator complains, it is true, about the impossibility of creative imaginative thinking in the lifeless atmosphere of Cap Juby:

\begin{quote}
Nous vivions les uns sur les autres en face de notre propre image, la plus bornée. C'est pourquoi nous ne savions pas être isolés dans le désert; il nous eût fallu rentrer\textsuperscript{1}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1}All italicizing in quotations from Courrier-Sud is our own and is employed simply to point out words and phrases most pertinent to discussions in our text.

\textsuperscript{2}All page references in the text and notes are, unless otherwise indicated, to Courrier-Sud in the \textit{Œuvres} (Paris, 1955), pp. 3-77.
chez nous pour imaginer notre éloignement, et le découvrir dans sa perspective. (3)

(He is almost surely echoing here the feelings of Saint-Exupéry, real-life commander at Juby.) We are told on the other hand that Bernis gets out of his airplane at Alicante "la tête pleine encore du bruit de son moteur et d'images vives" (12). At Casablanca he amuses himself by pretending to be unwilling to continue his flight in bad weather because he would be like a blindfolded man in a closet: "Il avait bien trop de vie intérieure pour penser une seconde à un accident personnel: ces idées-là viennent aux coeurs vacants, mais cette image de placard le ravissait" (54). On another occasion we find him thinking, while flying over the Sahara, in terms of a valid image or series of images which is known to all pilots:

Il connaît pourtant cet étouffement. Nous l'avons tous connu. Tant d'images coulaient dans nos yeux; nous sommes prisonniers d'une seule, qui pèse le poids vrai de ses dunes, de son soleil, de son silence. Un monde sur nous s'est échoué. Nous sommes faibles, armés de gestes qui feront tout juste, la nuit venue, fuir des gazelles. Armés de voix qui ne porteraient pas à trois cents mètres et ne sauraient toucher les hommes. Nous sommes tous tombés un jour dans cette planète inconnue.3

This second image, which was later dramatized in the actual adventures of the Petit Prince, is a very successful early expression of one phase of Saint-Exupéry's humanistic conception of man's lot in an

3Pp. 68-69. We shall return to certain symbolic details of this passage in our discussion of the concept of general human weakness in Chapter IV. In the course of this study we have often found it necessary to discuss certain passages in connection with more than one theme, so that their total significance is frequently not examined at one time. In the explications we have tried, on the other hand, to consider the whole meaning of passages studied.
"absurd" world. It also reveals his skepticism regarding human communication.

Bernis' imaginative thinking while on leave in France is of a less valid sort, but it has an extremely important role in the novel's action. He finds on first returning that the reality of life at home does not correspond to the imagination of it which he had developed in Africa: "Il n'attendait plus des rencontres, des amitiés qu'un ennui vague. De loin on imagine" (17). In the episode of the elopement both he and normally down-to-earth Geneviève are the dupes of shallow, melodramatic images. She is vaguely conscious of the situation before their departure from Paris:

Mais il se penche vers elle et parle avec douceur. À cette image qu'il donne de lui, à cette tendresse d'essence divine elle veut bien s'efforcer de croire. Elle veut bien aimer l'image de l'amour; elle n'a que cette faible image pour la défendre. (36)

During the drive toward Sens Bernis also begins to realize his mistake: "Il avait préféré [prendre] sa voiture à cause de l'image qu'elle donnait de liberté; jolie liberté!" (37). Later he draws encouragement from a mental picture of himself making Geneviève comfortable and happy in a hotel, but soon understands the foolishness of such imagining:

Il éprouva une vague impression de bonheur. Mais combien la vie immédiate s'ajustait mal à ces images. Deux autres hôtes restèrent muets. Ces images, il fallait chaque fois les renouveler. Et chaque fois elles perdaient un peu de leur évidence, de faible pouvoir, qu'elles contenaient, de prendre corps. (40)

The next morning, after the couple have decided wordlessly to return to Paris, he is again conscious of thinking in images but with an
essential difference: "D'ailleurs, il doutait de lui-même. Il savait bien qu'il avait cédé encore à des images. Mais, les images, de quelle profondeur viennent-elles?" (42). Our discussions in other chapters will show, in effect, that the images governing Bernis' conduct here correspond to valid philosophical and psychological conceptions. After his separation from Geneviève in Paris, he wanders into Notre-Dame and listens to an extraordinary sermon. The priest who delivers it figures as a "classic" example of a mind which is prey to uncritical and shallow imagery (v. explication of this passage). We shall note later in this chapter another significant reference to imaginative thinking in the scene of Bernis' last visit to Geneviève.

Both major characters and also the narrator sometimes conceive of their own or others' unauthentic thinking and behavior in terms of images which have to do with the theatre or related human activities. There exists in fact an image-concept of theatricality and make-believe which comes often into their thoughts, and which constitutes a major theme of the novel.

In boyhood Bernis and the narrator were, not surprisingly, addicted to romantic, stilted thinking. Thus they delighted in saying to the calm, practical Geneviève: "'....sais-tu ce que nous ferons plus tard? .... Nous serons, faible femme, des conquérants.'" (21). One may assume, even in the absence of a directly supporting statement,

4In his European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard Trask (New York, 1953), pp. 138-144, Mr. Ernst Robert Curtius demonstrates the continuous importance of theatrical metaphors from the writings of Antiquity through those of the Middle Ages and into the literature of today. Saint-Exupéry's conception of a shallow "play-acting" is anticipated in numerous famous works, e.g., Molière's Les Précieuses ridicules.
that they embarked on the adventurous career of flying from such motives, though the life they found in it was not in the main a theatrical one. There is, in point of fact, one reference to Bernis' "romanesque" attitude on the eve of his first regular flight (8-9). On his return to France he has, however, the following significant impression in which the normal, pedestrian world seems make-believe in contrast to his own hard life:

"Ce monde, nous le retrouvions chaque fois, comme les matelots bretons retrouvent leur village de carte postale et leur fiancée trop fidèle, à leur retour à peine vieillie. Toujours pareille, la gravure d'un livre d'enfance" (16). He has also at this time a quite opposite impression which seems to take the place of the first one: "Peu à peu, pendant le retour, un paysage se bâtit déjà autour de lui, comme une prison. Les sables du Sahara, les rochers d'Espagne, étaient peu à peu retirés, comme des vêtements de théâtre, du paysage vrai qui allait transparaître" (16).

In Part II, which recounts the adventures of Bernis during his leave in Paris, the theme of theatricality is ubiquitous and highly significant. Geneviève was not subject to thinking in romantic images in childhood, and she has not changed when Bernis finds her as a wife and mother. Her husband Herlin is guilty, on the other hand, of constant posing. This fact constitutes indeed virtually the only clue for an understanding of his character. When Bernis dines with the pair in a restaurant Geneviève is painfully aware of this trait of her husband:

5This meaning seems sometimes to be contained also in the image of the bergerie, which we shall examine in Chapter IV.
It is during the illness of their child that his theatricality becomes most offensive. He "declaims" and plays a "rôle de père malheureux" (25). In a violent culminating scene he berates Geneviève for having taken a walk to calm her nerves: "'Oui... et pendant que la mère s'amuse, l'enfant vomit du sang!'" (28). After the child has died, Geneviève is repelled also by the theatrical attitude of friends who come to console her: "Ceux qui jusqu'à l'antichambre marchent avec un calme tranquille, mais, de l'antichambre au salon, font quelques pas précipités et perdent l'équilibre dans ses bras" (32).

Partly in order to escape this false attitude toward things, she decides to go away with Bernis. In this resolution she becomes herself guilty for the first time of theatrical thinking, as the narrator implies in his letter of warning to Bernis: "Oui, je sais, dans son désarroi d'aujourd'hui. Mais les drames sont rares dans la vie. .... Je crois ... la vie s'appuie sur autre chose..." (33). In Bernis' Paris apartment she realizes that she will have to come to grips with a reality which had represented only a pleasant sort of make-believe:

Then she understands, in an apparently opposite realization, that if she stays with Bernis pretense and play-acting will have a big part in her future. The cheap and bright draperies with which he covers
the furnishings of his apartment are like "[des] masques sur leur visage" (35), and her life in Africa and South America will be full of "des spectacles point nécessaires et à peine plus réels, si Bernis n'est pas assez fort, que ceux d'un livre" (36). During the trip to Sens she reveals inadvertently her real expectations for the future:

"Aimerez-vous l'Espagne?"
Une petite voix hintaine lui répondit: "Oui, Jacques, je suis heureuse, mais... j'ai un peu peur des brigands."
Il la vit doucement sourire. Cette phrase fit mal à Bernis, cette phrase qui ne voulait rien dire sinon: ce voyage en Espagne, ce conte de fées...

Bernis begins also, as we have already noted, to question the validity of the images which govern his conduct (40). The pair abandon theatrical motivations in their wordless decision to return to Paris, and Bernis feels that the images which have brought it about have deeper foundations than those which had led him into the elopement (42). He manages even to give Geneviève up entirely without deforming the situation with stock phrases: "Il ne pouvait évidemment pas dire: 'Je vous rends votre liberté' ni quelque phrase aussi absurde, mais il parla de ce qu'il comptait faire, de son avenir" (43).

If he has come to his senses about Geneviève, Bernis has not, however, finished with theatricality. The theme is present in both of the escapist ventures with which he fills the rest of his time in Paris. The priest at Notre-Dame is carried away by a sense of his own dramatic role and Bernis notices once that the candlelight makes the orator's face seem like a "visage de cire" (44). While walking along the Paris quais after this experience, Bernis has a critical vision of the falsely dramatic quality of his mood and situation.
Pourtant ce crépuscule... Toile de fond trop théâtrale qui a servi déjà pour les ruines d'Empire, les soirs de défaite et le dénouement de faibles amours, qui servira demain pour d'autres comédies. (47)

In Montmartre, where he attends a real theatrical performance, the disillusioned Bernis sees on the other hand a commonplace, practical side even in the business of entertainment:

Bernis regardait la vie par les coulisses où tout est métier. Où il n'y a ni vice, ni vertu, ni émotion trouble, mais un labeur aussi routinier, aussi neutre que celui des hommes d'équipe. Cette danse même, qui rassemblait les gestes pour en composer un langage, ne pouvait parler qu'à l'étranger.6

After his night with the dancer he has a most untheatrical understanding of the act of love: "Les paysages du coeur changent si vite.... Traversé le désir, traversée la tendresse, traversé le fleuve de feu" (50).

When he stops to visit Geneviève for the last time Bernis is struck by the extraordinarily calm and sensible quality of the milieu to which she has returned. Not even the approach of death, which had destroyed all authenticity of thought in Berlin, affects the balanced view of well members of this household:

P. 48. Here it is the reality of the métier which robs the scene of magic and mystery. Such is also the case for a view of the Sahara which the narrator expresses in terms of the same image:

Les Maures s'agitaient peu. Ceux qui s'aventuraient jusqu'au fort espagnol gesticulaient, portaient leur fusil comme un jouet. C'était le Sahara vu des coulisses: les tribus insoumises y perdaient leur mystère et livraient quelques figurants. (3)

The narrator elsewhere compares the professional preparations for Bernis' departure from Toulouse to those for a theatrical performance: "...des gestes régles comme pour un ballet..." (5). The boys had also felt that they were seeing "les coulisses de la vie" in their visit to the old attic (62), but there (cf. explication) the coulisses were more exciting than the theatre itself.
On savait la mort installée sous le toit, on l’y accueillait en intime sans en détournier le visage. Il n’y avait rien de déclamatoire.....

Un rire jaillit qui mourut de lui-même. Un rire sans racine profonde, mais que ne réprimait pas une dignité théâtrale.

The theme of theatricality plays no role in the episode of Bernis’ death. It is true that there is an implication that he left the earth in search of an image (77), but this passage is pertinent rather for the themes of his quest, which represent an authentic, if an un-prosaic, view of life.

There exists in Courrier-Sud an imaginative theme almost directly antithetical to theatricality, and the author often places the two in contrast. This other theme, which denotes the most down-to-earth of attitudes, appearances and behaviors, is made up of references to characters' closeness to "things," to "les choses." This image — for as used in the following passages it is an image and not a factual category — appears in the minds of both major characters: in Geneviève's as she conceives her way of life and in Bernis' especially as he understands her attitude. In childhood the boys had been charmed by this quality of Geneviève: "Tu nous paraissais éternelle d'être si bien liée aux choses, si sûre des choses, de tes pensées, de ton avenir. Tu régnaïs..." (20). They were themselves, on the other hand, more interested in "l'envers des choses" — or in what was found under the "écorce des choses."?

These imaginative concepts and Geneviève's antithetical ones of "la surface des choses" and "les évidences" are given attention in Chapter VIII.
In the concrete tasks of the métier Bernis too works closely with things. The narrator describes the "ordre absolu des choses" (5) which is necessary for the launching of the mail plane at Toulouse, and he evokes in these terms the departure of a search caravan into the desert: "Nous entrons dans la nuit: bêtes, hommes et choses" (75). Sometimes, however, one category of "things" seems inimical to Bernis in his task of carrying the mail, as in this impression from the air: "Cette lumière est minérale, ce sol apparaît minéral; ce qui fait la douceur, le parfum, la faiblesse des choses vivantes est aboli." (7).

Bernis arriving in Paris on leave is described half-seriously by the narrator as "posé au secret des choses" (17), but we learn shortly that "il avait craint de trouver les choses différentes et voici qu'il souffrait de les trouver si semblables" (17). He writes back to the narrator: "...je me crois le maître des choses quand les émotions me répondent. Mais aucune ne s'est réveillée" (17). It is Geneviève who actually brings him back to a closeness with things: "Je l'ai retrouvée comme on retrouve le sens des choses et je marche à son côté dans un monde dont je découvre enfin l'intérieur..." (22). The narrator interprets further:

Elle lui venait de la part des choses. Elle servait d'intermédiaire, après mille divorces, pour mille mariages. Elle lui rendait ces marronniers, ce boulevard, cette fontaine. Chaque chose portait de nouveau ce secret au centre qui est son âme. (22)

The things of Geneviève's world seemed to be nearly all friendly and reassuring:

Et puis, parmi les choses peu sûres, il en est tant
d'obéissantes. Elle régnait sur les livres, les fleurs,
les amis. Elle entreprenait avec eux des pactes. .... ....
"Geneviève, disait Bernis, vous régnez toujours sur les
chose..."

The illness of her child quite destroys her closeness to things as
they seem to become inimical: "Mais les choses, un jour, se révol-
tèrent" (24). It is during a moment of rest in the midst of this
disaster that Geneviève understands most clearly the nature of her
previous existence:

Elle marchait et éprouvait un grand repos à se souvenir
de son enfance. Des arbres, des plaines. Des choses sim-
ples. Un jour, beaucoup plus tard, cet enfant lui était venu
c'était quelque chose d'incompréhensible et en même temps
de plus simple encore. Une évidence plus forte que les
autres. Elle avait servi cet enfant à la surface des choses
et parmi d'autres choses vivantes. (24)

Now she sees her whole desperate situation in terms of the disorder
of things: "Il faut qu'elle s'oppose en hâte à cette débâcle des
chose... Il faut tirer en hâte ce fauteuil à sa place, ce vase, ce
livre. Il faut qu'elle s'épuise vainement à refaire l'attitude des
chose qui entourent la vie" (31). Herlin is a hindrance to her task
and she becomes aware of his "nullité en face des choses" (28).

Before the elopement the narrator warns Bernis that he will not
be depriving Geneviève simply of money: "...la fortune, c'est ce
qui fait durer les choses.... Et tu vas lui vider sa vie comme on
vide un appartement de mille objets que l'on ne voyait plus mais qui
le composent" (33). In Bernis' lodgings in Paris she conceives her
loss in similar terms: "Elle pensa: les choses duraient plus que
moi. J'étais reçue, accompagnée, assurée d'être un jour veillée,
et, maintenant, je vais durer plus que les choses" (35). Her silent
resignation on the trip to Sens is figured as a giving up of "things" for his sake (40), and Bernis is horrified by her new attitude, which is in effect a renunciation of her old down-to-earth and calm life:

Mais surtout ce détachement. Il l'eût désiré avide de biens. Souffrant des choses, touchée par les choses et criant pour en être nourrie comme un enfant. Alors, malgré son indigence, il aurait eu beaucoup à lui donner. Mais il s'agenouilla pauvre devant cette enfant qui n'avait pas faim. (41)

Her changed mood on the way back to Paris is presented in the following terms: "Elle lui savait gré de beaucoup de choses." Leurs rapports étaient bien plus libres qu'hier" (43). Bernis interprets her recovery to the narrator in similar terms: "J'ai dû lui rendre sa maison, sa vie, son âme. Un à un tous les peupliers de la route" (67). The quality of the things in her new world is also given some attention. The sight of a faded sign over a bicycle shop causes Bernis to reflect that "beaucoup de choses dans sa vie là-bas étaient médiocres mais qu'il ne s'en était pas aperçu" (38). Later, "il se reprocha avec une obstination maladive de l'avoir mêlée à des choses laides" (39).

On another level, Geneviève's changed relationship to her "things" is less a result of illness than of her previous betrayal of them and of her whole world in the elopement with Bernis. Perhaps this illness is itself a result of the betrayal. In some passages her "things," which include flowers and trees as well as the bibelots and furniture

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8 In the context of the whole thematic development even an expression so banal as "beaucoup de choses" assumes special significance. We have often been encouraged to see symbolic meaning in apparently commonplace expressions because of their similarity to evidently symbolic conceptions.
of her house, seem to be not only symbols in her mind but actual protagonists in the novel's action. Thus, during a stop on the way to Sens, some trees by the roadside seem to be reproachful sentinels (37), and on the return trip Bernis has the impression of giving her back "un à un tous les peupliers de la route" (67). The painful impression made by the objects in her sick-room may therefore derive from the fact that they remind her of her mistakes.

Two similar interpretations may be given to her reaction to Bernis' presence:

"Jacques..." Elle le fixait. "Jacques..." Elle le halait du fond de sa pensée. Elle ne cherchait pas son épaule mais fouillait dans ses souvenirs. Elle s'accrochait à sa manche comme un naufragé qui se hisse, non pour se saisir d'une présence, d'un appui, mais d'une image... Elle regarde...

Et voici que peu à peu il lui semble étranger. (66-67)

It is perhaps true on one level that she has ceased to think sensibly in her old way and that her delirious mind is filled with romantic images. She rejects Bernis because his real-life presence does not correspond to her fanciful image of him. It is surely also true, however, that she turns away from him because he has become a symbol of her mistakes, and of a world to which she cannot belong.

Authenticity or seriousness is often figured also by expressions of weight. This metaphorical transference is common in French and other languages, and the author's use of such expressions in the novel would scarcely be notable if it were not extraordinarily inven-

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Often the original meaning of physical weight is quite lost, as in, for example, German wichtig or French and English grave from the Latin gravis.
tive and if he did not obviously intend to express thereby important meanings and distinctions. We have already referred to a passage in which Bernis thinks of a valid image "qui pèse les poids vrai de ses dunes, de son soleil, de son silence" (69). Geneviève uses a similar expression to indicate the importance of one of her "things." She has been refusing to pay attention to the wooing of her fiancé:

—Geneviève, vous êtes une enfant cruelle!
—Oui. Bien sûr. Regardez mes roses, elles pèsent lourd! C'est admirable une fleur qui pèse lourd. (23)

The actual promotion of life and regeneration, symbolized by care for flowers, is a more "weighty" affair in her mind than the ceremonial of courtship.

Expressions of weight carry a deeper meaning in descriptions of human beings, when they usually have an implication of valid experience and seriousness of purpose. Returning from their imaginative experience at the cistern (cf. explication), the boys were "lourds de secrets, comme ces plongeurs des Indes qui touchèrent des perles." When they have become flyers and pay a visit to their old collège, heaviness is one of the figurative qualities which translate their transformation into strong, substantial men: "Nos manteaux lourds capitonnaient le monde...." (10). Bernis' "weight" also distinguishes him figuratively from the people of the frivolous milieu which he visits in Paris while on leave:

10 Figurative references to heaviness in human beings sometimes denote only numbness or awkwardness, e.g., pp. 12, 42, 54. The narrator once describes how Bernis, feeling heavy and clumsy as he climbs into his airplane, regains agility and lightness when he has settled into the cockpit, into his real element (5).

11 P. 61. The imaginative conception of "diving for pearls" is discussed in Chapter VIII.
Il entre, pesant, dans un dancing.... parmi les gigolos....

Bernis, dans ce milieu flou, où seul il garde sa raison, se sent lourd comme un porte-faix, pèse droit sur ses jambes.

During the night spent at Sens Geneviève has an illusory feeling of the "gravity" of Bernis' gestures: "Ses gestes dans le rêve étaient lourds comme les gestes d'un haleur." The priest at Notre-Dame has a remarkably similar illusion about the heaviness of his own gestures and words:

Il lui semblait exercer sur la foule une pesée lente.... (44)

Des idées lui venaient qui se formaient en dehors de lui, pendant qu'il achevait sa phrase, comme un fardeau qu'on lui passait..... (45)

"Je porterai les chaînes les plus lourdes de l'esprit.
"Je suis celui qui porte les fardeaux du monde." (46)

The priest is of course echoing here, with variations, some Biblical imagery (cf. Matthew 11: 28-30).

In his adventure with the dancer Bernis is attracted by the weight and solidity of her body: "Il devinait le poids de sa chair, comme la pulpe d'un fruit, et c'était pour lui une révélation de la découvrir pesante. Une richesse" (48). Similarly, she is struck by the weight of his head: "S'il ferme les yeux, elle prend et soulève cette tête lourde, comme celle d'un mort, des deux mains, ainsi qu'un

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12 P. 41. It is significant to note one example of hands which are authentically heavy with experience and responsibility. They belong to a farmer whom Bernis notices in the bus at Perpignan: "Ses mains qui portaient leur destin gravé et reposaient à plat sur les genoux, si lourdes" (17). In Vol de nuit the symbolism of heavy hands becomes much more important, especially in Rivière's scene with Roblet (pp. 104-105). Hands are also evoked in Courrier-Sud (e.g., pp. 5, 7) and, especially, in Vol de nuit (e.g., pp. 83-84, 87, 109) as poignant expressions or symbols of pilots' humanity and vulnerability.
pavé" (49). This heaviness and substantiality derive mainly from their humanity or even from their animality.

In the episode of Bernis' death images of lightness are used to great effect in integration with that of liens. On one level of interpretation Bernis is considered simply to have risen from the earth from lack of weight and of ties to hold him back. During the night before the discovery of his friend's body the narrator thinks:

La nuit est merveilleuse. Où es-tu, Jacques Bernis? Ici peut-être, peut-être là? Quelle présence déjà légère! Autour de moi ce Sahara si peu chargé qui reçoit à peine, au pli le plus lourd, un enfant léger. (76)

Some of his most significant reflections the next day are expressed in the same terms:

Sur cette dune, les bras en croix et face à ce golfe bleu sombre et face aux villages d'étoiles, cette nuit, tu pesais peu de chose...
A ta descente vers le Sud combien d'amarres dénouées, Bernis aérien déjà de n'avoir plus qu'un seul ami: un fil de la vierge de mon amitié te limit à peine... (77)

This lightness is not at all an exact opposite of the heaviness which Bernis had felt in Montmartre. It may imply to some extent a loss of earthly responsibility, but it does not mean a diminution of his seriousness of purpose, as our discussion of the quest will demonstrate. There is a parallel with the death of the Little Prince, who left the earth because of responsibilities above (PP, 492).

The examination of these first symbolic and imaginative themes has suggested an interpretation for the main lines of Geneviève's career — her extraordinarily sensible girlhood and motherhood, her

—Figurative references to "prison," "bonds," and "flight" are discussed in Chapter VII.
disorientation at the death of her child and subsequent pursuit of illusions in the elopement, and, finally, her illness and repentance in the calm, authentic surroundings of her childhood. Closeness to things, anti-theatricality, and weightiness are capital conceptions for an understanding of her nature and life. The examination has also suggested a great deal about Bernis — his dreamy boyhood, his seeking for romance in flying and finding in it a very practical reality and responsibility, his fascination with the simple attitude of Geneviève and his attempt to carry her with him into a world of illusory, stock values. We have seen something too of the perspicacity and critical faculty which allows him to recognize his mistakes — also in terms of anti-theatricality and weightiness — and to reject the worlds offered by the priest and by Montmartre. A look at the symbolic evocations of lightness in the episode of his death has also suggested a small part of the meaning of that development. Most of his story is still neglected, however, and we are not yet at the heart of the matter for an understanding of it.
CHAPTER IV
DOMESTICITY, ADVENTURE, AND RESPONSIBILITY

In the course of this chapter we shall discuss a large variety of symbolic material for the purpose of analyzing some important differences and similarities between Geneviève's and Bernis' ways of living and of thinking. All of the details discussed center around a few imaginative concepts which represent both obsessive preoccupations of the characters and salient themes or leitmotiv of the novel. These concepts, which often take the form of symbolic antitheses, are, in the general order of our discussion: softness and hardness, warmth and cold, strength and weakness, solidity and fragility, order and disorder, calm and inquiétude, peace and war. They all have in common an area of application or meaning which we have tried to suggest in the title of the chapter and which we shall describe more explicitly in its conclusions.

Figurative references to hardness and softness are so common in ordinary speech that it is often difficult to be sure whether the author has intended creative analogy in his own employment of such expressions. Yet it is the themes represented most directly by these simple imaginative conceptions which touch most closely on what may be considered to be the chief "problem" of Saint-Exupéry's whole work, that is, the question of the relative merits of a soft life in human society and a hard one in adventure and struggle. In this novel the question poses itself principally in the minds of Bernis and the
narrator.

For both of them the physical softness of the French landscape is contrasted mentally with the hardness of Africa. In their visit to the old cistern they had noted the special protection provided by the great trees of the domaine: "Quelle fraîcheur sous des branchages si vieux, si lourds, qui portaient le poids du soleil. Jamais un rayon n'avait jauni la pelouse tendre du remblai...." (61). Upon arriving in France by airplane, Bernis is struck by the transformation of the ground below from the dry, hard sands of the Sahara into "ce limon vert, sombre et doux" (16). On his return flight to Africa and to duty he has a correspondingly opposite impression: "......ce sol apparaît minéral: ce qui fait la douceur, le parfum, la faiblesse des choses vivantes est aboli". (7). At the beginning of the novel the narrator also contrasts the winds of Europe "qui tournent, cèdent" with those of the Sahara, "si durs" (3).

The concepts of hardness and softness are applied analogically to people and to human activities. The narrator reflects at length upon Bernis' change from a "gamin tendre" (9) at the collège into an "ancien" who comes back with a "pas dur" (10). In a striking image reminiscent of Gautier's "L'Art," he sums up the lessons of life learned by his friend: "Qu'as-tu appris plus tard à courir le monde, Jacques Bernis? L'avion? On avance lentement en creusant son trou dans un cristal dur" (9). Describing the preparations for Bernis' departure from Toulouse airport, he evokes also in terms of hardness the strict precision required of tools in the métier: "Des ampoules de cinq cents bougies livrent des objets durs, nus, précis comme ceux d'un
Again, the hardness of human discipline is compared to that of ballistic instruments: "Ces ampoules de cinq cents bougies, ces regards précis, cette dureté pour que ce vol relancé d'escale en escale jusqu'à Buenos-Aires ou Santiago du Chili soit un effet de balistique et non une œuvre de hasard.

The soft values of human society are symbolized in Geneviève, who, like Mme Fabien in *Vol de nuit*, is the main "knot" of human relations. "Chacun était lié à elle par un secret, par cette douceur d'être découvert, d'être compromis" (24). Yet the contrast between her soft world and the hard one of Bernis is not absolute or exclusive.

The camaraderie of the métier is itself characterized by a very human douceur, as the author makes clear in the following imaginative description of Bernis' feelings as he receives advice from an older pilot:

\[\text{Quelle douceur aujourd'hui répandait cette lampe dont coulait une lumière d'huile. Ce filet d'huile qui fait le calme dans la mer. Dehors il ventait. Cette chambre était bien un îlot dans le monde comme une auberge de marins. (9)}\]

This particular sort of douceur, which denotes a feeling of security and communion in comradely surroundings, is exalted much more in later books, e.g., the accounts of Rivièr's relations with his pilots in *Vol de nuit*, of Saint-Exupéry's association with Guillaumet in *Terre*.

\[1\text{P. 4. This hard light is in evident contrast with the moonlight at Cap Juby, "qui ne livre pas les objets mais les compose, nourrit de matière tendre chaque chose" (3).} \]

\[2\text{It is important to note this concentration within the novel's first few pages of numerous references to douceur and dureté. Such concentration, which we shall note often in this study, makes the author's imaginative language more salient and helps to validate our diagnosis of symbolically expressed themes.}\]
des hommes, and of his friendship with the other men of his French air squadron in Pilote de guerre.

The contrast between the worlds of the two characters is kept from being perfect also by implications (1) that Bernis has not entirely come to grips with the hard facts or responsibilities of his métier and (2) that Geneviève can also be hard when necessary. The narrator reflects about Bernis' physical courage as an aviator in these terms:

Tout reste abstrait. Quand un jeune pilote se hasarde aux loopings, il verse au-dessus de sa tête, si proches soient-ils, non des obstacles durs dont le moindre l'écraserait, mais des arbres, des murs aussi fluides que dans les rêves. Du courage, Bernis? (69)

In trying to build a life entirely upon romantic love, both Bernis and Geneviève momentarily forsake their responsibilities and give excessive attention to soft values. It is she who first understands, or feels, their mistake and who then makes Bernis realize it too. During their drive back to Paris he senses in her character the potentiality of a hardness which he had never suspected before: "Têtue et douce. Si près d'être dure, cruelle, injuste, mais sans le savoir. Si près de défendre à tout prix quelque bien obscur. Tranquille et douce" (43). This hardness is in defense of Geneviève's home and old way of life which the elopement had almost destroyed.

The conflict between hard and soft values receives much more consideration in Vol de nuit, and the two seem to be epitomized in the chief characters of Le Petit Prince and Citadelle. Thinking especially of these two books, M. Luc Estang doubts that the conflict was ever quite resolved for Saint-Exupéry, in spite of a certain "conni-
Il faut en prendre son parti: Saint-Exupéry est à la fois le Petit Prince et le Grand Caïd. Auquel vont ses complaisances? La tête à celui-ci, le cœur à celui-là? Je ne sais. Toujours est-il que la dualité l'exprime en entier. Adversaires fraternels, le petit bonhomme et le vieux bonhomme ne laissent pas de trahir, dans leur combat, quelque émouvante connivence: à l'égard des créatures, la dureté de l'un rejoint la tendresse de l'autre...  

What emerges rather clearly even in Courrier-Sud is that a solid personal existence cannot have one of the qualities exaggerated to the exclusion of the other. Geneviève and Bernis fail in their attempt to build a purely tender way of life, and she astonishes him in Sens by showing a hard side to her normally soft or sweet character. No example is given, one must admit, of the opposite distortion, but the numerous sympathetic references to human douceur by the narrator, who has a very "hard" duty to perform, suffice to indicate its validity and importance.

Another simple imaginative antithesis, similar in meaning to that of hardness and softness, opposes the warmth of life and of human society to the cold of death and non-human elements. On two

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4 The French "douceur" may of course be translated into English by either "softness" or "sweetness." We have not tried to determine which translation is better in particular cases since for Saint-Exupéry and his French readers such distinctions would not affect the symbolism of the douceur-dureté antithesis.

5 It is not surprising that in a novel whose action takes place partly in the desert there should also be some poignant references to heat and coolness. While flying over the Sahara the narrator once considers himself to be hanging over a bed of coals: "En suspens sur un brasier blanc, je ne vois rien qui vive" (75). Elsewhere he describes the "de-humanizing" effect of the desert sun: "C'était, pour quelques heures, le ventre de la terre au soleil. Ici les mots perdaient peu à peu la caution que leur assuraient notre humanité" (57).
occasions the adjective "tiède" evokes simply the quality of life.

Thus the human warmth of Bernis in his airplane is contrasted explicitly with the coldness of his surroundings:

Il songe qu'il est seul. Sur le cadran de l'altimètre le soleil miroite. Un soleil lumineux et glacé. Cette lumière est minérale, ce sol apparaît minéral; ce qui fait la douceur, le parfum, la faiblesse des choses vivantes est aboli.

Et pourtant, sous la veste de cuir, une chair tiède — et fragile, Bernis.

A similar warmth of life constitutes the only positive attraction for Bernis of the danseuse from Montmartre:

Femme: la plus nue des chairs vivantes et celle qui luit du plus doux éclat. Il pense à cette vie mystérieuse qui l'anime, qui la réchauffe comme un soleil, comme un climat intérieur. Bernis ne se dit pas qu'elle est tendre ni qu'elle est belle, mais qu'elle est tiède. Tiède comme une bête. Vivante. (7)

Elsewhere warmth represents the security and comfort of civilization and human institutions. Reflecting about their departure from the collège, the narrator presents his and Bernis' experience in just such terms: "Nous étions sortis de cette maison tiède dans la grande tempête de la vie, il nous fallait leur raconter [aux professeurs] le vrai temps qu'il fait sur la terre" (11). The "real weather" which they found in the perilous life of flying was often cruel. In a letter to his friend, Bernis recalls an early impression in flight that the world had become cold and inhuman: "Et ce froid, car nous volions haut; ces villes prises dans la glace. Tu te souviens?" (18). On

In the frame of this concept the sailing ship which supplies Cap Juby is considered to bring in a bit of human coolness and freshness: "Il habille d'un peu de linge frais tout mon désert" (57). The main symbolic contrast is nevertheless between warmth and cold.
taking off from Casablanca for the return trip to Africa he has a rather similar feeling: "Et d'abord il eut l'impression non de décoller mais de s'enfermer dans une grotte humide et froide...." (55).

The most poignant figurative allusion to cold comes in the narrator's relation of his night spent in the desert while searching for Bernis: "Vers trois heures du matin, nos couvertures de laine deviennent minces, transparentes: c'est un maléfice de la lune. Je me réveille glace!" (76). Since Bernis is perhaps at this moment dying in the desert, it is permitted to see a figurative cause for this sudden coldness in the passing of a human life, of a "présence."

There is one occurrence of the cold motif which, though it fits well into the general interpretation established, also has other figurative implications. After relating Bernis' adventure with the nan-seuse, the narrator inserts the following poetic reflections upon physical love:

O femme après l'amour démantelée et décuoronnée du désir de l'homme. Rejetée parmi les étoiles froides. Les paysages du coeur changent si vite... Traversé le désir, traversée la tendresse, traversé le fleuve de feu. Maintenant pur, froid, dégagé du corps, on est à la proue d'un navire, le cap en mer. (50)

This coldness is indeed a symptom of remoteness from human relations but its coupling with references to purity and to the navire image hints at a sort of icy solitude as a basis for venture and responsible accomplishment. Bernis is now ready, it is implied, to return to the hard business of his métier.

6 The navire is discussed in Chapter V.
While Bernis is in Africa, there once comes to his mind an elaborate image (or series of images) which is rich in meaning for the symbolic antithesis of chaleur and froideur and also, if less explicitly, for that of douceur and dureté:

Les tendresses, au départ, on les abandonne derrière soi avec une morsure au cœur, mais aussi avec un étrange sentiment de trésor enfoui sous terre. Ces fuites quelquefois témoignent de tant d’amour avare. Une nuit, dans le Sahara, peuplé d’étoiles, comme il rêvait à ces tendresses lointaines, chaudes et couvertes par la nuit, par le temps, comme des semences, il eut ce brusque sentiment: s’être écarté pour regarder dormir. Appuyé à l’avion en panne, devant cette courbe de sable, ce fléchissement de l’horizon, il veillait ses amours comme un berger... (17)

It is easy to infer from this passage (which contains also a number of images and conceptions to be discussed in other chapters) that the hard, cold life of duty and sacrifice affords a better appreciation of warm, soft human values by adding perspective and that it also serves to defend these values. In the imaginative conception of the berger is contained Saint-Exupéry’s later famous tenet of responsibility. Fabien will consider himself to be "le berger des petites villes" (VN, 81); the Little Prince will ask the author for a mouton which he can take care of; and the Calm of Citadelle will be the shepherd of a people who are themselves engaged in pastoral occupations. This

7 Considering the other imaginative uses of "tendre" which we have noted and also Saint-Exupéry’s general interest in etymology, we think it quite possible that he was conscious in this passage of the analogical semantic development of "tendresse" in the sense of love.

8 V. explication of Bernis’ death (Chapter XII) for discussion of "l’étoile du berger," and of the narrator’s conception of himself as the "shepherd" of Bernis.
central Saint-Exupérean conception may easily be traced, of course, to the Old Testament and to the Parables of Christ, and it is indeed perhaps in this facet of his philosophy that the author's debt to Christianity is most evident.

The symbolic douceur-dureté and chaleur-foideur antitheses are complemented by a third one, faiblesses-force (or fragilité-solidité), which is also implicit in Bernis' impressions while flying over the Sahara:

Cette lumière est minérale, ce sol apparaît minéral: ce qui fait la douceur, le parfum, la faiblesse des choses vivantes est aboli. (7)

This symbolic contrast between the landscapes of Europe and of North Africa is extended to the characters themselves. Geneviève, a perfect representative of domestic and civilized values, is often described in terms of a sympathetic faiblesse. In childhood Bernis and the narrator had taken pleasure in the thought of her feminine weakness in comparison to their own masculine strength: "Nous voulions t'éblouir et nous t'appelions: faible femme. Nous serons, faible femme, des conquérants" (21). After having grown up and become pilots they remember her in just the same light: "Vous étiez restée cette enfant fragile, et c'est elle, quand nous entendions parler de vous, que nous hasardions, surpris, dans la vie" (19). Geneviève herself makes a curious confession to Bernis about her weakness in childhood:

"Je me souviens... j'étais une drôle de petite fille. Je m'étais fait un Dieu à mon idée. ... J'allais retrouver mon ami. Je lui disais dans ma prière: voilà ce qui m'arrive et je suis bien trop faible pour réparer ma vie gâchée. Mais je vous donne tout: vous êtes bien plus fort que moi." (24)

The presentation of her as an adult contains a number of references
to feminine weakness. Her physical fragility is, for example, contrasted with the strength of Berlin in the episode of their quarrel (29). When she leaves Paris to elope with Bernis, she has the following hopeless impression: "Elle soupira. Ce qu'elle essayait était au-dessus de ses forces" (37). As they turn back toward Paris, Bernis is very conscious of her weakness: "Sans doute l'aimait-elle toujours, mais il ne faut pas trop demander à une faible petite fille" (43).

Bernis as a young pilot is, on the other hand, often described as solid and strong. His return with the narrator to their old collège is described in these terms: "Nous revenions solides, appuyés sur des muscles d'homme" (10). When he enters a dancing at the beginning of leave in Paris, his solidity is remarkable in the "milieu flou" and the frivolous young men there "s'écartent flexibles pour qu'il passe" (16). There are also several allusions to the power of the airplane he controls, a power which is once represented as passing into the pilot himself: "Maintenant il résiste moins à l'avion qui cherche à monter, laisse s'épanouir un peu la force que sa main comprime. Il libère d'un mouvement de son poignet chaque vague qui le soulève et qui se propage en lui comme une onde" (6).

The contrast between Geneviève's weakness and Bernis' strength, like that between her douceur and his dureté, is not meant to be a simple or absolute qualification. He perceives in her a particular kind of force and in himself two different sorts of weakness, one of which becomes apparent also to Geneviève. There are suggestions of her strength even before the episode of the elopement. After the
violent scene in which he had tried to bully her, Herlin "desserra enfin les doigts avec un sentiment étrange d'impuissance et de vide" (29). Even during his rage he had declared, symbolically, that "il avait longtemps été la dupe, lui Herlin, qui plaçait en elle toute sa force" (28). He had in fact counted upon her in their family life as a source of support and strength. During the illness of her child, Geneviève recalls the first days of her motherhood and in these recollections the quiet strength of her way of life is expressed by a striking image: "Et son enfant près d'elle respirait faiblement et c'était le moteur du monde et sa faible respiration animait le monde" (27). Not really damaging to this impression, though destined to disappointment, is the feeling of strength given her by the doctor's reassuring words: "Le médecin disait: 'Cela peut s'arranger; l'enfant est fort.' Bien sûr. Quand il dormait, il se cramponnait à la vie de ses deux petits poings fermés. C'était si joli! C'était si solide" (26). Even when death has won this battle, Geneviève maintains her strong attitude: "Elle prononçait sans faiblir les mots dont on faisait le tour, le mot: mort" (32).

It is during the brief period of their romantic adventure that Geneviève and Bernis discover the other side of each other's nature and way of life. She has her revelation in a visit to his Paris apartment before their going away, and her perceptions are translated in the text by a series of poignant evocations:

The moteur image is discussed in Chapter VI.
Elle ne sait exprimer ce qu'elle ressent: ce décor manque de durée. Sa charpente n'est pas solide...

(34)

Elle survivra à cette maison de Dakar, à cette foule de Buenos-Aires, dans un monde où il n'y aura que des spectacles point nécessaires, et à peine plus réels, si Bernis n'est pas assez fort, que ceux d'un livre...

(36)

Elle veut bien aimer l'image de l'amour: elle n'a que cette faible image pour la défendre...

Elle trouvera ce soir dans la volupté cette faible épaule,10 ce faible refuge, y enfoncera son visage comme une bête pour mourir.

(36)

Bernis also perceives the weakness of the images which have been governing him in this adventure (40), and he becomes aware, on the way to Sens, of a force which is opposing his efforts: "Il envisageait cette panne avec effort.... Il craignait une certaine force qui se faisait jour"11(36). This force derives essentially from Geneviève's original character and way of life which are once again becoming dominant.

One may infer that in embarking upon their irresponsible adventure Geneviève and Bernis are the victims of a general human moral weakness. After his visit to Notre-Dame, Bernis thinks of the Paris scene as a "toile de fond trop théâtrale qui avait servi déjà pour les ruines d'Empire, les soirs de défaite et le dénouement de faibles amours, qui servira demain pour d'autres comédies" (47). It is even

10 In the relation of Bernis' visit to the dying Geneviève it will be stated explicitly that she does not seek the support of his shoulder (66-67).

11 Note the dense concentration of references to force and faiblesse in pp. 20-40.
implied that this weakness is an animal one. We have already noted that Geneviève sought Bernis' shoulder "comme une bête pour mourir" (36); after their decision to return to Paris he reflects upon his mood in terms of the same conception: "Il savait bien ne pas souffrir non plus, mais sans doute quelque bête en lui était blessée dont les larmes étaient inexplicables." 12

Bernis and the narrator are also aware of a different sort of human weakness, one which has to do with man's lot in an indifferent universe. Just after the already quoted passage in which the mineral hardness of the Sahara is contrasted with "la faiblesse des choses vivantes," there is an evocation of Bernis' own weakness: "Et pourtant sous le veste de cuir, une chair tiède — et fragile, Bernis" (7). On the following page the narrator alludes to the responsibility which Bernis must shoulder, as an air-mail pilot, in spite of this weakness: "Tu devais, à l'aube, prendre dans tes bras les méditations d'un peuple. Dans tes faibles bras" (8). We have already had occasion to note a particularly valid image which occurred to all pilots of the Ligne:

Un monde sur nous s'est échoué. Nous sommes faibles, armés de gestes qui feront tout juste, la nuit venue, fuir des gazelles. Armés de voix qui ne porteraient pas à trois cents mètres et ne sauraient toucher les hommes. Nous sommes tous tombés un jour dans cette planète inconnue. (69)

Just after this passage the narrator evokes in poignant terms the augmentation of human strength which is possible through comradeship.

12 P. 43. This skeptical attitude toward romantic love is expressed more directly in one of the narrator's observations about the relations of Geneviève and Bernis: "Sans doute ne savaient-ils pas que l'on aventure, sous la caresse, bien peu de soi-même" (29).
and cooperation: "Les camarades nous ont tirés de là. Et, si nous étions faibles, nous avons hissés dans la carlingue: poignet de fer des camarades qui nous tiraient hors de ce monde dans leur monde" (69). We may probably consider as also pertinent to these considerations two curious descriptions of the density and solidity of the atmosphere in which the pilot and his plane move:

Le bruit s'enfle maintenant, dans les reprises répétées, jusqu'à devenir un milieu dense, presque solide, où le corps de trouvé enfermé. .....Ayant jugé l'air, d'abord impalpable puis fluide, devenue maintenant, solide, le pilote s'y appuie et monte. (6)

Le moteur faisait ce bruit dense qui existe seul et derrière lequel le paysage passe en silence comme un film. (18)

Though these passages are striking evocations of a pilot's physical sensations, they almost certainly do not constitute gratuitous impressions and it is not wrong to draw from them some inferences about man's relations with the universe. He must, in effect, create his own support, his own friendly, solid surroundings. One is reminded of the narrator's already cited statement that "on avance lentement en creusant son trou dans un cristal dur" (9), and of the author's later declaration that "la terre nous en apprend plus long sur nous que tous les livres. Parce qu'elle nous résiste" (TH, 139). Though the literal images are quite opposed — it is a question in one case of overcoming resistance and in the other of creating support — the philosophical import is the same. The idea of a mineral, inhuman hardness and coldness which resists or opposes the dynamism of life and humanity is directly contradictory to the "pathetic fallacy" of the romanticists. It is obviously kin, on the other hand, to con-
ceptions expressed in Théophile Gautier's poem "L'Art" and later rather common in the poetry of the Parnassians and of Mallarmé and Valéry. Though the poets were thinking primarily of wrestling beauty out of resistant material, the parallel has much validity. According to a principal thesis of M. François' already mentioned book on the author's esthetics, Saint-Exupéry refused to recognize any essential distinction between the creation of beauty and the performance of responsible tasks.

The contrast between Geneviève's and Bernis' respective natures and worlds is expressed also in another series of symbolic antitheses — ordre-désordre, calme-inquiétude, mobilité-immobilité, and paix-guerre — which are extremely rich in meaning both for the book's general philosophical message and for the novelistic interpretation. These conceptions are so closely related as to necessitate their being considered together. Again the essential differences are symbolized in imaginative impressions of the physical landscapes of France and of the Sahara. At Perpignan Bernis brings his airplane down to "ce fond tranquille;....ce fond de mer où tout repose...." (16). He has come back to "le monde le plus immuable où, pour toucher un mur, pour allonger un champ, il fallait vingt ans de procès. Après deux ans d'Afrique et de paysages mouvants et toujours changeants comme la face de la mer ....il prenait pied sur un vrai sol...." (17). At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator says of the Sahara winds: "....comment croire à notre paix? Les vents alizés glissaient sans repos vers le Sud. ....Quelle hâte, quelle inquiétude!" (3). Later
he reflects again about the winds in much the same terms: "Jours de

désordre: les dunes, prises à biais, filent leur sable en longues
mèches, et chacune se débобine pour se refaire un peu plus loin" (57). In the course of the following discussion we shall note a
number of similar symbolic impressions.

The most salient part of this whole thematic development is the
sustained presentation of Geneviève's world as orderly and calm.
The following passages are from the narrator's recollections of her
enjoying the peace of evening as a child:

Votre visage s'apaisait par degrés quand, le soir, on ran-
geait le monde pour la nuit. "Le fermier a rentré ses bêtes." 
Vous le lisiez aux lumières lointaines des étables. Un bruit
sourd: "On ferme l'écluse." Tout était en ordre. (19-20)

....tu tirais ta confiance de toute cette vie qui montait et
autour de toi dans la paix nocturne.......

The passage of the boisterous rapide (fast train) at seven o'clock
seemed to promote this nocturnal peace and orderliness by carrying
away from Geneviève's world all that was "inquiet, mobile, incertain
comme un visage aux vitres des sleepings" (20).

When she has become a wife and mother, Bernis finds her actively
bringing order to her surroundings:

Les meubles du salon, elle les remuait un peu, ce fau-
teuil elle le tirait, et l'ami trouvait enfin, là, sa vraie
place dans le monde. Après la vie de tout un jour quel tu-
multe silencieux de musique éparse, de fleurs abîmés: tout
ces que l'amitié saccage sur terre. Geneviève sans bruit,

13 This expression is one of the very few technical ones which
Saint-Exupéry allows himself to use figuratively.
faisait la paix dans son royaume.\textsuperscript{14}

The illness of her child destroys this order and peace as it destroys so many other substantial qualities of Geneviève's old world. Remembering things as they were, she thinks with alarm: "Mais, depuis trois jours quel désarroi" (27). The efforts to save her son seem somehow integrated with her housewifely intentness upon preserving order: "Elle éprouvait un étrange besoin d'ordre. Ce vase déplacé, ce manteau d'Herlin traînant sur un meuble, cette poussière sur la console, c'était ... c'étaient des pas gagnés par l'ennemi. Des indices d'une débâcle obscure. Elle luttait contre cette débâcle" (25-26). The doctor who struggles directly against the illness seems to belong to the forces of calm: "Le chirurgien entrait dans la chambre en blouse blanche comme la puissance tranquille du jour."\textsuperscript{15}

When their fight ends in defeat, Geneviève sees a sort of triumph of confusion: "La mort vient dans un grand désordre..."\textsuperscript{16} She resolves

\begin{quote}
Elle lui venait de la part des choses. ... Ce parc n'était plus peigné, dépouillé comme pour un Américain, mais justement on y reconnaît ce désordre dans les allées, ces feuilles sèches, ce mouchoir perdu qu'y laisse le pas des amants. Et ce parc devenait un piège. (22)
\end{quote}

This concept of a pleasant disorder is further elaborated in the description of his visit to her when she is dying in the country:

Le vestibule était obscur: un chapeau blanc sur une chaise: le sien? Quel désordre aimable: non un désordre d'abandon, mais le désordre intelligent qui marque une présence. Il garde encore l'empreinte d'une présence" (64).

\begin{quote}
15P. 27. A fuller explanation of her attitude here will be found in Chapter VIII.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
16P. 31. She goes on to say, however, that after death has wrought destruction there follows an extraordinary calm: On est presque étonnée de la paix, du silence" (31).
\end{quote}
valiantly, however, to continue her own struggle: "Il faut qu'elle s'oppose en hâte à cette débâcle des choses. Il faut tirer en hâte ce fauteuil à sa place, ce vase, ce livre. Il faut qu'elle s'épuise vainement à refaire l'attitude des choses qui entourent la vie" (31).

After her child's death Geneviève also pauses for a rare moment of really uneasy reflection upon her way of life. Among the significant insights which she gains at this time is the following one concerning the orderliness of her old world: "Mille pactes rompus. C'était donc un enfant qui tenait les liens du monde, autour de qui le monde s'ordonnait? Un enfant dont la mort est une telle défaite pour Geneviève?" (32). There is no elaboration of this idea here, but it is surely to be related to the description of Geneviève elsewhere as a "petite servante de la vie" (26). It is, stated most broadly, the promotion of life which gives purpose and order to her existence.  

Geneviève's elopement with Bernis does not really appear as a search for new order and peace, though she says on her first visit to his apartment: "Voyez-vous, j'ai fui la maison. J'ai un tel besoin de paix" (31). In his letter to Bernis the narrator warns against over-estimating the importance of her temporary "désarroi" and against

17 The imaginative concept of liens is discussed in Chapter VII.

18 This interpretation is supported by an already quoted impression which the boys had of Geneviève in childhood: "....tu tirais ta confiance de toute cette vie qui montait et autour de toi dans la paix nocturne et en toi-même...." (21). We shall examine this attitude more directly in Chapter VI.
under-estimating the orderly forces still present in her life (33). Geneviève does not think in terms of disorder during the elopement, but we may take as pertinent to this preoccupation one presentation of her thoughts just before the departure:

"Maintenant je suivrai cet homme et je vais souffrir et douter de lui." Car cette confusion humaine de tendresse et de rebuffades, elle ne l'a démêlée qu'en eux dont les parts sont faites. (36)

Those "whose parts are settled" are the dead, from whose spiritual presence Geneviève draws comfort in her country home. She does not expect to find perfect peace and order in living relationships; she had not done so with Herlin and will not with Bernis.

The antithesis between calm and uneasiness does have a role in the relation of the elopement. Geneviève suffers from a fever, doubtless symbolic of her state of mind, and Bernis is also a prey to mental agitation: "Il lui prit .... la main, sentit que la fièvre montait. Chaque seconde minait cette chair. Il se calmait par des images" (39). After they have started back toward Paris there is a significant return of calm: "Chaque détail du paysage, on le reconnaissait. Il s'installait tranquillement. Il rassurait" (42).

Back in Paris and no longer in contact with Geneviève's world, Bernis finds the city full of disorder:

La ville faisait autour de lui son remue-ménage inutile. Il savait bien que de cette confusion il ne pouvait plus rien sortir.19

19 P, 43. He also has a superficially opposite impression upon their arrival: "A Paris, nul tumulte: on ne dérange pas grand'-chose" (43).
This impression lasts, except for a moment, throughout the episodes of his attempts to escape in Notre-Dame and in Montmartre. His reaction to the priest's sermon is once summed up in these words: "Bernis est en déroute!" (46). His mood while walking afterwards along the Seine is formed of a curious and unhealthy blend of peace and disorder:

Les arbres demeuraient immobiles, leurs branches en désordre prises dans la glu du crépuscule. Bernis marchait. Un calme s'était fait en lui, donné par la trêve du jour, et que l'on croit donné par la solution d'un problème. (47)

This discernment of a false sense of peace in the atmosphere of night-fall is almost certainly to be related to Geneviève's twilight calm and confidence in her simple world. It is an early indication of basic imperfection in her attitude. Though the source of the reflections in the above quotation seems to be the narrator, Bernis also senses something false in his mood and is almost desperately worried:

Pourant ce crépuscule... Toile de fond trop théâtrale..... Toile de fond qui inquiète si le soir est calme, si la vie se traîne, parce que l'on ne sait pas quel drame se joue. Ah! quelque chose pour le sauver d'une inquiétude si humaine... (47)

That this uneasiness has profound, philosophical roots is attested by its very vagueness and by the reference to its generically human feeling. We shall examine Bernis' inquiétude more closely a bit farther on in this discussion.

In Montmartre, where he repairs to escape, his uneasiness, Bernis at first finds some satisfaction in the surface agitation: "Une agitation sans nom, où il est bon, n'est-ce pas, Bernis, de se perdre?" (47). Then he enjoys a pleasant sort of inquiétude in watching some danceurs: "Elles inquiétaient les sens de toujours dénouer l'image qui était sur le point de s'établir. C'était l'expres-
sion même du désir" (48). In the dance, however, he discerns a "construction" which derives from the realm of métier and of which the performers themselves are no longer aware. 20

The motif of disorder resurges with the description of the danseuse after her night with Bernis: "La femme sort ou du sommeil ou de l'amour, cette mèche de cheveux collée au front, ce visage défait, retirée des mers" (50). Here disorder seems to be joined to the ravaging effects of time often symbolized by sea images.

The narration of Bernis' final visit to Geneviève is, for these themes, in marked contrast to the relation of his escapist adventures in Paris and recalls the presentation of Geneviève's childhood attitude. From the beginning there is a special emphasis upon the general peacefulness: "Sous l'œil d'un conducteur paisible on gagnait une route sans mystère, un ruisseau, des églantines" (63). "Visite étrange: nul éclat de voix, nulle surprise" (64). The evening calm is compared explicitly in Bernis' mind to the agitation characteristic of his own world: "Ce repos gagné eût pu être éternel, il en avait le goût. Mes nuits, elles, sont moins que des trêves..." (65). Once again he finds people occupied in creating a simple order among bibelots and flowers, 22 and he thinks, half condescendingly and half in admiration:

20 Cf. for this passage the discussion of sens in Chapter VI.

21 Note, again, the concentration within pp. 20-50 of nearly all symbolic details pertinent to these themes.

22 This arranging of flowers seems to have almost a religious significance. Bernis hears "un pas de nonne qui range les fleurs de l'Autel" (65).
"Comme tout est simple ... vivre, ranger les bibelots, mourir..." (65). Even after having learned of Geneviève's approaching death, he is affected in spite of himself by the atmosphere of the house: "Il ne comprenait pas sa propre paix" (66).

There is in this passage no direct metaphorical indication of a flaw in the orderliness and peace of Geneviève's world, as there is, we shall see, for its solidity and durability. It is noteworthy, however, that for her personally night has ceased to be a time of peace to become something fearful. This fearfulness even derives, in a sense, from an excess of stability and order in the things around her: "C'était bientôt la nuit qui obsédait la malade comme une étape à franchir. La lampe en veilleuse fascine alors comme un mirage, et les choses dont les ombres ne tournent pas et que l'on regarde douze heures sous le même angle finissent par s'imprimer dans le cerveau, peser d'un poids insupportable" (66). If Geneviève's thoughts are no longer calm, she is nevertheless dying in a peaceful atmosphere where death is accepted. The other members of the household speak of her in "des voix pleines d'amour mais si calmes" (65). It is pertinent to recall in this connection some of the narrator's memories of her in childhood:

Tu lisais, et, pour nous, c'étaient des enseignements sur le monde, sur la vie, qui nous venaient non du poète, mais de ta sagesse. Et les détresses des amants et les pleurs des reines devenaient de grandes choses tranquilles. On mourait d'amour avec tant de calme dans ta voix...

"Geneviève, est-ce vrai que l'on meurt d'amour?"

Tu suspendais tes vers, tu réfléchissais gravement. Tu cherchais sans doute la réponse chez les fougères, les grillons, les abeilles et tu répondais "oui" puisque les abeilles en meurent. C'était nécessaire et paisible. (20-21)
It is surely true on one level of meaning that Geneviève is dying of love in the classical pattern which she understood.

After taking off from Toulouse, Bernis has a highly significant reflection about his leave: "Bernis rêve. Il est en paix: 'J'ai mis de l'ordre'" (6). This observation must at first seem paradoxical if one considers the disturbing — and even fatal — effects of his elopement with Geneviève. A later rephrasing of the statement by the narrator is more understandable:

Bernis est las. Deux mois plus tôt, il montait vers Paris, à la conquête de Geneviève. In rentrait hier à la compagnie, ayant mis de l'ordre dans sa défaite. (14)

Bernis did indeed restore a measure of order to the confusion resulting from the death of Geneviève's child and her elopement. On his final visit he finds just the sort of external order she had enjoyed before, and she is herself dying in an orderly, peaceful way. She is dying nevertheless, and Bernis is losing her irrevocably. By returning her to her old world he has only made the best of a defeat. His impression of having set things straight almost surely betokens also the resolution in his mind of certain problems which are represented by other themes. 23

The story of his amorous adventure with Geneviève does not contain the whole treatment of these themes in Bernis' life and thinking. In childhood the boys had wished to draw the confident Geneviève into their own uneasiness: "...nous cherchions par tous les symboles, par tous les pièges, à t'entraîner, sous les apparence, dans ce fond

23Cf. Chapters V and VIII.
The fact is that they distrusted the order from which she took assurance, an order to which the narrator once refers as "...cette vieille ritournelle, ...cette vie faite de saisons, de vacances, de mariages, et de morts" (61). On returning to France after adventures in flying, they are vaguely uneasy: "A reconnaître tout si bien en place, si bien réglé par le destin, nous avions peur de quelque chose d'obscur" (16). In Perpignan, Bernis has a feeling of returning to prison. From the air, at another time, he perceives the facile order of villages and fields in terms of an elaborate image:


This man-made order appears superficial and precarious. The phrase "trop bien rangés" is significant for its implication that Bernis does not believe in the possibility of safe and perfect order. His world of adventure and risk is not characterized, to be sure, by total disorder, but, like the equilibrium of the dancers, any order it has is

24 P. 21. As a child Geneviève also had a sort of philosophical inquiétude: "Parfois du village un glas s'élevait, portant aux grillons, aux blés, aux cigales l'inexplicable mort. Et vous vous penchiez en avant, inquiète pour les fiancés seulement, car rien n'est aussi menacé que l'espoirance" (19). One of the boys' old teachers at the collège also confessed to them, on their visit, a profound inquiétude: "Nietzsche lui-même le troublait. Et la réalité de la matière... il savait plus, il s'inquiétait..." (11).

temporary or menaced. After arriving at Alicante, he remembers having experienced while flying a moment of extraordinary security and orderliness:

Il se souvient d'avoir ressenti avec une évidence soudaine que ce paysage, ce ciel, cette terre étaient bâties à la manière d'une demeure.\(^{26}\) Demeure familière, bien en ordre. Chaque chose si verticale. Nulle menace, nulle fissure dans cette vision unie: il était comme à l'intérieur du paysage. \(^{(13)}\)

This illusory orderliness is related explicitly to the very sort which gave Geneviève her confidence:

Ainsi les vieilles dames se sentent éternelles à la fenêtre de leur salon. La pelouse est fraîche, le jardinier lent arrose les fleurs. ....L'ordre dans la maison est doux..... \(^{(13)}\)

The plane's entry into a storm quite demolishes Bernis' impression of security and he is in peril of death: "Une second encore, et de cette maison bousculée.... il sera rejeté pour toujours. Plaines, forêts, villages jailliront vers lui en spirale" \(^{(13)}\). He recovers control of the plane but the menace he had understood remains fixed in his mind: "Eh! mais cette faille entrevue! Tout n'était là qu'en trompe-l'œil: routes, canaux, maisons, jouets des hommes!...." \(^{(13)}\).

In this impression there is a hint of the bergerie image,\(^{27}\) which symbolizes for Bernis not only deceptive, precarious order but also

\(^{26}\) The demeure is discussed in Chapter V.

\(^{27}\) Bernis has already had, before the occasion just mentioned, a vision of the bergerie. This impression had come shortly after his departure from Toulouse: "A deux cents mètres on se penche encore sur une bergerie d'enfant, aux arbres posés droits, aux maisons peintes, et les forêts gardent leur épaisseur de fourrure: terre habitée..." \(^{(6)}\).
the frailty of man and human creations in confrontation with extra-
human forces.

His profound *inquiétude* is related as well to another imagina-
tive concept of this complex, that of *immobilité*, which, as we have
seen, is one of the symbolic qualities of the French landscape he
perceives from the air (17). In their visit to the old cistern, he
and the narrator were affected by the stillness of the water and had
cast in stones to disturb it (61). This physical quality retains its
fascination for Bernis after he has become an adult, when it is likely
to appear as an external manifestation of unpleasant and insecure
moral situations. During his drive with Geneviève toward Sens, he
conceives the whole menace to their happiness in terms of immobility:
"Il envisageait cette panne avec effroi. Il craignait l'*immobilité*
du paysage. Elle délivre certaines pensées qui sont en germes. Il
craignait une certaine force qui se faisait jour" (38). After the dis-
appointing visit to Notre-Dame, immobility is one of the perceptions
associated with his uneasiness: "Les arbres demeuraient immobiles,
leurs branches en désordre prises dans la glu du crépuscule. ....Ah!
quelque chose pour le sauver d'une inquiétude si humaine..." (47).
Another such moment of exterior stagnation and of inner anxiety comes
as he leaves Geneviève's domaine: "Il ne bougeait pas. Il se sou-
venait de soirs pareils. On se levait pesant comme un scaphandrier.
Le visage lisse de la femme se fermait et tout à coup on avait peur
de l'avenir, de la mort" (67). A final and very strong impression of
immobility, epitomized in the image of the *gangue*, comes to him as he
is flying away from Cap Juby: "L'*air immobile* a pris l'avion comme
une gangue. Nul tangement, nul roulis et, de si haut, nul déplacement
du paysage." 28 This moment — like those on the road to Sens, along
the Paris quais, and at Geneviève's house in the country — is an oc-
casion for hard philosophical speculation: Bernis goes on (68-69) to
reflect about the general weakness of man in an indifferent universe.
In these passages immobility is itself less a philosophical concept
than a physical symptom or provocation of the inquiétude which is of
central importance in Bernis' nature. 29 It is, however, a symptom
linked by analogy with the basis of his uneasiness. The immobility of
things around him is symbolic of the mineral, inhuman forces which
oppose vital and human dynamism.

His life in the métier is not, of course, characterized primarily
by inquiétude and disorder. We are told that during a struggle to
right his plane "Bernis n'a plus que des pensées rudimentaires, les
pensées qui dirigent l'action..." (13). Action — more specifically
responsible action — is the source of a professional satisfaction
which offsets his inquiétude. In this sort of action the flyers of
the Ligne create order for their own ends, as may be seen in this
imaginative description of the preparations for an airplane's depart-
ure:

28 P. 68. The description of an earlier impression of this sort,
just before Bernis' departure from Casablanca, contains a suggestion
of the psychological origin of such moods: "Ainsi parfois, un film se
rompt. L'immobilité saisit, chaque seconde plus grave comme une syn-
cope, puis la vie repart" (55).

29 Immobility is also a symptom of Geneviève's mental anguish on
two occasions — during a pause on the road to Sens (37) and in the
night of her fatal illness (66). It is perhaps in this conception of
the physical "symptom" of moods that Saint-Exupéry comes nearest to
the Proustian metaphor which was discussed in the first chapter.
Le chef de piste jette un dernier coup d'œil; ordre absolu des choses: gestes réglés comme pour un ballet. Cet avion a sa place exacte dans ce hangar, comme dans cinq minutes dans ce ciel. Ce vol aussi bien calculé que le lancement d'un navire. ... pour que ce vol ... soit un effet de balistique et non une œuvre du hasard. (5)

The work in which Bernis and his comrades are engaged, like Geneviève's struggle to save her child, is often conceived as a sort of war for the defense and promotion of human interests. They are extending the frontier of civilization and order through the dissidence of the Sahara. 30 The narrator remembers in this light the "briefing" before his friend's first flight: "Je me souviens de cette veillée d'armes..." (8). When he is about to leave Toulouse for the mail-flight to Africa, Bernis is handed a "plan de bataille" (5), and while aloft he regards the hood of his plane as an "obusier" (6). Geneviève had similarly seen the slightest surface disorder in her home as "des pas gagnés par l'ennemi" and had understood as a "combat rapide" the surgeon's efforts to save her child. "Et tout à coup, comme Bernis dans son avion, elle avait eu la révélation d'une stratégie si forte: on allait vaincre" (26). Both characters abandon their "war," however, in the episode of the elopement, and Bernis realizes that in this pursuit of private purposes they are like an "armée sans foi" (38).

30 The narrator reflects concerning the dissidence which surrounds the fort at Cap Juby: "Nous n'allions guère qu'à cinq cents mètres où commençait la dissidence, captifs des Maures et de nous-mêmes" (3). "A ce puits répondait un puits trois cents kilomètres plus loin. ... C'est au second puits que j'aurais senti ma solitude, c'est au puits suivant que la dissidence eût été vraiment mystérieux" (57).
The campaign of the men of the Ligne is not lacking in faith and it is difficult to see, in terms of these themes, how Bernis might have sought his own death. The treatment of the final episode gives indeed a quite opposite impression. The pilot was killed, at least indirectly, by a "rezzou," a kind of condensed symbol of the dis-sidence with which he and his comrades felt themselves to be in conflict. In spite of this momentary triumph of a "parti ennemi," the battle goes on, as a final communiqué indicates: "Pilote tué avion brisé courrier intact. Stop. Continue sur Dakar" (77). The end of Bernis' personal life appears to the narrator, to be sure, in a quite different light: "Il me semble qu'un enfant s'apaise" (77). This observation is more pertinent, however, for the theme of a private quest, which we shall consider in Chapter VIII.

In the present discussion we have examined most of the "quality" antitheses which express the differences between Geneviève's and Bernis' worlds. We have found that moral and spiritual oppositions are symbolized very effectively by descriptive contrasts between actual physical attributes of the Sahara and France. This symbolism is naturally more evident in the mind of Bernis, where nearly all the qualities represent concepts in which his thoughts are formulated. Geneviève as well, however, thinks in terms of such concepts as "order"

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31 The text is not very clear on this point. Cf. explication of this passage (Chapter XII).

32 Two other important antitheses of this sort, clarté-obscurité and "la surface des choses"—"sous les apparences," will be discussed in Chapter VII.
and "solidity." In conjunction with the more elaborate imaginative conceptions, such as the bélierie and the gangue, which we have associated with them for meaning, these symbolic qualities have an important novelistic role in demonstrating the incompatibility of the two characters' separate worlds. This incompatibility leads to the failure of their romantic venture and, on one level, even to their deaths.

The images and symbolic details discussed here reveal also, on the other hand, a certain area of similarity and agreement, an area which we tried to evoke in the chapter's title by the word "responsibility." Geneviève's war for order and life is matched, in effect, by Bernis' conception of his military campaign against la dissidence. It is important to note also that the opposition of the two worlds does not lead to absolute mutual misunderstanding. Geneviève begins to comprehend Bernis' way of life during the elopement, and he achieves a really penetrating understanding of her world and even of her thought. This greater awareness on the part of Bernis, which manifests itself throughout the novel, is related to his philosophical inquiétude, which, we shall see, is the key to further thematic developments.
CHAPTER V

TIME AND DECAY

An introduction to this theme of Courrier-Sud has been effected by our general discussion of human frailty in Chapter IV. Both Geneviève and Bernis reflect often and intensely about decay and the passage of time, and their reflections are expressed in some of the most elaborate images of the novel. We shall discuss first Bernis' view of Geneviève as a being mysteriously removed from time, a view translated principally by a certain type of sea images. Then we shall look at the key concept of durability by which she judges the world of romantic love and adventure into which Bernis wishes to lead her. The impressions of the pair during their elopement and those of Bernis during his further adventures in Paris are figured in various images of flowing water and in those of the rapide (fast train) and the moteur, which we shall consider together. Our attention will then turn to a different, almost opposing view which Bernis holds of Geneviève's relation to time. This second view of her world and the narrator's vision of Bernis' life find effective expression in the image-concepts of the demeure, the navire, and the menacing sea of time.

In childhood the boys had already been fascinated by a certain timeless which they sensed in Geneviève: "Tu nous paraissais éternelle d'être si bien liée aux choses, si sère des choses, de tes pensées, de ton avenir" (20). The narrator remembers also another
conception of her held by Bernis: "Il me disait que tu habitaïs ton corps, comme cette fée sous les eaux...." (20). This sub-aquatic habitat symbolizes here, among other things, 1 an immunity from time.

It has this meaning also in the boys' impressions of the old cistern:

Derrière la porte dormait une eau2 que nous disions morte depuis mille ans, à laquelle nous pensions chaque fois que nous entendions parler d'eau morte. ....nous lancions des pierres qui faisaient des trous. ....Le caillou que nous avions lancé commençait son cours, comme un astre, car pour nous cette eau n'avait pas de fond. (61)

This conception of water as fused with duration is echoed in the narrator's summation of the revelations he and Bernis had received on visiting the cistern and the attic:

Et nous descendions vers notre chambre, emportant pour le grand voyage du demi-sommeil cette connaissance d'un monde où la pierre mystérieuse coule sans fin parmi les eaux comme ces tentacules de lumière qui plongent mille ans pour nous parvenir..... (62)

The boys have an intuition, then, of unfathomable depth (or time) below and of infinite height (or time) above. Geneviève seems to share something of the same imaginative conception when she thinks of the trees in her domaine as "ces voûtes vertes qui ont la profondeur de l'eau et son mouvement."3 Sub-aquatic timelessness figures prominently in the boys' impressions of Geneviève and of the

1Bernis' perception of a magical quality in Geneviève, also implicit in this passage, will be discussed in Chapter VIII.

2Sea and ship images had already appeared in this passage as evocations of great age: "Il était interdit aux enfants de pousser cette petite porte verte, d'un vert usé de vieille barque, de toucher cette serrure énorme, sortie rouillie du temps, comme une vieille ancre de la mer" (61).

3P. 36. Bernis has a similar impression, without the same symbolic meaning; "Les champs semblaient d'un vert plus vif, profonds comme de l'eau, au soleil couchant" (52).
ancestral, tradition-bound way of life which she expects to continue. In the description of their visit to the cistern is found also a prophetic reference to the very different sort of life which they hoped to lead:

Nous nommons ceux qui usaient soixante années de coin de terre ....nous nommons ces générations présentes "l'équipe de garde." Car nous aimions nous découvrir sur l'îlot le plus menacé, entre deux océans redoutables, le passé et l'avenir. (60-61)

The image of the menacing sea (about which we shall have more to say in relation to the navire) and that of the island recur in Bernis' thoughts about the "briefing" before his first flight: "Dehors il ventait. Cette chambre était bien un îlot dans le monde comme une auberge de marins." The narrator also describes a pilot's life in terms of an eroding sea of time: "Les villes peu à peu se remplacent l'une l'autre, il faut atterrir pour y prendre corps. Maintenant tu [Bernis] sais que ces richesses ne sont qu'offertes puis effacées, lavées par les heures comme par la mer." (9). He employs the same figure in his letter of warning to Bernis: "En me promenant sur la plage hier, si vide, si nue, éternellement lavée par la mer, j'ai pensé que nous étions semblables à elle."5

The contrast between Geneviève's and Bernis' worlds in terms of

4P. 9. There is another significant comparison of the flyers' life to that of sailors as the narrator reflects upon Bernis' return to France: "Ce monde, nous le retrouvions chaque fois, comme les matelots bretons retrouvent leur village de carte postale...." (16).

5P. 33. The desert sands are several times compared to the surface of the sea. Bernis on leave is said to return "après deux ans d'Afrique et de paysages mouvants et toujours changeants comme la face de la mer...." (17). Y. also pp. 57 and 75.
durability finds expression as well in the figure of the rapide. This image represented in the boys' minds all that was foreign to Geneviève's childhood existence: "...le rapide de sept heures du soir faisait son orage, doublait la province et s'évadait, mettoyant enfin votre monde de ce qui est impétueux, mobile, incertain comme un visage aux vitres des sleepings" (20). It is evoked positively, on the other hand, to describe the winds of the Sahara and, implicitly, the hectic, adventurous lives of Bernis and his friends: "...com- ment croire à notre paix? ...Ce n'étaient plus ces vents d'Europe qui tournent, cèdent; ils étaient établis sur nous comme sur le rapide en marche" (3).

The thematic contrast between Geneviève's durable world and the transitory one of Bernis has a major role in the narration of the elopement. In the letter of warning to his friend, the narrator explains Geneviève's concept of durability before it is first presented to the reader in terms of her thoughts:

"Ces coutumes, ces conventions, ces lois, tout ce dont tu ne sens pas la nécessité, tout dont tu t'es évadé... C'est cela qui lui donne un cadre. Il faut autour de soi des réalités qui durent. ...la fortune: c'est ce qui fait durer les choses. C'est le fleuve invisible, souterrain qui alimente un siècle les murs d'une demeure, les souvenirs: l'âme." (33)

Geneviève is quick to feel uneasy at the absence of durability in the world she is about to enter, and this uneasiness is at the basis of her illness in Sens. There are several very forceful passages in which her feelings are presented to us impressionistically. Thus, in Bernis' apartment before their departure by automobile, her thoughts dwell almost exclusively on the matter of solidity and
She is led inevitably to compare these surroundings unfavorably with those of her childhood:

...elle comprenait précisément que, dans sa vie nouvelle, c'est de superflu qu'elle serait riche. Elle n'en avait pas besoin. Mais cette assurance de durée: elle ne l'aurait plus. Elle pensa: les choses dureraient plus que moi. J'étais reçue, accompagnée, assurée d'être un jour veillée, et, maintenant, je vais durer plus que les choses. 6

Not even death had seemed to threaten this sort of permanence:

Elle connaissait là-bas le signe des morts et ne le craint pas.... Disparus? Quand parmi ceux qui sont changeants ils sont seuls durables, quand leur dernier visage enfin était si vrai que rien d'eux ne pourra jamais le demeurer!  (36)

She has at last a completely disenchanted vision of what is likely to be her lot among the impermanent things of Bernis' world: "Elle survivra à cette maison de Dakar, à cette foule de Buenos-Aires, dans un monde où il n'y aura que des spectacles point nécessaires et à peine plus réels, si Bernis n'est pas assez fort, que ceux d'un livre..." 7 (36).

6P. 35. Geneviève's relationship to the "chooses" of her surroundings is discussed in Chapters III and VII.

7Note the concentration within a few pages of these numerous references to durability.
During the trip Bernis understands her conception and realizes that his world lacks the durability which she needs to have around her. His realization is symbolized in the reaction to an exterior detail, a sign over a bicycle shop:

Un gaz presque tari remuait les ombres, faisait vivre sur le mur blafard une enseigne délavé et qui avait coulé: "Vélos..." Il lui parut que c'était le mot le plus triste et le plus vulgaire qu'il eût jamais lu. Symbole d'une vie médiocre. Il lui apparut que beaucoup de choses dans sa vie là-bas étaient médiocres mais qu'il ne s'en était pas aperçu. (38)

The analogical symbolism of this sign lies in the fact that its paint has run, a manifestation of cheapness and impermanence, and also in the etymology of the word "vélos" which, like that of "rapide," suggests mobility and change. (Bicycles may also be associated with cheap, proletarian amusements.)

Both characters are also conscious of the actual flight of time. These perceptions are translated by certain water images and by those of the rapide and the moteur. Upon first taking refuge in Bernis' apartment, Geneviève had anticipated with pleasure the prospect of giving herself up to change and fluidity:

Le temps fuit sur cette épaule sans faire de mal. C'est presque une joie de renoncer à tout, on s'abandonne, on est emportée par le courant, il semble que sa propre vie s'écoule... (30)

Her feelings during the drive to Sens are quite different. Both lovers are keenly aware of the automobile's backfiring motor, another exterior detail which takes on imaginative and symbolic meaning: "Le moteur tirait toujours mal avec des à-coups et des claquements. Elle soupira. Ce qu'elle essayait était au-dessus de ses forces.
Tout cela à cause de ce moteur qui haletait." The rain which falls during their trip has in their minds a similar connotation of decay and fluidity: "Maintenant il pleuvait. "Pourriture!" se dit Jacques...." (37). Bernis realizes, however, that the "missing" motor and the rain are merely symbols of more profound difficulties which they are confronting (41). During the stay in Sens it is Geneviève who conceives of the rapide. At the moment of her awakening at the hotel (41) this image is contrasted in her mind with the navire, a conception which we shall discuss shortly.

During the drive back to Paris the lovers' mood is very much changed, but Bernis, thinking in terms of the rapide, is aware that he is losing Geneviève in the course of events and passage of time. "Son visage lui parut nouveau, où avait-il vu ce visage? Aux voyageurs. Aux voyageurs que la vie dans quelques secondes détachera de votre vie. Sur les quais. Ce visage peut déjà sourire, vivre de ferveurs inconnues" (43). Alone in Paris he has another impression of flow, of current: "Il savait bien que de cette confusion il ne pouvait plus rien sortir. Il remontait, avec lenteur, le peuple étranger des passants" (43). Some of the words of the priest in Notre-Dame seem meant to appeal especially to this mood:

"Que deviendrez-vous hors de ma demeure, hors de ce navire où l'écoulement des heures prend son plein sens, comme, sur l'étrave luisante, l'écoulement de la mer. L'écoulement de la mer qui ne fait pas de bruit mais porte les Îles. L'écoulement

P. 37. The etymology of the word also suggests change and movement. Another meaning for the image in this and other passages is discussed in Chapter VI.
This offer of meaningful flow and supposedly secure islands makes no impression upon Bernis, who considers that the priest's disordered images have no valid basis.

In the night of love which he spends with the dancer of Montmartre, both think obsessively of decay and the passage of time. Their thoughts are expressed in an extraordinary series of images. The dancer feels first that she is "oubliée sur une grève déserte" and then has the impression of an anguished sea voyage: "Couchée en travers de cette poitrine, elle sent la respiration de l'homme monter et descendre comme une vague et c'est l'angoisse d'une traversée" (49). The sound of his heart reminds her of a motor rather like the one which expressed Geneviève's uneasiness, and she thinks also of the "demolishing" action of a woodcutter or of a wrecking machine:

Si, l'oreille collée à la chair, elle écoute le bruit dur du cœur, ce moteur en marche ou cette cognée du démolisseur, elle éprouve le sentiment d'une fuite rapide, insaisissable. Et ce silence, quand elle prononce un mot qui le tire du rêve. Elle compte les secondes entre le mot et la réponse, comme pour l'orage -- une... deux... trois... (49)

Still another water image translates her impression of ebbing life:

"On sent la vie qui vous traverse comme une rivière. Une fuite vertigineuse. Le corps: cette pirogue lancée..." (49). It is Bernis, now, who is reminded by her disordered appearance of someone "tirée

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9P. 45. The priest had already said: "Je suis la source de toute vie. Je suis la marée qui entre en vous et vous anime et se retire" (45). Cf. explication of this passage (Chapter IX).
des eaux .... retirée des mers" (49). Then the rapide image is added to this extraordinary series: "Ces heures passent comme de petites gares de province — minuit, une heure, deux heures — rejetées en arrière, perdues. Quelque chose file entre les doigts que l'on ne sait pas retenir" (50). In this anguished awareness of the flow of time, it is not the fact of growing old but the senselessness of passing moments, "cette seconde gâtée, ce calme différé" (50), which is so painful. Bernis mentally compares love — and perhaps life itself — to a: "oiseau fou qui bat des ailes et meurt" (50).

Just before leaving Paris, he has another impression of flow expressed in terms of the river and of the rapide:

Ce salon en ordre ressemble à un quai. Bernis, à Paris, franchit avant l'heure du rapide des heures désertes. Le front contre la vitre, il regarde s'écouler la foule. Il est distancé par ce fleuve. 10  (51)

This motif of flowing water comes back to his thoughts for a last time in the form of a ditty which he sings with the old sergeant near whose desert fort he is stranded:

Il pleut, il pleut, bergère...

.... ..... ....... ....
Rentre tes blancs moutons
 Là-bas dans la chaumièrê...

.... ..... ....... ....
Entends sous le feuillage
L'eau qui coule à grand bruit,
Déjà voici l'orage...

(73)

The sergeant, who regards Bernis almost as a magician, says: "Ah comme c'est vrai" (73).

10 Note the concentration within pages 36-51 of so many images having to do with flowing water, the moteur, and the rapide.
When Bernis visits Geneviève for the last time at her country home, his conception of the timelessness or durability of her world seems at first unchanged. This village, like her childhood home, is symbolically isolated from the *rapides*: "Les *rapides* brûlaient cette gare qui n'était là qu'en trompe-l'œil..." (63). Bernis finds "un mur *éternel*, 11 un arbre *éternel*" and imagines once more a magical, sub-aquatic existence: "Royaume de légende 12 endormi sous les eaux, c'est là que Bernis passera cent ans en ne vieillissant que d'une heure" (64). During this visit is revealed also, however, a quite different attitude toward Geneviève's world and the traditional way of life. The new attitude is expressed in terms of the *demeure* and the *navire*, two symbolic conceptions which we shall now discuss together.

The *demeure* and the *navire* are first of all imaginative representations of Geneviève's way of life. On reading Bernis' enthusiastic letter from Paris, the narrator remembers her childhood in this way: "Vous étiez si bien abritée par cette *maison* et, autour d'elle, par cette robe vivante de la terre" (19). In Bernis' apartment after her son's death, Geneviève says significantly: "Voyez-vous, j'ai fui la

11 The immovable wall occurs several times in Bernis' thoughts as a pessimistic image. Landing at Perpignan, he thinks of the French landscape as "ce fond de mer où tout repose, où tout prend l'évidence et la durée d'un mur" (16). Disappointed at what he finds on returning to Paris, he thinks: "Cette ville ici: un mur." The dancer in Montmartre, with whom he has no hope of real communion, appears in the same light: "Comme la femme fumait une cigarette et, le menton au poing, courbait la tête, il ne vit plus qu'une étendue déserte. Un mur, pensait-il" (47-48).

12 This image is anticipated by numerous other allusions, to magic and mystery in the description of Bernis' visit. Cf. explication (Chapter XI).
Geneviève says also: "Si vous saviez dans quel désordre est la maison..." (32). Herlin's simple reaction is to think of selling the house.

14P. 31. This thought of a voyage by water is anticipated in the text — and in Geneviève's thoughts — by her impression of being "emportée par le courant" (30).

15Geneviève had earlier compared her sick child's labored breathing to "le souffle oppressé des remorqueurs" (25). Her son was, then, like a vessel toeing others, that is, the other members of the family. Cf. also her reflection: "C'était donc un enfant qui tenait les liens du monde, autour de qui le monde s'ordonnait" (32).

16P. 33. The word demeure, by virtue of its relationship to the verb demeurer, suggests permanence and stability.
While she is in Bernis' apartment before their departure, her doubts are also expressed in the "demeure-navire" concepts and images. It is in response to the question: "Que pensez-vous de notre demeure?" that she becomes aware of the flimsiness of her surroundings and future. "...ce décor manque de durée. Sa charpente n'est pas solide..." (34). She is distrustful of the light coverings which disguise the walls: "Elle aime, de la paume, caresser la pierre, caresser ce qu'il y a dans la maison de plus sûr et de plus durable. Ce qui peut vous porter longtemps comme un navire." A bit later she remembers her own country house with its solid stones: "Elle revoit cette maison à travers les tilleuls épais. C'est ce qu'il y avait de plus stable qui arrivait à la surface: ce perron de pierres larges qui se continuait dans la terre." It is no doubt figuratively significant as well that she cannot conceive of the house she and Bernis would have in Spain: "Rien ne pouvait en bâtir l'image en Geneviève." In the description of the pair's awakening at Sens, there is an explicit contrast between the conception of the navire and that of the rapide:

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17 P. 34. As this quotation indicates, the navire conception carries with it the idea of a movement within time as well as that of a durable resistance to time implicit in the demeure. The imagination of life as a voyage through stormy seas is of course a very old and popular idea. In his already mentioned work (pp. 128-130) Mr. Ernst Curtius shows the importance of all sorts of nautical metaphors in the literature of antiquity and of the Middle Ages.

18 P. 35. On his visit to Geneviève in the country, Bernis will also understand the symbolism of this perron: "Il gravit le perron de larges pierres. Il était né de la nécessité avec une aisance sûre des lignes. 'Rien ici n'est truqué...'" (64).

19 P. 38. There is an obvious echo here of the humorous French phrase: "Construire des châteaux en Espagne."
Cette fenêtre est salie par l'aube. ... Cette nuit, elle se creusait jusqu'aux étoiles. On rêve. On imagine.
On est à la proue d'un navire.
Elle [Geneviève] ramène contre elle ses genoux, se sent une chair molle de pain mal cuit. Le coeur bat trop vite et fait mal. Ainsi dans un wagon. Le bruit des essieux scande la fuite. Les essieux battent comme le coeur. On colle son front à la vitre et le paysage s'écoule.... (41)

The confidence of Geneviève and Bernis during the night, compared here to the feeling of the captain of a ship, was quite illusory. In following their personal inclinations and purposes they were not furthering a great enterprise. Geneviève's impression at dawn of traveling in a rapide corresponds to the actual transitory nature of their venture. During this same early morning, Bernis has a revelation of the real analogy between Geneviève's old life and a sea voyage: "Sa maison était un navire. Elle passait les générations d'un bord à l'autre. Le voyage n'a de sens ni ici ni ailleurs, mais quelle sécurité on tire d'avoir son billet, sa cabine, et ses valises de cuir jaune. D'être embarqué..." (42). This skeptical attitude is presented more elaborately in the episode of his last visit, which will be examined shortly.

The navire and the demeure figure also in Bernis' adventures in Bernis' adventures in Paris after leaving Geneviève. The whole world of the priest's religion and its incoherent emblems is indeed summed up in these expressions:

Ma demeure est la seule issue, que deviendrez-vous hors de ma demeure?

20 The presentation of an enclosure as a way out is typical of numerous paradoxes in the priest's language. Cf. explication (Chapter IX).
Que deviendrez-vous hors de ma demeure, hors de ce navire où l'écoulement des heures prend son plein sens comme l'écoulement de la mer qui ne fait pas de bruit mais porte les îles. L'écoulement de la mer.

Montmartre does not pretend to offer the security of a dwelling or of a shipboard, though after his night with the dancer Bernis rather surprisingly has the same impression he and Geneviève had had during the night in Sens: "Maintenant pur, froid, dégagé du corps, on est à la proue d'un navire, le cap en mer" (50). This image is of course descriptive of the psychological after-effects of carnal love, but it probably indicates also the turning of Bernis' thoughts back to flying and to duty.

In the narrator's recollections of the old attic, which Saint-Exupéry places after the story of Bernis and Geneviève, an essential contrast is drawn between the two conceptions of the demeure and the navire, a contrast which symbolizes almost by itself the weakness, underneath its seeming security, of Geneviève's world:


... .... ..... ...... ...... ...... ...... ...... ...... ...... ...... ...... ....... ......

... la maison qui craque au vent est menacée comme un navire....

(62)

This leak in the ship's hold represents the menace to human security of passing time, a topic which has provided matter for many novels, Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu being the most eminent example.
On his visit to the dying Geneviève's country house (the account of which immediately follows the passage above), Bernis has, along with some impressions of the relative solidity of the demeure, new visions of the trou and of the leaking ship:

D'un store soigneusement baissé un rayon de soleil filtra.
"Une déchirure, pensa Bernis, ici l'on vieillit sans savoir..." (65)
Le soir s'insinuait comme la mer dans une cale qui fait eau... (67)

Though this pessimism applies to human life in general, it is naturally concentrated upon the traditional way of life, wherein Geneviève and others do attain a sense of security and even a relative permanence.

The figurative language of this episode also contains the clearest single clue to the reason for Geneviève's death. Bernis has the following impression of her delirious reaction to his presence: "Elle le halait du fond de sa pensée. .... Elle s'accrochait à sa manche comme un naufragé qui se hisse, non pour se saisir d'une présence, d'un appui, mais d'une image..." (67). This sentence seems to imply that she is no longer aboard the ship of her old life in spite of the return to old surroundings. At least two causes for this situation are suggested by images of the navire complex. In a way her ship no longer exists (cf. "naufragé"), or at least its voyage no longer has sens after the death of the child, who had been compared to a remorqueur pulling other vessels (24-25). (She had also thought briefly that Bernis' gestures in love were like those of an "haleur" [41].)

Secondly, in going away with Bernis, Geneviève willfully abandoned the demeure or navire of her old life. This is one of the numerous ambiguities or "litiges de langage" in Courrier-Sud which prevent over-
simple interpretations.

The demeure and navire appear as pessimistic conceptions in the descriptions of Bernis' life of adventure. During his flight from Toulouse to Casablanca the sky and earth seem momentarily to form a sort of dwelling:

"Une maison," pense Bernis. Il se souvient d'avoir ressenti avec une évidence soudaine que ce paysage, ce ciel, cette terre étaient bâtis à la manière d'une demeure. Demeure familière, bien en ordre. Chaque chose si verticale, nulle menace, nulle fissure dans cette vision unie: il était comme à l'intérieur du paysage.

This impression is abolished by a storm which almost costs Bernis his life: "Une seconde encore, et de cette maison bousculée, et qu'il vient à peine de comprendre, il sera rejeté pour toujours" (13).

The shock he feels doubtless derives largely from an understanding of general human frailty. In recollection the whole pessimistic vision is summed up by the image of the trou, or faille:

Une aventure? Il ne reste de cette seconde qu'un goût dans la bouche, un aigreur de la chair. Eh! mais cette faille entrevue! Tout n'était là qu'en trompe-l'œil: routes, canaux, maisons, jouets des hommes!...

(13)

(In later books [e.g., the title Terre des hommes] Saint-Exupéry returns, though always with reservations, to the conception of the earth as a friendly shelter.)

This acute awareness of human mortality is at the center of Bernis' general inquiétude, which we have already considered briefly in the preceding chapter. The world of inquiétude is itself represented on two occasions by sea images. Thus the boys had wished not only to bring Geneviève up from her sea of mystery (20) but also to
draw her "sous les apparences, dans ce fond des mers" où [les] appelait [leur] inquiétude" (21). At Cap Juby Bernis describes his failure to take her away in terms of a similar image: "A mesure que nous remontions vers Paris, diminuait entre le monde et nous une épaisseur. Comme si j'avais voulu l'entraîner sous la mer" (67-68).

A statement following this one is the key to a remarkable inquiet preoccupation with time on the part of Bernis:

Quand, plus tard, j'ai cherché à la joindre, j'ai pu l'approcher, la toucher, il n'y avait pas d'espace entre nous. Il y avait plus. Je ne sais te dire quoi: mille années. On est si loin d'une autre vie.

Time is imagined here as a sort of fourth dimension which separated the lovers in spite of their physical proximity. Essentially the same conception appears on several other occasions. The stagnant water of the cistern, "immobile depuis mille ans" (61), was already, in the boys' minds, separated from the domaine around it by time rather than distance. Bernis sees his departure from Paris as a removal in time: "Cette femme passe, fait dix pas à peine et sort du temps" (51). Similarly, when his friend's plane seems to have disappeared in the Sahara between Agadir and Juby, the narrator thinks of him as being "hors de l'espace, hors du temps" (58). Pilots crossing the monotonous desert consciously measure their progress in time rather than in distance. Bernis' impressions of this strange situation are once presented in detail:

23 The image of the "fond des mers" once occurs with a quite different meaning. When landing at Perpignan, Bernis thinks of the French landscape as "ce fond de mer où tout repose, où tout prend l'évidence et la durée d'un mur" (16).
...nul déplacement du paysage. Surré dans le vent l'avion dure. Port-Etienne, première escale, n'est pas inscrite dans l'espace mais dans le temps, et Bernis regarde sa montre.

...si la panne livre l'homme au sable, le temps et les distances prendront un sens nouveau et qu'il ne conçoit même pas. Il voyage dans une quatrième dimension. (68)

This imagination of a fourth dimension is representative of Bernis' philosophical speculations, which go considerably deeper than the doubts and wonderings of Geneviève. (It is surely also a transposed product of Saint-Exupéry's own flying experience and of his personal interest in the philosophical conception of duration which had been so important in French thought since the publication in 1889 of Bergson's Les Données immédiates de la conscience.)

Bennis' personal inquiétude (which, we shall see, is also expressed in the theme of his quest) prevents his finding perfect fulfillment even in his profession. The métier scarcely figures in his mind as a dwelling or ship in which he finds security. The room in which he received advice from older pilots before his first flight did indeed seem like a sailor's inn or an island: "Cette chambre était bien un îlot dans le monde comme une auberge de marins" (9). We are told immediately, however, that this shelter was very unstable: "Chambre de pilote, auberge incertaine, il fallait souvent te rebâtir" (9). It is perhaps significant that the narrator, more at home in the métier than Bernis, once conceives of the station at Juby as a ship: "A Juby pourtant, ....isolés du monde, nous lancions des signaux de détresse comme un navire...." (53). At another time he thinks, in a rather astonishing metaphor, of his station as the Ark and of the sailing ship which brings supplies as a dove (74). He also compares
the preparations for Bernis' mail flight to the launching of a ship:
"Ce vol aussi bien calculé que le lancement d'un navire" (5). In spite of his solid work for the Ligne, Bernis seems to keep, on the other hand, a considerable independence of mind. There is probably symbolic meaning in the fact that his death does not appear to the narrator as a separation from a"communal"ship, as was Geneviève's, but as the actual sinking of an "independent" ship: "Il me semble qu'un vaisseau chavire. Il me semble qu'un enfant s'apaise. Il me semble que ce frémissement de voiles, de mâts et d'espoirances entre dans la mer" (77). This implication that Bernis constituted his own ship in the sea of life and time is easily related to the themes of his personal quest and flight to be examined later. All three thematic developments suggest that he was imperfectly "engaged" in the ship and in the "direction" of the Ligne. There is, however, no hint of condemnation on the part of the narrator; in this important matter, as in many others, he is noncommittal.

The imagery and symbolism studied for this theme of time and decay reveals an essential difference between the worlds of the main characters and illuminates important aspects of their whole careers. The contrast between the durability of Geneviève's way of life and the instability of Bernis' is one of the major reasons for the lovers' incompatibility. Certainly in her mind it is the principal reason. Bernis is also aware of the difference and is fascinated by the strange immunity from passing time which he senses in Geneviève and her surroundings. His realization that her assurance is based upon illusion does not destroy his admiration; his two attitudes towards her world
stand as one of the major contradictions of the novel. Geneviève's death appears, consequently, as a result both of the abandonment of her old life and of the innate vulnerability of this life. Bernis' own death, which we have already seen as a sacrifice in the war for civilization, is figured here as a more personal matter, as a sort of culmination of his inquiétude and isolation. This interpretation will be supported by examination of the themes of his personal quest and flight.

Water images have a very great role in the expression of this temporal theme. Evocations of flowing water appear often as symbols of passing time and of the rush of events, while the sea figure has more than one distinguishable meaning. It represents the corrosive effects of time, the depths of inquiétude, and a sort of immunity from time, these latter two conceptions being joined closely, as we shall see more plainly in Chapter VIII, to a certain quality of magic and mystery. The rapide and moteur appear with remarkable frequency in the minds of both characters as concrete images of flow and senselessness. (We shall see more of this latter meaning in Chapter VI.) The demeure and the navire are already, in spite of some variation in their meaning, powerful, almost mystical expressions of Saint-Exupéry's conception of civilization. The idea of a "citadelle" is obviously a direct descendent of Geneviève's "ship" and "home" — and perhaps also of those mentioned in the priest's sermon. Bernis' perception of the symbolic trous, déchirures, and failles does not invalidate the relative security and meaningfulness of Geneviève's way of life, one which Bernis and Saint-Exupéry plainly admire.
CHAPTER VI

TIME AND REGENERATION

The general theme of meaning to be discussed in this chapter is in evident antithesis to that of "Time and Decay." Both have to do with major facets of Saint-Exupéry's philosophy. The first touches upon his inquiétude and upon the conception of civilization later to be epitomized in the symbolic image of a "citadelle." The second is related also to his conception of civilization and, more particularly, to ideas of dynamism and personal development later expressed by such words and phrases as "le devenir," "aller vers," and "peser dans la bonne direction." Both themes carry, too, large shares of the general novelistic meaning. Like the images and symbols of the preceding chapter, those grouped here reveal essential distinctions between the worlds of Geneviève and Bernis and also contribute heavily to the interpretation of their whole careers. We shall consider first certain general differences between the two worlds and the dramatic role of these differences in the episode of the elopement. Then we shall re-examine the concept of regeneration and renovation for both characters in the light of Bernis' experiences after leaving Geneviève in Paris.

For Bernis novelty and rejuvenation are perennial preoccupations.

The boys had fled from "cette vieille ritournelle, ....cette vie faite de saisons, de vacances, de mariages, et de morts."¹ "....nous

¹P. 61. When the flyers return to France they are oppressed by the too familiar appearance of the countryside and the people (16).
savions déjà," recalls the narrator, "que voyager c'est avant tout changer de chair" (61). In Bernis' letter to Cap Juby, he recalls in highly imaginative terms the feeling of newness he had experienced in the first days of flying:

Deux minutes plus tard, debout sur l'herbe, j'étais jeune, comme posé dans quelque étoile où la vie recommence. Dans ce climat neuf. Je me sentais dans ce sol, dans ce ciel, comme un jeune arbre. Et je m'étirais du voyage avec cette adorable faim.

....Et ce printemps! Te souviens-tu de ce printemps après la pluie grise de Toulouse? Cet air si neuf qui circulait entre les choses. (18)

In its simplest form Bernis' desire is for newness and change of all kinds. We shall see, however, that certain expressions of this very passage represent much more serious preoccupations.²

Much emphasis is placed, on the other hand, upon the age and venerability of Geneviève's world. Her home and its furnishings "pouvaient traverser les siècles sans se démoder ni vieillir..." (35), and to the boys she herself seemed to be eternal (20). This "eternal" quality comports, however, a sort of perpetual newness. One of the great strengths of her way of life is its closeness to nature, and there is in nature a regular renewal to which she is particularly sensitive: "....après ce tri que l'hiver a fait, ce grand sarclage, elle sait qu'un printemps va remplir la trame, monter dans les branches, éclater les bourgeons, refaire neuves ces voûtes vertes...."

²Bennis goes on to speak as well in terms more pertinent to the theme of his mysterious quest: "Et puis tu me connais, cette hâte de repartir, de chercher plus loin ce que je pressentais et ne comprenais pas, car j'étais ce sourcier dont le coudrier tremble et qu'il promène sur le monde jusqu'au trésor" (18).
Geneviève's love for flowers, like that of the Little Prince, is doubtless symbolically significant. She would not listen to the romantic talk of her fiancé because she was busy caring for roses and replied, when he reproached her for being cruel: "Oui, bien sûr. Regardez mes roses, elles pèsent lourd. C'est admirable une fleur qui pèse lourd" (23). The simple promotion of life was more important for her than the frills of romantic love. Trees, another symbol of growth and regeneration, were also among Geneviève's beloved "things," and she had in childhood a premonition of her future in terms of a comparison with them. The narrator recalls: "Tu sentais soudain ta vie si certaine, comme un jeune arbre se sentirait croître et développer la graine au jour. Il n'était plus rien que de nécessaire." This conception of a necessary course of events in which she shares in the regeneration of life is central in Geneviève's mental "universe."

After her son has fallen ill, she remembers her feelings upon becoming a mother in imaginative terms similar to those which had expressed

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3. This verb is scarcely used in Courrier-Sud with the dynamic force it has in the later phrase "peser dans la bonne direction" (cf. Vol de nuit and Pilote de guerre). The priest at Notre-Dame feels, however, that he is exercising a "pesée lente" upon his listeners (45). One may note also several other extraordinary and imaginative uses, as in Bernis' observation that "l'avion pèse vers la gauche" (13). Cf. also pp. 5, 66, 69.

4. A discussion of the trees' role as protagonists in the novel is found in Chapter III.

5. P. 21. V. also in this connection a passage, quoted in Chapter VIII, which shows the child Geneviève communing in the moonlight with the vegetable and animal life around her window (19).

6. In childhood she had played seriously at being a mother. The narrator recalls: "Vous avez été, enfant de quinze ans, la plus jeune des mères. A l'âge où l'on écorche aux branches des mollets nus, vous exigiez un vrai berceau, jouet royal" (19).
her "premonition": "Les arbres vivaient, montaient, tiraient un
printemps du soleil elle était leur égale. Et son enfant près d'elle
respirait faiblement et c'était le moteur du monde et sa faible res-
piration animait le monde" (27). This imagination of her son's heart
as a motor is echoed in an impression which she has during his ill-
ness: "L'enfant dormait. Lustré par la fièvre, la respiration courte,
mais calme. Dans son demi-sommeil, Geneviève imaginait le souffle
opressé des remorqueurs" (25). The failing of this symbolic motor
in the child's death quite destroys, for a moment, Geneviève's assured
feeling of participating in a necessary course of events. For the
first time in her life, she desires complete change: "Dans huit
jours j'ouvrirai les yeux et je serai neuve: il [Bernis] m'emporte"
(34).

The narrator warns Bernis against trying to change Geneviève
entirely but concludes: "Mais j'imagine que pour toi, aimer, c'est
naitre. Tu croiras emporter une Geneviève neuve" (33). Before
their departure she understands realistically what her new life is
likely to be: "Elle survivra à cette maison de Dakar, à cette foule
de Buenos-Aires, dans un monde où il n'y aura que des spectacles point
nécessaires...." (36). She is not yet ready, however, to turn back.

During the elopement both characters perceive first that they
are "going against" the natural course of things and, then, after they
have turned back toward Paris, have a correspondingly opposite impression. Their thoughts are expressed by an extraordinarily varied and effective series of images and symbols. Thus the "missing" motor of Bernis' automobile is an exterior detail which represents their whole situation:

Le moteur tirait toujours mal avec des à-coups et des claquements.

... ***** ...... ...... ...... ...... ...... ...... ......

Elle soupira. Ce qu'elle essayait était au-dessus de ses forces. Tout cela à cause de ce moteur qui haletait. (37)

Bernis realizes that the motor merely symbolizes more profound difficulties (41), and he feels quite different on the return trip though it is still functioning badly (42). In Sens the frustrated lover notes sadly the absence in Geneviève of a quality which, we have seen (18), he had imagined as an attribute of youth and health:

Mais surtout ce détachement. Il l'eût désirée avide de biens. Souffrant des choses, touchée par les choses, et criant pour en être nourrie comme un enfant. Alors, malgré son indigence, il aurait eu beaucoup à lui donner. Mais il s'agenuillait pauvre devant cette enfant qui n'avait pas faim. (41)

During the trip back to Paris, on the other hand, Geneviève becomes thirsty (42).

On the way to Sens both characters imagine that they are going uphill: "Chaque arbre était si lourd à tirer à soi. Chacun. L'un après l'autre. Et c'était à recommencer" (38). During the drive back

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8 Mr. Ernst Curtius demonstrates the importance of alimentary metaphors in pagan and Christian literature of Antiquity and in the writings of the Middle Ages. Op. cit., pp. 134–136. Saint-Exupéry had also, of course, the immediate example of Les Nourritures terrestres of his friend André Gide.
next day Bernis thinks according to a directly opposing image: "Il ne savait pas encore s'il souffrait parce qu'il suivait une pente et que l'avenir venait à lui sans qu'il eût à s'en saisir. .... Mais on arriverait. On suivrait une pente. Toujours cette image de pente" (42). Both characters are aware also of the return of necessity to their actions:

Chaque détail du paysage, on le reconnaissait. Il s'installait tranquillement. Il rassurait. C'était un cadre nécessaire qui montait au jour. ....À quoi bon se presser? Tout ce qui se passait venait à eux nécessairement; toujours cette image de nécessité. (42–43)

In one of the worst moments of the trip south, Bernis' despair is expressed in terms much like those which had evoked his exultation in flying (18) and his hopes for a life with Geneviève (33): "Il souhaitait l'aube, pareil aux condamnés qui disent: 'Quand il fera jour je vais respirer' ou 'Quand viendra le printemps, je serai jeune...'

(38). On the return trip he is dismayed, on the other hand, to perceive a certain new quality in Geneviève: "Son visage lui parut nouveau, où avait-il vu ce visage? Aux voyageurs. Aux voyageurs que la vie dans quelques secondes détachera de votre vie" (43). Geneviève is back in the "necessary" course of her life.

Bernis does not really believe in Geneviève's instinctive purpose, though he shares her feelings during the elopement. Upon arriving in Paris on leave, he had been enchanted by her assurance and had written to the narrator: "Je l'ai retrouvée comme on retrouve le sens des choses...." (22). In Sens — note the ironical symbolism of this genuine place-name — the pair have an illusion of the meaning-
fulness and purpose of their gestures in love:

Bernis est debout. Ses gestes dans le rêve étaient lourds comme les gestes d'un hâleur. Comme les gestes d'un apôtre qui vous tire au jour du fond de vous-même. Chacun de ses pas était plein de sens comme les pas d'un danseur. ....

....On[était] à la proue d'un navire. (41)

After Bernis has recognized this mistake and has realized that he must lose Geneviève, he is nevertheless skeptical about the sens of the life to which she is returning:

....il doutait de lui-même. Il savait bien qu'il avait cédé encore à des images. Mais, les images de quelle profondeur viennent-elles? Ce matin, en se réveillant, il avait tout de suite pensé devant ce plafond bas et terne: "Sa maison était un navire. Elle passait les générations d'un bord à l'autre. Le voyage n'a de sens ni ici ni ailleurs, mais quelle sécurité on tire d'avoir son billet, sa cabine, et ses valises de cuir jaune. D'être embarqué...." (42)

Upon arriving at Geneviève's country house where she lies dying, he feels his life "changer de sens" (63). He notices "un mur éternel, un arbre éternel" and thinks concerning the set of stone steps in front of the house: "Il [est] né de la nécessité avec une aisance sûre des lignes" (64). He perceives that the people of the household are busy arranging flowers, symbols of regeneration, even as Geneviève is dying. Her very sickroom, too, is full of the light and sounds of a lusty summer. We have noted in the preceding chapter, however, that Bernis also understands during this visit the vulnerability of

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9 This imagination of an hâleur is doubtless to be set against Geneviève's more authentic impression that her son's breathing was like that of a remorqueur (25), already noted, and against the statement in her death scene that "elle le halaït [Bernis] du fond de sa pensée" (67).
Geneviève's world. He has an equally pessimistic reflection about its meaning and direction: "Comme tout est simple, pensa Bernis, vivre, ranger les bibelots, mourir..." (65). His double vision of her way of life — both enchanted and sceptical — is thus expressed in terms of the present theme as well as in terms of others.  

After leaving Geneviève in Paris, Bernis had entered Notre-Dame in search of a sens for his life: "...il était venu parce que les minutes menaient ici à quelque chose. Dehors elles ne menaient plus à rien. Voilà: 'Dehors les minutes ne mènent plus à rien'" (44). In his figurative language the priest does in fact offer sens — and rejuvenation — as he offers so many other objects of Bernis' quest:

"Que deviendrez-vous hors de ma demeure, hors de ce navire où l'écoulement des heures prend son plein sens.... (45)

"Venez à moi, vous à qui l'action, qui ne mène à rien, fut amère... (45-46)

"Vous serez des enfants qui jouent. 12
"Vos efforts vains de chaque jour, qui vous épuisent, venez à moi: je leur donnerai un sens, ils bâtiront dans votre coeur, j'en ferai une chose humaine." (46)

Bernis considers that these words have no basis in reality and that the priest is really offering escape instead of sens.

Montmartre seems at first to afford a sort of rejuvenation:

"Des femmes que l'on croise une fois dans sa vie: l'unique chance"

10 Cf. Chapters V and VIII.

11 V. Chapter VIII and also the explication of this passage (Chapter IX).

12 Rather surprisingly, the sermon contains no direct reference to the Christian concept of "being born again."
In the bustling activity of various people in this milieu, Bernis discerns a sense of which they are no longer aware:

Toute cette agitation nocturne prenait un sens. L'agitation des grooms, des chauffeurs de taxi, du maître d'hôtel. Ils faisaient leur métier qui est, en fin de compte, de pousser devant lui ce champagne et cette fille lasse. ... Cette danse même, qui rassemblait les gestes pour en composer une langage, ne pouvait parler qu'à l'étranger. L'étranger seul découvrait une construction mais qu'eux et elles avaient oubliée depuis longtemps. (48-49)

After his night of love with one of the dancers, a night during which both are painfully aware of the senseless passage of time, Bernis has, rather surprisingly, the same imaginative feeling as during the night with Geneviève: "Maintenant, pur, froid, dégagé du corps, on est à la proue d'un havre, le cap en mer" (50). Now, it is implied, his personal desires are satiated, and he is ready to devote himself to the impersonal work of his métier.

Upon returning to the Ligne at Toulouse, Bernis finds, as he had anticipated, purpose and rejuvenation. Even before entering his plane he is gratified by a perennially new appearance which derives from its quality as an often used tool: "Toiles luisantes, moteur sans cambouis. L'avion semble neuf" (4-5). Once aloft he has a delightful impression of leaving his old life behind, of being re-

13 This anticipation had come just after his separation from Geneviève: "Il savait que son travail l'entourerait de liens si matériels qu'il reprendrait une réalité. Il savait aussi que, dans la vie quotidienne, le moindre pas prend l'importance d'un fait et que le désastre moral y perd un peu de sens" (44). On his final visit to Geneviève he realizes that in her world, too, daily tasks permit a sort of rebirth each morning: "Le lendemain... c'était recommencer la vie. On marchait vers le soir" (65). On this occasion his own life seems to offer no such relief: "Mes nuits, elles, sont moins que des trêves..." (65).
born, and, in this case, the basis for his feeling is explained:

\[ \text{born, and, in this case, the basis for his feeling is explained:} \]

\[ \ldots \text{pour l'instant, il abandonne tout en arrière comme si tout se continuait en dehors de lui. Pour l'instant, il lui semble naître avec le petit jour qui monte, aider, ô matinal, à construire ce jour. Il pense: "Je ne suis plus qu'un ouvrier, j'établis le courrier d'Afrique." Et chaque jour, pour l'ouvrier, qui commence à bâtir le monde, le monde commence.} \]

In the promotion of a cause bigger than himself, in the act of "building," Bernis becomes new in the sense that his past life loses its importance. His exhilaration lasts throughout the flight, intruding even into his serious conversation with the narrator about Geneviève:

\[ \text{Pourquoi souris-tu?} \]
\[ \quad \text{— Ah! rien. Tout à l'heure, dans la carlingue, je me suis souvenu d'une vieille chanson. Je me suis senti tout à coup si jeune...} \]

The old sergeant in the desert is greatly impressed by Bernis' youth and vitality: "...la dernière visite d'un jeune lieutenant à un vieux sergent est presque un souvenir d'amour" (72). "Le sergent contemple un jeune dieu, venu de nulle part pour s'envoler!" While

\[ \text{14. There are other references to the "newness" which pilots feel in their work. At the moment of leaving Casablanca Bernis fills his lungs with an "air neuf" (55). Upon leaving Cap Juby he thinks: "Six heures encore d'immobilité et de silence, puis on sort de l'avion comme d'une chrysalide. Le monde est neuf" (68). The chrysalide image becomes important in later works, e.g., Terre des hommes.} \]

\[ \text{15. The priest had offered to give the efforts of his listeners a meaning, so that they would "build" in their hearts (46). Other figurative uses of the verb "bâtir", not closely related to this theme, are found on pp. 12-13, 16, 38, and 55.} \]

\[ \text{16. This is presumably the song which Bernis later teaches to the old sergeant in the desert (73). Its themes are, in essence, that of "carpe diem" and, more emphatically, that of responsibility.} \]

\[ \text{17. This theme was also present in the narration of Bernis' visit to Geneviève: "Il [le contrôleur] dut lire enfin en Bernis les trois vertus requises depuis Orphée pour ces voyages: le courage, la jeunesse,} \]
searching for Bernis in the desert the narrator thinks of him several times as a child:

...ce Sahara ...supporte à peine ...un enfant léger. (76)
Un enfant perdu remplit le désert. (76)
Il me semble qu'un enfant s'apaise. (77)

The narrator also recalls at this time a certain confession of Bernis concerning the hunger which he had associated with youth and newness:

"Je ne sais même pas très bien ce dont j'ai eu besoin; c'était une fringale légère..." (76). If the adjective "léger" is meant to qualify his craving morally instead of quantitatively — and it is difficult to see how a "fringale" could be weak or small — we might infer that Bernis realized his search for novelty was not very serious. His eagerness and his constant need to feel himself new, to "changer de chair," are indeed somewhat childlike, but for Saint-Exupéry, one knows, childlike views of the world are likely to be the true ones.

It is important to note also that Bernis was aware of and interested in another sort of dynamism in the world around him besides those we have mentioned. In the capital episode of the boys' visit to the old attic — called in French a "grenier" — the strange potentiality which he senses is figured by the image of the "grain":

Nous sursautions. Travail obscur des choses. Poutres éclatées par le trésor, à chaque craquement nous sondions le bois. Tout n'était qu'une cosse prête à libérer son grain.18

I'amour..." (63). Cf. explication of this passage.

18There seems to be no special significance in this use of the masculine form "grain" instead of the feminine "graine" as in Geneviève's premonition (21). (Cf. André Gide's symbolic title Si le Grain ne meurt.) In Africa Bernis had once thought of his friendships at home as seeds germinating in the ground: "...il rêvait à ces tendresses lointaines, chaudes et couvertes par la nuit, par le temps, comme des semences...." (17). The stones on the exterior side of the cistern enclosure, the
The development which he seeks to comprehend here is a mysterious one quite different from the regeneration, also symbolized by the graine, which Geneviève feels to be at work in nature and in herself. His curiosity in this respect is pertinent for the general theme of the quest, which, we shall see, has a poignant culmination in the episode of his death.

In summation, Geneviève knows instinctively that renovation and regeneration are products of a necessary sens of course of events in nature, and she feels herself to be a part of this general process. For her, love is precisely "what makes the world go round." Only after her child's death has seemed to destroy the direction of her old life does she seek a selfish personal renovation in the affair with Bernis. She realizes her mistake quickly, and returns to her old existence. Bernis seeks novelty constantly and has at first no doubt about his ability to create a wholly new life for himself and Geneviève. He also realizes his mistake, in imaginative thoughts much like hers, but he is doubtful about the sens of the life to which he must let her return. His attitude toward her world during the last visit to her in the country is half admiring, half skeptical. He finds in the métier, however, a purpose and a rejuvenation which, somewhat like those of side symbolic of Geneviève's world, are compared to eggs: "Chaque pierre de ce côté-ci était chaude, couvée comme un œuf, ronde comme un œuf" (60). Cf. explication of this passage.
Geneviève's life, are the product of participation in a cause greater than one's personal aspirations. Bernis is also aware of a more mysterious potentiality of change and development in the world around him, and this awareness is important for the theme of his quest.

Several of the imaginative conceptions discussed in this chapter, cigi, l'arbre, la graine, bâtir, and la pente, were destined to have a great fortune in Saint-Exupéry's later works. Other expressions which were to embody ideas relative to renovation and dynamism, e.g., "peser dans la bonne direction," "aller vers," "tendre vers," and "le devenir," do not appear in this first work. The whole theme of the élan vital, of life versus inertia, was, actually, to have a more central importance in subsequent books such as Vol de nuit and Terre des hommes.
CHAPTER VII
OPPRESSION, FLIGHT, AND DETACHMENT

Both major characters and the narrator of Courrier-Sud think often and fundamentally in terms of a complex of images having to do with "prison," "bonds," "flight," and "detachment." In these images Bernis and Geneviève conceive of their own and each other's worlds, and through them are presented as well essential interpretations of these characters' whole careers.

The basis of this thematic development is in the boys' imaginative conception of the conventional world around them as a prison, a conception which is most salient during their cistern visit:

"Ici, c'est l'envers des choses..."
L'envers de cet été si sûr de lui, de cette campagne, de ces visages qui nous retenaient prisonniers. Et nous haïssions ce monde imposé. (60)

In the subsequent account of their visit to the attic, the boys' aspiration to escape has striking expression:

Fuir, voilà l'important. A dix ans nous trouvions refuge dans la charpente du grenier. (61)

Vieille écorce des choses sous laquelle se trouvait, nous n'en doutions pas, autre chose. Ne serait-ce que cette étoile, ce petit diamant dur. Un jour nous marcherons vers le Nord ou le Sud, ou bien en nous-mêmes, à sa recherche. Fuir.

In this passage, as in the narration of Bernis' death, the theme of flight is expressly juxtaposed to that of the quest, though in the rest of the novel they are quite separate. One learns indirectly...
that Bernis' choice of flying as a career derived, at least partly, from this desire to escape. His return to France on leave seems to him at first like a return to prison: "Peu à peu, pendant le retour, un paysage se bâtit déjà autour de lui comme une prison" (16). The familiar friends whom he seeks out are for him all prisoners, albeit of themselves: "Tous étaient prisonniers d'eux-mêmes, limités par ce frein obscur et non comme lui, ce fugitif, cet enfant pauvre, ce magicien" (16). Even a mother's bonds of duty to her child appear to him oppressive: "Cette mère qui berçait un enfant, qui en était déjà prisonnière, qui ne pouvait fuir" (17). On returning to France, Bernis is really afraid of being caught again himself in a petty existence which he had left behind:

"Ce barman: le même. Il eut peur d'en être reconnu, comme si cette voix en l'interpellant devait ressusciter en lui un Bernis mort, un Bernis sans ailes, un Bernis qui ne s'était pas évadé." (16)

The narrator, who, we may assume, knows the pattern of his friend's thoughts from past association, warns explicitly against regarding Geneviève's situation in this light:

"J'ai beaucoup pensé à tes lettres et à notre princesse captive."

"... Ces coutumes, ces conventions, ces lois, tout ce dont tu ne sens pas la nécessité, tout ce dont tu t'es évadé... C'est cela qui lui donne un cadre. Il faut autour de soi, pour exister, des réalités qui durent. Mais absurde ou injuste, tout ça n'est qu'un langage. Et Geneviève, emportée par toi, sera privée de Geneviève." (33)

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1Note the concentration on pages 16-17 of several allusions to captivity and flight. CV also a longer passage from page 17 quoted later in this chapter.
Though Bernis remembers her as "la petite fille captive qui l'avait aimé" (24), her situation in childhood was in fact most comfortable. The narrator reflects also that she had been "abritée par cette maison et, autour d'elle, par cette robe vivante de la terre" (19). It is, however, less in this protection than in the nature of her liens that one finds an explanation of Geneviève's contentment in an environment which the boys felt to be oppressive. In the following passage, for example, these "bonds" are shown rather as "pacts":

Vous aviez conclu tant de pacts avec les tilleuls, avec les chênes, avec les troupeaux que nous vous nommons leur princesse. (19)

Geneviève has no idea of fleeing but is served, on the contrary, by the flight of unstable things from her quiet world — a world in which she actually appears to reign instead of being imprisoned:

Enfin le rapide de sept heures faisait son orage, doublait la province et s'évadait, nettoyant votre monde de ce qui est inquiet, mobile, incertain comme un visage aux vitres des sleepings. .... .... Tu nous paraissais éternelle d'être si bien liée aux choses, si sûre des choses, de tes pensées, de ton avenir. Tu régnaïs...

(20)

Far from being the bonds of a prisoner, her liens are presented here as like those which bind a sovereign to her subjects. It is noteworthy that Geneviève as a child does not conceive of her situation either as captivity or enthronement; she is content with the impression of a "destin inexprimable et pourtant sûr" (21).

When Bernis returns to Paris he perceives that her position in marriage and motherhood is much like the one she enjoyed as a child:

Elle lui venait de la part des choses. Elle servait d'intermédiaire, après mille divorces, pour mille mariages. Elle lui rendait ces marronniers, ce boulevard, cette fontaine. (22)
Et puis, parmi les choses peu sûres, il en est tant d'obéissantes. Elle regnait sur les livres, les fleurs, les amis. Elle entreprenait avec eux des pactes. ... Chacun était lié à elle par un secret, par cette douceur d'être découvert, d'être compromis. L'amitié la plus pure devenait riche comme un crime.

"Geneviève, disait Bernis, vous régnez toujours sur les choses." (24)

This is the first passage we have seen in which Saint-Exupéry speaks of liens in the specific sense of human relations. In the final episode of this novel and in all of the later books it is this sort of "bonds" which becomes most significant.

During the illness of her son, when all her ties are menaced, Geneviève begins to reflect seriously upon her life. Among the images of her thoughts some are highly pertinent to the thematic development which we are examining:

Un jour, beaucoup plus tard, cet enfant lui était venu et c'était quelque chose d'incompréhensible et en même temps de plus simple encore. ..... Elle s'était sentie... mais oui, c'est cela: intelligente.2 Et sûre d'elle-même et liée à tout et faisant partie d'un grand concert. (27)

Having a child strengthened Geneviève's ties to nature, thereby ordering her whole existence. In his later period Saint-Exupéry would almost certainly have called this child a "noeud de relations," for its death breaks Geneviève's ties and brings disorder to her world:

"Mille pactes rompus. C'était donc un enfant qui tenait les liens du monde, autour de qui le monde s'ordonnait? Un enfant dont la mort est une telle défaite pour Geneviève?"3 (32). Geneviève is

2Saint-Exupéry was almost surely conscious here of the etymological kinship of intelligent (Lat. inter + ligere) and lier (Lat. ligare).

3Note the dense concentration within pages 19-32 of references to Geneviève's liens.
literally "at loose ends," and she thinks of escape for the first time in her life. The dawn visit to Bernis' apartment figures as a first stage in her flight: "Voyez-vous, j'ai fui la maison" (31). She hopes to find in him and his love a refuge from the crumbling of her old world:

"Elle appuyait son front à son épaule et Bernis crut que Geneviève, toute entière, trouvait là son refuge. Sans doute le croyait-elle aussi. Sans doute ne savaient-ils pas que l'on aventure, sous la caresse, bien peu de soi-même. (29)

Even after having had a sobering intuition of her future life, she feels she can turn only to Bernis: "Elle trouvera ce soir dans la volupté cette faible épaule, ce faible refuge, y enfoncera son visage pour mourir" (36). The fact that Geneviève thinks primarily of a "refuge" shows that her actions are motivated rather by the destruction of her old liens than by the emergence of new ones. This refuge will be attained, as she seems half-consciously to realize, only in death.

The elopement is quite obviously, for both characters, an effort to flee instead of a journey towards a meaningful destination. They begin to realize the truth of the situation very soon. When he must stop to change a spark-plug in his car, Bernis has already started to be disillusioned:

"Nous aurions dû prendre le train." Il se le répétait obstinément. Il avait préféré sa voiture à cause de l'image qu'elle donnait de liberté! jolie liberté! Il n'avait d'ailleurs fait que des sottises depuis cette fuite; et tous ces oubliés! (37)

When she awakes in the hotel at Sens, Geneviève has a sort of intuitive revelation in which there figures the image of the rapide:
Elle ramène contre elle ses genoux, se sent une chair molle de pain mal cuit. Le coeur bat trop vite et fait mal. Ainsi dans un wagon. Le bruit des essieux scande la fuite. Les essieux battent comme le cœur. On colle son front à la vitre et le paysage s'écoule: des masses noires que l'horizon enfin recueille, cerne peu à peu de sa paix, douce comme la mort.

Geneviève seems almost to envy the stability of the "masses noires" which are imprisoned in the deadly peace of the horizon. This vision has been preceded, however, by an apparently contradictory perception that she is a prisoner in her adventure with Bernis, an eventuality actually anticipated by the narrator in his account of her visit to the Paris apartment: "....et Bernis ne tient plus dans les bras, prisonnière, que cette petite fille en pleurs" (33). The idea forms in Geneviève's own mind while she waits for Bernis to repair the car:

Geneviève l'avait rejoint. Elle se sentait soudain prisonnière: un arbre, deux arbres en sentinelle et cette stupide petite cabane de cantonnier. Mon Dieu, quelle drôle d'idée... Est-ce qu'elle allait vivre ici toujours? (37)

There is doubtless ironical significance in the fact that Geneviève's sentinels are trees like those to which she had felt so near in her old life. The "cabane de cantonnier" may also represent the well-ordered world she is leaving behind. Bernis himself, after he has had to turn back toward Paris, tacitly accepts her interpretation of things in his thoughts about the future:

Il ne pouvait évidemment pas dire: "Je vous rends votre liberté" ni quelque phrase aussi absurde, mais il parla de ce qu'il comptait faire, de son avenir. Et dans la vie qu'il s'inventait, elle n'était pas prisonnière. (43)

P. 41. Other rapid images occurring in this episode are discussed in Chapter V.
The author speaks nowhere of the bonds which hold Geneviève in her relationship with Bernis, but one may assume that they are neither so strong nor so pleasant as those of her old "regal" situation. It is as if the old ones were never broken at all but rather stretched to the point of agony: "C'était contre elle-même que Geneviève peinait et ce qui s'arrachait d'elle tenait si fort qu'elle était déjà déchirée" (41). The new ones are not strong enough, on the other hand, to engage Geneviève in her new milieu: "Mais surtout ce détachement. Il l'eût désirée avide de biens. Souffrant des choses, touchée par les choses et criant pour en être nourrie comme un enfant" (41). This presentation of her elopement as a sort of flight into captivity translates through paradox a situation of great complexity.

It is Bernis who, after losing Geneviève, finds himself utterly unattached and adrift. He looks forward to regaining some stability on returning to the métier: "Il devait repartir avant peu: c'était bien. Il savait que son travail l'entourait de liens si matériels qu'il reprendrait une réalité" (44). Before leaving for Africa, however, he falls into two more attempts to escape. At the beginning of the first of these, the visit to Notre-Dame, he understands very well the nature of his motivation:

Et soudain il lui apparut qu'il s'agissait encore d'une croisière et que toute sa vie s'était usée à tenter ainsi de fuir. Et le début du sermon l'inquiéta comme le signal d'un départ. (44)

In his figurative language, the priest offers deliverance to the listeners, but it is not the sort which Bernis has sought:

"0 prisonniers, comprenez-moi! Je vous délivre de votre
science, de vos formules, de vos bois, de cet esclavage de l'esprit, de ce déterminisme plus dur que la fatalité.

Je ne vous asservis pas; je vous sauve. De l'homme qui le premier calcula la chute d'un fruit et vous enferma dans cet esclavage, je vous libère. Ma demeure est la seule issue......

It is true that Bernis is seeking the "sense of things" and that he may be tormented by metaphysical doubts, but there is no evidence that his dilemma is ever posed in his own mind as a conflict between science and faith. The priest offers also, however, a refuge for those in flight, using, in this regard, language which seems better adapted to appeal to Bernis: "Venez à moi, vous à qui l'action, qui ne mène à rien, fut amère" (45). These words succeed only in distressing Bernis, who senses no substance behind them.

The evening spent in Montmartre constitutes a very obvious sort of escapism, and, even before he turns to the dancer, Bernis recognizes its futility: "Déjà s'était dénouée en lui toute sa ferveur. Il se disait: 'Tu ne peux rien me donner de ce que je désire.' Et pourtant son isolement était si cruel qu'il eut besoin d'elle" (46).

The account of their night together is then heavy with evocations of flight. Since these passages are, however, more pertinent for the theme of flow of time (v. Chapter VI), we shall not cite them here.

Just before leaving Paris, while watching the crowd pass in front of his apartment, Bernis has another vision of the passage of time and is conscious of being utterly without "liens": "Cette feuille était la matière vivante qui vous nourrit de larmes et de rires et

Bernis had imagined Geneviève's detachment in Sens as an unwillingness to be "nourrie" by the things around her(41).
maintenant la voici pareille à celle des peuples morts" (51). His final visit to Geneviève is an episode more significant for the theme of Bernis' quest than for that of his flight, but there is a striking passage referring to his characteristic quality as a transient:

Ce soir même, la carriole, l'omnibus, le rapide lui permettront cette fuite en chicane qui nous ramène vers le monde depuis Orphée, depuis la Belle au bois dormant. (64)

Even here, of course, the allusions to Orpheus and to the freeing of the Sleeping Beauty show the emphasis on what Bernis seeks in his travels instead of what he flees.  

The take-off from Toulouse, an event described in the first pages of the novel, is presented in terms which contradict Bernis' previous expectations of finding liens again in the accomplishment of his duty (43-44): "Tant de choses l'attachaient encore à lui-même. Et tout à coup, il était libre. Bernis a presque peur de se découvrir si disponible, si mortel" (7). One might infer from the expression of the first sentence, even without further evidence, that his adventures in France had essentially selfish motives, that the liens he sought to establish with Geneviève did not have the substance of the durable ones she had in her old life. This idea of unworthy, selfish bonds is echoed seemingly in the reference to Bernis' old friends in Paris as "prisonniers d'eux-mêmes" (16) and in the following statements about the psychological situation of the men at Juby:

While at the domaine Bernis notices, as in childhood, the presence of certain liens between people and things: "Quel désordre aimable: non un désordre d'abandon, mais le désordre intelligent qui marque une présence" (64). V. note 2 above.
Nous vivions les uns sur les autres en face de notre propre image, la plus bornée. C'est pourquoi nous ne savions pas être isolés dans le désert: il nous eût fallu rentrer chez nous pour imaginer notre éloignement, et le découvrir dans sa perspective.

Nous n'allions guère qu'à cinq cents mètres où commençait la dissidence, captifs des Maures et de nous-mêmes. (3)

Bernis' attachment to himself in Paris has perhaps something in common with this externally caused loss of perspective. Both situations contrast very evidently with the relatively altruistic captivity of Geneviève in her old world.

Bernis and his companions in flying are represented as having only weak and temporary ties to other human beings: "Il fallait quelquefois, la nuit même, dénouer ses liens..... Il fallait quelquefois, la nuit même, dénouer deux bras...." (9). The opposition between the liens of human relations and the call of duty receives much less attention in Courrier-Sud than in Vol de nuit. Yet even in the first novel certain passages hint that a kind of detachment from human values is necessary for the defense of those very values. After his night of love with the dancer, Bernis is "pur, froid, dégagé du corps .... à la proue d'un navire, le cap en mer" (50). Part of his reflections upon leaving France also cast light on this sort of detachment:

...il abandonne tout en arrière comme si tout se continuait en dehors de lui. Pour l'instant, il lui semble naître avec le petit jour qui monte, aider, ô matinal, à construire ce jour. Il pense: "Je ne suis plus qu'un ouvrier, j'établis le courrier d'Afrique." Et chaque jour, pour l'ouvrier, qui commence à bâtir le monde, le monde commence. (6-7)

(Here the concept of detachment joins in meaning Bernis' idea of "le neuf," discussed in Chapter VI.) The passage most pertinent for these
considerations is part of the narrator's reflections on Bernis' return to France:

De loin on imagine. Les tendresses, au départ, on les abandonne derrière soi avec une morsure au cœur, mais aussi avec un étrange sentiment de trésor enfoui sous terre. Ces fuites témoignent quelquefois de tant d'amour aventure. Une nuit, dans le Sahara peuplé d'étoiles, comme il rêvait à ces tendresses lointaines, chaudes et couvertes par la nuit, par le temps, comme des semences, il eut ce brusque sentiment: s'être écarté pour regarder dormir. *Appuyé à l'avion en panne, devant cette courbe du sable, ce fléchissement de l'horizon, il veillait ses amours comme un berger... (17)

One notes here, among numerous other imaginative conceptions, that of a detachment or "stepping back" which enables Bernis both to appreciate and to protect the human relations which he had "fled." In *Vol de nuit* the conception of this sort of detachment has a much more evident and more elaborate expression in the thoughts of Rivière and of Fabien and, begrudgingly, even in the reflections of pilots' wives.

In the narrator's thoughts upon Bernis' death, the themes of his flight and of his quest are inextricably merged (as they had been in the recollections of the boys' visit to the attic):

Mon Camarade...
C'était donc ici le trésor: l'as-tu cherché?
Sur cette dune, les bras en croix et face à ce golfe bleu sombre et face aux villages d'étoiles, cette nuit, to pesais peu de chose...
A ta descente vers le Sud combien d'amarras dénouées,
Bernis aérien déjà de n'avoir plus qu'un seul ami: un fil de la vierge te liait à peine...
Cette nuit tu pesais moins encore. Un vertige t'a pris.
Dans l'étoile pa plus verticale à lui le trésor, ô fugitif!
Le fil de la vierge de mon amitié te liait à peine: berger infidèle j'ai dû m'endormir. (77).

In this passage Saint-Exupéry seems to have wished to emphasize the two contradictory motivations of Bernis' spatial and intellectual
wanderings — the going toward something and the going away from something. It is impossible to reconcile them in logical language by concluding that the quest was only for a refuge — the insistence upon his seeking "le sens des choses" and his looking under "la surface des choses" quite invalidates such a conclusion. The apparent contradiction is doubtless in the author's mind a "litige de langage," and he would surely say that the opposing truths have a point of reconciliation outside the realm of logic.

In this discussion we have seen two very different sorts of captivity: Geneviève's "regal bondage" among the people and things of her conventional world, and Bernis' stifling imprisonment in the same milieu. Geneviève has no desire to flee until her bonds are broken by the death of her child. Then she does try to escape with Bernis, only to find a real, oppressive captivity or, on another level, a refuge which means death. Bernis' whole life is figured, according to one interpretation, as a long flight or attempt to escape. He fails to do so with Geneviève and also in his experiences of Notre-Dame and Montmartre. However, his running away into the adventure of aviation does not appear as irresponsible since it affords him a special detachment in which he can appreciate the human relationships left behind (as well as a new comradeship in the responsibility of the métier). His death appears, on one level, as the breaking of his last tie of friendship and as the final episode in his flight. We shall see in the discussion of his quest that death also leads him toward something.

Several of the imaginative conceptions connected with this theme
were to be very evident and meaningful in Saint-Exupéry's later writing. Among these the most important are the liens of friendship and the prison of selfishness or bourgeois complacency. The phrase "moëud de relations" is not found in Courrier-Sud, but it is clearly anticipated in the description of Geneviève's child as something "qui tenait les liens du monde" (32).

7 The Little Prince will learn from the fox that "apprivoiser" means "créer des liens" (PP, 470).

8 The author will say later: "En travaillant pour les seuls biens matériels, nous bâtissons nous-mêmes notre prison" (TH, 158).

9 When Saint-Exupéry's world seems to be crumbling during the Fall of France, he reflects, like Geneviève on the death of her child: "Il est difficile d'exister. L'homme n'est qu'un moëud de relations et voilà que mes liens ne valent plus grande chose" (FG, 311).
CHAPTER VIII

CLARITY, OBSCURITY, AND BERNIS' MYSTERIOUS QUEST

In previous chapters we have seen the general contrast between the worlds of Bernis and Geneviève expressed symbolically in terms of opposed physical qualities such as hardness and softness, of cold and warmth. We shall examine now the most significant of such oppositions: that between clarity and obscurity, and a related one between surface and depth. The distinctions suggested by these oppositions run through the whole of Bernis' and Geneviève's existences, while the symbolic qualities themselves are keys to the most obsessive concepts of both characters' thinking. We shall examine first the general symbolic contrast and its role in the characters' relations with each other. Discussion of Bernis' affinity for obscurity and depth will then provide a basis for exploring the theme of his mysterious quest, which, like that of his flight, offers one of the major interpretations of his career. In Chapter VII we have already noted two objects of his search: novelty, which is the simplest and least meaningful one, and sens, which is the most intellectual. In this chapter we shall consider the more mysterious objects of the quest, e.g., la source and le trésor.

The basis of this whole complex of symbolism lies in the presentation of Geneviève's world as "clear" and "superficial"¹ and in

¹These terms are employed in their literal or etymological senses as echoes of references to the author's images. They are not meant to imply a condescending interpretation of Geneviève's character,
the revelation of surface clarity as a key imaginative concept in her thinking. The boys were keenly aware of a certain "luminous" confidence which seemed connected with her timeless quality:

"...couronnée de lumière, tu régnais. Tu nous paraissais éternelle d'être si bien liée aux choses, si sûre des choses, de tes pensées, de ton avenir" (20). Her assurance, here associated so closely with physical illumination, is a consequence of her instinctive participation in the general process of vital regeneration. During the illness of her child it becomes apparent that in Geneviève's own mind life is somehow related to the clarity which can exist only on the surface of things:

Ce vase déplacé, ce manteau d'Herlin traînant sur un meuble, cette poussière sur la console, c'était... c'étaient des pas gagnés par l'ennemi. Des indices d'une débâcle obscure. Elle luttait contre cette débâcle. L'or des bibelots, les meubles rangés sont des réalités claires à la surface. Tout ce qui est sain, net et luisant semblait, à Geneviève, protéger de la mort qui est obscure. (25-26)

The "débâcle obscure" would be, in effect, a triumph of darkness.

The doctor, who, in his calm acceptance of the facts, is a contrast to Herlin, seems to Geneviève a powerful force on the side not only of health but also of clarity:

...en lui ce corps d'enfant était situé exactement.
...tous ce qui est grave, obscur, malsain, était exprimé.
Quelle protection dans cette lutte contre l'ombre! Et cette

which, as the following discussion will show, would be most ill-founded. The adjective "superficial," in particular, should not be taken to suggest a lack of sincerity.

\textsuperscript{2}V. Chapter VI.
During a walk to rest from tending the sick child, Geneviève reflects about her entire past life. The expression of her thoughts in this passage makes still more apparent how essential to her basic attitude is the symbolism of surface and clarity:

Clarity, surface, and évidence are thus linked explicitly to service in the cause of life. When Geneviève stops to look at the glittering objects in a shop window, her way of thinking seems almost pitiful:

Here the liking for surface clarity is assimilated significantly to her affinity for the old and durable. The shine of the antique bibelots seems to symbolize natural forces on her side in the battle

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3Note the concentration of so many references to clarté and surface within pages 25-27.
against death. This rather strange attitude is not meant to seem ridiculous but is on the contrary an essential view of life, which, we shall see, both the narrator and Bernis come to understand and to respect. 4

Quite unlike Geneviève, Bernis is presented in childhood as distrustful of excessive clarity and assurance. This is the principal meaning of the narrator's recollections of their visit to the old cistern (v. explication of this passage). The outside of the wall enclosing the cistern is "séché, pénétré, pétri de soleil, pétri d'évidence." Every piece of ground, every bit of straw is "dégageée par ce soleil de tout mystère" (60). In the minds of Bernis and his friend these physical properties symbolize the simple, traditional life which they find so unsatisfying. The boys resent this summer which is "so sure of itself," which holds them prisoner, and they hate "ce monde imposé" (61). After the delicious, forbidden visit to the cistern, they feel themselves caught up again in "tout ce tumulte vain de la surface" (61).

Two rather elaborate images, the vitrine and the aquarium, sometimes represent in Bernis' mind the sort of over-exposure and surface évidence which he distrusts. He and the narrator had teased the tranquil Geneviève in childhood by saying she had put even the sky into a show-case (21); when he is flying back toward Africa, Bernis sees the civilized, pedestrian world below in this light:

4 The doctor also recognizes the virtue of her simple attitude. As already noted, he thinks of her as a "petite servante de la vie" (26) and even reflects, concerning her actions; "Voilà ce que j'ai vue de plus vrai au monde" (27).
Quel monde bien rangé aussi—3,000 mètres.—Rangé comme dans sa boîte la bergerie. Maisons, canaux, routes, jouets des hommes.... Humbles bonheurs parqués. Jouets des hommes bien rangés dans leurs vitrines.

Monde en vitrine, trop exposé, trop étalé, villes en ordre sur la carte roulée et qu'une terre lente porte à lui avec la sûreté d'une marée. (7)

In a letter to the narrator at Juby, he recalls in the same terms their earliest impressions of flying: "Murcie, Grenade couchées comme des bibelots dans leur vitrine...." (17). The image of the aquarium, which occurs several times in Courrier-Sud, seems sometimes to be a stronger, more disdainful elaboration of the vitrine. Its connotation of artificial limitations also makes it contrast with other water images discussed here and in Chapter V. While Bernis is flying between Alicante and Tangiers in perfect weather, this image is evoked contemptuously as something which cannot compare with the glorious, unfettered surroundings in which he finds himself:

Un ciel de fête populaire: oui. Un ciel de 14 Juillet. Il fallait dire [à la Météo]: "A Malaga c'est jour de fête!"

Chaque habitant possède dix mille mètres de ciel pur sur lui. Un ciel qui va jusqu'aux cirrus. Jamais l'aquarium ne fut si vaste. (13-14)

When he visits a dancing upon arriving at Paris Bernis mentally compares this milieu and its denizens to an aquarium of goldfish:

Ils [les gigolos] vivent leur nuit dans cette enceinte comme des goujons dans un aquarium, tourment un madrigal, dansent, reviennent boire" (15-16). The vitrine and the aquarium come to his mind with

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5 The image of the toy bergerie, here associated with that of the vitrine, is symbolic of frailty and of precarious order. Cf. Chapter IV.
most significance in his impressions of Geneviève. We shall examine these occurrences in discussion of the elopement episode and of his last visit.

Inside the wall of the cistern enclosure the boys had found a fascinating obscurity which contrasted with the over-sure clarity outside: "Quelle fraîcheur sous des branchages si vieux, si lourds, qui portaient le poids du soleil. Jamais un rayon n'avait jauni la pelouse tendre du remblai ni touché l'étoffe précieuse" (61). They also discover "l'envers des choses" underneath the surface of the world outside, and on returning they are "lourds de secrets comme ces plongeurs des Indes qui touchèrent des perles" (61). In the visit to the attic they similarly sense something mysterious under the "vieille écorce des choses" (62). Here they also find weakness (trous) in the clear, sure world downstairs — a sort of justification for their dissatisfaction — and in this passage are introduced the two principal symbols of Bernis' quest: the étoile and the trésor.

The contrast between Geneviève's affinity for sureness and clarity and Bernis' opposed attraction to adventure and mystery is therefore a very elaborate and insistent one. Presented thus simply it does not, however, tell the essential of their relations together. The fact is that he sees in her not only clear, "superficial" values but also very mysterious and obscure ones. In his childhood

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6 It is significant that one of the main symbols of Bernis' quest should be a source of light. His pleasure in the sky above Malaga (v. passage from pp. 13-14 quoted above) seems also to derive from perception of a clarity superior to that of the everyday world.
impressions this latter view is indeed dominant. For the boys
Geneviève was a sort of fairy: "...vous viviez pour nous un conte
enchanté et vous entriez dans le monde par la porte magique — comme
dans un bal costumé, un bal d'enfants — déguisée en épouse, en
mère, en fée... Car vous étiez fée" (19). The narrator remembers
that Bernis had thought of her not simply as a fairy but as a being
who lived under the surface: "Il me disait aussi que tu habitais
ton corps, comme cette fée sous les eaux, et qu'il connaissait mille
sortilèges pour te ramener à la surface dont le plus sûr était de te
faire pleurer" (20). This impression contradicts explicitly the idea
of Geneviève's existence as a superficial one. The idea of affinity
for clarity and sunlight is similarly contradicted, if less plainly,
by the boys' perception of another affinity with moonlight:

Car vous étiez fée. Je me souviens. Vous habitiez sous
l'épaisseur des murs une vieille maison. Je vous revois
vous accoudant à la fenêtre, percée en meurtrière, et guettant
la lune. Elle montait. Et la plaine commençait à bruire et
secouait aux ailes des cigales ses crécelles, au ventre des
grenouilles ses grelots, au cou des boeufs qui rentraient ses
clochés... La lune montait... Parfois du village un glas s'é-
levait, portant aux grillons, aux blés, aux cigales l'inex-
plicable mort. Et vous vous penchiez en avant, inquiète pour
les fiancés seulement, car rien n'est aussi menacé que l'es-
perance. Mais la lune montait. Alors couvrant le glas, les
chats-huants s'appelaient l'un l'autre pour l'amour. Les
chiens errants l'assiégaient en cercle et criaient vers elle.

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It is in this passage and in the description of Bernis' visit
to Geneviève's country home that Saint-Exupéry seems most indebted
to Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes. Parallels between the two
books go considerably deeper than the similar evocations of a "bal
d'enfants" and of a "domaine mystérieux." Bernis' perception of
mystery all around has a close equivalent in the imagination of
Augustin Meaulnes, and his mystified admiration of Geneviève recalls
very evidently the earlier character's enchantment with Yvonne de
Galais. Both young men also lose their beloved to death.
Et chaque arbre, chaque herbe, chaque roseau était vivant. Et la lune montait. Alors vous nous preniez les mains et vous nous disiez que c'étaient les bruits de la terre et qu'ils rassuraient et qu'ils étaient bons. 

(19)

In this passage Geneviève's mysterious relationship with the moon is obviously symbolic of her femininity, a quality associated with the moon even before the classical legends of Diana and Venus.

It is also rather evidently a figuration of her participation in the vital process. Her fairy-like nature and the sub-aquatic quality imagined by Bernis share in this same symbolism. He had wished to bring the fairy to the surface by destroying her assurance (cf. p. 20 quoted above), and this assurance is, as we have noted, a result of her integration in the sens of life and regeneration. Geneviève's character hangs together, then, very well. (She does not, of course, sense anything mysterious about herself; the concepts of clarity and surface represent very well her view of the world in which she moves.) The contradiction lies rather between Bernis' two attitudes toward her, which might be called respectively enchanted admiration and affectionate condescension. There is almost certainly a legitimate parallel between these opposed views of Geneviève and his contrasting impressions of the two sides of the cistern wall. In both cases there is mystery underneath (or behind) surface clarity.

It is implied that Bernis had chosen the career of flying as a means of pursuing his mysterious quest. The practical teaching of

8. In the account of Bernis' last visit to Geneviève it is stated that he will carry away a memory "couleur de lune" (64).

9. This interpretation is bolstered by an elaborate presentation of Geneviève's attitude toward love which follows this passage.
the older pilots, in contrast to his traditional instruction at
school, seems to him like a magical initiation:

Et Bernis était fier de cet enseignement: son enfance
n'avait pas tiré de l'Enéide un seul secret qui le protégeait
de la mort. Le doigt du professeur sur la carte d'Espagne
n'était pas un doigt de sorcier et ne démasquait ni trésor,
ni piège, ne touchait pas cette bergère dans ce pré. (9)

When the boys revisit their old collège, they feel like mysterious
travelers (10), and the professors are anxious to make Bernis give
up the "secrets" he has discovered about life (11). Returning to
Paris on leave, he is figured as "directement posé au secret des
choses" and as an archangel, albeit an "archange triste." (10) This
sadness is explained in the following passage, where the narrator
implies that Bernis has not found the final objects of his quest
in aviation and is returning to seek them in the world of human rela-
tions he had left behind: "Les tendresses, au départ, on les aban-
donne derrière soi avec une morsure au cœur, mais aussi avec un
étrange sentiment de trésor enfoui sous terre" (17).

Bernis is disappointed at what he finds on first returning to
France, and he presents this disappointment to the narrator in terms
of the symbols of his quest:

....tu me connais, cette hâte de repartir, de chercher plus
loin ce que je pressentais et ne comprenais pas, car j'étais
ce sorcier dont le coudrier tremble et qu'il promène sur le
monde jusqu'au trésor.
Mais dis-moi donc.... Pourquoi, pour la première fois,
je ne découvre pas de source et me sens si loin du trésor?
Quelle est cette promesse obscure que l'on m'a faite et qu'un
dieu obscur ne tient pas? (18)

10P. 17. During the night in Sens Geneviève will think that
Bernis' gestures are like those of an "apôtre" (41).
Bernis' conception of himself as a *sourcier* is to be related to water images of depth discussed in the beginning of this chapter and in Chapter V. He thinks, actually, to have found the *source* in Geneviève, who has remained mysterious and fascinating:

...J'ai retrouvé la source. C'est elle qu'il me fallait pour me reposer du *voyage*. Elle est présente. Les autres... Il est des femmes dont nous disions qu'elles sont, après l'amour, rejetées au loin dans les étoiles, qui ne sont rien qu'une construction du cœur. Geneviève... tu te souviens, nous la disions, elle, habitée. Je l'ai retrouvée comme on retrouve le sens des choses et je marche à son côté dans un monde dont je découvre enfin l'intérieur...

That is to say that Geneviève, who thinks of herself as living "on the surface of things," is in truth revealing to Bernis the "inside" of things.

The narrator refers in his answer to Bernis' enchanted view of Geneviève: "J'ai beaucoup pensé à tes lettres et à notre *princesse captive*" (33). He advises strongly against their going away together, however, and his warning is cast in the imaginative terms of Geneviève's own practical way of thinking, in terms of "clarity":

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11 Such will be precisely Bernis' impression of the dancer in Montmartre after their night together (50).

12 This expression recalls Bernis' childhood conception of Geneviève as a fairy who inhabited her own body (20). A clearer recollection comes on the following page: "Bernis devine une enfant de quinze ans, qui lui sourit sous la femme inconnue, comme dans les contes de fées" (23).
Mais, Geneviève, laisse-la vivre. (33)

The shimmery forms of Bernis’ world are not of the same "grain" as the sharp outlines in that of Geneviève. The narrator also compares love to a lamp in a figure which is important for understanding later impressions of the two lovers: "L'amour est, pour toi, cette couleur des yeux que tu voyais parfois en elle et qu'il sera facile d'alimenter comme une lampe. Et c'est vrai qu'à certaines minutes ... il est facile de nourrir l'amour" (33). Both analogical conceptions of this passage — those of love as light and as something to be nourished — will be echoed in the lovers' own impressions. When Geneviève comes to Bernis' apartment very late at night, just after the death of her son, she is attracted, figuratively, by light from the lamp of love: "— J'ai vu de la lumière, je suis venue...." (30).

Inside the apartment she senses, however, an unhealthy quality in the mixture of this man-made light with the incipient daylight: "La lumière de la lampe se mêle déjà à celle de l'aube, breuvage maussade qui donne la fièvre. Cette fenêtre écœurée" (30). A little later, this image is joined significantly in her mind to that of the aquarium: "Les vitres blanchissent, versent dans la pièce une lumière d'aquarium" (30). A strikingly similar impression comes to both Geneviève and Bernis in the dawn after their night of love in Sens:

Cette fenêtre est salie par l'aube. Cette nuit, elle était bleu sombre. Elle prenait, à la lumière de la lampe, une profondeur de saphir. Cette nuit, elle se creusait jusqu'aux étoiles. On rêve. On imagine. On est à la proue d'un navire. (41)

Daylight, which rather plainly represents prosaic reality, intrudes
upon and overcomes the feeble illumination from the lamp of love. Bernis has also, in terms of the lamp symbol, a general reflection concerning romantic love and duty: "La flamme de la lampe. Il faut se hâter de nourrir la lampe. Mais il faut aussi protéger la flamme du grand vent qu'il fait" (41). Private relationships must, then, be both cultivated and protected. Bernis seems here to have attained a unified vision of the different values in life; nevertheless his doubts and confusions are in fact far from finished.

During the episode of the elopement Geneviève thinks not only in terms of the lampe, but also in those of the surface clarity and assurance which figured in her mind during the child's illness. She is disturbed by the cheap, temporary furnishings of Bernis' apartment, which cannot stand the daylight, by "ce demi-jour sur des divans, des tentures de garçonnière" (34). She says that she would prefer to his gaudy rugs "un parquet bien simple, bien ciré" but realizes that his floor cannot stand out frankly in the light as did the "parquets de noyer brillant" of her childhood home. There, she remembers: "C'est ce qu'il y avait de plus stable qui arrivait à la surface: ce perron de pierres larges qui se continuait dans la terre" (35). During the drive to Sens, both she and Bernis come to think that their discomfort and unhappiness is symbolized by the rainy night, a night in which there is, one notes, no moonlight:

Les phares éclairent mal. On s'enfonçait péniblement dans la nuit comme dans un trou. (37)

-- Ma petite Geneviève, ne pensez pas à cette nuit... Pensez à bientôt... Pensez à... À l'Espagne. Aimez-vous l'Espagne? (38)
"Geneviève, c'est cette nuit, c'est cette pluie qui abîme notre confiance." Il connut tout de suite que cette nuit était semblable à une maladie interminable. Ce goût de maladie, il l'avait dans la bouche. C'était une de ces nuits sans espoir d'aube. Il luttait, scandaît en lui-même: "L'aube serait une guérison si seulement il ne pleut pas... Si seulement..." Quelque chose était malade en eux, mais il ne savait pas. Il croyait que c'était la terre qui était pourrie, que c'était la nuit qui était malade. Il souhaitait l'aube, pareil aux condamnés qui disent: "Quand il fera jour, je vais respirer" ou "Quand viendra le printemps, je serai jeune..." (38)

As we have already had occasion to note, Bernis and Geneviève find at Sens temporary relief in the symbolic lamplight of love but the rays of dawn bring final disillusionment about their situation.

After leaving Geneviève in Paris Bernis continues his spiritual quest in the course of two episodes heavy with symbolic meaning. He listens while the priest at Notre-Dame offers sens in a number of figurative statements (which we have examined in Chapter VI) and also hears him present himself as the mysterious source: "Je suis la source de toute vie" (45). The priest proposes as well to return to mankind the mystery of the stars:

"Vous avez intégré la marche de l'étoile, ô génération des laboratoires, et vous ne la connaissez plus. C'est un signe dans votre livre, mais ce n'est plus de la lumière: vous en savez moins qu'un petit enfant. ... Cette douceur de la lumière de l'amour, je vous les rends." (45)

We have already noted in Chapter VII that Bernis considers that this sermon offers rather another direction in which to flee than an end to his quest. The priest had felt that his ideas and expressions possessed an extraordinary évidence, but Bernis observed rather that "la lumière des cierges lui faisaient un visage de cire" (44).

Montmartre attracts him at first with another sort of artificial
light and seems momentarily to offer fulfillment of his quest:
"Des femmes que l'on croise une fois dans sa vie: l'unique chance. Là-bas Montmartre d'une lumière plus crue" (47). Bernis does find, in the nocturnal agitation around him, a superficial sort of sens deriving from the métier, and he is interested by a certain mystery and sub-aquatic depth which he perceives in one of the dancers in a nightclub:

Devant lui ce dos mystérieux, lisse comme la surface d'un lac. Mais un geste ébavché, une pensée ou un frisson y propagèrent une grande ondulation d'ombre. Bernis pensait:
j'ai besoin de tout ce qui se meut, là-dessous, d'obscur. (48)

During the night of love spent with her, he discovers also a sort of source: "....elle est tiède. Tiède comme une bête. Vivante. Et ce coeur toujours qui bat, source différente de la sienne et fermée dans ce corps" (50). The appeal of this dancer lies in her very humanity — or in the mere fact of her being alive. After the act of love she loses all attraction and is, unlike Geneviève (21-22), "rejetée parmi les étoiles froides" (50). Neither in Notre-Dame nor in Montmartre, in sum, does Bernis find an end or even a meaningful advancement to his quest; he leaves Paris sadder and more confused than when he had arrived.

In the description of Bernis' last visit to Geneviève in the country (cf. explication, Chapter XI), his two views of her are strikingly mingled and contrasted. The narration of his arrival is heavy with allusions to mystery and magic. The men at the railway station are "trois gardiens d'un monde secret" (63); Bernis is entering "ce

13. V. Chapter VII.
It is soon made plain that his mystified admiration is mainly for the durability of this way of life:

Il s'enfonçait dans le mystère. L'homme [le paysan qui conduisait Bernis au château], des trente ans, portait toutes ses rides pour ne plus vieillir.

Royaume de légende endormi sous les eaux, c'est là que Bernis passera cent ans en ne vieillissant que d'une heure. (64).

When Bernis leaves the domaine he will carry away an inexpressible memory which is "couleur de lune, couleur du temps." Once inside the house, however, he is skeptical about this victory over time: "D'un store soigneusement baissé un rayon de soleil filtra. 'Une déchirure, pensa Bernis, ici l'on vieillit sans savoir..." (65). Later he understands the importance for Geneviève of her bibelots:

Le pas de nouveau résonna: "On range les bibelots, ils ont encombré les vitrines peu à peu. Chaque siècle en se retirant laisse derrière lui ces coquillages..."

Il n'y avait rien de déclamatoire; "Comme tout est simple, pensa Bernis, vivre, ranger les bibelots, mourir..." (65)

When he goes into the room where Geneviève lies dying, he finds her surrounded, paradoxically, by the clarity which had been a sign of her security:

Il eut besoin de la revoir, monta en fraude l'escalier, ouvrit la porte de la chambre. Elle contenait tout l'été. Les murs étaient clairs et le lit blanc. La fenêtre ouverte s'emplissait de jour. .... Quel sommeil glorieux au centre de l'été!

"Elle va mourir..." Il s'avança sur le parquet ciré, plein de lumière. Il ne comprenait pas sa propre paix. (66)

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14V. note 7 above.
This clarity will not protect Geneviève, though it may rob death of its sting. Bernis understands that she is dreading the night, when the familiar objects around her — even the lamp — will be oppressive and seem inimical. On leaving the house he has a final vision of human mortality in terms of the reassuring shine of Geneviève's bibelots: "Le soir s'insinuait comme la mer dans une cale qui fait eau, les bibelots allaient s'éteindre" (67). The themes of magic and mystery are less pronounced in the description of his departure, but it is stated that he is returning from "un voyage immense, .... un voyage confus" and there is definite symbolic meaning in the fact that he feels "lourd comme un scaphandrier" (67). This detail recalls both the figuration of Bernis' quest as a diving for pearls and his initial impression of visiting a "royaume de légende endormi sous les eaux" (64). (This impression had itself been anticipated by a childhood one of Geneviève as a "fée sous les eaux" [20].)

When Bernis sums up his failure in a conversation with the narrator, he does so from Geneviève's point of view. Instead of mentioning the sub-aquatic mystery of her world, he says that things had happened "comme si j'avais voulu l'entraîner sous la mer" (67-68). This expression recalls rather the narrator's earlier statement that the boys had wished to draw her "sous les apparences, dans ce fond des mers où nous appelait notre inquiétude" (21). Bernis also speaks of having to give Geneviève back her "things" and her clear, bright surroundings: "Elle était cramponnée à ses draps blancs, à ses évidences, et je n'ai pas pu l'emporter" (68). This summary
contains also, however, an echo of his old enchanted, mystified attitude; he had been separated from Geneviève not by space but by "mille années" (68).

After Bernis has related his story and is about to continue his flight toward Dakar, the narrator speculates about the future direction of his friend's quest in a series of almost lyrical reflections:

Où vas-tu maintenant chercher le trésor, plongeur des Indes qui touches les perles, mais ne sais pas les ramener au jour? Ce désert sur lequel je marche, moin qui suis retenu, comme un plomb, au sol, je n'y saurais rien découvrir. Mais il n'est pour toi, magicien, qu'un voile de sable, qu'une apparence..." (68)

Upon leaving Europe Bernis had symbolically left behind the lights of human relations and of civilization: "Ces plaines, ces villes, ces lumières qui s'en vont, c'est bien lui qui les abandonne. Qui s'en dévêt" (14). Several very significant references to human relations are nevertheless to be found in the figurative passages concerning étoiles and le trésor which conclude the author's treatment of the quest. The old sergeant of the fort where Bernis spends a night has only stars and the moon for company: "Que surveille-t-il de ce poste? Sans doute les étoiles. Sans doute la lune... — C'est vous le sergent des étoiles?" (72). A young lieutenant had already told him something about these stars; now Bernis explains them in his own fashion:

— Il [le jeune lieutenant] m'a expliqué les étoiles.
— Oui, fit Bernis, il vous les passait en consigne. 15

15The boys at the cistern had considered that each generation held the sun, the wheat, and the big house en consigne (61).
Et maintenant, il les expliquait à son tour. Et le sergent, apprenant les distances, pensait à Tunis aussi qui est loin. Apprenant l'étoile polaire, il jurait de la reconnaître à son visage, il n'aurait qu'à la maintenir un peu à gauche. Il pensait à Tunis qui est si proche. 

Here the North Star is plainly a marker of human and social values, of the sergeant's liens in Tunis. To this old soldier Bernis seems to be "un jeune dieu .... venu lui rappeler une chanson, Tunis, lui-même" (73).

During their visit to the old attic the boys had thought of a star seen through the roof as a future object of quest: "....cette étoile, ce petit diamant dur. Un jour nous marcherons vers le Nord ou le Sud, ou bien en nous mêmes, à sa recherche" (62). This conception has an explicit echo in certain of the narrator's reflections during his search for Bernis in the desert:

Ce désert, tout à l'heure, n'était qu'un sable sans mystère. .... Mais une hyène crie et le sable vit, mais un appel re-compose le mystère, mais quelque chose naît, fuit, recommence...

Mais les étoiles mesurent pour nous les vraies distances.
La vie paisible, l'amour fidèle, l'amie que nous croyons ché-rir, c'est de nouveau l'étoile polaire qui les balise.... Mais la croix du Sud balise un trésor. (75-76)

Mystery, this passage seems to mean, can exist only where humanity, or at least life, is present; stars are mysterious and interesting only when they symbolize or point to human values. The North Star represents friends and families in France, while the Southern Cross points the way to Bernis and to the treasure he has pursued into death. (We have already noted that Bernis thought of his friendships at home as a "trésor enfoui sous terre" [14].)

The suggestion that his quest was directed, on one level, toward the secret of human relationships is reinforced by one of Bernis'
earlier "confessions" which the narrator now remembers:

Bernis, tu m'avouais un jour: "Ce que je devinais se cachait derrière toute chose. Il me semblait qu'avec un effort j'allais comprendre, j'allais le connaître enfin et l'emporter. Et je m'en vais troublé par cette présence d'amis que je n'ai jamais pu tirer au jour..." (76-77)

In the concluding passage of the novel there is an apotheosis both of Bernis' quest and of his flight. He is considered to have fled from the earth in pursuit of treasure in a star: "Un vertige t'a pris. Dans l'étoile la plus verticale a lui le trésor, ô fugitif!" (77). Here friendship figures not as the object of his quest but as something which could not hold him back: "Le fil de la vierge de mon amitié te liait à peine; berger infidèle j'ai dû m'endormir" (77). Thus Bernis' quest, like the career of Fabien in Vol de nuit and the earthly stay of the Little Prince, ends in death figured as ascension to a star directly overhead.

The themes which we have discussed here have, in summary, a sort of basis in the description of Geneviève's clear, sure world and in the presentation of surface clarity, sureness, and such symbols as bibelots and vitrines as key concepts in her thinking. In evident contrast are Bernis' distrust of excessive clarity and sure-

16 The description of the Little Prince's death suggests a further interpretation for that of Bernis, an interpretation which would re-emphasize the importance of friendship in his quest. The Little Prince is returning home, of course, and he assures the author that he is not really dying (PP, 490). The star to which he returns — and all the others as well, since they are indistinguishable — will be signs of his friendship in the eyes of the author left on earth (PP, 488-490). In this idea of friendship made stronger through separation, which is perhaps implicit also in the conclusion of Courrier-Sud, one touches upon Saint-Exupéry's conception of responsible detachment. Cf. Chapter VII, especially commentary on passage from CS, 17.
ness, represented particularly in such images as the *vitrine* and the *aquarium*. His own attraction to mystery and conception of a magical quest are portrayed most elaborately and most effectively in the cistern and attic episodes. An important paradox lies in his seeing in Geneviève's "clear," "superficial" world and nature mysterious depth and certain goals of his quest. The story of their relations together after the death of her son is, however, interpreted by both characters in terms of her old concepts. It is a lack of "clarity" in the world into which he wishes to lead her which determines the failure of their elopement. (Both characters are also disillusioned about the power of the "lamp of love" to compete with the daylight of practical life.) Bernis continues his mysterious quest rather listlessly and quite unsuccessfully in the symbolic visits to Notre-Dame and Montmartre. Then he turns back hopefully to Geneviève before returning to duty in Toulouse. His perception of a fascinating mystery in her way of life is revived at the beginning of this visit, as he senses in the physical and psychological atmosphere of the country domaine a sort of victory over time. Before leaving he comes both to understand Geneviève's way of thinking and to despair of ever sharing in it. The progress of his spiritual search after returning to the *Ligne* and stopping at Cap Juby is more nebulous and more difficult to interpret. Certain passages in which figure the symbols of the star and the treasure seem to suggest that the final goal of his physical and intellectual wandering has to do with the magical quality of human relationships (cf. also "présence d'ami").
It is evident in any case that his mysterious quest, like his flight, finds a perfect achievement in death.
EXPLICATIONS OF KEY PASSAGES IN COURRIER SUD
CHAPTER IX

THE PRIEST'S SERMON

Bernis is alone in Paris after having returned Geneviève to her old home and life:

A.1

Comme il passait près de Notre-Dame, il entra, fut surpris de la densité de la foule et se réfugia contre un pilier. Pourquoi donc se trouvait-il là? Il se le demandait. Après tout, il était venu parce que les minutes menaient ici à quelque chose. Dehors elles ne menaient plus à rien. Voilà: "Dehors les minutes ne mènent plus à rien." Il éprouvait aussi le besoin de se reconnaître et s'offrait à la foi comme à n'importe quelle discipline de la pensée. Il se disait: "Si je trouve une formule qui m'exprime, qui me ressemble, pour moi ce sera vrai." Puis il ajoutait avec lassitude: "Et pourtant je n'y croirais pas."

Et soudain il lui apparut qu'il s'agissait encore d'une croisière et que toute sa vie s'était usée à tenter ainsi de fuir. Et le début du sermon l'inquiéta comme le signal d'un départ.

"Le royaume des Cieux, commença le prédicateur, le royaume des Cieux..."

The priest is at first unable to express himself:

B.

Il s'appuya des mains au rebord large de la chaire... se pencha sur la foule. Foule entassée et qui absorbe tout. Nourrir. Des images lui venaient avec un caractère d'évidence extraordinaire. Il pensait aux poissons pris dans la nasse, et sans lien ajouta:

"Quand le pêcheur de Galilée..."

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1 In this chapter and the three which follow we have divided the passages for explication into sections designated by letters of the alphabet. These letters reappear at the beginning of the commentaries which correspond to the various sections. Sometimes a particular commentary may contain mention of a detail found in a different section of the quoted text; in these cases we have included the appropriate letter reference in parenthesis. At the end of each chapter there is a general discussion set off from the detailed commentary by asterisks (***)

-186-
Il n'employait plus que des mots qui entraînaient un cortège de réminiscences, qui duraient. Il lui semblaient exercer sur la foule une pesée lente, allonger peu à peu son élan comme la foulée du coureur. "Si vous saviez... Si vous saviez combien d'amour..." Il s'interrompit, haletant un peu: ses sentiments étaient trop pleins pour s'exprimer. Il comprit que les moindres mots, les plus usés, lui paraissaient chargés de trop de sens et qu'il ne distinguait plus les mots qui donnaient. La lumière des cierges lui faisait un visage de cire. Il se redressa, les mains appuyées, le front levé, vertical. Quand il se détendit, ce peuple remua un peu, comme la mer.

Puis les mots lui vinrent et il parla. Il parlait avec une sûreté étonnante. Il avait l'allégresse du débardeur qui sent sa force. Des idées lui venaient qui se formaient en dehors de lui, pendant qu'il achevait sa phrase, comme un fardeau qu'on lui passait, et d'avance il sentait en lui, confusément, l'image où il la poserait, la formule qui l'emporterait dans ce peuple.

Bernis listens to the last part of the sermon:

C. Bernis maintenant écoutait la péroraison.

"Je suis la source de toute vie. Je suis la marée qui entre en vous et vous anime et se retire. Je suis le maïs qui entre en vous et vous déchire et se retire. Je suis l'amour qui entre en vous et dure pour l'éternité.

"Et vous venez m'opposer Marcion et le quatrième évangile. Et vous venez me parler d'interpolations. Et vous venez dresser contre moi votre miserable logique humaine, quand je suis celui qui est au delà, quand c'est d'elle que je vous délivre!

"0 prisonniers, comprenez-moi! Je vous délivre de votre science, de vos formules, de vos lois, de cet esclavage de l'esprit, de ce déterminisme plus dur que la fatalité. Je suis le défaut dans l'armure. Je suis la lucarne dans la prison. Je suis l'erreur dans le calcul; je suis la vie.

"Vous avez intégré la marche de l'étoile, ô génération des laboratoires, et vous ne la connaissez plus. C'est un signe dans votre livre, mais ce n'est plus de la lumière; vous en savez moins qu'un petit enfant. Vous avez découvert jusqu'aux lois qui gouvernent l'amour humain, mais cet amour même échappe à vos signes; vous en savez moins qu'une jeune fille! Eh bien, venez à moi. Cette douceur de la lumière, cette lumière de l'amour, je vous les rends. Je ne vous asservis pas; je vous sauve. De l'homme qui le premier calcula la chute d'un fruit et vous enferma dans cet esclavage, je vous libère. Ma demeure est la seule issue, que deviendrez-vous hors de ma demeure?"

The priest's appeal becomes more poignant:
D. "Que deviendrez-vous hors de ma demeure, hors de ce navire où l’écoulement des heures prend son plein sens, comme, sur l’étrave luisante, l’écoulement de la mer. L’écoulement de la mer qui ne fait pas de bruit mais porte les Iles. L’écoulement de la mer.

"Venez à moi, vous à qui l’action, qui ne mène à rien, fut amère.

"Venez à moi, vous à qui la pensée, qui ne mène qu’aux lois, fut amère..."

Il ouvrit les bras:

"Je suis celui qui porte les fardeaux du monde."

L’homme parut à Bernis désespéré parce qu’il ne cria pas pour obtenir un Signe. Parce qu’il ne proclamait pas un Signe. Parce qu’il se répondait à lui-même. (45–46)

Bennis’ uneasiness grows:

E. "Vous serez des enfants qui jouent.

"Vos efforts vains de chaque jour, qui vous épuisent, venez à moi: je leur donnerai un sens, il bâtitrons dans votre cœur, j’en ferai une chose humaine."

La parole entre dans la foule. Bernis n’entend plus la parole, mais quelque chose qui est en elle et qui revient comme un motif:

"... J’en ferai une chose humaine."

Il s’inquiète.

"De vos amours, sèches, cruelles et désespérées, amants d’aujourd’hui, venez à moi, je ferai une chose humaine.

"De votre hâte vers la chair, de votre retour triste, venez à moi, je ferai une chose humaine..."

"... Car je suis celui qui s’est émerveillé de l’homme..."

Bennis est en déroute.

"Je suis le seul qui puisse rendre l’homme à lui-même." (46)

The priest’s tremendous verbal energy is exhausted:

F. Le prêtre se tut. Épuisé, il se retourna vers l’autel. Il adora ce Dieu qu’il venait d’établir. Il se sentit humble comme s’il avait tout donné, comme si l’épuisement de sa chair était un don. Il s’identifiait sans le savoir avec le Christ. Il reprit, tourné vers l’autel, avec une lenteur effrayante:

"Mon père, j’ai cru en eux, c’est pourquoi j’ai donné ma vie..."
Et se penchant une dernière fois sur la foule:
"Car je les aime..." Puis : il trembla.
Le silence parut à Bernis prodigieux.
"Au nom du Père..." 
Bernis pensait: "Quel désespoir! Où est l'acte de foi? Je n'ai pas entendu l'acte de foi, mais un cri parfaitement déses-péré."

Bernis leaves Notre-Dame and walks along the Seine:

Pour tant ce crépuscule... Toile de fond trop théâtrale qui a servi déjà pour les ruines d'Empire, les soirs de défaite et le dénouement de faibles amours, qui servira demain pour d'autres comédies. Toile de fond qui inquiète si le soir est calme, si la vie se traîne, parce qu'on ne sait pas quel drame se joue. Ah! Quelque chose pour le sauver d'une inquiétude si humaine...
Les lampes à arc, toutes à la fois, luisent. (47)

Bernis' visit to Notre-Dame comes just after the depressing failure of his elopement with Geneviève. This episode and that, immediately following, of his night in Montmartre constitute two symbolic attempts by the hero to find sens — or escape — before returning to Africa. At this point in the novel the reader has not yet encountered the principal imaginative recollections of Bernis' childhood, those of the forbidden visits to the cistern and to the attic. The young man's mental "universe" is already somewhat familiar, however, from descriptions of his flying adventures and of his relations with Geneviève. This passage brings together in a rather strange way every major theme of the novel, and it even contains references to most of the specific imaginative and symbolic conceptions of the characters.
Bernis' conscious reason for entering Notre-Dame is revealed in the first paragraph: "...les minutes menaient ici à quelque chose. Dehors elles ne menaient plus à rien." He is seeking a sens to replace the one which he had hoped to find in love. In his desire to "se reconnaître," he is willing to consider the direction and order ("discipline") offered by religion. In his next reflections ("Si je trouve une formule qui m'exprime.... pour moi ce sera vrai. .... Et pourtant je n'y croirais pas.") the extent of his inquiétude is manifest. He does not believe in absolute truth and is unable to accept a relative one.

Then Bernis has suddenly a vision of his whole life as a series of attempts to escape. This interpretation and that of the long quest (evoked above in the implied reference to sens) will remain at the end of the novel two equally valid views of his career. Both themes may indeed be implicit in the image of the "croisière," which can have not just the connotations of an idle cruise or of a frequent doubling back but also that of a purposeful voyage or patrol. The beginning of the sermon appears to signal a new departure because the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" seems to evoke a legendary refuge or goal.

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2 This preoccupation is also evident in Bernis' thoughts as he flies over the desert: "En équilibre sur tant d'inconnu, Bernis songe qu'il se connaît mal" (69).

3 These two interpretations are discussed in Chapters VII and VIII.

4 Geneviève's home in the country will seem to Bernis like a "royaume de légende" (64).
The priest has an extraordinary sense of his own responsibility before the docile, hungry crowd waiting to be "nourished," and his mind is subject to an invasion of images which seem to him self-evident. He speaks therefore without external lien or logic, passing directly from the Kingdom of Heaven to the Fisherman of Galilee (a "Fisher of Men") because his passive listeners resemble fish imprisoned in a trap. All his words have in his own mind a string of connotations and an intrinsic, permanent meaning ("un cortège de réminiscences qui duraient"). For a moment, however, his message seems too weighty to be put into words and he can only allude to the ineffable: "Si vous saviez..." Bernis notices meanwhile that the candlelight gives the orator's straining face a waxy, artificial appearance. The tension and restraint suddenly disappear as the priest looks toward the heavens ("le front levé, vertical"), and he is able to give expression to what is in his mind. His ideas seem now to be born of themselves, and even the images which are to bear them present themselves spontaneously. He is plainly guilty of an uncritical acceptance of ideas and images, a peril of which we have seen Saint-Exupéry to be very much aware.  

A long series of descriptive images presents the priest's impressions of his relationship to the crowd as that of dynamism to passivity. He seems to have a "pesée lente," "la foulée du coureur," while the throng moves slowly like the sea. When his restraint is broken,  

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5 Cf. the discussion of unauthentic, inefficacious images and of "pacotille" in Chapters I and III.
he has the lusty feeling of a "débardeur qui sent sa force." Ideas are like burdens passed on to him, and he lays them in images or formulas which will carry them into the people. In the course of the sermon he will use in great profusion such purposeful verbs as "porter," "mener," "sauver," and "délivrer."

C

Bernis then listens to the sermon's conclusion, in which images are evoked one after another without coherence and almost without introduction. Identifying himself with Christ, the priest claims to be the source of all life and then shows unconscious pessimism by comparing himself (or perhaps the earthly life) to a tide which ebbs and flows, to a pain which torments and then goes away. He returns to more consoling thoughts by referring to a divine love which lasts forever.

Then is begun an elaborate and sustained attack upon the pretensions of human logic and science. None of their objections to revealed religion — the contentions of Marcion (second-century gnostic who saw contradictions between the Old and the New Testaments), the claim that the fourth gospel does not conform to the first three, or the charge that there have been interpolations in the Bible — none of these arguments have any relevance since God is beyond logic and science, since it is precisely from such mental chains that he wishes to deliver humanity. Present-day men are, in effect, prisoners of a determinism infinitely worse than the traditional conception of

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6 The source is one of the principal symbols of Bernis' quest.
fatality. Christianity offers an opening in the armor of science, represented by Newton. It constitutes a window in this prison; it is "life," the error in calculations. (Thus the priest persists in the conception of his own dynamic role in respect to his listeners.) Two examples are given of phenomena which science has formulated without understanding. The star, a symbol of Bernis' quest, has become a scientific notation ("signe"), and learned men know less about it than a child. They also know less about human love, for all their "lois," than a young girl. The priest promises as God's spokesman to restore the informulable essences of these phenomena: the sweetness of the star's light and the light of love. Then he returns to the idea that religion offers liberation instead of enslavement, embodying his conception in a striking imaginative figure: "Ma demeure est la seule issue...." In this presentation of an enclosure as a way out his denunciation of logic is given a specific illustration.

D

In the next paragraph of the sermon the demeure is elaborated into the navire, which offers symbolically not just security but sens in the movement of time. This conception must be considered in relation to Bernis' original impression of embarking on a croisière (4) and his recent revelation concerning Geneviève's way of life: "Sa maison était un navire. Elle passait les générations d'un bord à l'autre. Le voyage n'a de sens ni ici ni ailleurs, mais quelle sécurité on tire d'avoir son billet...." (42). The priest speaks also of islands carried by the sea, a conception which contrasts with the boys' idea of an island menaced between the oceans of the past and
the future (61). (He had begun by thinking of his listeners as a sea.) In the allusions to "écoulément," as in the earlier one to "la marée," (C), he unconsciously belies the persistent presentation of himself and of religion as a dynamic, purposeful force. He repeats his offer of sens, nevertheless, by referring to the bitter action and thought of those who lack it. Then his emphasis turns to divine kindness and he offers to bear man's burdens: sin, pain, disease, and the most dreadful affliction of all — the mental anguish occasioned by scientific determinism. For the priest — as never for Saint-Exupéry — faith is sought as a justification for disregarding science and the responsibilities it imposes upon man.

We learn now that for Bernis the priest seems to be in despair because he does not seek or proclaim an external sanction ("un Signe"). He is trying to assuage his own disquiet with images which do not correspond to reality or to conviction (cf. Bernis' concern for the validity of his own images: "Mais, les images, de quelle profondeur viennent-elles?" [42]). This personal disquiet pierces through, as we have noted, in unconsciously pessimistic images, e.g., the presentation of religion as a mere "window" or "hole" through which to escape (C), as the senseless ebb or flow of the sea, as an illness which "renons" mankind and then goes away.

7 These two conceptions of time are discussed in Chapters V and VI.

8 The mention of the pain of mothers who have lost their young calls to mind, of course, the case of Geneviève.
E

Referring again to the happy state of childhood (cf. C), the priest develops a new paradox by proposing play which has sens and is constructive. Another fundamental, if less evident, contradiction lies under the promise to make man's life more human when, in fact, the present lot of cruel love and disappointment in the flesh is already utterly human. When this paradox is put into more striking, seductive form with the offer of divine influence to "return man to himself," Bernis — far from having found a "discipline de la pensée" — feels himself to be "en dérouté" (like the priest) and his attention is dissipated.

F

In the next paragraph is made evident what had already been suggested in Bernis' reflection that the priest was not proclaiming a transcendent "Signe" — namely, that he has not taken inspiration from an independent Divinity but has tried to create God in his own mind for his own needs. Proof of the self-centered nature of his religion comes when he identifies himself with Christ to the point of seeming to experience before the crowd's eyes all His fatigue and self-abnegation. The prodigious silence which follows is not a communicative one such as Saint-Exupéry often presents but one which implies the non-existence for the priest himself of the Divinity by whom he pretends to be inspired. There has been no act of faith, and the atmosphere is one of despair because of the absence of communication with a power superior to man.
After going out along the Seine Bernis undergoes a mood of *inquiétude* symbolized by and provoked by the immobility of the physical setting. The trees along the river are motionless in "la glu du crépuscule." For a moment Bernis is affected by the calm of evening, but then the beautiful twilight appearance of the Paris quais seems to him a stage for pitiful human comedies such as the performance of the priest in the cathedral and his own melodramatic despair at the end of his love affair with Geneviève ("le dénouement de faibles amours"). The exterior immobility — which contrasts with the priest's pretended dynamism — is frightening because it hints at more dreadful "dramas." The lighting of the street-lamps heralds the beginning of Bernis' next attempt to escape his *inquiétude*, that is, the visit to Montmartre.

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Though the general philosophical *inquiétude* treated in this episode is not evoked so clearly anywhere else in the novel, the priest speaks in terms of most of the image-concepts which express Bernis' and Geneviève's views of life — the *demeure*, the *navire*, the sea of time, the *trou* ("le défaut dans l'armure"), *sens*, *écoulement*, *prison*, *fuite*, the *source*, and the *étoile*. He evokes also, it is true, ideas which do not figure *per se* in the characters' minds, e.g., the oppression of logic and the de-humanization of life.

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9 Several other such moments of immobility and *inquiétude* are discussed in Chapter V.
Several times he "resolves" seemingly contradictory images and concepts into paradoxical expressions. Thus the demeure-navire, which had already seemed to afford sens and sécurité to Geneviève, now offers an issue for flight as well. Similarly, childish play and constructive action are proposed almost in a single breath, and subjection to a Divinity is presented as a "re-humanization" of life. Bernis is unconvinced by this verbal alchemy, and the confusion from which he was suffering upon entering Notre-Dame is only intensified.

It does not seem to have been noted by critics that there are very evident and substantial parallels (as well as differences) between this sermon and Citadelle. It is not simply that the tone of the author's posthumous work is also exhortatory and that images also occur there in extraordinary sequences and combinations. This superficial similarity derives from deeper ones. The principal ideas of the sermon — liberation from the bondage of commonplace logic and adherence to something bigger than self for the attainment of sens and security — these ideas are the very center of Citadelle (though Saint-Exupéry does not repudiate science as does the priest). The closest parallel has to do with the priest's and the Prince's conceptions of religion. Bernis rejects the former's declarations because there is no proclamation of a "Signe." Precisely the same objection might be made to Citadelle by a reader so minded. The Prince tells of searching for God on a mountaintop and of finding only a block of black granite (CD, 683). There is no answer when he asks for a sign, and he judges that it is better so: "Car un tel signe je ne l'eusse reçu que d'un égal, donc encore de moi-même, reflet encore de mon
désir. Et de nouveau je n'eusse rencontré que ma solitude" (CD, 684). He decides subsequently that the value of prayer resides exactly in the fact of its not being answered. Citadelle contains a number of such monologue-prayers (e.g., pp. 870-872) in which the Prince "answers himself" and, like the priest, joins his self-evident propositions by many "car's" and "parce que's." There is, of course, an essential difference: the Prince has a genuine assurance and order in his thoughts, while the priest betrays self-doubt and a "désarroi" in his own mind. It is probably safe to assume, nevertheless, that Saint-Exupéry jumbled together in this sermon not only the principal concepts of his fictional characters but also some tentative ones of his own. Somewhat like Flaubert's Homais, this priest is a disguised and caricatured spokesman of one side of his creator. The author presents in this way some of his "half-jelled" philosophical speculations and demonstrates at the same time his awareness of the peril of being duped by the false evidence of one's own subjective or incoherent images.
The narrator is expecting Bernis' arrival at Cap Juby:

JAQUES BERNIS, cette fois-ci, avant ton arrivée, je dévoilerais qui tu es. Toi que, depuis hier, les radios situent exactement, qui vas passer ici les vingt minutes réglementaires, pour qui je vais ouvrir une boîte de conserves, déboucher une bouteille de vin, qui ne nous parleras ni de l'amour, ni de la mort, d'aucun des vrais problèmes, mais de la direction du vent, de l'état du ciel, de ton moteur. Toi qui vas rire du bon mot d'un mécanicien, gémir sur la chaleur, ressembler à n'importe lequel d'entre nous...

Je dirai quel voyage tu accomplis. Comment tu soulèves les apparences, pourquoi les pas que tu fais à côté de nôtres ne sont pas les mêmes.

He now recalls a childhood visit with Bernis to an old cistern:

Nous sommes sortis de la même enfance, et voici que se dresse dans mon souvenir, brusquement, ce vieux mur croulant et chargé de lierre. Nous étions des enfants hardis: "Pourquoi as-tu peur? Pousse la porte..."

Un vieux mur croulant et chargé de lierre. Séché, pénétré, pétri de soleil, pétri d'évidence. Des lézards bruissaient entre les feuilles, que nous appelions des serpents, aimant déjà jusqu'à l'image de cette fuite qui est la mort. Chaque pierre de ce côté-ci était chaude, couverte comme un œuf, ronde comme un œuf. Chaque parcelle de terre, chaque brindille était dégagée par ce soleil de tout mystère. De ce côté du mur, régnait, dans sa richesse, dans sa plénitude, l'été à la campagne. Nous apercevions un clocher. Nous entendions une batteuse. Le bleu du ciel combait tous les vides. Les paysans fauchaient les blés, le curé sulfatait sa vigne, des parents, au salon, jouaient au bridge. Nous nommions ceux qui usaient soixante années de ce coin de terre, qui, de la naissance à la mort, prenaient de soleil en consigne, ces blés, cette demeure, nous nommions ces générations présentes "l'équipe de garde." Car nous aimions nous découvrir sur l'îlot le plus menacé, entre deux océans redoutables, entre le passé et l'avenir. (60-61)
The boys enter the cistern enclosure:

C  "Tourne la clef..."

Il était interdit aux enfants de pousser cette petite porte verte, d'un vert usé de vieille barque, de toucher cette serrure énorme, sortie rouillée du temps, comme une vieille ancre de la mer.

Sans doute craignait-on pour nous cette citerne à ciel ouvert, l'horreur d'un enfant noyé dans la mare. Derrière la porte dormait une eau que nous disions immobile depuis mille ans, à laquelle nous pensions chaque fois que nous entendions parler d'eau morte. De minuscules feuilles rondes la revêtaient d'un tissu vert: nous lancions des pierres qui faisaient des trous.

Quelle fraîcheur sous des branchements si vieux, si lourds, qui portaient le poids du soleil. Jamais un rayon n'avait jauni la pelouse tendre du remblai ni touché l'étoffe précieuse. Le caillou que nous avions lancé commençait son cours, comme un astre, car, pour nous, cette eau n'avait pas de fond.

"Asseyons-nous..." Aucun bruit ne nous parvenait. Nous goûtons la fraîcheur, l'odeur, l'humidité qui renouvelaient notre chair. Nous étions perdus aux confins du monde car nous savions déjà que voyager c'est avant tout changer de chair. (61)

The boys dislike returning to the secure, everyday surroundings which they had escaped:

D  "Ici, c'est l'envers des choses..."

L'envers de cet été si sûr de lui, de cette campagne, de ces visages qui nous retenaient prisonniers. Et nous haïssions ce monde imposé. À l'heure du dîner, nous remontions vers la maison, lourds de secrets, comme ces plongeurs des Indes qui touchèrent des perles. À la minute où le soleil chavire, où la nappe est rose, nous ententions prononcer les mots qui nous faisaient mal:

"Les jour allongent..."

Nous nous sentions repris par cette vieille ritournelle, par cette vie faite de saisins, de vacances, de mariages, et de morts. Tout ce tumulte vain de la surface. (61)

Now the narrator recalls a visit to the attic of their childhood home:

E  Fuir, voilà l'important. À dix ans, nous trouvions refuge dans la charpente du grenier. Des oiseaux morts, de vieilles malles éventrées, des vêtements extraordinaires: un peu les coulisses de la vie. Et ce trésor que nous disions caché, ce trésor des vieilles demeures, exactement décrit dans les contes des fées: saphirs, opales, diamants. Ce trésor qui luisait faiblement. Qui était la raison d'être de chaque mur, de chaque

The boys have a delicious impression of mysterious forces at work around them:

F Nous sursautions. Travail obscur des choses. Poutres éclatées par le trésor. A chaque craquement nous sondions le bois. Tout n'était qu'une crosse prête à livrer son grain. Vieille écorce des choses sous laquelle se trouvait, nous n'en doutions pas, autre chose. Ne serait-ce que cette étoile, ce petit diamant dur. Un jour nous marcherions vers le Nord ou le Sud, ou bien en nous-mêmes, à sa recherche. Fuir.

L'étoile qui fait dormir tournait l'ardoise qui la masquait, nette comme un signe. Et nous descendions vers notre chambre, emportant pour le grand voyage du demi-sommeil cette connaissance d'un monde où la pierre mystérieuse coule sans fin parmi les eaux comme dans l'espace des tentacules de lumière qui plongent mille ans pour nous parvenir; où la maison qui craque au vent est menacée comme un navire, ou les choses, une à une, éclatent, sous l'obscurce poussée du trésor. (62)

In this passage the narrator recalls visits which he and Bernis had made in boyhood to an old cistern and to the attic of the big house where they lived. These recollections come after the account of Bernis' experiences on leave in France and after the reporting of his flight back almost as far as Cap Juby, where the narrator is expecting him momentarily. They are thus widely separated from the
memories of Geneviève as a child (19-22), which had preceded the narration of her love affair with Bernis. In the episode of the elopement the reader was already quite familiar with her temperament and imagination, while only shorter references had been made to those of her lover. This passage, which is the real center of the novel, comes as a preparation for Bernis' final visit to Geneviève and for the episode of his death.

A

The chapter begins with the narrator's promise to reveal the true nature of his friend, who, during his brief stop at Cap Juby, will seem to be no different from any other pilot performing his duty. Upon leaving Toulouse Bernis had already reflected that he could forget, at least temporarily, the painful facts of his relations with Geneviève: "'Je ne suis plus qu'un ouvrier, j'établis le courrier d'Afrique.' Et chaque jour, pour l'ouvrier, qui commence à bâtir le monde, le monde commence" (7). He had had similar consoling thoughts even during the despair which led him to Notre-Dame:

Il savait que son travail l'entourerait de liens si matériels qu'il reprendrait une réalité. Il savait aussi que, dans la vie quotidienne, le moindre pas prend l'importance d'un fait et que le désastre moral y perd un peu de sens. Les plaisanteries de l'escale garderaient même leur saveur. C'était étrange et pourtant certain:

It is in this light (and also in view of the normal pudic of Saint-Exupéry's flyers) that one should consider the narrator's statement that Bernis will not speak of the true problems of life such as love and death. The performance of duty pushes aside all but pragmatic
and immediate considerations.\textsuperscript{1}

The narrator nevertheless finds it strange that Bernis should be "situated" so precisely by the radio messages and that he will seem, upon arrival, no different from people around him. In reality he cannot be placed or described so simply and he is different from other people by virtue not only of his recent experiences but of his whole career — his inner "voyage." We have already seen the nature of the quiet, seemingly sure voyage of Geneviève: "Le voyage n'a de sens ni ici ni ailleurs, mais quelle sécurité on tire d'avoir son billet, sa cabine, et ses valises de cuir jaune. D'être embarqué..." (42). In this passage we begin to hear about the magic personal voyage of Bernis. We already know, too, of Geneviève's life "à la surface des choses" (27); here we learn of Bernis' passion for lifting up "les apparences" to explore what is underneath.

B

The "vieux mur croulant et chargé de lierre" which appears at the beginning of these recollections has already the quality of the forbidden which Bernis finds attractive, and the mention of the boys' eagerness to push open the door prepares for the revelation of his intellectual curiosity and spiritual restlessness.\textsuperscript{2} There follows

\textsuperscript{1}The narrator remarks elsewhere that while busy keeping his plane in the air "Bernis n'a plus que des pensées rudimentaires, les pensées qui dirigent l'action...." (13).

\textsuperscript{2}In the recollections of childhood no distinction is made between the characters of Bernis and the narrator. As an adult the latter seems to be somewhat less restless and better integrated in the life of the métier than his friend. Both have, no doubt, something of Saint-Exupéry's own nature, as does also, perhaps, even Geneviève. One may remember in this connection Flaubert's famous statement: "Madame Bovary, c'est moi!"
a repetitive and insistent description of the dryness, warmth, and clarity of the wall's surface facing the sun. All of these qualities except dryness have been noted in the imaginative description of Geneviève's world; her devotion to brightness, to things clear and on the surface has been particularly emphasized (27). The lizards, though quite in place on a warm stone wall, clash with this thematic picture. Transformed in the boys' minds into snakes, they symbolize escape in the form of death. 3 In this image the boys' preoccupation with escape is joined to that with time, and their sensations after entering the cistern enclosure are anticipated. The figure of the egg, which has no other occurrence in the novel, evokes effectively Geneviève's traditional way of life with its emphasis on regeneration and the perpetuation of life. This clear scene of a country summer, free from mystery except for the "serpents," is a perfect symbolic representation of her world. The people, objects, and activities mentioned — the demeure, the clocher, the batteuse, the paysans harvesting, the blés, the curé spraying the vigne, the parents playing bridge — are all figures of assurance and contentment. Not even the blue sky has areas of mystery ("vides"). (In the attic episode the blue night sky seen through the roof will, on the contrary, represent mystery.)

It is plain, however, that the boys do not participate in this mood. They consider that the physical world — even the sun — is

3 A snake is the friendly agent of the Little Prince's death and return to his planet.
given only "en consigne" to these people, who, because of the limited span of human life, are merely an "équipe de garde." This is, of course, a role which Geneviève fills very well, even though the idea is foreign to her. In this connection comes the first clear conception of the menacing sea of time, an image which has been anticipated in Bernis' vision of Geneviève's navire (42) and, more nearly, in some terms of the priest's sermon (45). Here the boys (like the priest) think in terms of an isle instead of a ship, perhaps because it is the present or the span of life, rather than human institutions, which they have in mind. It may be as well because islands seem to be absolutely permanent and the erosion which destroys them is scarcely noticeable. Islands are also, of course, traditional objects of quest. 4

As the boys open the door of the cistern enclosure, the tremendous age of the place is evoked further in terms of the sea of time. The ancient green of the door is like that of an old boat, and its lock, "rouillée du temps," is like a venerable anchor which they are pulling up by entering an ancient, mysterious world. The narrator's mention of the practical reason for the cistern's being forbidden to the boys also has symbolic significance. In imagining "l'horreur d'un enfant

4When Fabien of Vol de nuit flies up among the stars to escape the storm below, he imagines that he has arrived in the mythical "baie des îles bienheureuses" (p.125). In the same novel Rivière reflects on the Age of Colonization when Europeans built boats to carry them to newly discovered "îles" (p. 130).
nooné dans la mare" the families may be thinking not only of physical
drowning but also of the spiritual dangers which await the boys in
the deep, mysterious world outside the safe, clear domaine of their
childhood. 5

The motif of great age returns with the boys' impression that
this deep water is sleeping, dead, and "immobile depuis mille ans." Like the door, it has a color of aged green from the primitive, pri-
mordial vegetable matter on its surface. Its immobility is provoc-
ative to the boys so they throw in stones, an act symbolic of their
urge to upset the assurance of life on the surface and to plunge into
the bottomless depths of mystery.

There follows an exposition of the irresistible physical qual-
ities of the place: odor, humidity, coolness, and shadow. A con-
trast is clearly effected between these qualities and those of the
domaine outside the wall. The latter are characteristic of Geneviève's
world and the former of the mysterious world which the boys wish to
enter. She does not suffer from the burden of the sun — on the
contrary — but they feel oppressed by excessive clarity and évidence
and are grateful now for a bit of darkness and mystery in the shade
of the great trees. They find also a symbolic depth, contrasting
with Geneviève's "surface des choses," by imagining that the stone's
fall through the bottomless water will be like the orbit of a star.

5 M. François notes that a variation of this image recurs in Vol
de nuit (p. 128) and Citadelle (p. 968) and suggests that Saint-
Exupéry may have been obsessed by the actual drowning of a child
We shall see that the star will be given other, less specific meanings in the attic episode.

It is explained in the next paragraph that the boys are delighted by the silence, coolness, odor, and humidity of the place because these qualities, in affecting or changing their flesh, produce the illusion of distant travel: "...nous savions déjà que voyager c'est avant tout changer de chair." Thus they recognize that travel is essentially inner and spiritual, though inseparably linked with physical feelings. The qualities of the cistern enclosure which give the boys such agreeable sensations are, in fact, a traditional setting for mystical (or religious) experience. There is between their appeals to the different senses a mysterious correspondance, and the sensual effect itself corresponds to and prepares a certain mood or state of mind.

D

The exclamation "Ici, c'est l'envers des choses..." recalls the narrator's earlier statement that Bernis "lifts off appearances" (A). The world of appearances which the boys wish to life off here is oppressive because of its placid assurance ("si sûr de lui"). It seems to them like a prison or a "monde imposé." They feel themselves now to be heavy with secrets of which this world knows nothing.

6 This statement elucidates Bernis' whole preoccupation with the "neuf," which is extremely important for an understanding of his career, particularly his role in the elopement. Geneviève does not normally think in such terms, though she does just after the death of her child. Cf. Chapter VI.

7 Cf. Chapter VII.
The figure of the Hindu pearl divers, which is prepared by the phrase "lourds de secrets" and the expression "nous remontions," is to appear again in the narrator's reflections before Bernis' arrival at Cap Juby: "Où vas-tu maintenant chercher le trésor, plongeur des Indes qui touches les perles, mais ne sais pas les ramener au jour?" (68). It is easily related to other images of the quest (including the trésor of the attic passage) and also to the whole cluster of water images. The rose-colored twilight and the nappe, whose later combination in the phrase "la nappe du soir" was to be such a poignant evocation of the pleasures of human society, express here the pleasant melancholy of the boys who wish to escape ("prisonniers"). The twilight itself ("le soleil [qui] chavire") is also a further reminder of ultimate decay and death.

The sure, domestic world's concern for seasons and other regular changes and events contrasts directly with the boys' deeper, more mysterious interest in a time which has nothing of the habitual and repetitive. The mention of "ce tumulte vain de la surface" is meant also to point up an antithesis with the quiet "envers des choses" which they had found so fascinating and meaningful.

The account of the visit to the attic, which follows and continues that of the adventure at the cistern, contains profounder and more enigmatic figurative conceptions. The narrator had insisted, near the end of the recollections just studied, upon the boys' feeling that they were prisoners in a "monde imposé" (D); these begin quite logically upon a note of escape: "Fuir, voilà l'important." The
attic thus presents itself first as a refuge, but we shall see that this term does not express its whole significance. It is also a sort of observation post from which the characters are able to comprehend figuratively and symbolically both the demeure and the world outside.

The things which the boys find there could not show themselves in the salon beside the bibelots so dear to Geneviève. They would be disconcerting, for the oiseaux morts (like so many other details of these passages) evoke death, and both the trunks bursting with worn-out articles and the out-modeled clothes call attention to decay and the passage of time. One might even say with some pertinence that these things cannot be shown "on the stage," since the narrator has returned to the theatre metaphors so often employed in distinguishing the worlds of Geneviève and Bernis. These are the "coulisses de la vie." Unlike the "coulisses du Sahara" (3), they do not lack mystery but are on the contrary more enchanting than the "grande scène" below.

The narrator now introduces specifically the figure of the trésor, which has already been anticipated by the pearldiver image (D) and which is later to be a principal symbolic object of Bernis' quest. Its meaning here is even more enigmatic than in other passages of its occurrence. The fact that it is peculiar to vieilles demeures might seem to indicate a rather specific value, but the mention of fairy tales discourages such an interpretation. This treasure is the raison d'être of the poutres; it is what they and traditions defend against time. The narrator has already spoken of the

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8Cf. "cette fuite qui est la mort," "eau morte," "mariages et morts," "enfant noyé," "l'étoile .... qui fait mourir."
treasures of human society (17). The treasures of this old house may be, on one level, a sort of accumulation of human values resulting from its long habitation. They contrast perhaps with the bibelots, which are also passed from generation to generation but on "la surface ces choses." A connection suggests itself also with the boys' desire to flee. The narrator had observed, concerning the treasures of friendship which Bernis had left behind, that "ces fuites témoignent quelquefois de tant d'amour avaré" (17). (We shall see in the following discussion [F] that treasure figures also as something which the boys wish to pursue in the outside world.)

From the idea of the treasure attention is turned to the great beams and the traditions which defend the house and its human institution against temporal change. In this conception, with its emphasis on the "culte du passé," is summarized Geneviève's whole way of life. Bernis and the narrator perceive, in their quality of young seers, a decisive flaw in the construction. In conceiving of the house as a ship they give it a less dependable foundation and introduce the probability of leaks and eventual destruction. The holes (trous) through which come dying birds clearly symbolize the insinuation of death, and the mention of cracks in the wall (lézardes) is another allusion to decay. The boys' disturbing revelation is contrasted with the "sécurité trompeuse" of the formal gaiety below; these people are really "passagers" on a leaky ship. The holes in the roof (failles), through which filters a blue night sky very different from the sky without "vides" outside the cistern wall (B) — these holes return as symbols of the inimical effect of time.
Through one of them the boys now see a star which brings illness and death. Since the star reappears shortly (F) as a "signe" inviting pursuit, death already figures here implicitly as the most important of voyages.  

F

In the next paragraph the boys' attention is diverted to another phenomenon as mysterious as the first. Because of the sound of cracking wood, the house seems to be bursting with its treasure (cf. "malles éventrées" [E]) like a pod about to release its seed. Thus the institution generates its own destruction, albeit a peculiarly reproductive sort of destruction. It may not be wrong to consider that the boys themselves are a kind of seed which will escape the parental cosse to go germinate elsewhere, but the analogy of the grain is not limited to human progeny. It is a question of all that lies under the écorce of things, under the apparences mentioned earlier (A). The star, in a new figuration, now symbolizes the mysterious treasure in the kernel of things, the "petit diamant dur," which the boys expect to pursue in space ("vers le Nord ou vers le Sud") or intellectually and spiritually ("en nous-mêmes"). Thus the treasure of the old house (E) and that which the boys perceive in the stars of the sky have a sort of fusion. The paragraph ends with the single word: "Fuir," which, coming immediately after the phrase "à sa recherche," points up the dual nature of Bernis' later wander-

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9 For the Little Prince death itself is travel to a star. We shall see that a similar interpretation may be placed upon the description of Bernis' own death.
ings — that is, the going away from something and the going toward something.

The star reappears with still a third meaning, as something "qui fait dormir." In a sense it is still a kind of object to be pursued, since the drowsiness preceding sleep, the "demi-sommeil," is a kind of "grand voyage" of the imagination. There is also a parallel with the star "qui fait mourir," for, as we have noted, death seems also to be figured as travel, as the supreme voyage.

The narrator's statement of the knowledge which the boys take downstairs is a sort of three-point résumé of the symbolic revelations which they have had at the cistern and in the attic. The phrase "la pierre mystérieuse [qui] coule sans fin parmi les eaux comme dans l'espace ces tentacules de lumière qui plongent mille ans pour nous parvenir" recalls both the stone which the boys cast into the water (C) and the star they perceived through a hole in the roof. In this twin conception is contained an intuition of bottomless, timeless depths below and of infinite, timeless height above. It may imply interest both in man and in the external world — in any case, it symbolizes mystery perceived in the whole of reality. In the phrase "la maison qui craque au vent .... menacée comme un navire" is expressed the boys' understanding of the house's weakness and of its role, stated earlier, of transporting the generations on the eternal voyage from birth to death. In "les choses [qui], une à une, éclatent,

10 In describing the hallucinatory, day-dreaming impressions of the boys in these passages Saint-Exupéry takes his place in a long tradition of dream literature, which includes such writers as Hugo, Nerval, and Flaubert in the nineteenth century and numerous others, such as Alain-Fournier, in the twentieth.
sous l'obscur pousée du trésor," is figured, finally, the hidden nature and mysterious potentiality of all things which is the object of the boys' curiosity and pursuit.

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These recollections of childhood, coming just before Bernis' account of his last visit to Geneviève and shortly before the final fatal stage of his flight, reveal in figurative, symbolic terms his essential nature and elucidate in this way his unsuccessful adventure with Geneviève and his whole career. In the relation of the visit to the forbidden cistern, there is a great symbolic antithesis between clarity and superficiality on one hand, and mystery and depth on the other. The theme of depth, embodied as it is in evocations of coolness, humidity, and shadows, and in water and sky images, complemented by the conception of the island between two oceans, focuses the boys' curiosity upon the menacing and disturbing properties of time. Geneviève's comfortable idea of time is represented by the "vieille ritournelle .... de saisons, de vacances, de mariages, et de morts." Clarity, dryness, superficiality, and the "vieille ritournelle" form in the boys' minds a "monde imposé" a "prison," from which they feel compelled to flee. The visit to the attic begins on this note of flight, though the place is scarcely more of a "refuge" than the cistern. Nearly all of the symbolic details of the first visit are echoed in the second. The "envers des choses" which the boys had sensed first is matched by the "coulisses de la vie" and, later, by the "autre chose" which they feel to be under the "écorce" of things. The "îlot" between two oceans becomes a "nâvire." The
"serrure énorme" of the door to the cistern reappears in the "poutres énormes" of the roof. The "trous" which the boys make in the surface quiet of the pool return as natural "trous" or "failles" in the roof, and the stone which they cast in is re-evoked as "la pierre mystérieuse." Finally, the "secrets" and the "perles" discovered in the first adventure correspond to the "grain," the "trésor," and the "étoile, .... petit diamant dur" which figure as objects of quest in the second. The latter account is, however, more explicit in several ways. The perception of weakness in the traditional way of life is much clearer here, and the theme of quest emerges stronger than that of flight, with which it is juxtaposed. Most of the same notes are struck again, we shall see, in the account of Bernis' death.
CHAPTER XI
THE DEATH OF GENEVIEVE

Bernis gets off a small local train at the rustic station near Geneviève's country home:

A

Ce n'était pas une petite gare de province, mais une porte dérobée. Elle donnait en apparence sur la campagne. Sous l'œil d'un contrôleur paisible on gagnait une route blanche sans mystère, un ruisseau des églantines. Le chef de gare soignait des roses, l'homme d'équipe feignait de pousser un chariot vide. Sous ces déguisements veillaient trois gardiens d'un monde secret.

Le contrôleur tapotait le billet:
— Vous allez de Paris à Toulouse, pourquoi descendez-vous ici?
— Je continuerai par le train suivant.

Le contrôleur le dévisageait. Il hésitait à lui livrer non une route, un ruisseau, des églantines, mais ce royaume que depuis Merlin on sait pénétrer sous les apparences. Il dut lire enfin en Bernis les trois vertus requises depuis Orphée pour ces voyages: le courage, la jeunesse, l'amour...

— Passez, dit-il.

Les rapides brûlaient cette gare qui n'était là qu'en trompe-l'œil comme ces petits bars occultes ornés de faux garçons, de faux musiciens, d'un faux barman. Déjà, dans l'omnibus, Bernis avait senti sa vie se ralentir, changer de sens. Maintenant sur cette carriole, près de ce paysan, il s'éloignait de nous plus encore. Il s'enfonçait dans le mystère. L'homme, dès trente ans, portait toutes ses rides pour ne plus vieillir. Il désignait un champ:
— Ça pousse vite!

Quelle hâte invisible pour nous, cette course des blés vers le soleil!

Bernis nous découvrit plus lointains encore, plus agités, plus misérables, quand le paysan désignant un mur:
— C'est le grand-père de mon grand-père qui l'a bâti.

Il touchait déjà un mur éternel, un arbre éternel: il devina qu'il arrivait. (63-64)

Bernis arrives at the domaine:

B

— Voilà le domaine. Faut-il vous attendre?

-215-
Royaume de légende endormi sous les eaux, c'est là que Bernis passera cent ans en ne vieillissant que d'une heure.

Ce soir même, la carriole, l'omnibus, le rapide lui permettront cette fuite en chicane qui nous ramène vers le monde depuis Orphée, depuis la Belle au bois dormant. Il paraîtra un voyageur semblable aux autres, en route vers Toulouse, appuyant sa joue blanche aux vitres. Mais il portera dans le fond du cœur un souvenir qui ne peut pas se raconter, "couleur de lune," "couleur du temps."

Bernis walks toward the house:

Visite étrange: nul éclat de voix, nulle surprise. La route rendait un son mat. Il sauta la haie comme jadis: l'herbe montait dans les allées... ah! c'est la seule différence. La maison lui apparut blanche entre les arbres mais comme en rêve, à une distance infranchissable. Au moment d'atteindre le but, est-ce un mirage? Il gravit le perron de larges pierres. Il était né de la nécessité avec une aisance sûre des lignes. "Rien ici n'est truqué..." Le vestibule était obscur: un chapeau blanc sur une chaise: le sien? Quel désordre aimable: non un désordre d'abandon, mais le désordre intelligent qui marque une présence. Il garde encore l'empreinte du mouvement. Une chaise à peine reculée d'où s'étais levée la main appuyée à la table; il vit le geste. Un livre ouvert: qui vient de le quitter? Pourquoi? La dernière phrase chantait peut-être encore dans une conscience.

Bernis sourit, pensant aux mille petits travaux, aux mille petits tracas de la maison. On y marchait le long du jour en parant aux mêmes besoins, en rangeant le même désordre. Les drames étaient de si peu d'importance; il suffisait d'être un voyageur, un étranger pour en sourire... "Tout de même, pensait-il, le soir tombait ici comme ailleurs une année entière, c'était un cycle révolu. Le lendemain... c'était recommencer la vie. On marchait vers le soir. On n'avait plus, alors, aucun souci: les persiennes étaient closes, les livres rangés et les garde-feu bien en place. Ce repos gagné eût pu être éternel, il en avait le goût. Mais nuits, elles, sont moins que des trêves..."

Bernis pauses to enjoy the atmosphere of the house:

Il s'assit sans faire de bruit. Il n'osait pas se révéler: tout semblait si calme, si égal. D'un store soigneusement baissé un rayon de soleil filtra. "Une déchirure, pensa Bernis, ici l'on vieillit sans savoir..."

"Que vais-je apprendre..." Un pas dans la pièce voisine en-chanta la maison. Un pas tranquille. Un pas de nonne qui range les fleurs de l'Autel. "Quelle besogne minuscule achevé-t-on? Ma vie est serrée comme un drame. Ici que d'espace, que d'air,
entre chacun des mouvements, entre chacune des pensées..." Par
la fenêtre, il se pencha vers la campagne. Elle était tendue
sous le soleil, avec des lieues de route blanche à parcourir
pour aller prier, pour aller chasser, pour aller porter une let-
tre. Une batteuse au loin ronflait: on faisait un effort pour
l'entendre: la voix trop faible d'un acteur oppressé la salle.

Le pas de nouveau résonna: "On range les bibelots, ils ont
encombré les vitrines peu à peu. Chaque siècle en se retirant
laisse derrière lui ces coquillages..." (65)

Bennis learns that Geneviève is dying:

E  On parlait, Bennis écouta:
   — Crois-tu qu'elle passe la semaine? Le médecin...
   Les pas s'éloignèrent. Stupéfait, il se tut. Qui allait
   mourir? Son cœur se serra. Il appela à l'aide toute preuve
de vie, le chapeau blanc, le livre ouvert...
   Les voix reprirent. C'étaient des voix pleines d'amour
   mais si calmes. On savait la mort installée sous le toit, on
   l'y accueillait en intime sans en détourner le visage. Il n'y
   avait rien de déclamatoire: "Comme tout est simple, pensa Bennis,
vivre, ranger les bibelots, mourir..."
   — Tu as cueilli des fleurs pour le salon?
   — Oui.
   On parlait bas, sur un ton voilé mais égal. On parlait de
mille petites choses et la mort prochaine les teignait simple-
ment de grisaille. Un rire jaillit qui mourut de lui-même. Un
rire sans racine profonde, mais que ne réprimait pas une dignité
théâtrale.
   — Ne monte pas, dit la voix, elle dort.
   Bennis était assis au cœur même de la douleur dans une inti-
mité dérobée. Il eut peur d'être découvert. L'étranger fait
naitre, du besoin de tout exprimer, une douleur mois humble. On
lui crie: "Vous qui l'avez connue, aimée..." Il dresse la
mourante dans toute sa grâce et c'est intolérable.
   Il avait droit pourtant à cette intimité "... car je l'aimais." (65-66)

Bennis slips upstairs to the room where Geneviève lies ill:

F  Il eut besoin de la revoir, monta en fraude l'escalier, ouv-
rit la porte de la chambre. Elle contenait tout l'été. Les
murs étaient clairs et le lit blanc. La fenêtre ouverte s'em-
plissait de jour. L'horloge d'un clocher lointain, paisible,
lente, donna la cadence juste du cœur qu'il faut avoir. Elle
dormait. Quel sommeil glorieux au centre de l'été!
   "Elle va mourir..." Il s'avança sur le parquet ciré, plein
de lumière. Il ne comprenait pas sa propre paix. Mais elle
gémit: Bennis n'osa pénétrer plus avant...
   Il devinait une présence immense: l'âme des malades
s'étale, remplit la chambre et la chambre est comme une plaie. On n'ose heurter un meuble, marcher.

Pas un bruit. Des mouches seules grésillaient. Un appel lointain posa un problème. Une bouffée de vent frais roula, molle, dans la chambre. Le soir déjà, pensa Bernis. Il songeait aux volets que l'on allait tirer, à la lumière de la lampe. C'était bientôt la nuit qui obséderait la malade ainsi qu'une étape à franchir. La lampe en veilleuse fascine alors comme un mirage, et les choses dont les ombres ne tournent pas et que l'on regarde douze heures sous le même angle finissent par s'imprimer dans le cerveau, peser d'un poids insupportable. (66)

Geneviève becomes aware of Bernis' presence:

G — Qui est là, dit-elle.

Bernis s'approcha. La tendresse, la pitié montèrent vers ses lèvres. Il s'inclina. La secourir. La prendre dans les bras. Étre sa force.

"Jacques..." Elle le fixait. "Jacques..." Elle le halait du fond de sa pensée.. Elle ne cherchait pas son épaule mais fouillait dans ses souvenirs. Elle s'accrochait à sa manche comme un naufragé qui se hisse, non pour se saisir d'une présence, d'un appui, mais d'une image... Elle regarde...

Et voici que peu à peu il lui semble étranger. Elle ne reconnaît pas cette ride, ce regard. Elle lui serre les doigts pour l'appeler: il ne peut lui être d'aucun secours. Il n'est pas l'ami qu'elle porte en elle. Déjà lasse de cette présence, elle le repousse, détourne la tête.

Il est à une distance infranchissable. (66-67)

Bernis leaves her room and the house:

H Il s'évada sans bruit, traversa de nouveau le vestibule. Il revenait d'un voyage immense, d'un voyage confus, dont on se souvient mal. Est-ce qu'il souffrait? Est-ce qu'il était triste? Il s'arrêta. Le soir s'insinuait comme la mer dans une cale qui fait eau, les bibelots allaient s'éteindre. Le front contre la vitre, il vit les ombres des tilleuls s'allonger, se joindre, remplir le gazon de nuit. Un village lointain s'éclaira. À peine une poignée de lumières; elle aurait tenu dans ses mains. Il n'y avait plus de distance; il eût pu toucher du doigt la colline. Les voix de la maison se turent: on avait achevé de la mettre en ordre. Il ne bougeait pas. Il se souvenait de soirs pareils. On se levait pesant comme un scaphandrier. Le visage lisse de la femme se fermait et tout à coup on avait peur de l'avenir, de la mort.

Bernis sums up for the narrator his experiences with Geneviève:

V

I  

Et Bernis, avant de partir, me résumait toute l'aventure:

"J'ai essayé, vois-tu, d'entraîner Geneviève dans un monde à moi. Tout ce que je lui montras devenait terne, gris. La première nuit était d'une épaisseur sans nom: nous n'avons pas pu la franchir. J'ai dû lui rendre sa maison, sa vie, son âme. Un à tous les peupliers de la route. A mesure que nous remontions vers Paris, diminuait entre le monde et nous une épaisseur. Comme si j'avais voulu l'entraîner sous la mer. Quand, plus tard, j'ai cherché encore à la joindre, j'ai pu l'approcher, la toucher, il n'y avait pas d'espace entre nous. Il y avait plus. Je ne sais te dire quoi: mille années. On est si loin d'une autre vie. Elle était cramponnée à ses draps blancs, à son été, à ses évidences, et je n'ai pas pu l'emporter. Laisse-moi partir."

(67-68)

The narrator reflects about the future of his friend's personal quest:

J  

Où vas-tu maintenant chercher le trésor, plongeur des Indes qui touches les perles, mais ne sais pas les ramener au jour? Ce désert sur lequel je marche, moi qui suis retenu, comme un plomb, au sol, je n'y saurais rien découvrir. Mais il n'est pour toi, magicien, qu'un voile de sable, qu'une apparence... — Jacques, c'est l'heure.

(68)

The narration of Bernis' last visit to Geneviève is separated from the account of their romantic relations which constitutes most of Part II. It comes in the last Part after the recounting of Bernis' flight from Toulouse to Cap Juby, and, more significantly, just after the narrator's recollections of their symbolic childhood adventures. While those recollections had come in anticipation of Bernis' arrival at Juby, this episode is supposedly related during his short stop-over there. The reader therefore knows considerably more about Bernis' "universe" than at the point of the events in Paris. He benefits as well from knowledge of the boys' early impressions of the conventional world which has remained that of Geneviève. In this
episode Bernis sees her in her most characteristic surroundings, those of the country **domaine**, and his view of her world is completed. It is here as well that he understands most clearly, by way of contrast, his own way of life. His and the narrator's impressions of Geneviève's death also provide the principal symbolic clues to the meaning of this rather unexpected event.

The first part of the narration is tied together by evocations of magic and mystery which resume a theme introduced by the boys' early impressions of Geneviève as a "fée" (19-22). Thus the station is not what it seems to be but a "porte dérobée." The ticket-taker, the handyman, and the station-master caring for his roses are really three guardians of a secret world which Bernis aspires to enter. The ticket-taker is about to give access not to a road, a brook, and eglantines but to a magic kingdom known to mortals since the time of Merlin. This is the first of several details in this episode which recall the Celtic romances. Saint-Exupéry has transformed the mysterious "guardians" of medieval literature into the bourgeois figures of a **chef de gare**, an **homme d'équipe**, and a **contrôleur**.¹ We have already noted the adjective "secret"; the

¹*Cf. Geneviève's pleasure in caring for roses (23-24). In *Le Petit Prince* the hero's rose is the major symbol of friendship and love.*

²*In Chrétien de Troye's *Yvain*, for example, the knights Calogrenant and Yvain must deal with a hideous villain before arriving at the magic fountain (verses 287-409 and 794-800). The device is common also in all literature dealing with the supernatural. Dante meets a panther, a lion, and a wolf before reaching the entrance of the underworld (*Inferno*, Canto I, verses 31-63).*
phrase "sous les apparences" comes now as another evocation of Bernis' childhood curiosity and quest as portrayed in the cistern and attic recollections. There follows a first allusion to his similarity to Orpheus and to the parallel of their two missions. Like the figure of Greek mythology — and also like Sir Lancelot, whose mission to save his Queen is perhaps evoked in the above reference to Merlin — Bernis is entering an extra-temporal world and the realm, if not of death, then at least of approaching death. He will try to save his beloved and, unlike Lancelot but like Orpheus, he will be unsuccessful. There is probably symbolism in the similarity of the names "Geneviève" and "Quénièvre," both ladies having been unfaithful to their husbands. We shall note in discussion of subsequent passages two other reminders of the Lancelot story.

Just as the theme of obscurity and depth in the cistern episode had turned around considerations of time, references to mystery in this account are interwoven with allusions to the new quality of time which Bernis is encountering. Rapides have no contact with this realm, whose "door," the station, seems to be an illusion. (The simile of the "bars occultes" is a surprising one in the circumstances; one may suppose that the analogy meant is principally that of a "false front" for some secret society or cult.) References to a new sort of time now become very frequent. Bernis has felt his life change tempo on leaving the rapide for the slow local train — on the

3 The boys had considered that the last rapide of the evening removed from Geneviève's childhood world all that was "inquiet, mobile, incertain comme un visage aux vitres des sleepings" (20).
even slower peasant's cart (cf. Sir Lancelot's humiliating ride in a charrette) he goes still deeper into the temporal mystery. This is a world where people's ages do not show because they have all their wrinkles — that is, have become timeless — at thirty. In such a setting the growing of wheat (an essential symbolic activity of Geneviève's world) seems like a race toward the sun. It has already been pointed out that Bernis was moving away from his friends of the Ligne ("il s'éloignait de nous"); now he realizes with added perspective that their lives are agitated and wretched compared to those which take place under the protection of an "eternal" tree and wall. (Upon returning from Africa Bernis had considered that the French countryside had "l'évidence et la durée d'un mur" [16]).

B

Now Geneviève's domaine is compared directly to a legendary kingdom asleep under the water. In childhood she had appeared to the boys as a "fée sous les eaux" (20). (Cf. the legend of Sir Lancelot's being reared by a fairy at the bottom of a lake.) It becomes evident here that her "sub-aquatic" quality is essentially an isolation or immunity from time and change. This world, called "legendary" and introduced by many allusions to magic and mystery, seems surreal and intangible. In the following passage Bernis' future departure from the domaine is called a return to "le monde" — that is, to reality. Upon coming back to France and the conventional life at the beginning of his leave, he had been returning, similarly, to "un paysage vrai" (16), but the French countryside was compared, in the same paragraph, to "ce fond de mer où tout repose" (16). Geneviève's
world has seemed alternately quite ordinary and superficial or extraordinarily deep and mysterious. We shall see that these two points of view have a sort of fusion in Bernis' mind after his visit.

The new allusion to Orpheus\(^4\) and one to the legend of Sleeping Beauty point up again the nature of Bernis' mission. The first also anticipates its unsuccessful conclusion, as the latter does not. Like Orpheus in his expedition to bring Euridice back from Hades, Bernis will fail, in a sense, through his own fault (though it is true, of course, on another level, that he has no power over death). Perhaps one may carry the parallel further and say that in pursuing quest and romantic adventure (and trying to reconcile these with Geneviève's life, he has failed to devote himself to her real interests, just as, in looking back, Orpheus failed Euridice. Bernis' steadily accelerated departure by cart, local train, and \textit{rapide} ("fuite en chicane") will bring a return to the everyday world comparable to Orpheus' solitary return to the realm of the living.

The narrator points out again that while his hero will seem outwardly unchanged, this experience will have marked him permanently. In this milieu Bernis' life is, as he had anticipated, "slowing down" and "changing direction." The mention of a memory "couleur de lune" and "couleur du temps"\(^5\) not only heightens the mystery by suggesting

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\(^4\) The story of Orpheus is one of the numerous classical myths which has found favor in modern French literature, e.g., the Gluck-Halévy opera and Jean Cocteau's play and cinema script.

the ineffable but recalls specifically Geneviève's Diana-like affin-
ity for moonlight (19) and the essentially temporal nature of her
personal mystery.

As Bernis leaves the cart to enter the grounds of the château,
there are further allusions to tranquillity: "....nul éclat de voix,
nulle surprise. La route rendait un son mat." (On his return [H]
this road will be "dure." ) The detail of the grass growing in the
path is rather puzzling; if it is an indication that the domaine has
been decaying since Bernis' childhood it is the only one. It prob-
ably signifies only a temporary neglect due to Geneviève's illness.
The house's whiteness is a new symptom of this world's "clarity,"
which is precisely like that of the area outside the cistern wall
(60). The fact that the building appears as in a dream and at an
impossible distance shows how foreign — and fascinating — the con-
ventional world has become for Bernis after his adventures in far
places. The stone-steps are symbolic of the man-made sturdiness of
this house which "protects against time" (62). The allusions to neces-
sity and assurance also recall previous descriptions of Geneviève's
world and contrast with her impressions of Bernis' apartment in
Paris.6 "Ici, rien n'est truqué....." She had thought that the

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6 On that occasion she had remembered specifically the stone
steps which Bernis now admires: "Elle revoit cette maison à travers
les tilleuls épais. C'est ce qu'il y avait de plus stable qui
arrivait à la surface; ce perron de pierres larges qui se contin-
nuait dans la terre" (35).
furnishings of his salon had to hide their faces (34–35), Bernis' perception of a "désordre intelligent" echoes an earlier impression of Geneviève's "linking" faculty.⁷

In the next paragraph Bernis ceases momentarily to admire the milieu around him and becomes almost patronizing. The business of maintaining a superficial order seems futile, and the household's small dramas are petty indeed. The narrator had, however, warned him that "les drames sont rares dans la vie" (33), and we shall see that the strength of this way of life derives largely from its refusal to be theatrical. The new reference to Bernis' real and symbolic capacity as a "voyageur" serves to emphasize his detachment from what he is observing, a detachment which is not, however, to be maintained very long (cf. E).

His attitude changes again as he admires the profound peace of evening in this place. "Le lendemain .... c'était recommencer la vie." In her tranquil life Geneviève enjoys each morning a renovation which Bernis is ever seeking in his adventures and which he does find in the actual exercise of the métier.⁸ People here enjoy

⁷Just after his return to Paris Bernis had learned from Geneviève to appreciate a certain "intelligent" and man-made disorder:

Ce parc n'était plus peigné, rasé et dépouillé comme pour un Américain, mais justement on y rencontrait ce désordre dans les allées, ces feuilles sèches, ce mouchoir perdu qu'y laisse le pas des amants. Et ce parc devenait un piège. (22)

Upon becoming a mother Geneviève had felt herself to be "intelligente. Et sûre d'elle-même et liée à tout...." (27).

⁸Bernis thinks, upon beginning his flight to Africa: "Et chaque jour, pour l'ouvrier, qui commence à bâtir le monde, le monde commence" (7).
"eternal" repose at night, and the poor rest of his "truces" seems wretched in comparison.

Bernis' admiration gives way again, this time to sober skepticism, as he sees a ray of sunlight seeping under a closed shutter. This "déchirure," plainly analogous to the "trous" and the "failles" which the boys had perceived in the attic, is explicitly linked to the process of decay: "Ici, l'on vieillit sans le savoir." Geneviève's kingdom is not completely "endormi" and timeless.

The theme of the supernatural returns with the step which "enchants" the house and with the simile of the nun arranging flowers on the Altar. We have already seen (in Chapter VI) that Geneviève had special affection for flowers, as if she recognized in them allies in the service of life. She had disconcerted her ardent fiancé with the apparently inconsequential remark: "C'est admirable une fleur qui pèse lourd" (23). The religious simile here has therefore special significance.

Bernis now contrasts his own life with the one around him in terms of its dramatic quality — an idea already familiar — and in terms of its tightness ("serré"). The latter is virtually a new image (cf. "plénitude" of summer [60]), but its antithesis with spaciousness may be placed very well among such others as agitation—

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9 The narrator has described thus the restless nights of the Sahara: "La nuit: cette demeure... Mais comment croire à notre paix? Les vents alizés glissaient sans repos vers le Sud" (3).
ordre, hâte-tranquillité, and inquiétude-assurance. A note of skepticism returns as Bernis thinks of someone's arranging the bibelots; they seem to him like shells left behind by the sea of time.

E

It is at this point that he learns that Geneviève is going to die. In an unreasoning desire not to believe what he has heard, he tries to draw reassurance from the physical phenomena around him. His appeal to the "chapeau blanc" and the "livre ouvert" is curiously like Geneviève's attitude during the illness of her child ("Tout ce qui est sain, net et luisant semblait .... protéger de la mort qui est obscure" [26]).

The portrayal in the next two paragraphs of the household's calm, practical reaction to imminent death is strongly reminiscent of Geneviève's reflections about "les disparus" just before her elopement. Thus Bernis' observation that death is "accueilli en intime" has been anticipated by the statement: "Elle connaît là-bas le signe des morts et ne le craint pas" (36). His vision of this world now grows grander as he sees life, death, the arranging of the bibelots, and gathering of flowers in a simple unity. The absence of a "dignité théâtrale" contrasts with Herlin's actions during the child's illness (28-29), with Bernis' impressions of the

10 The theatrical metaphor at the end of this paragraph ("la voix trop faible d'un acteur oppresse la salle") seems meant to evoke only a momentary psychological reaction — that is, it should not be taken to imply a theatrical quality in the life of the house.
Paris quais after the mass at Notre-Dame (47), and, less evidently, with his own life of adventure and death in the desert. His desire not to be discovered because "[l'étranger] dresse la mourante dans toute sa grâce et c'est intolérable" recalls the theatrical behavior of the friends who had come to console Geneviève ("Ils pressent sur leur sein une enfant crispée" [32]).

The remark that Bernis is in an "intimité dérobée," his fear of discovery, the fact of his going upstairs "en fraude," three repetitions of the word "étranger," and the tense of the verb "aimer" all continue the theme of magic and of "chicane" which was so strong in the beginning of this episode, while the mention of his past love as an excuse for the intrusion recalls the three qualifications required by the contrôleur for entry into the mysterious kingdom: courage, youth, and love (A).

F

In the following passage there is an apotheosis of light which contrasts cruelly with the fact of impending death. With the words "clair," "été," "blanc," "jour," and "lumière," the narrator presents for the last time the special clarity of the world to which Geneviève has returned and of which Bernis is having a final glimpse. This clarity, like the one that Geneviève sought for her child's sick-room, will not protect from death but robs it of some of its terror. The far-off steeple bells join to this theme those of measured time and of meaningful order also familiar as characterizations of Geneviève's world. They give "la cadence juste du cœur," an evident contrast with the racing heart of Geneviève in Sens (41) and with
the dancer's impression of Bernis' heartbeat as "cette cognée du démollisseur" (49). Bernis is affected in spite of himself by this atmosphere: "Il ne comprenait pas sa propre paix."

The description of his actual visit to Geneviève is one of the capital passages of the novel since it contains the principal figurative clues to the meaning of her death. The tone changes abruptly from the tranquillity which had run even through the moment of Bernis' learning of her illness. The "présence immense" he feels in the bedroom is very different from the one that he had sensed upon seeing Geneviève in Paris (21) — it is like a wound, so that he hardly dares move. (This fearfulness itself continues the theme of the forbidden, Orphean visit.) The clarity and warmth he had perceived even on the threshold and which had made him reflect: "Quel sommeil glorieux au centre de l'été!" is now replaced in his consciousness by the cool wind which signals the approach of evening. This coming of evening is analogous, as becomes clear on the following page, to the leak which Bernis discovered in the house of his childhood (62); both are representations of decay and death.

He realizes that the night about to set in will be entirely different for Geneviève than for the other, well members of the household, who, we have seen (C), welcome it as a "repos gagné." Similarly the lamp, elsewhere a symbol of human society and security, will be

Bernis draws comfort from a symbolic lamp in the room where he is being "briefed" for his first mail flight: "Quelle douceur au­jourd'hui répandait cette lampe dont coulait une lumière d'huile. Ce filet qui fait le calme dans la mer" (9). The lamp as a symbol of romantic love is discussed in Chapter VIII.
oppressive, as will also even the familiar "chooses" of Geneviève's world. If this paragraph is seen in isolation one may conclude that Saint-Exupéry has given merely a very poignant and realistic description of the psychology of illness. When its vocabulary and references are considered in relation to the whole novel, the passage has thematic significance as well. Illness — and perhaps also the consciousness of her infidelity — have, in effect, changed Geneviève's whole attitude toward the world; former sources of reassurance — the night, the lamp, and the "chooses" of the house — have become inimical. (For the other members of the household, as the preceding passages make clear, illness and approaching death are accepted calmly; they simply cast over things a pall of "grisaille.")

G

Geneviève's reactions to Bernis' presence and to his tenderness must be considered in the light of her changed condition. Her life has become completely introspective and the appearance of Bernis offers only an occasion to search into the "fond de sa pensée." She reaches not for a real person, a "présence," but for an image. When the presence does not conform to the image, she loses all interest and the lovers are separated by a great distance, as they were in Sens when her thoughts were also elsewhere. Geneviève's attitude is quite explicable on one plane by her illness, but there is surely a deeper significance in the simile which compares her gestures to those of a "naufragé." The navire of the house and family around her is sailing tranquilly on, but she is no longer a passenger. Death is indeed taken calmly in this atmosphere and Geneviève will in fact, as she had
anticipated, be "veillée par les choses" (35). Her personal voyage
is however quite finished. The power of the navire, so efficacious
in combatting the effects of time on collective human life, is not
able to save the individual. It seems reasonable to suppose also,
from the point of view of poetic logic, that this illness is simply
the culmination of the one at Sens, itself a symptom or a result
of Geneviève's willful desertion of the navire, or responsibilities,
of her old life. She tries to pull herself up by Bernis' sleeve,
just as during the night at Sens she had thought of his gestures as
those of an haleur (41). Disillusion comes once more as she releases
him and turns away because he is an "étranger," because "il n'est
pas l'ami qu'elle porte en elle." She had previously explained to
him in Paris that as a girl she had taken all her troubles to an
imaginary "ami," a God of her own making. On that same occasion,
"Bernis sentait si lointaine en elle, si bien défendue, la petite
fille captive qui l'avait aimé..." (24). She had, it seems, conceived
of God in the image of Bernis during childhood and again after the
death of her son. He does not measure up to her expectations now
and so, like Orpheus, will fail in his mission through his own short-
coming.

In keeping with the original theme of mystery, Bernis' visit
appears to him now as an immense and confused voyage. As he leaves
the house he has a final large vision of Geneviève's way of life and
of human life in general. The darkness seeping into the house, cor-
responding exactly to an image of the attic scene and again compared
explicitly to water which leaks into a ship, symbolizes, like the "déchirure" already mentioned (D), the destructive effect of time. The mysterious, temporal waters which cover Geneviève's domaine are, then, not just protective but also menacing. Her reassuring bibelots are about to lose their superficial glitter, and the lights of a distant village, "à peine une poignée de lumières," demonstrate the feebleness of human institutions in the great obscurity of time. The apparent abolition of distance, which seems to contrast with Bernis' earlier perception of a "distance infranchissable" between himself and Geneviève, signals a new change in his mood. (It may mean also that the way back to the world is easier and shorter than had been the way into mystery at the beginning of this episode.) After a final thought of the order which still reigns in the great house, Bernis has, as at Casablanca (55) and after his visit to Notre-Dame (47), one of those nightmarish, revealing moments of immobility when pessimism is triumphant. Here his thoughts are focused explicitly upon the prospect of death. There is probably additional significance, however, in the fact of his feeling heavy like a "scaphantdrier." In the episode of the cistern visit (61) his quest had been expressed imaginatively as a diving for pearls (as it will be also in his talk with the narrator [I] which we shall see shortly). He is coming up to the surface after an unsuccessful dive into the mysterious, timeless waters of Geneviève's world.

He is conscious, on leaving the domaine, of a total lack of liens to hold him back: "Rien ne le retenait. Il glissait sans résistance entre les arbres." Between him and Geneviève there is no
longer any tie, and we shall see that his last lien, that of his friendship with the narrator, will be insufficient to prevent him from going off into the final quest of death. "Il santa la haie: la route était dure. C'était fini, il ne reviendrait plus jamais."
The rhythm of these last sentences symbolizes the "jolting to a halt" of Bernis' hope and exultation.

I

In the next chapter, a brief one, Bernis sums up for his friend the whole story of his relations with Geneviève. When he had tried to draw her into his own world, she had realized — and made him realize — that the "chooses" of that world were "terne(s), gris(es)," or, as he had thought on the way to Sens, "médiocres" (38). These flimsy things could not compete with the sure, durable ones which she had known. His reference to the terrible "thickness" of the night on the way toward Sens recalls the night the ill Geneviève must face as "une étape à franchir" (F) and contrasts with the night described as a "repos gagné" (C) for others in her household. He speaks of having to give her back her house — the demeure inseparable from her life and soul — and the symbolic, protagonistic trees along the road back to Paris. During the return trip they had felt themselves grow closer to the real world, as if Bernis had tried to draw her under the sea. This conception recalls the narrator's earlier statement that the boys had teased Geneviève in childhood in order to drag her "sous les apparence, dans ce fond des mers où nous appelait notre inquiétude" (21). Bernis notes also that on his final
visit he had been separated from her by a vast span of time ("mille années") rather than by mere distance. This observation elucidates his previously mentioned perception (G) of a "distance infranchisable." Thus is recalled, too, the essentially temporal nature of the mystery he had been exploring.

J

The narrator now reflects upon his friend's story in imaginative terms of the quest. Bernis' "scaphandrier" feeling has an echo in the new likening of his quest to a diving for pearls. Once again the two views of Geneviève's world are juxtaposed. Bernis had not only tried, as we have seen above (I), to draw Geneviève into the sea of inquiétude — he had also plunged down into her own sea of mystery in an unsuccessful effort to bring back pearls or treasure. Though he touched the central riches of this mystery, he was unable to lift them to the surface. Now he must continue his search elsewhere. The narrator alludes admiringly to his friend's power to lift up veils or appearances. In the reference to his own inability to rise off the sands of the desert there is a significant anticipation of Bernis' death, which will be figured, on one level, as an ascension to pursue his quest in a star.

*****

In this episode the worlds of Geneviève and Bernis confront each other for the last time, and the depiction of symbolic differences between them is achieved. Bernis leaves the domaine with an understanding and appreciation of Geneviève' such as he had not possessed
before, but he is convinced as well of the impossibility of taking her into the life to which he is accustomed. Geneviève has also understood their incompatibility and has rejected Bernis as not corresponding to the idealistic image of him which she had developed in childhood.

In this visit to his dying sweetheart Bernis has also a vision of decay and mortality much more powerful than his premonitions in the attic scene (62), though it is expressed in images analogous to the touts he had perceived in that episode. He leaves the house with an acute consciousness of his own mortality, and the narrator senses, in their conversation at Juby, that his friend's quest is now directed toward a world beyond the finite one of ordinary reality. This passage is a direct preparation for the episode of Bernis' death.
CHAPTER XII
THE DEATH OF BERNIS

The narrator, spending a night in the desert during the search for Bernis, remembers some of his friend's "confessions":

Bernis, tu m'avouais un jour: "J'ai aimé une vie que je n'ai pas très bien comprise, une vie pas tout à fait fidèle. Je ne sais même pas très bien ce dont j'ai eu besoin: c'était une fringale légère..."

Bernis, tu m'avouais un jour: "Ce que je devinais se cachait derrière toute chose. Il me semblait qu'avec un effort, j'allais comprendre, j'allais le connaître enfin et l'emporter. Et je m'en vais troublé par cette présence d'ami que je n'ai jamais pu tirer au jour..."

Il me semble qu'un vaisseau chavire. Il me semble qu'un enfant s'apaise. Il me semble que ce frémissement de voiles, de mâts et d'espérances entre dans la mer. (76-77)

He begins the search next day:


Si nous cherchions du côté du rez-zou?
— Alors en éventail, d'accord? Celui du centre fonce plein Est...

Simoun: dès cinquante mètres d'altitude ce vent nous sèche comme un aspirateur.

He finds the body of Bernis:

Mon Camarade...
C'était donc ici le trésor: l'as-tu cherché!
Sur cette dune, les bras en croix et face à ce golfe bleu sombre et face aux villages d'étoiles, cette nuit, tu pesais peu de chose...
A ta descente vers le Sud combien d'amarres dénouées,
Bernis aérien déjà de n'avoir plus qu'un seul ami: un fil de la vierge te liait à peine...
Cette nuit tu pesais moins encore. Un vertige t'a pris.
Dans l'étoile la plus verticale a lui le trésor, ô fugitif!
Le fil de la vierge de mon amitié te liait à peine: berger infidèle j'ai dû m'endormir. (77)
Two radio messages transmitted along the Ligne close the novel:


VIII

"De Dakar pour Toulouse: Courrier bien arrivé Dakar. Stop."

This final episode of the novel follows immediately the narrator's account of a sleepless night he had spent at the French fort in the desert after a day of unsuccessful searching for Bernis. The reflections of the first three paragraphs are to be attached to this night of waiting. With the probability of Bernis' death already in mind, the narrator is remembering some of his friend's last remarks. These remarks have the form of confessions, and they are franker and more direct than any of Bernis' other statements about himself. Even here, however, there is room for some variation in interpretation.

A

It is not certain, first, whether the life which he has loved without understanding is life in general or, as the expression "une vie" may imply, the special life of quest and adventure. The qualification "pas tout à fait fidèle" may also be puzzling since there is no hint of the exact nature of the infidelity. If it is a question of life in general, the faithlessness may lie in a failure of reality to conform to theoretical conceptions — those of religion, of the conventional world, or of Bernis himself. This would evoke the whole Saint-Exupérien preoccupation with the insufficiencies of human logic and language, a preoccupation which has indeed been suggested on the
preceding page by the narrator's allusion to his friend's "espérance inexplicable." If, on the other hand, Bernis' life of quest and adventure is meant, its infidelity must involve a failure to satisfy his personal aspirations. This latter interpretation corresponds to at least part of the truth since Bernis refers in the next "confession" to the frustration of his quest. The fact expressed here that he had not known just what he needed and the paradoxical characterization of his urge as a "fringale légère" seem to amount to an avowal that his curiosity has been less steady and profound than he had thought. One must allow, of course, for the exaggeration of a momentary impression.

The confessions of the second paragraph may also be startling on first glance. When Bernis says that what he had sensed was "derrière toute chose," he does not mean, however, that he had seen mystery (e.g., in Geneviève and in the cistern and attic settings) where there was in fact none, or even that this mystery could have been clarified in a simple manner. He has felt often that, with a little effort, he was going to understand it and take possession of it, but — and this is a capital point for the conclusion of Courrier-Sud — he does not solve the mystery of life and the narrator does not imply that an easy solution has been overlooked. It is perhaps implied that Bernis' efforts to understand have not been so sustained and serious as they might have been. The "présence d'ami" which he mentions as representative of the fundamental things he could not "tirer au jour" (cf. his desire to bring Geneviève to the "surface" [20]) evokes a theme of comradeship which is of great importance in Saint-Exupéry's
whole work but not greatly emphasized in this first novel. It has, however, as we shall see, a significant place in these concluding pages.

In the next paragraph, where the narrator anticipates the outcome of his search in the desert, Bernis' death is figured both as the sinking of a ship and as the "quieting down" of a child. The first idea, which is elaborated in the conception of a "frémissement de voiles, de mâts et d'espérances [qui] entre dans la mer," has been anticipated by extremely numerous images having to do with water or navigation. At the French fort in the desert the narrator had already thought: "Ce petit poste au clair de lune: un port aux eaux tranquilles." And again: "Ce petit fortin: un embarcadère" (76). The figuration of Bernis' life as a sea voyage expresses the individual, really private side of his career. A contrast is very probably intended between this "vaisseau" overcome during a lone voyage and the "navire" of Geneviève's family and home. Her ship does not founder, but she ceases to be a passenger at the moment of her elopement and is compared, during her fatal illness, to a "naufragé" (67). Bernis, on the contrary, has never been quite engaged aboard the ship of a collective human institution — neither in his childhood world nor in that of the Ligne has he been wholly contained.

1Cf., besides the details mentioned in the text, the following expressions: "entrainer sous la mer," "plongeur de perles," "dériver," "tangage," "roulis" (68); "couler," "fluides" (69); "bulles d'en-clume," "rivière," "canot," "eau fraîche," "remous" (70); "torrent" (71); "il pleut, bergère" (73); "voilier," "eau," "Noé" (74). Cf. also the discussion of the "navire" in Chapters V and VI.
The likening of his death to the quieting of a child may seem to echo the implication of the expression "fringale légère" that his troubles were not very serious ones. We know, however, that for Saint-Exupéry childlike views of life are often the true views. The peace evoked here is, at any rate, the sort which comes after personal agitation rather than that which follows battle with an enemy. The significance of Bernis' death in line of duty receives attention, however, in the subsequent passage.

B

The search for and discovery of his body is recounted largely in fragmentary phrases and exclamations ranging in tone from terse reportage to lyrical impressionism. The narrator had been drawn to the spot by news of a band of plundering and murdering Arabs in the vicinity. This "rezzou" is a sort of condensed symbol of the disorder or "dissidence" which the men of the Ligne were struggling to overcome. (It may symbolize also the inner turmoil of Bernis' mind.) The mention of the Sahara wind which dries one out "comme un aspirateur" is, similarly, an evocation of the inimical human and natural forces with which the pilots must contend. Bernis' death is presented now in the light of a casualty in battle. This view of the event will reappear in more striking form in the last lines of the novel (D).

C

The narrator's thoughts on actually finding Bernis are not for the Ligne and its enterprise but for his friend: "Mon Camarade..." The capitalization and syntactical isolation of this appellation lends
emphasis to the theme of friendship, which has been introduced by "présence d'ami" above and which is about to become prominent in the final passage.

In the impressionistic reflections upon Bernis' death, quest and flight, the two major figurations of his personal career, are juxtaposed and, in a purely poetic way, reconciled. The "étoiles" and "trésor" appear as objects of the quest which may have led him to this barren spot and then away from the earth. Both have figured very significantly in previous passages. In the attic the boys had dreamed of pursuing "cette étoile, cet petit diamant dur" which they saw through a hole in the roof: "Un jour nous marcherons vers le Nord ou le Sud, ou bien en nous-mêmes, à sa recherche" (62). At the French fort in the desert Bernis had pointed out to the old sergeant that the North Star showed the way to the riches of his relations and friendships in Tunis (72). Finally, the treasure, star, and symbolic directions all appear in the narrator's thoughts during his night at the fort:

Mais les étoiles mesurent pour nous les vraies distances. La vie paisible, l'amour fidèle, l'amie que nous croyons cherir, c'est de nouveau l'étoile polaire qui les balise...
Mais la croix du Sud balise un trésor. (76)

Here the North Star is considered to mark friendship and human ties in France while the Southern Cross shows the way to a mysterious treasure -- that is, to Bernis' body and to the riches which he pursued into the sky. The very title, Courrier-Sud, thus takes on symbolic meaning in this final episode.

In the numerous allusions to stars which mark directions, as
well as in the references to Bernis as a child (A), Saint-Exupéry may have wished to recall the Christmas story. (Cf. also "fil de la vierge" below.) The posture in which Bernis is found ("les bras en croix") is obviously meant, on the other hand, to evoke the Crucifixion. The analogy is not, in either case, one of martyrdom, which would be inappropriate for Bernis' life, but lies rather in the implication of new life and of resurrection. This interpretation is supported by numerous references in the last pages to renewal, rebirth, etc. The fact that Bernis is gazing toward the sea and the starry heavens (fused in a single vision) also points up the idealistic nature of the quest which will be continued after death.

There is also an insistence upon Bernis' new lightness, upon the absence of "liens" to hold him to the ground. The narrator had thought, while looking at the desert from the French fort: "Quelle présence déjà légère! Autour de moi ce Sahara si peu chargé qui reçoit à peine, çà et là, un bond d'antilope, qui supporte à peine, au pli le plus lourd, un enfant léger" (76). Now he returns to this idea: "...face aux villages d'étoiles, cette nuit, tu pesais peu de chose...." This weightlessness is a result of the falling away of the "liens" of love and friendship, here compared to the lines which

2Cf. e.g. the following expressions: "chrysalide," "monde neuf," "sens nouveau" (68); "chacun d'eux nous changeait le coeur," "nous changions de climat: changions de chair" (69); "quelque chose naît, fuit, recommence" (76). Many evocations of mystery and other-worldliness also prepare the way for the conception of Bernis' resurrection. The narrator thinks of a "maléfice de la lune" (76) and of "ce clair de lune où rien n'est bien vrai" (76). He even imagines: "Ici fini le monde sensible" (76). The old sergeant, when asked where Bernis may be, points to the whole horizon: "Un enfant perdu remplit le désert" (76). Such details and expressions create a quasi-religious tone of mysticism.
attach a ship to its berth: "A ta descente vers le Sud combien d'amarres dénouées....:" The final break with Geneviève and with life in France had come as Bernis was going South toward Toulouse in order to take up his duties in the airline and to pursue his mysterious quest. Just before his death he was already "aérien," with only the single gossamer\(^3\) tie of the narrator's friendship to hold him to the terrestrial life. In an elaborate metaphorical conception unifying the navigation symbol with the other two central ones, he is considered to have broken his "lines" to rise up from the earth in pursuit of treasure in a star, but there appears in the same sentence — as if to counter-balance this apotheosis of the quest — the appellation: "ô fugitif." The "liens" and "weight" lost by Bernis were both protective and oppressive.

D

The radio communiqués which close the novel bring back to prominence the fact of Bernis' death in service of a cause greater than himself and show the continued service of that cause by those who survive him. "Pilote tué .... courrier intact." "....Courrier bien arrivé Dakar."\(^4\)

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This passage's content relative to Bernis' death (and, by extension, to his whole career) partakes of several different themes and

\(^3\) In Pilote de guerre the image of the "fil de la Vierge" comes spontaneously to Saint-Exupéry's mind as he watches the trail of smoke behind his airplane (p. 299). (This image makes him think in turn of a more elaborate one whose validity and efficacy he forces himself to judge.)

\(^4\) See note 5.
preoccupations, placed here in a sort of relation to each other.
The references to the interests of the Ligne, especially the final
communiqués, complete the surface plot of Courier-Sud, which is the
saga of the mail's progress to Dakar, and call final attention to
that part of the truth about Bernis' life which was constituted by
his service to the humane, civilizing enterprise of the mail-line.
There are, however, suggestions that he was not perfectly integrated
in this common effort (cf. "fringale légère [A]") so that it is not
inconsistent that the two themes of his personal life — quest and
flight, both pertinent to a deeper plot — should also find here a
completion, albeit a purely poetic one. He died, metaphorically,
in the battle against "la dissidence,"\(^5\) and his death was not, on
the plane of normal reality, self-willed. It is nevertheless true
from the poet's or philosopher's point of view that he was no longer
"tied" to the earth by human relations, that he fled the old world
which oppressed him, and that he sought in death the treasure "qui se
cachait derrière toute chose" but which he could not find in life.

Bernis' death has very evident parallels both with that of Fabien
in Vol de nuit and with that of the Little Prince. Similarities of

\(^5\)It is not clear from the text whether Bernis' plane crashed
simply because of a new motor failure or because it was fired upon by
the Arabs. In the earliest edition of Courrier-Sud (Paris, 1937) the
next to last communiqué contains this phrase: "Trace de bales (sic)
dans les commandes" (p. 227). Neither of the posthumous editions of
the Œuvres (Paris, 1950 and 1955) includes these words. The reason
for the change is not at all evident, though one may speculate that
the apparent printing error in the word "balles" (cf. above) may have
cauced the editors to hesitate. It is also possible, of course, that
the author may have made the change verbally before his death. We may
surely assume, in any case, that there is at least symbolic significance
in the proximity of the rezzou to the site of Bernis' death.
detail are so numerous and so meaningful that one has the impression
Saint-Exupéry must have tried three times to express a single concep-
tion — perhaps his personal conception of death. A brief examina-
tion of the two later episodes can, then, be helpful for understanding
the conclusion of Courrier-Sud.

While on a night flight toward Buenos-Aires Fabien of Vol de Nuit
is prevented from landing to refuel by a tornado which destroys his
visibility and drives him off course. When his situation in the
black, stormy night seems hopeless, he is attracted by the light of
stars in a patch of clear sky directly above. He goes up to escape
the storm, knowing well that this can only make death more certain.
The stars offer "repères" by which to steady his plane, and he feels
as if he were aboard a ship coming into port, into the bay of the
legendary Blessed Isles. He had had previously a similar impression
at nightfall: "Et le pilote Fabien .... reconnaissait l'approach du
soir aux mêmes signes que les eaux d'un port..... Il entrait dans une
rade immense et bienheureuse" (81). The narrator of Courrier-Sud also
notes that "les étoiles mesurent pour nous les vraies distances," and
nautical imagery plays an important role in his impressions of Bernis'
death. We have seen, however, that he thinks of his friend's passing
rather as the sinking of a vessel or as a breaking away from the wharf
than as a coming into port. He had, on the other hand, compared the
French fort in the desert to a "port aux eaux tranquilles" and to an
"embarcadère" (76).

The light around Fabien is so strong and so beautiful that he
imagines himself to have come into possession of a "treasure" of
stars. He too has lost his "bonds," though they are very different from those of Bernis; he has escaped the "prison of the storm below": "...mille bras obscurs l'avaient lâché. On avait dénoué ses liens, comme ceux d'un prisonnier qu'on laisse marcher seul, un temps, parmi les fleurs" (125). Fabien and his radioman are condemned, in spite of their spiritual "wealth" (cf. "treasure"), to plunge down to destruction below. Their mood is not at all, however, one of despair, and a reader receives the impression that death will not be a tragedy but a spiritual fulfillment. This is true even though in Vol de nuit the theme of personal quest is much less important than that of duty and of group responsibility.

In Le Petit Prince personal values are given much more attention, though, as we shall see even in this incidental discussion, responsibility is also a decidedly major theme. The Little Prince had left his native planet in order to escape his rose and to seek adventure, coming thus to visit the earth. Exactly one year after his arrival he goes back to the desert spot where he had landed. (It is there that he meets the narrator of the story.) He is returning to his planet in order to care for his rose, having learned from a friendly fox that he is responsible for her. A serpent obliges the Little Prince by biting him fatally so that he may ascend to his planet at the moment when it is directly overhead. (He had promised previously to send the Prince on a voyage longer than that of any ship [462]). Bernis rises, similarly, to "l'étoile la plus verticale." Both characters also die in the desert, a bare, ascetic setting which Saint-Exupéry, like some of the Fathers of the Church, seems to think
appropriate for man's realization of his own weakness and appreciation of spiritual values. While on earth the Little Prince had tamed a fox, after that animal had explained to him that "apprivoiser" means "créer des liens" (470). He had also "tamed" or made a friend of the author. His death does not figure as a real breaking of these liens. The fox will be reminded of his friend's golden hair by the color of growing wheat (472), and the author will imagine he sees the Prince's planet among the constellations of the night sky (489). It is perhaps implied, in a passage which we have seen, that the narrator of *Courrier-Sud* will also be able to commune with Bernis by gazing at the *croix du Sud*. Neither does the Prince's death appear as an end of responsibility; he is returning, on the contrary, to care for his rose. One may probably suppose that Bernis is also "returning" to higher and more essential (though ineffable) responsibilities.

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6 In *Terre des hommes* (pp. 210-243) he describes his own moral experience while stranded in the desert on the ill-starred flight toward Indochina. The ideal social institution of *Citadelle* will be surrounded by a desert whose heat and dryness contrast with the comforts within the city walls.
CONCLUSIONS

In these conclusions we shall attempt to tie together, by means of an illustrative résumé, the themes of Courrier-Sud discussed earlier. We shall also bring together in summary form a number of previous observations about the author's use of image and symbol. The sentence sub-titles and short paragraph headings indicate the main lines of our discussion.

The characters of Courrier-Sud think according to central imaginative and symbolic conceptions.

In Courrier-Sud there is little direct discussion of character to compare with the keen, objective analyses one finds in, say, the novels of Stendhal or Balzac. Yet character is portrayed here with extraordinary completeness and versimilitude. The reader is shown, in effect, the concepts and symbolic representations through which Geneviève and Bernis -- and sometimes the narrator -- interpret the world.

The universe of Geneviève of Saint-Exupéry speaks in the Carnets of a woman "[qui]n'a, à sa disposition, comme catégories pour saisir le monde, que celles dont l'ensemence ce Lyon Républicain défraîchi que j'ai aperçu sur sa table" (p. 93). Though Geneviève's universe is not artificial like this one but is on the contrary sin-
cere and based upon experience, it also seems very simple and unified. She conceives and judges the world around her in terms of its durability, order, and superficial clarity, all of which qualities combine in the symbol of the shiny bibelots arranged in a show-case and handed down from generation to generation. Her own existence in this setting is figured as a closeness to "things," especially to living, growing things such as flowers and trees. She feels herself to be "intelligente," "liée" to the seasonal changes and "sens" of life all around her. According to another capital conception, she is aboard a "navire" which provides security and "sens" to her existence. While she lives primarily in a world of "soft" and "peaceful" values, she recognizes the necessity of a certain "hardness" (e.g., during the drive from Sens), and sometimes imagines her life and life in general as a "war" against darkness and disorder (e.g., during her son's illness).

The universe of Bernis' basic mental universe, the one developed in childhood and portrayed in the cistern and attic episodes, is almost as simple and unified as that of Geneviève. He is bored by and distrustful of what he considers to be the excessive permanence, order, "clarity," and "superficicality" of his early surroundings. All of these despised qualities combine in his childhood view of the area outside the cistern wall and again, after he has become a flyer, in his imagination of the pedestrian world below as a "monde en vitrine," a toy "bergerie," or as an "aquarium." He is attracted, on the other hand, to "newness," obscurity, and depth
("l'envers des choses") — all symbolic characteristics of the area inside the cistern enclosure. He conceives of his aspirations as a quest in height and in depth for "le trésor," "les étoiles," "la source," "les perles," and "le sens des choses," and his friends think of him correspondingly as a "treasure-hunter," an "astrologer," a "sourcier," a "pearl-diver," a "magician," an "archangel," etc. Instead of feeling "intelligent" amid the "liens" of his childhood environment, he considers himself a "prisoner" and wishes to flee. More dramatically than Geneviève, if less steadily, he also sees life as a struggle, as a battle against "la dissidence" in which it is necessary to be brave like a soldier or a shepherd in order to protect human values.

Bernis' character is made much more complicated, however, by his curiosity about ways of thinking unlike his own. This curiosity and attraction to the "different" is in a sense the source of the novel's dramatic action. Even in boyhood he was anxious to understand Geneviève's world, whereas she was not really interested in his. In the cistern and attic episodes he perceives flaws ("trous" or "failles") in the solidity of their childhood surroundings, and for him the "navire" of human institutions is less something "qui peut vous porter longtemps" than a frail craft menaced by the "sea of time." He is nevertheless fascinated by the calm assurance of Geneviève and her way of life and often sees in them mystery, depth, and symbolic objects of his quest: "la source," "le trésor," and "le sens des choses." Though he teases Geneviève in order to draw her into the "sea" of his own uneasiness, he envisages her simultaneously as a
mysterious "fée sous les eaux." Similarly, he regards her alternately as a "prisoner" wishing to be freed from the "things" and people around her and as a "sovereign" who rules over these people and things by virtue of her magical "liens."

The action of Courrier-Sud is both expressed and determined by imaginative and symbolic conceptions.

Saint-Exupéry almost never depicts psychological action directly or analytically. Instead, he lays bare the very imaginative and symbolic substance of his characters' minds, revealing in this way not only their habits of thinking (as we have seen) but also the particular movement of their thoughts during the novel's action. By virtue of an extraordinarily sensitive understanding and artistic use of image and symbol, he is able to explore depths of human nature which could hardly be reached by more conventional means and to reveal poetic riches in human materials which might otherwise seem commonplace and uninteresting. Even the thoughts of the cabaret dancer and the old sergeant become fascinating when portrayed in this way. More important than their power of depiction, however, is the role of mental images and symbols in the dramatic movement of the novel. Certain of them become actual protagonists (or antagonists) in the plot as they recur significantly in the thoughts of one or more characters. They not only express the action but often determine it, so that the same story could not possibly be told without them. The obvious, surface plot of Courrier-Sud might be summarized in a few sentences; we shall now attempt a résumé of the deeper action as it
is expressed and determined by image and symbol.

When Bernis finds Geneviève again in Paris, she is, despite the lamentable character of her husband, more or less well settled as a wife and mother in circumstances which fulfill the requirements of her mental universe. The birth of her child has brought new "sens" to her existence and strengthened her "liens" with other living things. Bernis' own aspirations are, on the other hand, unsatisfied — he is an "archange triste" — and he hopes to find the objects of his quest in the world from which he had fled, particularly in Geneviève herself. A complete alteration of her comfortable surroundings is brought about by the illness of her child, figured as a revolt of the "choses" over which she has reigned. During the illness she fights valiantly as an agent of "clarity" and as a "servante de la vie" against what she considers to be the forces of darkness and of death. When the child dies it is as if the principal "noeud" of her "liens" had been untied. In the course of the struggle she becomes acutely aware of the impossible character of her husband. Both Geneviève and Bernis have genuine mental universes derived from their experiences, and they think or feel honestly about the realities of their milieux. Herlin does not reflect honestly in terms of a personal, valid universe, but is guilty of thinking in stilted, melodramatic conceptions, of "declaiming," of imagining himself as a "personnage." The author expresses this failing in terms of theatrical images. These offer, indeed, virtually the only key to an interpretation of Herlin's
character.

The apparent destruction of Geneviève's old world by the death of her child makes her want to flee for the first time, and she turns to Bernis as to a "refuge." Since he has long seen in her the object of his quest and has wished to liberate her from her "bonds," the two characters are now turned directly toward each other. During the episode of their love affair, however, it is Geneviève's old symbolic concepts which become dominant in the minds of both. Before their departure from Paris she perceives a significant lack of solidity and durability in the furnishings of his apartment and realizes that these "things" cannot stand out frankly in the daylight after the manner of those in her old home. During the ill-fated drive toward Sens she feels the backward tug of her old "liens" — not quite broken after all — and imagines the trip as a plunge into darkness. Departure from the "sens" of her former life is figured in her mind by the faulty motor of Bernis' automobile, which contrasts with the symbolic motor of her child's heart. In the hotel at Sens she has also a painful impression of riding in a "rapide," a sensation which is clearly antithetical to her old "ship-board" feeling. Bernis comes actually to see things in her way; he realizes the "mediocrity" of many "things" in his world and thinks, as she does, in terms of the faulty motor and of a plunge into darkness. Though the two lovers have during the night a temporary impression of "sens" in their gestures, they have upon awakening a revelation of the weakness of the "lamp of love" in confrontation
with the daylight of practical reality. They have, in fact, been
guilty of theatrical thinking — as the narrator had warned specif-
ically in his letter to Bernis. The return trip to Paris figures as
a regaining by Geneviève of her "things" — specifically of the pop-
lars along the highway — and as the descent of a "pente" instead of
an uphill pull against straining "liens." Even though Bernis now
understands and appreciates Geneviève's way of thinking, he is dis-
illusioned about the mysterious origin of her assurance. The voyage
of her "navire," he decides, really has no "sens" at all.

Bernis in despair

Back in Paris, no longer hoping to find the object
of his quest in Geneviève, Bernis is without "liens"
and his life has no direction. Need for the latter, for "sens," is
the specifically stated reason for his going into Notre-Dame,
though he feels upon entering that this is but the latest in a long
series of attempts to flee. In the cathedral he listens to a sermon
filled with extraordinary images. Identifying himself with God in
a state of spurious exaltation, the priest proposes an end to human
contradictions in a number of paradoxical expressions which compound
the confusion and offers to his listeners security, salvation and
several of the symbolic objects of Bernis' quest — e.g., "le sens
'des choses," and "la source." His images are not, however, based
upon spiritual realities, and they are not joined in a coherent train
of thought. The whole of the sermon reveals to Bernis only personal
desperation on the part of the orator. After leaving Notre-Dame,
Bernis has on the Paris quais a momentary impression of immobility
which is symptomatic of a profound inquiétude. During this instant
he sees human affairs, even great historical events, as a pitiful
sort of "play-acting."

Though he scarcely expects to find anything of value for his
quest in Montmartre, Bernis is driven there almost involuntarily by
his uneasiness. In a night-club he has a behind-the-scenes view of
a real theatrical performance, discovering in the most frivolous
métiers of entertainment a certain "sens" lost from view by the bored,
preoccupied participants but perceptible to a "magicien" like him-
self. The night of love he spends with a dancer affords only the
most temporary of satisfactions since she becomes for him afterward
merely an "étoile froide." Yet he finds briefly in her very human-
ity and animality a certain tragedy, warmth, mystery, and vital
"source" which are fascinating for their own sakes. Both lovers are
acutely conscious of the senseless passage of time, which is figured in
their minds by the simile of a loud faulty motor and by a number of
images of flowing water. Their brief communion in love is imagined
as an "oiseau fou qui bat des ailes et meurt." Alone just before
leaving Paris, Bernis again feels painfully the waste of passing
moments as he watches a "river" of passersby in front of his window.
He has no "liens" with these people, whose lives are "knotted" and
"unknotted" quite apart from him.

The last visit

On the way back to the airfield at Toulouse,
Bernis turns aside to visit Geneviève in the
country with a renewed sense of her mystery and new hope of finding
in her the objects of his quest. The first part of this narration is heavy with evocations of mystery and magic. In childhood he had seen her as a "fée sous les eaux." It is evident here that this "sub-aquatic" quality has to do largely with the strange durability or timelessness of the traditional way of life which is hers. As in Sens he suffers some disillusion, discovering symbolic flaws ("déchirures") in the solidity of her "demeure" (these are analogous to the "trous" he had perceived in the attic scene). He also looks condescendingly, if sympathetically, upon Geneviève's bibelots arranged in a show-case, reflecting: "Comme tout est simple .... vivre, ranger les bibelots, mourir...." He is still impressed, however, by the orderly "sens" of this existence and is affected, in spite of himself, by the prevailing calm. The "clarity" of Geneviève's surroundings is no protection against death, and Bernis understands that she is dreading the night, when the immobility of her beloved "chooses" will weigh painfully upon her wakeful mind. She is no longer engaged in the "sens" of her old life, no longer aboard the "navire"; she is dying as a "naufragé(e)." Upon seeing Bernis she compares his presence to a God-like image of him in her mind and, being disillusioned, turns away. Since her painful experience in Sens he has no longer represented a source of strength and support but is a symbol of her fatal mistake in the elopement.

During a new impression of immobility experienced while leaving the domaine, Bernis has his most painful realization of human mortality, figured here by the image of water leaking into the hold of a ship. At the same time, however, he feels like a "diver" coming up
from a "sea" of mystery. He is also conscious once more of being utterly without "ties," of slipping down the path without resistance. At Cap Juby he will sum up for the narrator his failure with Geneviève in terms of the incompatibility of their two universes. He had been unable to take her away from her "choses" and from her "clear" physical and spiritual surroundings ("évidences"), unable to draw her beneath the "surface" into the "sea" of his uneasiness.

The return to duty

Upon returning to the Ligne and to duty Bernis does find, as he had expected, a sort of rebirth or personal "newness," and the necessity for directed action gives him a "sens" which is temporarily sufficient. During the solitary flight his thoughts turn nevertheless to uneasy speculations cast in imaginative terms very similar to those in which he had reflected about Geneviève and his experiences in France. At one moment the sky and earth seem to form a secure "demeure," but this impression is demolished by a storm which reveals a dangerous "faîle" in the dwelling. Bernis has also, at Casablanca, another uneasy sensation of immobility, when life seems to be overcome by the static forces of the universe. During his brief stop at Cap Juby he tells the narrator of his adventures with Geneviève, and the latter then speculates about the possible future of his friend's mysterious quest. Subsequently Bernis is forced to land near a French fort in the desert, and he seems to the old sergeant in charge there like a "young god" come to interpret the world. In this episode it begins to become evident that Bernis' quest has to do in part with the secret of friendship
and other human relationships. He explains to the sergeant — who understands perfectly — that stars mark the direction of such social riches and responsibilities. This imaginative conception is echoed both in the thoughts of the narrator who comes to search for his friend and, less obviously, in certain confessions of Bernis himself which are recalled at this point.

The death of Bernis

In the concluding passages of the novel there is an apotheosis of all the major symbolic themes which interpret the hero's career. Those of flight and quest combine on a purely figurative plane in the image of a "weightless," "untied" Bernis rising from the earth in pursuit of "treasure" glimpsed in a star. The theme of his desire for personal renovation is prominent in his thoughts during the last flight and reappears in indirect allusions to the new life he will have in another world. There is also a final evocation of the theme most closely related to the surface plot of his flight toward Africa, i.e., the theme of a responsible "war" or military campaign co-extensive with the mission of the flyers' métier. Bernis dies near a raiding "rezzou," and the telegraphic communiqués reporting the mail's rescue and safe delivery to Dakar point up the continuing struggle of his comrades.

The unity of Courrier-Sud as a psychological novel is revealed by and dependent upon the thematic use of image and symbol.

In the foregoing illustrative résumé we have tried to demonstrate not just the dramatic role of imagery and symbolism but also the underlying unity of the novel. Courrier-Sud is, to be sure, a first
work, and there is a certain amount of unevenness. Passages of
densest meaning tend to be concentrated within a few pages and are
generally related to three or four major episodes. This is largely,
however, a result of the author's artistic efforts to emphasize
major symbols by repetition and to contrast differing conceptions by
juxtaposition. Most significant for the question of Courrier-Sud's
unity is the fact that the passages which tell of Bernis' experiences
in France and those which describe his impressions of flying are per-
tinent for the same symbolic and imaginative themes. Each theme is,
indeed, dependent on both elements of the novel's plot for its full
meaning and development. Even in those sections dealing with Bernis'
life in the métier, the book's value as a document of flying and
story of adventure is distinctly subordinate to its merits as a
novel which presents character and psychological, "inner" action
and which, in so doing, suggests a general interpretation of human
nature and of human destiny.

Saint-Exupéry's theories concerning image and symbol have dramatic
and artistic illustration im Courrier-Sud.

We have already noted in a general manner that Saint-Exupéry has
the characters of Courrier-Sud think in symbolic images. Now we
shall make some more specific observations about the ways in which
his theory (discussed in Chapter I) is reflected in the practice of
his first novel.
Mystical images

The first of our remarks, which concerns the complementary use of simple and elaborate imaginative concepts, has been anticipated by the discussion of Saint-Exupéry's conception of mysticism in thought and language. The characters of the novel think often in terms of physical qualities applied analogically to moral or abstract situations, and several of these "qualities" are sometimes fused into an elaborate image of powerful symbolism. Thus Geneviève's preference for a world of surfaces, clarity, durability, and order is represented perfectly by her affection for shiny, antique bibelots arranged in a vitrine. Bernis is aware of this symbolism and ends up by looking understandingly upon her bibelots during his last visit. The same qualities which reassure Geneviève are likely to have for him, on the other hand, an unpleasant analogical connotation. Two or more of them are condensed spontaneously, on several occasions, into the symbolic images of the "bergerie" and the "monde en vitrine" which come into his mind as he views from above the settled, confining French countryside which he has fled. The security and "sens" of Geneviève's life merge similarly in the imaginative concept of the "navire." Bernis understands this symbol as well but modifies its meaning essentially by imagining a menacing "sea of time" which seeps into the ship's hold and even, in a moment of pessimism, by denying to its voyage any valid "sens." The object of his personal quest is not symbolized, on the other hand, in a single image but is represented by a number of figurative expressions such as "l'envers des choses," "les perles," "le trésor,"
"les étoiles," "la source," and "le sens des choses." Sometimes two of these may be joined in a more elaborate image, as when Bernis thinks of the "star" as being under "l'écorce des choses," or when he is considered to have risen from the earth in pursuit of "treasure" in a star. In the preparation and presentation of these composite symbols Saint-Exupéry approached a mystical use of imagery such as he was to reflect upon in the Carnets. "The "navire" represents for Geneviève virtually the whole meaning of her way of life — it is almost a supreme concept which "unifies the world." The image of Bernis' leaving the earth in search of treasure in a star symbolizes, in a similar way, the whole nature of his idealistic quest and mysterious destiny. ¹ One might say, paraphrasing Saint-Exupéry's already quoted letter to Benjamin Crémieux, that symbols such as these, born when one "lets his flesh think," come near to "containing everything."

Contradictory Images Another of the author's practices foreseen in the discussion of his theory is the development of essential contradictions, imaginatively expressed, and the resolution of them in a purely suggestive and poetic way. Two of the most significant ones have to do with Bernis' view of Geneviève. He sees her, first, both as a "prisoner" bound to the things and people around her and as a "sovereign" ruling over these things and people. This

paradox is recognized and expressed directly in a phrase of the narrator's letter: "notre princesse captive." There is no evident resolution of this contradiction, but both conceptions lose their applicability as Geneviève's "things" revolt and as Bernis realizes that in taking her away he is making her a prisoner instead of freeing her. Again, Geneviève thinks of herself as a clear being living "on the surface of things," as Bernis does also when he wishes to draw her into the "sea" of his uneasiness. He senses as well, however, a subconscious depth in her character and world and thinks of her as a "fée sous les eaux." Both imaginative visions are echoed in the episode of his last visit, when he feels himself to be entering a "royaume de légende endormi sous les eaux" but understands at the same time the importance of "surface" values in her life. The latter view seems to be dominant as he speaks in his talk with the narrator of having tried unsuccessfully to "entrainer [Geneviève] sous la mer." Some of his other expressions in the same conversation indicate, however, that he is still mystified by her nature.

His own career is also interpreted in terms of contrasting images. The conception of his geographical and intellectual wanderings as a magical and mysterious quest is directly contradicted by the elaborate thematic presentation of his life as a series of attempts to flee. These two interpretations — quest and flight — appear in the final passages of the novel and have a purely poetic reconciliation in the figure of Bernis rising from the earth both because his "liens" have been broken and because he is pursuing
"treasure" in a star.

Each of these imaginative concepts is true, though none of them express the whole truth. Saint-Exupéry did not believe in the existence of hopeless contradictions — all were for him potentially resolvable, if not in terms of man's present language, then on the plane of an ideal language toward which human intellectual and linguistic progress tends. The narrator (and author) of Courrier-Sud does not try to reconcile contradictions logically or even, as the priest does in his sermon, through the simple means of paradoxical expressions. He has striven to do so suggestively or, to adapt his own terms, he has tried to lead the reader into a universe where contradictions no longer exist — at least as barriers to human understanding. The question of his success is, naturally, a highly subjective one. The conflict of Bernis' and Geneviève's personal worlds is not, of course, resolved in the novel — on the contrary. Yet he attains a real understanding of her manner of existence and even of its role in the whole scheme of life.

The judgment of spontaneous images

Saint-Exupéry's insistence upon the necessity of examining and judging images which come spontaneously to mind is another tenet of his theory which has dramatic illustration in Courrier-Sud. Herlin thinks and acts constantly according to conceptions not derived from personal thought and experience but obtained "the easy way" — that is, accepted uncritically and egotistically from a general store of stilted and melodramatic ideas. Bernis and Geneviève are also guilty of "play-
acting" in the episode of the elopement. He understands his mistake very well and worries, on the way back to Paris, about the validity of the new images which are coming to his mind: "Mais, les images, de quelle profondeur viennent-elles?" The images born during his musings in flight are similarly subjected to careful judgment. The priest at Notre-Dame, finally, offers in his sermon a classic example of the uncritical acceptance of spontaneous imagery. In his state of exaltation he is prey to a veritable invasion of images and symbolic conceptions. Since these are quite involuntary and uncontrolled, it is not surprising that some of them rest upon a very thin layer of meaning and that others betray the very religious doubt which the speaker is unconsciously striving to forget and to hide.

"Toute image forte devient" The author's statement that "toute image forte devient" also has considerable illustration in Courrier-Sud. We have already noted the development in meaning of Geneviève's "navire" in the thoughts of Bernis. Occasionally the meaning of an image may change completely within the mind of a single character, as when the "rapide" which had presented Geneviève's pleasant expectations of love ("... je serai neuve....") becomes the symbol of her painful situation in Sens. Such radical shifts in meaning are rare, but the "becoming" of images is illustrated also in less striking ways. An image which is born "spontaneously" or "quand [on] laisse sa chair penser" often sticks in a character's mind and its symbolism becomes more and more obsessive and insistent. This is the case for Geneviève's thoughts of a struggle with darkness
during the illness of her son and for Bernis' imagination of a "pente"
during the return from Sens. There is as well a very real sort of
"becoming" of images in the mind of the reader. This is, actually,
the effect of Saint-Exupéry's use of leitmotiv, which we shall now
discuss from three points of view.

Images and Themes

Images and Themes
The themes of meaning in Courrier-Sud, such as
those discussed in Chapters III-VIII, are dependent,
as we have already implied, upon images for their expression. We
have seen, for example, that theatre images usually appear in pas-
sages describing unauthentic thought or behavior. The theme of
responsibility is often evoked by images suggesting a military cam-
ampaign. The themes of time — those of decay and regeneration — are
expressed by appropriate groups of images, e.g., the "légardes" and
the "déchirure," on one hand, and the "œuf" and the "chrysalide"
on the other. Similarly, the two principal motivations of Bernis'
actions are evoked over and over again by a large variety of images
having to do either with escape from prison or with a magical quest.

Images as links

Images as links
Even when images related in literal meaning "belong"
to different themes they may effect a sort of con-
vergence of seemingly independent considerations. In the words of
Mr. William York Tindall, they "put things together."² Water images
images appear in Courrier-Sud as evocations not just of mystery and

²The Literary Symbol (Bloomington, 1955), p. 191. In his chapter
called "Strange Relations" Mr. Tindall cites many examples of this
linking function of image and symbol.
depth but also of the eroding effect of time. On two occasions it is made apparent through such images that Bernis' mystified fascination with Geneviève's world and the traditional world in general has to do largely with its special extra-temporal quality. The stone which he throws into the cistern is a "pierre mystérieuse [qui] coule sans fin parmi les eaux comme ces tentacules de lumière qui plongent mille ans pour nous parvenir," and Geneviève's domaine is a "royaume de légende endormi sous les eaux....[où] Bernis passera cent ans en ne vieillissant que d'une heure." Similarly, the magical images in which he conceives of her and of his own idealistic quest seem unrelated only until one learns, in the final pages of the novel, that the quest is perhaps on one plane a search for an understanding of the human relationships of which she has such a sure knowledge. The themes of the quest and of friendship are brought together also by certain references to stars and to "le trésor." These two symbolic objects of Bernis' search are both associated upon occasion with the riches of human society. Once he thinks of his friendships back in France as a "trésor enfoui sous terre," and he points out to the French sergeant in the desert that the North Star shows the way to Tunis and home. The narrator also reflects in this way about the North Star and thinks that "la croix du Sud balise un trésor," that it indicates the direction taken by his friend Bernis.

Images as Images of the same literal "family" are often concentrated within a few successive passages, effecting in this way an introduction to an important conception.
Thus, in the episode of the boys' visits to the cistern and attic, a number of apparently unconnected images having to do with ships or the sea precede the capital revelation of infinite, timeless depth which comes in contemplation of the stagnant water and in gazing through the roof at the stars. In the narration of Bernis' last visit to Geneviève a variety of references to magic and mythology prepare for his and the reader's final understanding of her mysterious way of life. The presentation of Bernis' death as ascension to a star is anticipated, in a similar way, by many allusions to the sky and to lightness.

Almost none of the images in Courrier-Sud have, in sum, a purely momentary value of description. Virtually all are pertinent for leitmotiv, for capital thematic or "preparatory" developments in the mind of the reader.

Saint-Exupéry's personal experiences are reflected in the imagery and symbolism of Courrier-Sud.

Other general observations have to do with the origin of Saint-Exupéry's images. M. François makes the following general remark concerning this matter: "La production littéraire de l'aviateur, si on l'envisage dans sa totalité, s'organise autour de quelques grandes images ramenées de l'enfance et converties en symboles didactiques dans le livre posthume [Citadelle]."³ Most of the important images of Courrier-Sud may indeed have their beginning in real or dream experience in childhood, e.g., the "demeure" and the "bibilots" on

one hand and the "trésor" and the "fée" on the other. The whole episodes of the cistern and attic visits probably have an autobo-
graphical basis. The author has also, of course, great faith in the unbiased view of life which may be had by a child — Le Petit Prince is supposedly based upon such a view. Yet not all of the images may be described meaningfully in terms of the author's childhood experi-
ence. If his interest in the "rapide," for example, may well have originated in his very early years, he is not likely to have attached to it any symbolic meaning until adulthood. Some of his expressions having to do with architecture (e.g., "demeure," "bâtir," "les poutres énormes") may well have acquired their imaginative power during his period of study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. His experience in aviation, finally, was of inestimable importance in the development of his imaginative thought. It is not that he drew from the air-
plane and the surroundings of the métier new sources of simile and metaphor — he almost never uses purely technical terms figuratively — but rather that flying gave him a special perspective on the world. He says à propos of Anne Lindbergh's Le vent se lève: "Elle n'écri-
 pas sur l'avion mais par l'avion." In Terre des hommes he states more explicitly: "L'avion est une machine sans doute, mais quel instrument d'analyse! Cet instrument nous a fait découvrir le vrai visage de la terre." Thus Bernis is able to conceive of sky and earth as a "demeure" or of human habitations below as "jouets des hommes." The author's experience of flying in an apparently immobile atmosphere inspires also his hero's reflections upon duration as a third dimension and conception of the airplane as a "chrysalide"
in which one is transformed into a new being. Saint-Exupéry's experience in aviation was to inspire many more moving passages in the later works.

*Courrier-Sud* contains many of the images and symbols prominent in Saint-Exupéry's later works.

The most evident "devenir" of the author's images takes place from book to book. Many of those found in *Courrier-Sud* were destined to have an illustrious fortune in the later works. The conception of the "demeure," for example, attains such importance as to be reflected in the very titles of *Terre des hommes* and *Citadelle*. The related ideas of navigation and the "havire" (always prominent in Saint-Exupéry's thoughts as a flyer) appear over and over as representations of the figurative voyages of the individual and society. Geneviève's "liens" return in countless speculations about human relations, and the image of her child as a center "autour de qui le monde s'ordonnait" is an obvious ancestor of *Pilote de guerre*’s presentation of man as a "noeud de relations." Her symbolic affinity for flowers is echoed in the characterization of Mme Fabien in *Vol de nuit* and in the Little Prince's affection for his rose.

Bernis' comparison of his service in the mail line to a shepherd's caring for his flock reappears in numerous thoughts about responsibility in *Vol de nuit* and *Le Petit Prince* and also in the very conception of the pastoral society of *Citadelle*. The mysterious personal quest has less importance in later works with the capital exception of *Le Petit Prince*, where Bernis' story seems in many
respects to be taken up again. Most of the individual images of the quest, such as "le trésor" and "les étoiles," do come back, however, in a great number of passages dealing with the riches of human relationships and with idealistic values. Bernis' search for "sens" receives in Citadelle a mystical answer: "Dieu est sens de ton langage...." The posthumously published volume Un sens à la vie, whose title is based upon that of a newspaper article written in 1938, also demonstrates Saint-Exupéry's continuing preoccupation with the "direction" of things. Almost none of Courrier-Sud's major images — we can think only of the "rapide" — are without important development or "becoming" in the later works.

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We hope, in conclusion, to have demonstrated that Saint-Exupéry employs imagery and symbolism in Courrier-Sud not only with liberality but also with definite esthetic purpose and with a very real degree of success. He possessed an extraordinary sensitivity to analogies between physical phenomena and inner truths of the human nature and destiny. By means of a really poetic use of image and symbol he has enabled the reader to participate — though not without effort — in his visions and perceptions. In later books, especially those after Vol de nuit, the portrayal of individual character and the elaboration of plot will cede their place of central importance to the development and expression of an active and vital humanism, but though he departs from the novelistic form and his pragmatism becomes more manifest, the sensitive and effective use of image and
symbol which we have noted here remains a most essential part of
his style.
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