

§ 5 The Dream with the Unicorn

Psychoanalysis, therefore, proves to be a practice of the letter. To illustrate this fact, I would like to relate here a fragment of the analysis of Philippe, a patient in his thirties, which I have already had occasion to report elsewhere.¹ The study of a dream, that “royal road to the unconscious,” will take us by the shortest route into the heart of this story. Here is how Philippe relates the “dream with the unicorn”:

The deserted square of a small town, it is odd. I am looking for something. There appears, in bare feet, Liliane whom I don't know and she says to me: “It's been a long time since I saw sand as fine as this.” We are in a forest and the trees seem to be strangely colored, in bright primary hues. I think that there are many animals in this forest and, as I am getting ready to say this, a unicorn crosses our path; all three of us walk toward a clearing that we glimpse below us.

Concerning the principal part of its manifest content, the dream takes up an event from the preceding day: Philippe had taken a walk with his niece Anne in a forest where they had played at stalking game and had noticed, near a stream, deer tracks (or as hunters say in French, “pieds” [feet]). As for the pretext of the dream, Philippe tells us it was thirst, which all the same woke him up soon after this dream.² In this regard, he adds that his dinner the evening before had consisted of Baltic herring, of which he is particularly fond.

The unicorn dream, as we shall see, accomplishes the desire to drink, and it is the underlying thirst that we will have to investigate in all its implications. Upon first analysis, the dream leads to three childhood memories that are going to make up the several scene changes on the stage where the play of Philippe's thirst will be acted out.

The deserted square on which the dream opens, like a still-empty stage, leads us directly to the heart of the play. The oddness has to do with the feeling that a monument or a fountain is missing from the center of the square. Having been thus evoked, they then emerge from memory, brought together in a monument—the unicorn fountain.³ This fountain, which has a statue of a unicorn at its summit, is in reality found in the square of a small provincial town where Philippe spent his vacations between the ages of three and five. But it is not just the remarkable figuration of the imaginary animal that is evoked by the square. It also calls up the memory of a familiar gesture, that of joining one's hands along their interior edges so as to form a bowl and then trying to drink from this makeshift cup the water gushing from the fountain. It is a variant of this gesture that we are going to encounter again in the second memory.

It is still vacation time, probably the summer of his fifth year, during a walk in a mountain forest. The fragment of the dream: “It's been a long time since I saw . . .” leads to this second scene. The phrase is literally repeated in a remark made during the walk the day before with Anne: it's been a long time, said Philippe, since he saw heather so thick and brightly colored, perhaps since he was five years old during a summer in Switzerland. This is the same blaze of color found elsewhere in the text of the dream, transposed onto the trunks of the trees. But the event from the walk that marked him was the attempt to imitate one of his older friends who was able to produce the sound of a siren by blowing through the opening formed between the adjoined thumbs of his two cupped palms.

We find another call, more distinctly articulated, in the third memory, which is staged on an Atlantic beach. We are led there by

the "fine sand" that complements the day's residue in the dream: "It's been a long time since I saw. . . ." Philippe probably stayed here at the beginning of the same vacation that would lead him eventually to the town with the unicorn (the summer of his third year). One finds here the principal identity of the unknown person in the dream, Liliane. If one breaks the name down and eliminates Anne, who is already identified, there appears Lili, a very close relation by both blood and marriage, who was with him on that beach. The memory chosen to mark this stay is Lili's teasing: because Philippe, during a very hot July, never stopped saying in every situation and in a grave and insistent manner "I'm thirsty," Lili wound up asking him every time she saw him, "So, Philippe, I'm thirsty?" This affectionate kidding became in subsequent years a complicitous greeting, almost a sign of recognition, a formula pronounced with the same grave and falsely desperate tone that expresses above all the expectation of a guaranteed satisfaction: "Philippe, I'm thirsty."

"Upon complete analysis, every dream reveals itself to be the fulfillment of a wish": this is how Freud condenses in one sentence the essence of his discovery concerning the interpretation of dreams. But what is a wish (*Wunsch*) in the Freudian sense, and what is meant by its fulfillment (*Erfüllung*)? We should not consider that such questions have been resolved simply because these terms have become so banal nowadays. Although we are still far from a complete analysis of the unicorn dream, we can already say upon initial approach, which is more intuitive than analytic, that the dream represents Philippe's thirst. We can even go along with Freud and suggest that it accomplishes it, that is, fulfills in its way the wish to drink, to the extent at least that it defers the moment of waking and drinking. One should point out in passing here that, of course, the thirst in question, as well as the wish to drink that precipitates the dream, cannot in any way be reduced to the circumstance that provokes it, which is a contingent thirst, a need to drink following the meal of herring.

Once evoked, the central function of thirst, far from closing down the interpretation, is presented as an open term, as if this

thirst avidly demanded that one listen to the literality or the reality of its interrogative appeal. One may then wonder how the appeal "I'm thirsty" is in return settled upon Lili's interpellation and why this wish to drink is placed under the sign of the unicorn.

As one does in the course of an analysis, we will let the memories, images, and words form a chain so as to attempt to follow, in the strict order of its detours, the path that leads to the unconscious.

It did not take Philippe long to say that he did not like the beach, but he said this with such vehemence that it was easy to guess there was some important theme nearby. Indeed, when he calls up that summer by the Atlantic, memories emerge as clearly and vividly as if they were still current, memories that are literally sensitive: the contact of the hot sand over the whole surface of the body, of fresh, wet sand when one played at burying oneself in it, and also of burning sand against the soles of the feet, which is a pleasurable irritation that doubles the biting sensation of the inhospitable metal covering an overheated balcony under the noon-day sun. For Philippe, the idea of a beach still calls up the phobia of sand getting into everything—hair, teeth, ears—and to lounge on a beach, for him, means to expose oneself to the annoyance of not being able to get rid of the sand. Days later, he contends, whatever one does, one still finds some sneaky grain of sand that has escaped from the most careful ablutions in fresh water, a grain that all by itself, crunching in silence, grows next to the skin. Thus, there came to the fore one of Philippe's minor symptoms, a real little phobia regarding badly pleated clothes, the stray crumb in bed-sheets, hair that gets into the collar after a haircut, a pebble in the shoe. One sees how, with the evocation of the beach, there arises an overly sensitive little nothing, a grain of the unconscious brushing the surface of the skin and putting the nerves on edge, which can on certain occasions drive Philippe to the edge of the most intense irritation, or even to the borders of anxiety.

Another theme in the dream, the foot (Liliane's bare feet), finds on this beach the chosen ground of its traces: tracks (again, "pieds" [feet], in French hunting vocabulary) of the deer seen the day before the dream, which converge on a place for drinking, the stream

at the bottom of the valley; marks of bodies on the sand of the beach where the weather is thirsty; and footprints that get filled in on the shifting shore, lose their outline in the very fine sand, and evaporate from the boardwalk where damp feet have walked. The trace that effaces itself, to be sure, but also the trace that remains: thus, on the outskirts of the town with the unicorn, pressed into the rock, two hoofprints of the horse belonging to a legendary prince who, with a desperate jump into a ravine, eluded his pursuers. Philippe loves his feet, thinks them not at all silly, and takes pleasure in their play. There was a time in his childhood when by often walking barefoot he endeavored to develop the epidermis of the soles of his feet, which he dreamed of making as hard as horn so as to be able to walk without injury on the roughest ground, to run on the beach without fear of hidden pitfalls. And no doubt he succeeded in part if one can believe the story of an exploit in which he sees himself under the admiring eyes of his friends rushing down barefoot over the fallen rocks of a glacial hillside. He fulfilled there in a partial fashion the clearly obsessional phantasm of keeping his body protected beneath the covering of an invulnerable hide.

We thus come once again upon that other major term of the dream, the horn decorating the forehead of the fabled animal. The unicorn's meaning as a phallic representation constitutes the common theme of legendary stories: an emblem of fidelity, the unicorn obviously cannot be procured without difficulty, and it is said that he who wants to get hold of one must leave a young virgin as an offering in a lonely forest, since the unicorn after having placed its horn on her lap falls asleep right away. To be sure, no unicorn really exists, anymore than does the horn of a unicorn: its place is taken by the tooth of a narwhal, a superb spur of twisted ivory, which draws its beneficent power precisely from the real-nothing it represents.⁴

On his forehead, in the place corresponding to the horn's implantation, Philippe bears a scar, the trace that remains from a childhood fight or a fall from a tricycle, an indelible mark, like the mark of ritual circumcision on his sex. The trace on the sand, which is a mark of the body, can now be seen on the skin, a mark

on the body, a scar into which the phallic emblem and the trait consecrating it send down their roots in a dream.

Concerning scars, we must here relate another scene that Philippe dreamed not long after the encounter with the unicorn and that seems to take up again the theme of hidden pitfalls in the sand of the beach.

Someone (a boy about twelve years old, it seems) has just slid with one leg into a hole. He is lying on his side and cries very loud as if he were seriously hurt. People (myself included) run to see where the wound is; but there is nothing to see, neither on his knee nor his leg; all one can find, on his foot on the side of his heel, is a visible scratch in the form of a thin red crescent but it is not bleeding. It seems he hurt himself on some object hidden in the hole: thinking it may be a rusty nail, people look for it but find a billhook [*serpe*].

One sees that in this dream the scar (a wound barely open or already closed) has gone from the forehead to the heel, thereby reversing the movement of the horn. One certainly need not be a psychoanalyst to hear in this narration the most direct allusion to the theme of castration. One can likewise guess that the figured agent of the wound, the *serpe*, veils only through the alteration of one letter the identity of the desired castrator, the psychoanalyst, whom the dreamer names or addresses by his first name. One may thus say, with a summary and allusive formula, that the desire motivating the dream is for castration, on the condition that we make clear the psychoanalytic sense of this term.⁵

But let us pause for a moment with Philippe and consider what a scar is: on the skin, a mark, a slight depression, white or pigmented, more or less without sensation, points to what was a scratch, a cut, or even a wound whose two gaping lips had to be dressed, sometimes even sutured; the trace of a violence done to the body, a durable inscription of a painful, sometimes catastrophic irruption. If the horn is a representation, as we said, of a real-nothing, the scar has the privilege of being, on the contrary, the inscription on the body of the interval of a cut, the mark of a gap that could be felt.

Now, Philippe, for whom the integrity of his body is of essential importance, considers a scar above all to be a filling in, a repair, a suture. For this reason, it is indissolubly linked to his mother's passion to protect, close, fulfill, or gratify. The scar, but as well the whole surface of the body, is a reminder for him of the attentive care of which he was the object on the part of a mother impatient to satisfy her passion at the level of bodily needs. Philippe was washed, fed, warmed, cared for in accordance with the excessiveness of the maternal phantasms. And we know what this kind of maternal love hides and manifests by way of unconscious and well-meant destructive tendencies: no cry that is not smothered, so as not to have to listen to it; an overabundance of food, as if he were nothing but a voracious appetite; no thirst that is not immediately drowned. That is why Philippe, filled to the point of bursting, continued to be thirsty!

We would be mistaken, however, if we went along with Philippe when he claims, and tries to make us believe, that he has only cause for complaint in this excess of maternal kindness. One may guess that he was profoundly marked, in a way that is more inefaceable than any other, by the passionate embrace of this smothering tenderness. Philippe was most certainly his mother's favorite, preferred over his brother, but also no doubt over his father, and on the always veiled horizon of his story one discovers that precocious sexual satisfaction in which Freud recognizes the experience leading to the obsessive's fate.⁶ To be chosen, pampered, and (sexually) gratified by his mother is (as we have already seen for the Wolf Man) a blessing and an exile from which it is very difficult to return. Thus, the scar, for Philippe, is above all this mark of the favorite and this closure of the paradisaical limbo to which are relegated those who are outside of life, not yet born to desire or already dead, like so many shades of an Oedipus, seduced too early and gratified by their mothers.

With this evocation of the phantasms and desires of his mother, with this position of the favorite, we accede to one of the major themes of Philippe's analysis.

One may at this point better understand the desire that this

dream "à la serpe" fulfills. It accomplishes in its own way the wish, which is moreover ambiguous, to see the mark of maternal closure reopened so that finally the pain of exile may be lifted. This is indeed the first idea that occurs to Philippe regarding the strangeness of the cry in the dream: "[the boy] cries very loud"; it is an odd yell, both a cry of terror and an irresistible appeal, which reminds him of the cry, the "kiaï," of the Zen tradition, supposedly capable of resuscitating the dead. Moreover, this cry refers back to a memory not yet mentioned even though it was called up very soon after the relation of the dream: Philippe is eight or nine years old, traveling with his parents and brother. At the end of one leg of the journey, they put up in a fine hotel, and, alone, he explores the grounds around the hotel that seem to extend very far. Then some noisy, excited boys arrive who are older than him (this detail shows up in the dream: "about twelve years old") and who are probably playing cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers. They pretend to attack him; Philippe, panic stricken in the face of this horde, runs away yelling . . . but not just anything: he cries very loud as in the dream, calling for help from Guy, Nicolas, and Gilles, so as to throw off his attackers and make them believe that he too is part of a large gang. But in spite of his fear he is careful not to yell out the most common names—Pierre, Paul, or Jacques—for his cries must seem to be quite specific. He remembers precisely having invoked the name "Serge" (at the time, it would have been Stavisky or Lifar).⁷ This memory makes clear the sense of the appeal in the dream and, as I have intimated, confirms the identity of the castrator (or liberator) who is invoked. It also brings us back to those less clearly articulated appeals called up through the memories revived by the dream with the unicorn.

Philippe, captive of his mother's phantasms, is walking by the sea, saying to himself "I'm thirsty." One can imagine the ambiguity of this declaration inasmuch as it seems, on the one hand, to call once again for the mother's gratifying presence and, on the other, to contest at the same time, in its very repetition, the possibility of quenching his thirst by taking it literally. Here the image of Lili is essential; she is set apart from a group of several other women

friends, gathered on this beach, exposing their finally unveiled bodies. Lili is small, her form is filled out, and her breasts are large. It is as if Philippe were moved by her, sensing that she will be better able than another to hear his call. He guesses, with as much certainty as confusion, that Lili is more open than the other women who usually surround him, that she is less captive than his mother to archaic phantasms, and that for her a man, even her husband, is a possible lover. It is as if Philippe were meeting a woman for the first time. This "first time" recalls a process of fixation, and one can find in this occurrence what will later constitute for our patient the inclinations, difficulties, and impasses of his choice. Lili, as a woman, shows herself to be a good listener to the seductive "I'm thirsty." Her address in return, "Philippe, I'm thirsty," seems to seal the success of this seduction and to confirm that the complaint or the thirst is finally heard as a call to desire, if not already as desire for Lili. With the warranty it has of being proffered by the mouth of another, the formula "Philippe, I'm thirsty" fixes in place and summarizes a first kind of compromise of Philippe's desire, in that time of hope or moment of opening that was the summer of his third year. "Philippe, I'm thirsty" combines in a few words the following three propositions at least, along with their respective reservations: (1) I am my mother's favorite, loved by her, but as such I am exiled to an imaginary and nostalgic paradise; (2) my call has been heard, but I have found a passive accomplice rather than someone to help me out of it; (3) I can love another woman (or be loved by her), but she is also prohibited. Indeed, one ought to add here that Lili, a close relation of his mother, was married to Jacques, a first cousin of his father, and we will have occasion to return to the role played by this first name in Philippe's history. Let us merely note for the moment that Lili, who was his relative twice over through blood and marriage, on the one hand wards off and represents and on the other hand doubles the dimension of incest that unfolds here anew for Philippe.

Hence, the meaning of this desire to drink begins to be specified: thirst, contrary to what one might think, represents more an appeal to opening than an expectation of some filling (gratifica-

tion). It lets one see the primordial capture by the mother, Philippe's nostalgia, and his revolt. But one must also say that this first stage of the analytic work has far from exhausted the resources of the dream material. It is also far from having engaged the forces of the libidinal economy whose mechanisms must be unleashed by a deepened analysis. Nothing would be easier than to stop here and perform an interpretive reconstruction based on a few privileged elements. The temptation to understand is strong, especially when the analysis highlights themes that fit rather conveniently into the frame of our knowledge. But if we give in to that temptation, sooner or later comes the realization that, out of haste, we have done nothing more than substitute one construction for another without bringing about any real modifications. By suspending the analysis of the dream, after having exposed its maternal hue, we would have succeeded at best in repainting with the aid of the palette of psychoanalysis the closure that Philippe complains of. There would be many ways to use this palette if one were not under the strict obligation as a psychoanalyst, first, to hear the sensitive points or the strong points in what the patient is saying; second, to respect these points; and finally, to avoid, as it is most appropriate to say in this case, any closed explanation.

We may recall here the manner in which Freud, in his analysis of the Wolf Man's nightmare, sums up his investigation after a first stage of the analysis. He enumerates the sensitive elements in such a way that, were this a strictly graphic representation, they would be set apart with bold-faced letters (the sequence is, moreover, italicized in the text): "*A real occurrence—dating from a very early period—looking—immobility—sexual problems—castration—his father—something terrible*" (SE 17: 34; GW 12: 60).

The work of analysis consists essentially in identifying or extricating in this way a series of terms whose more or less obvious insistence, which is always perceptible to an attentive ear, reveals that they are from the unconscious. Such work also requires that one maintain a faithful as well as an open ear, the precise recording and the always-renewable bare surface of a complete welcome. On the basis of our analysis of the dream, we can develop a series of terms

that are repeated and underscored in the unfolding of the discourse of "free association." In a still more stripped-down manner than Freud's in the given example, we can enumerate here, without adding any phony links, a few key or crossroad words of Philippe's act of saying:

"Lili—soif—plage—trace—peau—pied—corne" [Lili—thirst—beach—trace—skin—foot—horn]. This is how, upon analysis, the unconscious presents itself: a series of terms, which exhibited together create, for whoever has not entered into the detours of analytic discourse, the heteroclit impression of some bric-a-brac devoid of any order. Faced with such a series of heterogeneous elements, the most natural response, from which no one is immune, is to order the set within the frame of a construction whose type varies according to individual taste and ranges from the biological to the symbolic. Experience most often proves, and one cannot insist too much on this point, that by responding without discrimination to the demand to construct (or reconstruct), one loses, as Freud pointed out,⁸ the heart of what the patient's discourse is tending to say: there is thus no other way to listen at first than literally. If we therefore consider the utterance of this unconscious chain in its literality, we notice that when its two ends are brought together, the word *licorne* [unicorn] appears.

A monument of Philippe's phantasm and a metonymy of his desire, the *licorne*—through the displacements it figures, through the intervals it assembles and maintains, through its legend, and through the statue that decorates the fountain—says better than any proof the insistence of Philippe's thirst. It marks at the same time a place at which the desire to drink was asserted. At this point in the analysis, where the effigy breaks down into a play of letters, *licorne* indicates clearly the path leading to the true dimension of the unconscious. And yet, if we are not careful, it can also be the ultimate trap along this path. For one may be tempted, as a last resort, to seize upon the pretty composition of the monument and make it perform the filling-in function of any other construction whatsoever. The *licorne*, as mythical object, is particularly well suited for this use. One need only let its elements become arrested

in an image. This, however, would go directly counter to the movement of analysis, in which what is important, on the contrary, is to let the intensity of the meaningful echo spread out and exhaust itself in the unfolding of its reverberation, up to the point at which the literal trait can be heard in all its hardness. One must let it resonate like the call of the siren that Philippe endeavored to produce by blowing into the hollow of his joined hands. In its concise trait, *licorne* marks the gesture of drinking and the movement of the two hands pressed together to form a cup, the concave counterpart to the convexity of the breast, a mimed reproduction of a symbol in its original sense: a gesture of offering or supplication, but above all a gesture of mastery through which Philippe fulfills something of his desire.

With the evocation of this gesture, we step truly into the private domain where singularity reigns in its most secret difference. This movement of the hands, however banal it may be when one describes it formally, is thought of by Philippe as irreducibly his own, on the same level as the scar that marks him on his forehead. And here we touch on the limit of the secret, which one inevitably crosses over when relating an analysis, thereby producing a faithful image of the transgression that is psychoanalysis itself. For the description of these singularities outlines something like the proper essence of each individual in his or her most intimate self.

The ideal aim of a psychoanalysis would be to bring out these irreducible traits, the elementary terms where all echoes fall silent. But it is very rare that one even approaches such a draining away of the mirages of meaning through the stripped-down formality of a literal network. With the *licorne*, however, we seem to get quite close to this knot of Philippe's analysis, not so much, as we have just seen, because of the possible meaning of the *licorne* (even though one cannot exclude it) as because of its formal composition.⁹

The next step of the analysis, which must be understood literally in the sense of a movement, allows us to pass irreversibly into that matrix zone of psychic life where meaning is reabsorbed for an instant into a literal formula, the secret replica of the proper name, cipher of the unconscious. A jaculation, here transcribed

with the minimum of travesty, seems to have been the secret name of Philippe: "Pôor(d)j'e—li."

It is very rare that one manages in psychoanalysis to receive the confession of these secret formulas, for they are always jealously guarded. Philippe got around to being able to say this name via a path that deserves to be described in detail. It was, then, a question of gestures, like that of putting one's hand together to drink or to whistle, and, through association, of muscular control, as illustrated by two memories. In the one, he sees himself falling backward from a balcony without a ledge and landing on his feet three meters below, after having executed a dangerous back flip, almost as naturally as a practiced diver might have done. In the other, he sees himself likewise falling, but this time from a farmer's wagon in which he was sitting. By means of a similar natural and rapid movement, forward this time in a kind of head-over-heels, he escapes as before, without the least harm, from the threat of the large wooden wheel. "A misstep, a pirouette, and there you are" could be the formula that sums up this sequence of banal clumsiness, followed by an exceptional deftness, and that ends up in the satisfaction of our little guy, intact and standing on his own two feet. We could translate and interpret the formula as "Fortunately I regained control of my fall into the world." In fact—and this is how we got there—the secret formula prefigured, accompanied, or recalled from most distant memory a jubilant movement that consisted in rolling himself into a ball and then unrolling, finding the result pleasing and then starting over. More simply put, it was a kind of somersault or pirouette that like a magic trick could give rise in an instant of pleasure to something new, but also illusory. *Poord'jeli*, in the very scansion of its secret utterance, somersaulting around the central *d'* and falling back on the jubilation of the *li*, seems to be as much the model as the reproduction of the tumbling movement.

It is interesting to compare Philippe's self-given secret name, "Poordjeli," with the one given to him by his parents: Philippe Georges Elhyani (also transcribed with a minimum of necessary distortion so as to keep secret the patient's real identity but also to preserve all the possibilities of transgression in analysis). One may

find in the latter name, although in a more developed form, a rhythm analogous to the scansion of the formula. But whereas the *j(e)* of the jaculation is in the median position, in the name it pivots around the central *or* of *Georges*. It is possible to identify in this formula the constitutive elements of what may also be called a fundamental "Poordjeli" phantasm: *or* and *je* in *Georges*, as we have just pointed out; *li* in both the first and last names; and finally *p(e)* as the syncope that results when *Philippe* and *Georges* are strung together—which is accentuated at the beginning of the formula,—while a *d(e)*, a dental stop (which cannot be elucidated in our transposition) reproduces at the center of *Poordjeli* the syncope of *Philipp(e)' Georges*.¹⁰ One thus finds in Philippe's analysis, as is often the case, this resemblance between a patient's fundamental phantasm and his name.

With the evocation of this secret name, it seems we have reached an end point beyond which we cannot go: as an irreducible model, deprived of meaning, it truly seems to be one of those knots that constitute the unconscious in its singularity.

Nonetheless, the work of the analysis is not at all complete. When it happens that one succeeds in identifying one of these knots as clearly as in this case, another movement of elucidation can take off from there, a kind of analysis in reverse, which shows how meanings come to be formed in the singularity of the unconscious model and how multiple meanings arise out of these literal matrices. Let us spell out once again the terms of the formula "Poordjeli" while enumerating this time, in this analysis in reverse, some of the meaningful forms that branch out from these elements. Thus, on the basis of the formula's initial *po*, one may bring out meanings such as its homonym *peau* [skin], hide, epidermis, envelope, the importance of which we saw in Philippe's libidinal life. One could likewise follow paths opening onto the particularities of this story, through a word such as *pot*, also a homonym, as in *pot à boire* [drinking mug] or *pot de chambre* [chamber pot], or yet again through the affectionate and gently complaining exclamation of "pauvre" [poor] Philippe, in which the mark of the sec-

ond *or* already appears, veiled in *ovre* by the light caress of a *v*. Moreover, this median *or* is insistent in several major words of Philippe's singular vocabulary: words such as *fort* [big, strong], *mort* [dead, the dead man], and *port* [port] (or *porc* [pig]) have such a common use that one cannot convey how their originality for our patient stands out from everyday banality, how these words cling to his body.¹¹ In *corne* and *licorne* this originality appears more clearly, as it also does in a variant of the mother's loving nickname, *pauvre trésor* [poor treasure], although with this common exclamation our attempt at imitation can succeed only feebly in rendering the insistence of this *or* in Philippe's discourse. More singular, however, is the movement of reversal, as scanned by the formula, of *cor* into *roc*, *des or* into *roses*. Thus one finds curiously enough another privileged place of his childhood, the "rose garden," which is located in the same city on the other side of the road not far from the fountain with the unicorn. And Philippe talks endlessly about roses,¹² from their smell to the War of the Roses, a mythical place, a mystical theme, the heart between two breasts at the bottom of a gorge.¹³

No less than the *or*, around which it is doubled in *Georges*, the *ge* brought forward again by this *gorge* is a pretext for some spade-work along the singular paths of Philippe's unconscious desire. Thus, we recall the *moi-je* [I-me] nickname that was very early pinned on him so as to stigmatize his overly manifest "egotism." This nickname, which is the pejorative counterpart of "Philippe, I'm thirsty," constitutes here a priceless indication, as does the series of words ending in the same syllable: *plage*, *rage*, *sage*. But we will emphasize instead the path that is opened by the *j(e)* in the direction of the series of *Jacques*. Jacques is above all the father's older brother, who died before the birth of his namesake, Philippe's older brother. It is also, as we have already mentioned, Lili's husband. But the *je* is especially emphasized in the *je* of Jérémie,¹⁴ the paternal grandfather, who died very prematurely and whose monogrammed initials, "J.E.," on books and suitcases remain the sign of origin or the maker's mark—the figure of the dead father that cannot be erased by the face of the replacement grandfather.

We will not linger any longer in the paths presented by *li* on which the scansion of the secret name finally lands or its repetition in the first and last name, up to the very significant and explicit *lit* [bed] of Lili.

This manner of analysis, which takes off from a literal formula, may seem surprising or part of some gratuitous game if one forgets that it does no more than bring out in reality, and without the least interpretation, the most sensitive terms in the patient's act of speaking. One could even call them "sensitive" in the physical sense of the term.

That one must not settle for the indefinite games of meaning can be best illustrated if we examine the difficulty of a discourse that takes shape in meaning, a difficulty encountered by the analyst at every moment. Thus, when Philippe relates his memories of the beach and the novelty of his gaze on the feminine body, it is the most natural thing in the world to underscore in passing the privileged representation of the "corps de Lili" [Lili's body] in the bright sunshine. Right away, this representation makes sense, and the body, which is other and the other's, imposes itself, leading to the incestuous desire for the mother and to the fantasy of a full-blown fulfillment. The sense of a certain precocious mastery gets added to this, as power of seduction combined with the impotence of a too tender age. But what probably happens when one interprets the representation in this way—along with the well-known order given to the unfolding avenues of meaning—is that once again the major path, the one that would lead to the unconscious phantasm in its non-sense, in other words "Poordjeli," gets closed down for a time.

The question may be posed here concerning the relations maintained between the representation in language "corps de Lili" and the unconscious jaculation "Poordjeli." Going against common sense, I will insist on the fact that *the literal formula gives the representation its singular value* as much as, if not more, the representation "corps de Lili" invests the secret jaculation after the fact by giving it a meaning. As proof, one may go to the linguistic variants

that, for Philippe, make sense, from *corps joli* [pretty body] to *trésor chéri* [cherished treasure], passing through *lit de roses* [bed of roses], which contrast in their meaningful multiplicity with the unsurpassable immutability of the literal model "Poordjeli."

There remains to be considered, finally, the manifestly solipsistic character of the secret jaculation. In the movement of jubilation that it connotes, the formula contains an obvious autoerotic dimension and a narcissistic affirmation, which the evocation of the *moi-je* also renders, but more feebly. The articulation of the formula accompanies, evokes, or translates—better yet, it mimes in its utterance—the movement of the somersault that causes to appear, or that leaves as remainder, something more: mere lure of production, a derisive creation, but at the same time a self-affirmation, "well landed" as a result of the operation. In this autoerotic game, the sequence fulfills a narcissistic phantasm of autoengendering: on the one hand, Philippe, as an expressive mime, plays out this affirmed apparition of himself at the stopping point of the pirouette. On the other hand, through the repetition of the literal articulation, he seems to reach bliss [*jouir*] in the effect of production or engendering that is correlative to the stringing together of the literal terms, as if the articulation of this secret name caused him each time to be born (or reborn) from his own head, on his own initiative, into the world of language and into his own subjectivity. In a word, we could say that Philippe, through the use of the secret formula, attempts each time to annex for himself the scene of his own conception and that he thus rediscovers his primal scene as often as he impugns it.

What Philippe is trying fundamentally to impugn so as to feign mastering it is, in fact, the very dimension of the other's desire, inasmuch as he was no doubt prematurely its object, beneficiary, victim, and remainder. A castoff of paternal desire who finds his only landmark in the maker's mark of the name of the too-soon-departed Jérémie,¹⁵ an object abandoned to the mother's devouring desire, Philippe, as designated in his derisive formula, will from now on have no other concern than to defend against the other's desire, to contest the other as desiring, which is to say to take the

other for dead or nonexistent. For he thinks he knows by experience that if he lets himself recognize the other it would mean falling once again (and perhaps this time without any recourse) into the gulf of lack that makes of him someone who desires, where he would be once again toppled, devoured, suffocatingly fulfilled.

This is the impasse of Philippe's desire, which the complete analysis of the dream with the unicorn reveals in its phantasmic ordering.

of content, of the *pure* movement which produces difference. *The (pure) trace is difference*. Although it *does not exist*, although it is never a *being-present* outside of all plenitude, its possibility is by rights anterior to all that one calls sign . . . concept or operation, motor or sensory. . . . It permits the articulation of speech and writing—in the colloquial sense—as it founds the metaphysical opposition between the sensible and the intelligible, then between signifier and signified, expression and content, etc.” (*Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974], 62–63). In fact, despite the obvious difference that separates both my point of departure and my intention from those of Derrida, I remark the proximity of our undertakings (and this will become clearer in what follows), which is signaled by the necessary recourse to this expression. But for the moment, I am not able to summarize this encounter.

19. See Chapter 7.

20. *Objectality* and *objectal* are used throughout to designate the specific quality of object-ness in the psychoanalytic sense being elaborated here.—Trans.

21. The phrase “lettre perdue” is the standard French translation of the title of Poe’s famous tale, “The Purloined Letter,” to which Lacan devoted a well-known seminar.—Trans.

22. On the question of this object, one may consult D. W. Winnicott, “Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 34, no. 2 (June 1953): 29–97.

23. “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,” *SE* 10: 122–23; *GW* 10: 215.

24. This character of the object—the fact that, among other things, it cannot be reduced or specularized—which has been brought out by Lacan (in his seminar for the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, unpublished), refers first to the effect of the cut considered from the topological point of view (Jan. 5, 1966); second, to the designation of the unconscious subject as “re-split” [*refendu*]; finally to the division (*sexus, sectus*) of sex (Nov. 16, 1966).

25. These lines allude to the etymological connection between “réel” (real) and “rien” (nothing). Both derive from the Latin *res*.—Trans.

Chapter 4

1. See Chapter 3.

2. See Lacan, “Ouverture de ce recueil,” in *Ecrits*, p. 10, and “On a

Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis,” in *Ecrits: A Selection*, pp. 197–98.

3. Lacan, “Position de l’inconscient,” in *Ecrits*, pp. 847–48.

4. One could add here that such a description of a model of this major articulation, the sexual conjunction, opens a possible path toward an investigation of the nature of logical articulations.

5. Lacan, unpublished seminar, May 13, 1964.

6. See Chapter 6.

7. Lacan, “Kant avec Sade,” in *Ecrits*, p. 775.

8. The term *moneme* is used by André Martinet to designate the minimal linguistic unit; see his *Elements of General Linguistics*, trans. Elisabeth Palmer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 25.

9. The sense here plays on the homonyms in French, “nom” (name) and “non” (no).—Trans.

10. See Chapter 6.

11. On the use of the phrase *name of the father* by Lacan, see, among other texts, his “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,” in *Ecrits: A Selection*, p. 310 and note, and “La Science et la vérité,” in *Ecrits*, p. 874 and note.

12. See Chapters 3 and 4.

13. Here one may remark, in passing by way of this Latin detour, that the insistence of the V would put *vulpus* in the place of *lupus*. This could help with the interpretation of the drawing of the dream, in which the wolves look in fact like foxes.

Chapter 5

1. See Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, “L’Inconscient, une étude psychanalytique,” in *L’Inconscient* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), pp. 95–130 and 170–77.

2. The dream, which is the “guardian of sleep” in Freud’s phrase, does not altogether fulfill this function to the extent that the sleeper awakes anyway.

3. Philippe knew the series of six tapestries known as the *The Lady and the Unicorn* [*La Dame à la licorne*], which one can see at the Cluny Museum in Paris. But I cannot say whether he also knew the next series (likewise of six tapestries) called *The Hunt for the Unicorn*, which is on exhibit at the New York Metropolitan Museum (Cloisters). The second tapestry in this series, “The Unicorn at the Fountain,” represents a kneel

ing unicorn as it dips the tip of its horn into water flowing in a rivulet from a fountain.

4. In French, “real-nothing” is “le rien réel”; there would be at least three ways to translate this phrase: “the nothing real,” “the real nothing,” or “the real little almost-nothing (which is thus something).” I will adopt throughout the hyphenated *real-nothing* so as to signal when this phrase is being used. See also Chapter 3, n. 25.—Trans.

5. On this subject, see Chapter 8.

6. *OP*, 30, 31, 33.

7. Alexandre (Serge) Stavisky, 1886–1934, whose name has remained associated with the “affair” of a financial swindle that brought down a government of the French Third Republic in the early 1930’s; Serge Lifar, 1905–86, was a highly acclaimed dancer with Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes and director and chief choreographer of the Paris Opera Ballet beginning in 1929. These referents of the proper name *Serge*, in other words, situate the event from Philippe’s childhood in the early to mid-1930’s at the earliest.—Trans.

8. See Chapter 1.

9. One could observe here that “li-corne,” referring to the developed sequence of “Lili-corne,” reintroduces at the level of each of these terms the “echoes of meaning.” This is correct, and we will have occasion later to return to what seems to be an objection here.

10. The syncope refers to the mute *e* ending of *Philippe* when it is placed before *Georges*. In standard French prosody, this final *e* would be voiced or pronounced only when it falls before a voiced consonant. Other syllabic elements analyzed here carry semantic value, as will be brought out later: *je* (I) and *or* (gold).—Trans.

11. I.e., “lui tiennent au corps.” Another idiomatic expression is being detoured here: “tenir au coeur,” to be held dear, close to someone’s heart. The revision is motivated no doubt by the syllable *or* in “corps,” body.—Trans.

12. Let it be said that Philippe’s analysis occurred before Gilbert Bécaud’s song “L’important, c’est la rose” had become popular.

13. “Gorge,” which commonly means “throat,” is also a classic euphemism for a woman’s breasts.—Trans.

14. This name has also been transposed, according to the criteria already mentioned, so as to maintain both veiling and transgression.

15. This phrase includes an untranslatable pun: “qui ne trouve son re-

père que dans le nom.” The term “repère,” landmark, is here being recycled to indicate also a “re-father,” a repeat father.—Trans.

Chapter 6

1. The study of logical articulations requires, in my opinion, that one take into consideration the nature of the articulations in play in the unconscious system, at least so as to specify the relation of exclusion that these latter articulations imply with regard to a subjective function.

2. Jean Laplanche writes: “This ballast that removes language from the exclusive reign of the primary processes . . . is precisely the existence of the unconscious chain” (“L’inconscient, une étude psychanalytique,” in *L’inconscient*, p. 116).

3. See Victor Tausk, “On the Origin of the ‘Influencing Machine’ in Schizophrenia,” in *The Psycho-Analytic Reader*, ed. Robert Fliess (New York: International Universities Press, 1967).

4. See Chapters 3 and 7.

5. See Chapter 3.

6. On this subject, see Jacques-Alain Miller, “La suture: Eléments de la logique du signifiant,” in *Cahiers pour l’analyse* 1–2 (Jan. 1966): 46–49.

7. On this “eclipse of the subject,” see, among other texts, Lacan, “Subversion of the Subject,” pp. 314–15; on “vacillation,” see as well Jean-Claude Milner, “Le Point du signifiant,” in *Cahiers pour l’analyse* 3 (May 1966): 77.

8. “But we must insist that *jouissance* is forbidden to him who speaks as such, or else it can only be said between the lines,” Lacan, “Subversion of the Subject,” p. 319; translation modified.

9. On the psychoanalytic use of this French term, see Chapter 1, n. 22.—Trans.

10. See Lacan, “Subversion of the Subject”: “The subjection of the subject to the signifier, which occurs in the circuit that goes from *s*(O) to O and back from O to *s*(O), is really a circle, inasmuch as the assertion that is established in it—for lack of being able to end on anything other than its own scansion . . . refers only to its own anticipation in the composition of the signifier, in itself insignificant” (p. 304, translation modified). On the “circular relation, or the reciprocal engendering of signifier-subject,” see also Miller, “La suture,” pp. 49–51.

11. On this subject, see the observation of Emmanuel, in X. Audouard, “Un Enfant exposé aux symboles,” in *Recherches* (Sept. 1967): 147–71.

PSYCHOANALYZING

*On the Order of the Unconscious
and the Practice of the Letter*

Serge Leclaire

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