

Philippines: Sweet Prison¹

Hélène Cixous

Let's return – *revenons*.

Days of a neat, pure and ruling sun, moments when one truly sees all the realities, starting with the muddled hearts of men and the burning arena of the first wars and the extraordinary beauty of trees that watch human carnage, a novelty, and the voiceless pain of the skinned calf. These days have an unforgettable address (rue Philippe).

'*Revenons*' will be my first word. As long as I shall live, and even more perhaps.

Let's return to our starting point [Revenons à notre point de départ].

As soon as I hear this word, this sentence, *revenons*, I feel uplifted by a melancholy enthusiasm. Warm winds hailing from the word – rather than the trains which whistle for Proust – and I have already yielded to the temptation to

I shall sing of the infinite mighty power of such a sentence, for me, over me, in me. Of the quasi-omnipotence – for instance, of this one: *Revenons à notre point de départ*. You're disappointed? Maybe it seems ordinary to you, dull as a lead casket? And yet. I've got another one for you, which is apparently more seductive, culled in the dawn of this spring morning.

Hold your crown tight [tiens ferme ta couronne]. *I feel I have in the mind like the Lake of Geneva invisible at night*. I have the faces of four young girls, two bell towers, a noble lineage, a 'let's go further' in the Normandy hydrangea, which I don't know what I will do with <sometimes become fetishes whose meaning I no longer know.²

'*Hold your crown tight. I feel I have in the mind like the Lake of Geneva invisible at night*'. I read this and I cry. Cry with joy. Cry at being reunited. Reunited with my lost paradise. I cry over learning, as I find it again, that I had lost it, I cry over finding it again in order to lose it. I cry with the joy of crying. As long as I cry, it is still here,

enduringly, sparkling under the fine shower of tears I hold my crown with a passionate shudder. Its circle contains as many treasures as a magic cup of tea. I have here the first fragrant essences of the earth, a red earth where worms of a live-red glass squirm, Mamma's forceful absence, my tiny little brother squatting in a corner, a vast military storm over my heads, soon there will be jeeps, tanks, helicopters and a handful of overblonde children, oh yes and a big stone too, a temple for an anthill which is the whole of humankind. The perimeter is made up of tall stalks of a golden metal. Gate [*grille*]. And sentences burning like red pimiento spat out by a viper's tongue on my face with its forever lost smile which is mine. At age three this child already knows everything that is in store for her. The times are near. Death enters. Already! And a 'let's return to our starting point' which startles me with a violent prophetic happiness, which becomes that very instant a fetish whose meaning I do not know, which picks me up and saves me. Which brings me back home, with tears which necessity changes into an intense reflexion. Hold, shut your crown tight [*tiens, ferme ta couronne*], I say to myself keeping all those pieces that shine true for later.

That was on 21st of March. In 2008.

I had just *found*. Cobbles trodden with joy. A sentence of gold and silver which glistens on the cobblestones of the rue du Cercle Militaire. It is mine since I found it. I apply the literary principle here. Just as Proust finds his magic crown in a wood of Nerval's. He takes it. And becomes a daughter of fire. Another time, not far from a track beaten by Chateaubriand, he becomes a 'realised Sylph'. I apply the alchemy of literary telepathy here, whose formula, well known to the fanatics, is: '*Senancour c'est moi*' (Senancour: that's me). In a single word, just as '*ces âmes*' (these souls) sounds like '*sésame*' (sesame): *Senancourcémoi*. Among dreamers of the true there is communication. A banal and marvellous phenomenon. One walks in the forests of books and suddenly this is my crown, it is the very sensation. Here's a sentence wholly of mine: 'Which proves a mysterious relation between – (truth and natural beauty, X's brain and Y's heart).

I live on the hypothesis that there would have been one single huge Garden from the beginning of times whose circle-shaped enclosure would hold a set G of gardens which whirl about in times immemorial and alight here and there in the instant of a foreign garden.

'Hold your crown tight [*Tiens ferme ta couronne*]'...

Did I write this sentence? I must have written it in another life. Or else dreamt it. And returned [*revenue*]. I recognise it from the happiness which it kindles in me and which awakens me

Let's return to our starting point. (Which starting point? where? who? what?) Don't leave. 'Today we're going to take a narrow, uneven path which will lead to a wonderful viewpoint'. Pretend it is Dr Freud who's telling you this and lend a benevolent ear to what I'm going to say. Since I have lived with this sentence (*revenons*, etc.) for a month, I know its force and that under its modest appearance it is charged with desires, with promises of unheard-of delights, and with magic nostalgias. It does not sound like much but deliberately so. In truth it knows everything. Out of tenderness and politeness it presents itself like an effortless, slightly vague, yet pressing invitation. You remember this extravagant path which Proust took in order to initiate us into the mysteries of 'the instigatrix whose magic keys unlock at the bottom of ourselves the door of abodes into which we would not have known how to step', that is to say, *La Lecture* (Reading), also called 'the original psychological act'? You remember that, in order to lead us to think what Reading is, he proceeded to evoke in minute detail the places and days when he himself made the discovery of the Original Act, and how he guided us in his Reading Chamber, a real bazaar or else a supernatural and familiar theatre whose stage is surrounded by several circles of curtains cut from different fabrics, in marceline, in cambric, in guipure, all of them white naturally.

How he made us enter and exit the sanctuary in order to lead us to another sanctuary, designed like the vegetal double of the inner chamber, an arbour shrouded in trimmed hazelnut trees and located at the far end of the park, where the river ceases to be *a line of water covered with signs*, I mean *swans* [*une ligne d'eau couverte de cygnes*] and lined with statues, and like a book wings its way across the hedge of the park.

You have not forgotten how this superposition of magic spells, a true magician's manual full of signs...

is what he calls Reading.

You remember that this Itinerary leads us through space to the beginnings of times, to the origin, to the first days of the creation of the prophetic soul, to the creator's childhood, before creation, to the state of the young Siddartha under the boughs of his baobab.

You have not forgotten that, like a dreamer unsure as to whether he is being dreamt or woken up, when you felt you were lingering, through the suggestive force of a bard reincarnated from the legendary bards, ‘along these flowery by-ways’, it sometimes occurred to you to wonder where you were, in whose house, doing what, whereas you thought you could remember you had left in order to read, ‘to read’ a ‘book’, but to read, what is it? So a book was not what you thought it was, you had set out early in the morning, intent on reading a serious book by Proust, a solemn tome by Freud – and there we are in another book, and yet another, and then in a chamber full to the brim of the soul of others, there is *in the mandorla* Mamma’s smiley face behind which I can hear a mocking bird’s short burst of laughter, it’s Papa, happy as a Holy Spirit, through the multicoloured panes of the glass door. I can see us, me and my brother, hiding under the sheets the secret life and all the secrets of the life lurking behind the curtain of the improvised theatre when we began inventing counter-stories, thus it means I have returned [*revenue*] to 54 rue Philippe in Oran while following in young Proust’s footsteps, at the dawn of creation, in the workshop of telepathies.

It’s springtime. All of a sudden a need awakens, the ancient, ageless desire to drink the immortal songs of birds, birds die, songs resume, the need to hear invisible *Voices*, to watch the dead branches give way to the victorious buds, to set a limit to hibernation, and all those ancient forces which govern me, over me and in me, gather into a precise, shining, urgent idea: I want to read *Peter Ibbetson*. Read? Read the source, the torment, both together. Read? Appease the hunger of the soul which remembers the taste of illumination. Eat the light. Shed the tears. Restore the current of life cut off by winters. Set immortality in motion again. From a great distance, from the far end of the cave of secrets, Peter Ibbetson returns. I open the window. I hear his child’s voices. Reading starts again! We were sick with death. The seed picks up again

[...] during which the thousand sensations emanated from the depth of our good health follow the infinite movement of our thoughts and make up around it, from the flower of all our unconscious well-beings, the honey of a soft golden pleasure which mingles with our ardent meditation like a quiet smile. This art [...] ³

Books, kindly unhook us [*livres, délivrez-nous, délirez-nous*], lead us into the garden of *Unland* where the flowers grow whose adored names we had forgotten, where, under the clumps of thyme perhaps or between the tall stalks of acanthus, I find the keys to the gates of immortality. A book is *something else* then? The real book, the one which has all the strengths of the inner fecundities, is that, the one which has the Power of Communication, which communicates this power to us while leaving our solitude intact

The miraculous book – which says to us: *revenons au point de départ*. This is the way I am going.

Each to their starting point. Each to their magic book. Each to their childhood and fatality.

How does communication take place?

Via ‘telepathic *response*’ I’d say. It’s as if a book, which I do not know, which I believe I do not know, which I believe I do not ask anything from, personally, *were only just responding to me* while itself asking my own questions in front of me, in its language, whereas I said nothing, I say nothing, the story takes place in a foreign land, where I have never been, yet it is mine [*c’est le mien, c’est la mienne*], I don’t return from it/I cannot believe it [*je n’en reviens pas*]. I believe it is him and yet it is me. It looks like a dream. Everything that happens to the characters which are not me, happens in me, to me, one day. It is not the events which strike me with astonishment, after all everybody falls, loves, dies, betrays, and deceives. What astounds me is the afterthought, the murmur of sorrow and of indignation, the murmur of the thought behind the thought, the subtle, confidential air which circulates in the sentences. It is the sentences which gather the events, the choir, the song which interprets the destinies. And the signs, the details, all the signals each time unique through which a destiny translates itself into a reality. The setting for the action

My signs: gates [*grilles*]; a stone, which seemed to me fairly big. A summer chirping. An infinite stretch of sand. A real garden. A Population of ficus peopled with swifts. I’ll add to this the desperate howl of a dog: I have forgotten this howl, it’s my brother who remembers it. It often seems to me that I can hear my brother and myself howling in the hole-filled garden, my brother-dog, my brother the dog. My desperate dog, the one that runs in me, has a mute howl. Where can this howl possibly be?

In prison. Everything is imprisoned. My dog is in prison, eternally in prison. In the end even its cry is in prison. I too am in prison. In the crypt where I imprison myself, the noises from the life outside do not reach me any longer. But there's my brother, that is to say, the foreign body, wholly outside of me, and which however is the familiar stone in my garden [*la pierre familière dans mon jardin*]. My brother Pierre too is in prison. He walks about with his prison on his back. I refrain from saying to him: 'Pierre, you cannot see this prison which you are carrying, it is too tight, it's a real corset, it makes you stiff.' My brother comes plodding in, lined with a wall. He sits down in the armchair, he lays down his burden. The armchair cracks. My brother cannot hear his dog cry. My brother can hear my dog letting out the cry I cannot hear. I can see my dog is nothing but a howl but it is my brother who hears it. My brother cannot hear himself, I am the one who does. I tell him a true dream. I saw. The dead person was alive and the living one dead.

– What does this mean? says my brother.

Now he wears glasses which are like portholes. We eventually decide to get used to them. – Some relations are totally unknown to us, says my brother. A sentence wholly of mine. Thereupon he tells me four stories which he presents as 'shaggy dog incidents [*tirés par les cheveux*]'.

This is the name my brother gives to the incomprehensible facts which occur in his existence. Others would say telepathy. There are invisible threads. In the narrative each anecdote, once it is over, recalls another anecdote. My brother is extremely surprised. It is as if somebody he cannot see came behind him and pulled his leg [*le tirer par les cheveux*]. I don't say the word *telepathy* to my brother. I don't tell him that for a few weeks I've been playing with the chapters, in the works of Freud and of Jacques Derrida, whose fairy-like character is called Telepathy. I note these shaggy-dog stories [*histoires-tirées-par-les-cheveux*]. One of them is not so shaggy, he says. But still he likes it. I could tell them another time.

I listen to my brother. I call him inwardly. I don't call my brother by his name Pierre. Never. In my inner land I call him Pete. My brother recalls my dog which is also his dog, Fips the dog, without us being able to discover any explanation as to what brought him to this evocation at that very moment. There is no dog in the vicinity. It is the inner dog which woke up, one does not know how. I see him straightaway.

He runs like mad in the Garden. He jumps over the totally impassable gates just as Remus jumps over the wall with which Romulus has just enclosed Rome. I'll never forget this scene

– Why did Fips set about baying at the moon [*hurler à la mort*] when Papa died? Twenty kilometres away he felt a soul was passing out? said my brother

My brother listens to Fips. – Nothing can be done about it, says my brother.

The sentence moans in all directions. Nothing can be done about death, about pain, about the strange tenacity of the immortal foreign body. 'Fips, I am dead', says my father to his son the dog. It was Thursday 12th February 1948 at 11.45 am.

Telepathy is: without explanation. *Sans fil*. Sans wire.

Both of them linked at a distance in the same psychical garden, the same prison, shaken by the violent pity they feel for each other.

– What did you think? I say.

– Nothing. I remember he bayed at the moon.

At that moment our father did not speak any longer. There was a transference of pain from one soul to the other.

The signs, the keys, the all-powerful accessories which command the genesis and decide, like the *ficus ruminalis*,⁴ that here in a forgotten time the magic city of my birth was built, this construction of a prehistoric scene, as always for the keys, my signals are most commonplace in appearance. I cite them today: this does not mean that when they 'make an apparition' I recognise them immediately. On the contrary. I pass each time by those things so dear to me, sometimes I meet the object, an avenue of dragon trees which seems to lead to the entrance to the past, makes me jump, a rusty gate grates my heart, but no, time is too far, perhaps it is elsewhere, I cannot name the sensation, I remember there were tears but I no longer know who cries – I have the feeling as if I were going to my own unknown grave in a dream. The sensation tells me: name me. I do not know. It recedes sadly. Has not resurrected. Like Proust the day when, as he was crossing a pantry, a piece of green canvas blocking up a broken part of the glass pulled him up short. Halt! That's how it is: one passes in front of the curtain behind which stands the screen with the hole through which one must slip in order to get to the path that leads to the scene that knows. A

summer radiance makes us pause. Stop! Listen. Do you hear? What? A summer beam [*rayonnement d'été*]. Why? From having been [*d'avoir été*]. Where? At the beginnings of Letherature.

I have never been here. It's even a town, a house a street where I'd avoid going. And yet I am there, find myself there, as if in me another who is me would be staying there for me. And conversely: I am here at home, it's my home, my brain, my country my room and somebody else is living in it, true there are a few differences, thus the host may be a man, a sick person suffering from other illnesses than mine, the epoch does not matter for the inner time is like that of the dream... but for the rest, which is the main thing, fate is the same in the minutest details.

So there's a book that reads in my thoughts. One book or another. It's a fact. For some it can be a painting. It also happens to me, a painting reading in my thoughts.

– Do you believe in telepathy?

Don't respond. You have already responded.

What does Freud say?

You remember the *New Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*. *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* (these daughters or cousins of the *New Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, those that Freud wrote and delivered in 1915–16 and 1916–17 – in the middle of the war, therefore with the war within himself as well), fantastic lectures born in his imagination in 1932, whose strange status he revealed to us in an overwhelming Preface:

These new lectures, unlike the former ones, have never been delivered. My age had in the meantime absolved me from the obligation of giving expression to my membership of the University (which was in any case a peripheral one) by delivering lectures; and a surgical operation had made speaking in public impossible for me. If, therefore, I once more take my place in the lecture room during the remarks that follow, it is only by an artifice of the imagination; it may help me not to forget to bear the reader in mind as I enter more deeply into my subject.⁵

Thus only when talking (about them) has become forever impossible does he speak about them while resurrecting by magic a (lost) scene which never took place. His body has become violently foreign to him. One will never know who in him surrenders to the charm of Telepathy.

I so much wish I had all the time to walk with the wounded old man along the narrow, sunken footpaths which lead in sight of the Promised Land. I don't have the time. Fortunately Jacques Derrida already took the first walk, that was in 1981, he called it 'Telepathy', thus giving this strange deity a proper, secretive noun. *Telepathy* like Tarapatapoum, the fairy who saves childhoods from the misfortunes which are in store for them.

Allow me, out of love for the noble female stranger, to beg you to reread all these texts which a carriage of telepathies sweeps along briskly up the hill and down the dale towards the lofty heights of philosophy, on this ridge from which the Magnificent View can be glimpsed. You will see enacted as in a shadow theatre the mock fight of the Titans, which does not oppose but confuses Freud and Derrida, riding [*roulant*] from one to the other, taking each other for a ride [*se roulant*], pulling each to himself all the faux bonds and the Protean lures, in order not to speak the Telepatruth [*Véritélépathie*] while speaking it. *They steal the show from each other.*

For lack of time here, I have resorted to my all-powerful friend the Dream. I was hiding in my arbour, at last, there was a deep silence. There was no time left, the risk of being found out was almost nil. I could hear Freud's voice droning out the first beats of his second imaginary lecture, the one entitled *Dreams and Occultism, Traum und Okkultismus*, and which has two number systems, *Lecture 2* and *Lecture 30* since it is propped up by the legs and paws [*s'appuie pour marcher sur les membres, les pattes*] of the one that came before. 'Ladies and Gentlemen', he says, 'today we are going to follow a narrow path, etc.' All this was taking place in Freud's head on the one hand, in my head on the other hand. Freud could no longer speak, except in spirit. That was on 21st March 2008. 'The Surprise is what is waiting for us up there, when we have reached the top of the climb, I said to my mother and to my daughter. I did not have an idea of the surprise, I had a certainty of it. But it is not easy to get there, for you have to drive the car as if it were a camel or a horse, on the mountain. The beast

pants. True, at the beginning of the ascent, there is a thin road between the trees and the cliffs, enough space to creep in between the sharp bends. Even if one sees, looming farther up, a lorry that takes up the whole width of the footpath. One goes under the wheels one won't know how. Then there was no road anymore, at least this much was getting clearer it seems, for there was nothing but rocks, stones and scree, but I assured Eve that the car could still climb, good beast, it bent the paws [*pattes*] of its rubber wheels, we still had a little to go when we reached the site where the workers were digging out what will perhaps be a passage or a tunnel. Tons of sand are being excavated, there was a frail roof of ballast, better push on as soon as possible for if that collapsed over us. We now cross the contractor's glass office, and at last we emerge on the roof of the world. None of us four thinks that this is another name for Tibet. The word remains in secret. What a surprise! An immense panorama unfolded its ineffable [*inouïs*] landscapes in a dream of maximal dimension. Landscapes are more forceful than souls, what makes me think of a dream is the aura which emanates softly like a summer radiance. The Town itself had unfurled, with its floods of houses, of temples with pointed roofs right and left depending on where I turned my eyes. Towards the west one surely would have seen the sea. The Town rose. The dream did not carry beyond The Town but I had no doubt. Over there it's the sea, it is in the indicative present, even if I cannot see it. A strong sense of *déjàvu* as in a dream crept over me. Sometimes even, I said to myself, on the inclined plane of the imperfects full of halftones, the indicative present performs a straightening up, I have already thought that, this is when, having passed the things that pass – it was the low-roofed house of the Clos-Salembier with a garden sleeping on the Algiers hill – a hazy light gives an aura to the more durable reality which keeps watch in dreams and awaits us, at the end of the sunken footpath up there, from where, always, the sea can be glimpsed.⁶ Then one is swamped by the inner flood of revelation, we are infused with light. All this is of an ineffable beauty, nobody can doubt it, it is the True Beauty, that which one contemplates only within the dream, when we are ourselves at the top and within ourselves. I did tell you, I said, *this is what (till now) we had no knowledge of.*

And in order to climb back down, there is just this footpath which goes very fast to the familiar road. This is the way I came by chance

yesterday, not knowing that, if one pushed further on, one would get to this monumental triumph. I guessed that such an exaltation could not be granted to just any passer-by. One must introduce oneself in one's genealogy, for there is an obvious relation between the expansion of space and the lengthening of time. I came with past and future in order to fulfil in reality the prediction of Freud's which inaugurates his new imaginary lectures: follow the Path (I note he mumbles the word *path* in English, that way: *Wir werden heute einen schmalen Weg geben, let us follow the path*—the *pathy*, he had said—the narrow path of the *pathy* which leads to the discovery of the eternal mother). I know that you know—in regard to your own relations with people and things—*the meaning of the starting point*.

The Dissection of the Psychical Personality

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I know you are aware in regard to your own relations, whether with people or things, of the importance of your starting-point. This was also the case with psycho-analysis. It has not been a matter of indifference for the course of its development or for the reception it met with that it began its work on what is, of all the contents of the mind, most foreign to the ego—on symptoms. Symptoms are derived from the repressed, they are, as it were, its representatives before the ego; but the repressed is foreign territory to the ego—internal foreign territory—just as reality is external foreign territory.⁷

I did tell you, *this is what we had no knowledge of*. The power, kept hidden, of the Starting Point, in all our life experiences. Isn't it extraordinary? I exclaimed. My mother was impressed, my daughter carried away with enthusiasm. I brought her back to prudence: Revelation must be used wisely and with moderation. One must let it come. Now we can climb whenever we want. But we'll always have to *cultivate distance*. The grace of reaching the almost paradisiacal psychical space which Proust reaches via the 'clover and Artemisia-scented' road of Reading, is granted us only on condition that we *Cultivate Distance*. Space out, inwardly and outwardly. Allow this mist of time which drapes this garden, this view over the sea, this walk

at Versailles under the chestnut trees, of the shining reflection of the elusive which makes them look more beautiful to us than the rest of the world and as if immortalised, to form between people and things.

Let's return. That's the secret.

Let us travel the path of the Return without any consciousness of the time it is. It is the path of Reunions. And naturally it unfolds only if there are two of us teletreading it jointly.

It is time I returned to my subject, which is Philippine. Or Philippines. As I was trying to tell you about them, it, the word, I have spoken about something apparently totally different but the following Prologue is concerned with them. But before the Prologue, I owe you a confidence. When I started 'writing' this text, I thought it was called *Telepathic Garden* or *Lethepatic Garden*.

The names of texts,

where can they be coming from? This one, for example: *Philippine*. Or else *Dream I Tell You?* They arrive. By . . . tele-pathy-phony? What's certain is that they are not here, they are in inexistence during all the time when the text comes about and beyond time, until they wind up without a residence permit at my first reader's, who has always been Jacques Derrida. And of whom I suspect today that he continues to be.

I acknowledge my *fateful*, almost neurotic incapacity to *give the name*. Maybe it is out of a fear of 'giving', as one says in idiomatic French, giving over to the police, giving away, revealing the secret, betraying somebody. All the titles that come to my mind are fake titles. They ring false to my ear. *Faux, faut. Bon*. Yet my texts do have titles, as they must [*il le faut*]? I am not responsible for them [*je n'en réponds pas*]. I've known for a long time, out of experience, that they are sent to me, they appear suddenly, whispered to me. Free from me. Imposing. I bow. This takes place according to a suggestion mechanism: Jacques Derrida reading the titleless thing from a distance, something in me is no doubt acted upon by the thread or wire [*fil*] of the telereading. A fishing line [*fil*] is cast out. As if I could hear Jacques Derrida mumble: 'yet another sea! Where on earth does she fish that from?' Suddenly a word bites [*mot mord*]. His metaphors. As if. One morning a name comes out. Sometimes several come forward in one and the same breath. One listens to them. I have no opinion. I side with him. Note that all this is foreign to me.

It is in the middle of the garden of the book, during the fine hours of an afternoon. I was unreading the Book which makes me cry. I had passed very often by those chapters. The word has been there. I was not looking for it. As always it responded to my desire even before that desire came to consciousness.

Philippine sprang up with the piercing authority of an arrow. I'm going to tell you everything. Is it a name? A word? One cannot imagine a more powerful (signifying) term. If I had looked for it, I would not have found it. It found me. The other day I was dashing, fast, fleeing with impatience through the enclosed parks of a text with which I have a totally passionate relation, in a hurry to be done with suffering from it, to escape the repetition of a pain that has always been destined to be mine, being neither able to read it nor not to read it (other examples *T[ristan]* and *I[solde]*, *Der Atem*, *Letters to Milena*, *St Julien l'Hospitalier*), one of those adored, yet feared books, without any literary charm to seduce me and protect me, and which do nothing but harm me with pinpoint accuracy. It is a cruel book, without the consolations lavished by sentences of a thrilling beauty. This took place all of a sudden – page 142. Here it is:

The reality of our close companionship, of our true possession of each other (during our allotted time), was absolute, complete, and thorough. No Darby that ever lived can ever have had sweeter, warmer, more tender memories of any Joan than I have now of Mary Seraskier! Although each was, in a way, but a seeming illusion of the other's brain, the illusion was no illusion for us. It was an illusion that showed the truth, as does the illusion of sight. Like twin kernels in one shell ('Philipschen', as Mary called it), we touched at more points and were closer than the rest of mankind (with each of them a separate shell of his own). We tried and tested this in every way we could devise, and never found ourselves at fault, and never ceased to marvel at so great a wonder.⁸

Philippine. A word for two. A word worth two. Two words, as Derrida would say. Towards. A name word I had not heard for such a long time. It used to blossom in Algeria. Its fresh almond fragrance, freshness itself. Unbeknownst to me I immediately knew, received, that

is to say, knew anew [*su, reçu, c'est-à-dire resu*]. To receive is to know again what one used to know in another time. It means seeing a bygone time return.

I rang up my daughter straightaway. I wanted to share this with her. A Philippine has (always) two recipients by definition.

– Philippine, I said, do you know what it is?

– Philippine? No, I don't. Do *you* know?

I laughed

– Is it something obscene? she suggested.

I laughed. She laughed. Something obscene? Who knows?

Then I said:

– The almond. It's the almond. (I meant to say: it's the almond's lover [*amanz*] perhaps)

– It's an almond? How could I know this? Oh! it's an *amande* written with an *e* (i.e. fine)

– As well, I said

– *Aubergines* (female traffic wardens) give philippines? That's what you mean? I am lost with my basket of fruit and vegetables

– If you write it with an *a*, you'll enjoy its taste.

– Oh! But I have never eaten philippines. And you?

– Quite a few times

– Where did you eat some then? In Algeria then?

– *At the starting point*, I said, there's always been some.

In my opinion, you ate some.

– I would have eaten Philippines without knowing it?

– It's often the case. Philippine acts like Philtre. First one eats some. Then one forgets it. Then one is.

Now I am going to tell you the secret of Philippine: it's an *amande* with an *a*. It's an almond made up of two almonds. One of the two almonds has to make amends [*frappée d'une amende*]. It follows by identification that the other also has to amend [*est frappée*]. It's a play of almonds. A double play. What is there in *Amande*? There is the double charm of an *âme* (soul) which summons [*mande*] two people not to forget each other, to call each other by the same name, to precede each other, to echo, dissociate and reflect each other

As if they were mutually almonding and amending each other [*se mettaient à l'amande mutuellement à l'amende*].

– Now I'm going to tell you what it is, I said: it's the title of my talk [*communication*].

– Of your talk? – It's the title of thoughts talking to one another.

One says 'Philippine'. And all the thoughts ask: Philippine who? or what? And all the translators ask themselves how to translate Philippine in their language. Do you know the word for Philippine in English?

– It does not exist

– It cannot not exist. It crosses the Channel and gets to the other side, you say Philippine. Nobody can have any doubts about it. I made Telepathy with you. – You are in Philippine. – You've just put yourself in it. – You are my *Fillipine* (Philippine daughter).

Now I make Philippine with myself

What does Philippine tell me? I have Philippine on the cordial Telephone. Telephilia. Telephilippine.

Oh so many things. And then so many things. One opens.

But *who* is Philippine?

This is a question I did not ask myself. It calls me

– Who calls me?

– Hello, it's me! – Oh! I recognise you. Your voice among all the voices.

Philippine is me is you! You know the rite. The fate. An enchanted almond. It contains the *worlds* [mondes⁹] in its shell. Plato's world: it alone sums up the *Symposium*, its myth of Love, its tragedy. One has forgotten it a little? Now the myth of the androgyne revealed itself to Plato one day in the *Symposium* when he was sharing bread and fruit with a dear friend. Which of the two *philoï* found it? They were eating almonds. Those fruit with the velvety hull which do not give themselves to the first thief that comes along. Those mothers who conceal the soft, sweet child. The outer almond resists the hasty predator, says Plato. This is how desire is kept alive, through the toughness of the approach. The inner almond has the shape of a delicate oval which is used as a model and a reference to what is beautiful: a sea shell, a pearl, the lover's eyes, everything that resembles a sublime tear is almond shaped. Even the Christ in glory, even the Virgin, are entrusted to the soft oval frame of an almond. The Virgin herself in the mandorla shines softly as a *mystical almond*.

From almond to almond the almond enshrines itself, promises itself, steals away, receives, an emblematic fruit of hospitality, host and

hostess, passive and active, chaste and destined to be peeled, as I am doing now by opening the envelope of its names. Philippine is the androgynous almond. It always thinks about love.

Right here, in this very moment, Philia my cat comes and lays a paw on this page. As has been known since Ovid, cats are telepathic. Aletheia follows immediately. They guessed I was going to think about them. While I am making amends, the thought that the magic almonds from the market in the rue des Juifs came to our home, 54 rue Philippe in Oran, on Fridays, returns to my mind.

I never think of *thinking* of the rue Philippe for I walk along it in a dream where I use it as my inner street whenever I go to the far end of the town up to the building behind which, if one were to walk round it, one would glimpse the sea eternally.

Now everything urges me to make Philippine with my brother. We are sitting side by side. – In order to enrich your book, says my brother, I'm going to tell you my dream. In my dream I am younger. Our seventy years are behind me. I am seven years old. It's very pleasant.

– Philippine, I say.

– For us Philippines are the double or twin almonds [*amandes jumelles*], he says. When we were kids, we felt we were very lucky. He mouthfully says. (Instead of the almond, three mouthfuls of bread with three thick layers of jam like this.) One no longer eats young almonds here. It is an abandoned fruit. – You've never made Philippine in France? – Never. – It's a matter of age as well. The Philippine joy. It's a childish Surprise.

First one thinks it's Greek. It's Greek. One opens. There is more than one almond in the almond. The Al(e)manic [*l'alemande*] is held within the almond. Shall we open? Let's open the dictionary.¹⁰ The first A(l)emanic who says Philippine is German [*allemande*]. It's the marvellous Surprise. In fact Philippine is the altered form, through *attraction* of the first name *Philippe*, of the German word *Vielliebchen*. My much loved little one [*toute aimée*] my dear little beloved my darling androgyne, me-you miaow [*mimoi mitoi minou*], my fellow tenant in love. What lovely sworn words [*juremots*] these false twins [*jumeaux*] are, aren't they? Who will tell us the secrets of the force of attraction?

Mandorla. Why have I never forgotten this song by Celan?

MANDORLA

In der Mandel – was steht in der Mandel?
Das Nichts.
Es steht das Nichts in der Mandel.
Da steht es und steht.

Im Nichts – wer steht da? Der König.
Da steht der König, der König.
Da steht er und steht.

Judenlocke, wirst nicht grau.

Und dein Aug – wohin steht dein Auge?
Dein Aug steht der Mandel entgegen.
Dein Aug, dem Nichts stehts entgegen.
Es steht zum König.
So steht es und steht.

Menschenlocke, wirst nicht grau.
Leere Mandel, königsblau.

Die Niemandrose, 1961

MANDORLA

In the almond – what dwells in the almond?
Nothing.
What dwells in the almond is Nothing.
There it dwells and dwells.

In Nothing – what dwells there? The King.
There the King dwells, the King.
There he dwells and dwells.

Jew's curl, you'll not turn grey.

And your eye – on what does your eye dwell?
On the almond your eye dwells.
Your eye, on Nothing it dwells.
Dwells on the King, to him remains loyal, true.
So it dwells and dwells.

Human curl, you'll not turn grey.
Empty almond, royal-blue.

Thus Philippe will have attracted and seduced Vielliebchen while Philippine is attracted by Vielliebchen, but actually nobody will ever be able to say who first attracted whom, *it's the mystery of transference*.

In the end this chapter is called *Télépatitre*.

–I was about to call you! you say. I was calling you. I am calling you, my hand on the telephone, Telepathy the Accomplice Goddess, the switchboard operator expert in simultaneous talks makes thought think of thought at the very second. There is no second. It is the speed of light. It is you, in the garden, even if when you are not there, this emission of overluminous light, this radio breath in the foliage of hornbeams. Hardly have we passed each other the word than already the word is past, spontaneously. *File*. You say to me *File*.

Sometimes you say nothing, you only just beam radiantly. I can hear everything you think. I answer. I try to justify myself. My radiance is less strong than yours. It's to listen to you all the better.

The distance between us is supple, reflexible and obeys our moods. When we are cross it pretends to thicken. A smile and it turns into a puddle of sun.

Every one of us has a secret book. It is a book with a secret lock [*à secret*]. Holding secrets [*à secrets*]. We don't talk about it.

It is a cherished book. It is not beautiful. Not great. Not so well written, sometimes not well written even. We don't care. For it is goodness itself for us. The absolute friend. The first and the last. It promises and lives up to what it promises. It is modest, solid, profound. We forget it but it never forgets us. It knows everything about us but it does not know it knows. We do not know what it knows but we know it knows. If Freud had been asked to name his secret(ive) book, he would not have hesitated: it would have been *the Jungle Book*.¹¹ I dare say it is in its forest that lives the one he will always have called 'our hero'.

(You notice this turn of phrase? He says that with a sort of amused distance, in Voltaire's or in Sterne's style, intruding metadiegetically into the narrative, as if he wanted to debunk the ideality of their puppet, to mock them a little with the reader as accomplice: *our hero who does not see he is not a hero*, you see? – But no, it's not that. This lightness is all pretence. You can hear the slight inflection in his voice, this note of tenderness which it is advisable to dissimulate. Our hero,

however ridiculous he may sometimes be, is you but he is mostly me. Here is our Freud, like (Norbert) Hanold, the mentally short-sighted, who suddenly recognises himself in the canary bird locked up in a cage. 'Our hero', what a sign! Someone we know well creeps under the plumage of this clichéd form. Why do we follow so passionately this crank of an armchair archeologist, this asinanalyst [*ânalyste*] with a dunce's cap who mistakes women for statues and takes to the street in his nightie at noon, if not because we are him. It's me-me, mini-me, a small cock reared up on its ego spurs [*ergots*], it's the petty king who makes himself big, it's ego. It's Gogo.

Gogo, what a name for the one who will be our hero! An impossible name. Besides nobody remembers it.

The one book Proust loved above all others was *Le Capitaine Fracasse*. I have never read it. Proust might have read the book which makes me cry. I myself never read it: I dream it. I live it again. This book about which you've seen me thinking for a while, as if I could see its two characters sitting in the corner of the hall, gently holding hands, this book with almost supernatural powers, which no wall, no distance prevents from mingling its breath with my words, this book which is as marvellous for me as the *Capitaine Fracasse* remained marvellous for Proust even after he forgot it, no doubt its title will seem as foreign to you as the character of the Capitaine Fracasse is to me, and I will just utter this loud sounding name here: *Peter Ibbetson*. I hold it as dear as the apple of my eye, just as I hold dear the condition, the law, the grace, of my whole life: the gift of dreaming true.

I could have thought about it: isn't this book some sort of fortune-telling book for me?

I never think about it. It knows too much. I have always refrained from exploring it. It is enough that I feel it sparkling behind me, pearl after pearl, while I go to my dreams. It occurs to me today that this Peter has a twin sister. She is Gradiva. Today is the first time I become aware of the links between them. The two books were born at a distance and at the same time, each in a different language. Perhaps from an undiagnosed telepathy

In a way they tell the same story. It is about death and resurrection. The author? Now his name is George du Maurier, now

Wilhelm Jensen, the author has a similar stroke of genius. This stroke of genius is so strong that it can take place only once. Genius is stronger than the author. The same for the Apocalypse. The illumination takes place once only. So that it can be said that there is no author any longer. The Book of Revelation is dictated by a telepathic act. 'The author' will have been the medium of a manifestation of natural forces. The two 'authors' in question are true conductors of these thunderstriking phenomena. This is why they will have been struck once only. The whole irradiating truth is gathered in the destiny of one single creature, Peter or Gradiva. This is what is called a thunderstroke: the real stroke is always unique. This is why the end is in the beginning: there can be no other hero of the revelation than Romeo—with Juliet. Here they are, from one second to the next, hurled forever into the same psychical space. What takes place? During the initial collision, there is a transference of the seat of life to the place of the other. This can be compared to a *postnatal twinship*. Each makes the life of the other. It's a great strength. It's a great vulnerability. The first who dies kills the other by transmission.

The author? Almost nobody. He will only have managed to be the ghost servant of the great Peter Ibbetson. It is said that this George du Maurier, who knew how to draw but not how to write, proposed (suggested) to his friend Henry James that he should make his literary portrait. That of Peter Ibbetson. But nobody can write my autobiography in my place.

George du Maurier expected from Henry James the impossible gift of a self-analysis. According to Freud he was not wrong. Literary geniuses are those soothsayers that act involuntarily, spontaneously, from a distance, over minds paralysed by laziness by restoring, without knowing how - by *incitations*, says Proust, by intimations, by prophetic promise—desire, intoxication, the power to want to go beyond the canvas on which the last or first reflection of a vision vibrates indistinctly. Now George du Maurier's call to Henry James produced the effect he had hoped for. It all happened as if Henry James had asked George du Maurier (to write) to paint the inner picture around which George du Maurier had been roaming forever and whose charm remained undecipherable to him. It is the ghost of Henry James in him

which called him to lift in part the piece of green canvas which offered to him the reflection of a fixed mirage. Only Henry James and only Henry James's refusal could help him to venture beyond its surface, only this foreign intervention could compel him to reinsert himself into the life of his mind, where he suddenly found again the way which leads to a forever magnificent vision. *Peter Ibbetson* is the book which Henry James did not write.

Peter Ibbetson calls me. It's me here, Psyche, memory and unmirror [*démiroir*] of Psyche the first. In reality, I was not yet, at least that's what I believe. It is as if I were reading my memoirs. Thus I would have already lived this, one century before I was actually born.¹²

I alone can have a foreboding of the way I will die.

I can ask nobody to think in my place what will likely happen to me one day through the very fact of being predicted. And yet when I meet Peter Ibbetson, it's always the first time in appearance, and I sense that 'there', it is as if all about me were known, all that I do not know. There shudders a foreign memory in which my lost memory wanders as in a dream.

I have already been in this garden but I don't know I have.

When one day I know, when I recognise my garden, I will ask myself, but in vain, how Peter Ibbetson's garden will have been able, at a distance in time and space, to be the dazzling prefiguration of the Garden of the Cercle Militaire.

Peter Ibbetson says something to me

Is it a book? What is a book? This cherished book, do I read it? What am I doing when I lock myself with it in a feverish tête-à-tête from which I cannot wrench myself? I get up ten times, I get ready to pay a visit to my friends, I am dressed, I return to the book, I am summoned, bewitched, held back by the mysterious forces of Reading. I can hear its siren's murmur: Let's return to the starting point, come on, come with me. And that's what I want above all: I want a book to make me dream and bring me back to my childhoods: infancy, the first, second, fourth, etc. childhood. To read is nothing but that, is it not? To return to oneself in the prehistory in those legendary times when we were toddling and telepathing round the world on all fours and eight paws [*à quatre pattes et huit télépathes*] to see where its opening was.

As always for those expeditions, the traveller must be able to have at his disposal in the book these magic primitive objects which will enable him to establish the radio links with the legendary times. Starting for me with: a Gate. And also a garden. One keeping (watch over) the other. There is a child.

What does Peter Ibbetson say to me?

Go! Go! Move on! Move on

Peter Ibbetson, you say. Which one? For there are two *Peter Ibbetson's* which make philippine from a distance, one being the one who dreams, the other the one who is dreamt, one returning from the other, to the other. If I muse about it [*songe*], it so happens that *Peter Ibbetson* the first, the one who brought me to tears, with which I first found myself behind bars, will have been the next *Peter Ibbetson*.

It was the most beautiful film in the world. I persuaded myself easily that the Severed One, the recluse, was a copy of my father. But I'm not going to talk here about the transference love I always felt for Gary *Cooper*, which in French is pronounced like '*coups père*': for sure recuperated by the father [*à tous les coups le père*]?

This film was not a film, I do want to make it clear. It's a vision. It's a Revelation which will have exceeded all the calculations of its creators. For the true authors of this Vision, of this Dream filmed in a state of dream, are quite obviously the adorable Inventors of the Dreaming True, the Great Dreamed Ones who are sometimes called Peter and Mary, but not always. As they are endowed with the gift of Truedreamingness [*rêvance vraie*], it follows that, like all those invited in dreams, they have transfigureal names and figures. They are mistaken themselves, fail to know themselves [*se méconnaissent*], tremble with emotion, which allows them to taste the painful happiness of double love. Of dual love. Under the borrowed names, under the new bodies which lead them astray, under the foliage whose French look conceals the fabulous forest of A Midsummer Night's Dream, they are submitted to the laws of a strange attraction. The everlasting childhood which within them plays on the ruins of names thwarts [*déjoue*] the prisons and towers of lost time. But before the narrative there has been a first narrative. I have forgotten it completely, behind the dream. In this first narrative the two children who have invented names, Gogo and Mimsey, are always watched over by their invisible

doubles, Prince Charming and the fairy Tarapatapoum, two fairy-like genii who will follow them incognito all their lives. Only they have the secret. These two, Charm and Tarathypoum, live in the French language. They are accompanied by a true dream dog in French [*vrai chien de rêve en français*], the childhood dog, whose name is of course Médor. Each time one of them shouts *Médor*, that is to say *Mais dors* (do sleep), the other one echoes: *mais je dors* (but I am sleeping). I am already waiting for you. Come quick.

Nobody remembers any longer that as a child George du Maurier had as truly fateful a neighbour as the little girl whose eyes were so black that for the eyes of the future narrator of the *Recherche* they could be nothing but blue. A Gilberte, for it could only be her, on the other side of the gates, called him Gogo. That's my guess at least.

Gogo is the ring of the golden bell which announces Mamma's coming for the evening kiss. The kiss of the first love.

There is the Child, I mean Childhood, I mean the Genius, the little defenceless child who is still in the state of superhuman Clairvoyance.

Translated by Laurent Milesi

Notes

- ¹ This is the first part of a lecture given first in English at the University of Sussex in June 2008, then in the original on the occasion of the symposium on Hélène Cixous entitled 'Croire Rêver: Arts de pensée', co-organised by the Collège International de Philosophie and the Centro Dona i Literatura (University of Barcelona), in Paris two weeks later. The full text of this lecture, *Philippines: Prédelles*, will appear in French with Galilée in January 2009.
- ² Marcel Proust, *Carnets*, eds. Florence Callu and Antoine Compagnon (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), p. 50 (trans. LM).
- ³ Proust, *Mélanges*, in *Contre Sainte-Beuve; précédée de Pastiches et mélanges; et suivie de Essais et articles*, ed. Pierre Clarac with the collaboration of Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 801 (trans. LM).
- ⁴ This refers to the wild fig tree on the Palatine Hill in ancient Rome. The tree was said to be sacred to the goddess Rumina and, according to tradition, is the spot where the trough containing Romulus and Remus landed on the banks of the Tiber and where they were reared by a she-wolf. – LM.

⁵ *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXII (1932–1936): *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, trans. and gen. ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 5.

⁶ See Proust, 'A propos du "style" de Flaubert', in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, p. 591.

⁷ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures, Standard Edition*, XXII: 57.

⁸ George Du Maurier, *Peter Ibbetson*, Illustrated by George Du Maurier, Preface by Daphne Du Maurier (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969). All references are to this edition.

⁹ Also French *monder*: to blanch (almonds) – LM.

¹⁰ 'PHILIPPINE': n. and a., a late implantation (1898), is the altered form, through attraction of the first name *Philippe*, of the German word *Vielliebchen*, 'much loved', from *viel*, 'much', and the diminutive of *lieb*, 'loved', 'dear'. Like corresponding words *viel* is based on the neutral form of a Germanic adjective *fēlu-*, which is related to the Indo-European root of Greek *polu-* (whence 'poly-'), having the same meaning. *Lieb* corresponds to archaic English *lief*, Dutch *lief*, Old Norse *ljúff*, an adjective related to English 'love'. It has an Indo-European substratum which can be found in Latin *libet*, 'it pleases me' (whence 'libido') and Old Slavonic *ljubŭ*, 'dear'. *Vielliebchen* is used to designate a game played with double almonds [*amandes jumelles*] as well as, by extension, these almonds (bef 1850). It is probably altered from English 'valentine' (1450) or French *valentin*, *valentine*, having the same meaning, derived from the saint name *Valentin*. The meaning of 'double almonds' (1839) and of 'game' (1879) is also known in English. Translated from *Le Robert. Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, 3 vols. (Paris: Robert, 2004).

¹¹ 'You ask me to name "ten good books" for you [...] I will there name ten such "good" books for you which have come to my mind without a great deal of reflection.

Multatuli, *Letters and Works*. [cf. p. 133 n.]

Kipling, *Jungle Book*.

Anatole France, *Sur la pierre blanche*.

Zola, *Fécondité*.

Merezhkovsky, *Leonardo da Vinci*.

G. Keller, *Leute von Seldwyla*.

C.F. Meyer, *Huttens letzte Tage*.

Macaulay, *Essays*.

Gomperz, *Griechische Denker*.

Mark Twain, *Sketches*.

I do not know what you intend to do with this list. It seems a most peculiar one even to me; I really cannot let it go without comment. The problem of why

precisely these and not other equally 'good' books I will not begin to tackle; I merely wish to throw light on the relation between the author and his work. The connection is not in every case as firm as it is, for instance, with Kipling's *Jungle Book*.' Freud, 'Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading' (1907), *The Standard Edition*, vol. IX (1906–1908): *Jensen's 'Gradiva' and Other Works* (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), 245–6.

- ¹² 'For when an author makes the characters constructed by his imagination dream, he follows the everyday experience that people's thoughts and feelings are continued in sleep and he aims at nothing else than to depict his heroes' states of mind by their dreams. But creative writers are valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream. In their knowledge of the mind they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw upon sources which we have not yet opened up for science.' Freud, 'Jensen's *Gradiva*' (1907), *Standard Edition*, IX: 8.