



Philippine *philippine*, or the Tropics in Cixous's Dreaming True

Christian Jil R. Benitez

Chulalongkorn University, Thailand & Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines

• <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0654-1698>

Phrae Chittiphalsri

Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

• <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5915-2418>

Abstract

Hélène Cixous's oneiric ideation of the *philippine* (twin almond)—and by extension, her text *Philippines* (2009/2011)—primarily evokes love, or that force of attraction between two beings in which one can never say where each begins or ends. It is by the virtue of this entanglement that another philippine can be offered to this discourse: the Philippines that is that archipelago which encloses and opens up a particular location and reality within the tropics. This essay attempts to reconsider Cixous's *philippine* via the *Philippine*, through dwelling on the stroke of homophony between these two signifiers and encountering them as materials in and of themselves. As such, these words are recognized here not simply as objects of the critique, but as its very method, a material poetics through which a comparative reading can be initiated and pursued. Through this reading, despite the absence of any explicit referentiality between the words being coincided here, the loving promise of 'telepathic philippine' is practiced, and perhaps more faithfully so, by expanding Cixous's exclusively Euro-Western and temperate ideation to the Philippine tropics. In decolonially yoking Cixous's *Philippines* and the Philippines together, the essay ultimately intimates their being twin kernels, too, dwelling in a single shell—that same shell that is this planet.

Keywords: Philippines, *philippine*, Hélène Cixous, material poetics, telepathy, dreaming true, garden, tropicality, decolonial, entanglement

Telepathic philippine

C'est au milieu du jardin du livre, pendant les belles heures d'un après-midi. Je délisais le Livre qui me fait pleurer. J'étais passée bien souvent par ces chapitres. Le mot a été là. Je ne le cherchais pas. Comme toujours il a répondu à mon désir avant même que ce désir ne soit arrivé à la conscience.

Philippine a surgi avec l'autorité perçante d'un flèche. Je vais tout vous dire. Est-ce un nom? Un mot? On ne peut imaginer de (signifiant) vocable plus puissant. Si je l'avais cherché je ne l'aurais pas trouvé. Il m'a trouvée.... (Cixous, 2009, p. 33)

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... (Cixous, 2011, p. 19).

It was at this moment of reading George du Maurier's novel *Peter Ibbetson* (1919, p. 334-335) that Hélène Cixous (2011, p. 18; 2009, p. 19) was supposedly "sent" (*envoyés*) the title of her would-be text regarding the art of "dreaming true." In particular, Cixous was reading through the moment where the eponymous Peter meditates on his otherworldly intimacy with Mary, Duchess of Tower. Earlier in the novel, it had been revealed that Mary was Mimsey Seraskier, Peter's childhood sweetheart back in Passy, Paris, from whom he had been separated after being orphaned and forced to move to London to live with his uncle, thereby changing his name from Gogo Pasquier to Peter Ibbetson (Du Maurier, 1919, pp. 236-237). By serendipitous turns of events, the two friends chanced upon each other in adulthood; however, despite their mutual feeling of awe in meeting again after all those years, their encounter ended with them bidding each other goodbye once more, with Mary expressing uncertainty whether she "shall ever meet [Peter] again" (p. 246). And yet, as the novel unfolds, the two will *somehow* meet again.

In their brief reunion, among the few things they talked about was how during their time apart, they have once dreamt of each other in the same dream—indeed, dreamt

the same dream—where they were both in Rue de la Pompe in the Paris of their childhood again (Du Maurier, 1919, pp. 243-245, also p. 201). As Peter describes the incredible instance: “I and another human being had met—actually and really met—in a double dream, a dream common to us both and clasped each other’s hands. And each had spoken words to the other which neither ever would or ever could forget” (p. 247). Mary names the ability to dream such a dream “dreaming true,” a technique that her father had learned and eventually taught her, and which she passed on to Peter in the very first dream that they had together (p. 204). Said to be a “strange secret of the brain,” this practice of dreaming true allows one “in sleep to recall past things and people and places as they had once been seen or known...even unremembered things” (p. 287), so that one “might find innocent consolation in dreams for...waking troubles” (p. 246). Thus, in a way, to dream true is to dream even “through the prison bars” (“à travers les barreaux de la prison”) of reality, if only to make “the weirdest thing in the world happen...: a new life. This new life [that] takes place in a dream but in a true dream” (“arrive[r] la chose la plus étrange au monde: une nouvelle vie. [Cette nouvelle vie qui] passe dans un rêve mais dans un rêve vrai”) (Cixous, 2011, p. x; 2009, pp. 5, 56, 85).

This mighty ability proves especially vital later on in the novel when, having committed a murder,¹ Peter was convicted for life and hence further isolated from Mary. And yet, through dreaming true, the two still managed to find a way to be together, however momentarily and immaterially. Over time, in the repetitive practice of this technique as if it were indeed a “fine art” (Du Maurier, 1919, p. 234), it has become seemingly possible for “time and space [to be] annihilated...at the mere wish of either” (p. 335). It is from then on, as Mary sincerely declares, that “every hour that [she] can steal from [her] waking existence shall henceforward be devoted to [Peter] as long as both of [them] live, and sleep the same hours out of the twenty-four” (p. 290). This is precisely what happened from then on, as Peter eventually recounts from his prison cell, behind its cold steel bars: “Thus began for us both a period of twenty-five years, during which we passed eight or nine hours out of the twenty-four in each other’s company” (p. 301).

The particular passage that Cixous claims had authoritatively pierced her took place when Peter had already long been in prison. He contemplates the nightly “blessedness” that he and Mary have unexpectedly found, “this happiness...so deep,

¹ In the novel, Peter accidentally killed his uncle after confronting him regarding the true nature of his relationship with Peter’s mother, and whether Peter was indeed his uncle’s son (Du Maurier, 1919, p. 263). Meanwhile, in the 1935 film adaptation of the novel directed by Henry Hathaway and starring Gary Cooper and Ann Harding as Peter and Mary, respectively—the material rendition of *Peter Ibbetson* which Cixous (2011, p. 32; 2009, p. 51) nominates as “the first, the one [which] brought [her] to tears, with which [she] first found [her]self behind bars” (“le premier, celui qui [la] mit en larmes, avec lequel [elle se] retrouvai[t] derrière les premiers barreaux”) and thus compelled to rehearse herself an instance of dreaming true—Peter killed Mary’s husband, the Duke of Tower, in self-defence, after the Duke has attempted to shoot Peter upon discovering his affair with the Duchess. For a brief comparison between the two forms of *Peter Ibbetson*, see Zupančič (2017, pp. 195-198) and Leroy (2015, para. 6).

so acute, so transcendent, so unmatched in all the history of human affection” (Du Maurier, 1919, p. 334):

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... (1919, pp. 334-335, in Cixous, 2011, pp. 19-20)

Here, Cixous underscores the figure drawn by Peter in describing the intimacy that he and Mary share through dreaming true: that of a single almond with two kernels, what Mary identifies as a *Philipschen*²—which Cixous transposes to French as *philippine*³ (2011, p. 19; 2009, p. 35). The figure is crucial for Cixous, for more than simply being the almond that also bloomed in Algeria where she herself spent her youth, its very name, as she claims, is also “a word for two. A word worth two” (“*un mot pour deux. Un mot qui en vaut deux*”) (p. 20; p. 35). At its core, it purportedly holds the following “secret”:

[C]’est une amande avec un a. C’est une amande à deux amandes. L’une des deux amandes est frappée d’une amende. Il s’ensuit par identification que l’autre aussi est frappée. C’est un jeu d’amandes. Un double jeu. Qu’est-ce qu’il y adans Amande? Il y a un double charme d’âme qui mande deux personnes à ne pas s’oublier, à s’appeler du même nom, à se précéder, à se faire écho, à se dissocier, à se réfléchir

² As Zupančič (2017, p. 199) points out, Mary would eventually say again the name *Philipschen* to Peter toward the end of the novel: “I have come to tell you that we are inseparable forever, you and I, one double speck of spinal marrow—‘Philipschen!’—one little grain of salt, one drop” (Du Maurier, 1919, p. 395). It is interesting to note how this was the second and final mention of *Philipschen* in the entirety of Du Maurier’s novel, as if the text, in and of itself, is a single shell, too, that contains these two utterances of the almond’s name—indeed, *Peter Ibbetson* as a *Philipschen* that holds the twin kernels of the very word *Philipschen*. Such Philipschenic structure is demonstrated as well in Cixous’s homophonic consideration of the French word *amande* (almond).

³ This is the same equivalent proposed by Raymond Queneau (1946, p. 267, in Cixous, 2009, p. 34) in his French translation of *Peter Ibbetson*: “Comme deux amandes dans un même noyau, des ‘philippines’ comme les appelait Mary” (“Like two almonds in the same kernel, ‘philippines’ as Mary calls them”) (translation ours).

Comme si elles se mettaient à l'amande mutuellement à l'amende.
(Cixous, 2009, p. 36)

[I]t's an *amande* with an *a*. It's an almond with 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 game of almonds. A double game. 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*]. (Cixous, 2011, p. 21)

To slow down the turn through which she relates the philippine almond to the notion of amending, it is worth tuning to Cixous's characteristic "stroke of homophony"⁴ ("*coup d'homophonie*") (2011, p. 69; 2009, p. 98). By the virtue of similarity in sound, Cixous nominates the word *amande* (almond) as also the word *amende* (amend): to her ear, *amande* becomes *amende*, *is amende* indeed, although upon writing, it can be easily seen that instead of the vowels *a* and *e*, the word *amande* contains two *a*'s. Such graphemic difference can only be most auspicious, for the double presence of the kernel-shaped vowel *a* renders the very word *amande-that-is-amende* all the more concrete a representation of a philippine.

From this homophonic opportunity, Cixous furthers her ideation on amending through taking after the materiality of the almond philippine. For Cixous, the pair of kernels in this almond, "follow[ing] [the] identification" that such twinship evokes, compels an imagination of amending as a "double game," a game that is played, and must be played, by two: amending, as embodied by the figure of the philippine *amande*, is an event that is mutual, reciprocating and reciprocated, to the extent that the amendings done by the pair practically become concurrent to each other. In such virtual simultaneity, amendment then becomes mending, in the sense that one and the other seems to cease being apart, entangled as they have now become in their concerted instances of amending. It is this synchronicity that Cixous ultimately nominates as *telepathy*, or that which "makes thought think of thought at the very second...[at] the

⁴ Jacques Derrida (2006, p. 73), for one, notes that Cixous's homophonic and even homonymic strategy tantamounts to a rhetorical speed that is "infinite, or absolute, like an acceleration that goes faster than speed: even before moving and being able to move [*pouvoir mouvoir*], it replaces, it substitutes, it puts in the place of (one address for another, a word, a phoneme, a grapheme for another, one meaning for another), it changes subjects, it replaces the subject, identity, gender [*sexe*], or language itself." For an example exploration of homophony in Cixous's writings, particularly in conversation with Derrida's works and in relation too with non-human others, see Waltham-Smith (2021).

speed of light...[that] hardly have we passed each other the word than already the word is past, spontaneously” (“*fait penser la pensée à la pensée à la seconde même... [à] la vitesse... de la lumière... [que] nous ne nous pas donné le mot que déjà le mot est donné, spontanément*”). It is, in other words, the power which can make the distance between two as “supple, reflexible and obey[ing of their] moods” (“*souple docile à [leur] humeurs, réflexible*”) (2011, p. 26; 2009, p. 42).

Telepathy lies at the heart of Cixous’s other homophonic consideration of the word *amande*. In sonically splitting the word into *âme* (soul) and *mande* (summon)—as if these two words are kernels dwelling in a single shell—*amande* is thus recast as the act of summoning (*mande*) the soul (*âme*)—or, even perhaps, what Cixous leaves unsaid, souls, in the multiple, as in *âmes*, which is homophonic as well to *âme*. *Amande* therefore is intuited as the binding of one soul to another in their yoking together as to always remember each other, to be telepathically linked to each other, to dream true of each other *and* with each other, “to call each other by the same name” that is *Fillipine*—a philippine sibling (Cixous, 2011, p. 22). Ultimately then, for Cixous, the telepathic philippine is, “from almond to almond the almond [that] enshrines itself...[as] an emblematic fruit of hospitality, host and hostess, passive and active, chaste and destined to be peeled...always think[ing] about love” (“*d’amande en amande l’amande [qui] s’enchâsse...[comme un] fruit emblématique de l’hospitalité, hôte et hôtesse, passive et active, chaste et promise à être épluchée...pense[r] toujours à l’amour*”) (p. 23; p. 38)—much love, *viel Liebe*.

In this sense, Cixous’s concept of philippine echoes Jacques Derrida’s (2007, p. 259) notion of telepathy: “*telepathy against telepathy, distance against menacing immediacy, but also the opposite, feeling [le sentiment] (always close to oneself, it is thought), against the suffering of distancing [la souffrance de l’éloignement]*.”⁵ In other words, telepathy is the claim and assertion for a connection with the other, the persistence in the possibility of reaching them instantaneously, despite (and perhaps, because of) the distance that one also shares and endures with them. This link, of course, can only be love, for it ultimately points to the willingness to “be touched” by the other regardless of distance (Derrida, 2007, p. 236, in Royle, 2008, p. ix; see also Steele, 2014). And so, the philippine telepathy, simply put, can be understood as the “insistence for a loving encounter with and through the necessary interval one shares with another” (Benitez, 2021b, p. 72). It is, again, in Cixous’s words, “the gift of dreaming true, through the prison bars” (“*le don de rêver vrai, à travers les barreaux de la prison*”) (2011, p. x; 2009, p. 5).

⁵ The correspondence between Cixous’s and Derrida’s conceptions of telepathy is no mere accident: Cixous cites Derrida’s (2007) work, hailing it as “the first walk [to telepathy] in 1981” (“la première promenade [au télépathie] en 1981”) (2011, p. 13; 2009, p. 25). Moreover, such correspondence can also be traced to their similar return and engagement with Sigmund Freud’s (1955; 1964) texts on telepathy and occultism.

Cixous (2011, p. 24) practices this avowal for encounter with an other in her work through lithely linking *Peter Ibbetson*, her most “cherished” and “secret” book, with various other matters—among them the memories of her own childhood in Rue Philippe in Oran, Algeria (p. 23), Marcel Proust (p. 34), Plato’s *Symposium* (p. 22), the Christian iconographic almond-shaped aureole of light called *mandorla* (p. 23), and a poem by Paul Celan (pp. 24-26). In doing so, her writing effectually “spirals as a whirlwind picking up ideas as they interrelate, returning again and again” (Chansky, 2012, p. 398), “offer[ing] no explanation and rather continues with the train of thought” (Zupančič, 2017, p. 200). As such, Cixous’s *Philippines* can be appreciated as performative of philippines too, rehearsing it with readers themselves through telepathically compelling them to “willingly follow...her down the rabbit-hole to enjoy a peculiarly phantasmagoric experience” (Poole, 2011).

One can therefore regard Cixous’s oneiric ideation of the philippine—and by extension, her text *Philippines*—as primarily “evoking love, this ‘force of attraction’ between two beings, in which we can never say where each of the two begins” (“évoqu[ant] l’amour, cette ‘force d’attraction’ entre deux êtres dont on ne pourra jamais dire dans lequel des deux elle commence”) (Crevier Goulet, 2010, p. 31; translation ours). Being so, it becomes “an invitation to love/Love, to participate in [this] state of non-separateness where all things combine yet retain their uniqueness in the common embrace” (Zupančič, 2017, pp. 193-194).⁶ It is by virtue of this entanglement roused by Cixous’s philippine that another Philippine—our Philippines—can then be ideally offered to this discourse: the *Philippine* that is the “sign” of that “geopolitical reality [which] encloses and at the same time opens up the tropics as a particular global location” (Jacobo, 2011, p. 23). This is the signification that, despite its ostensible concurrence with the name of Cixous’s French almond, is curiously overlooked, if not utterly unthought-of, in her capacious exercise of reverie.⁷

This essay attempts then to reconsider Cixous’s *philippine* via our Philippines, through dwelling on the stroke of homophony between these signifiers—namely *philippine* and *Philippine*—and encountering them as materials in and of themselves. As such, these words are recognized here not simply as objects of the critique, but the very method through which a comparative reading can be initiated and pursued (see Benitez, 2022c). And so, instead of rehearsing the typical strategy of letting the extraliterary preemptively determine and pervade the act of comparison (see Hutchinson, 2018; also Spivak, 2003)—that is, letting “realistic discourse” overshadow the literary

⁶ Cixous’s concern on love has been observed in her texts published prior to *Philippines* (see for instance Cixous 2003; 2005), and as such, the latter can be considered as “one of the turning points in Cixous’s *œuvre*, helping us understand how the human mind functions and what it may uncover through the power of the imaginary” (Zupančič, 2017, p. 194).

⁷ Even most of the existent engagements with Cixous’s *Philippines*—and these are few—elide the “specter of the Philippine” (Jacobo, 2013) that haunts the text, opting to return instead to matters already raised by Cixous, such as *Peter Ibbetson* (Zupančič, 2017; 2013, pp. 283-304), Proust (Vozel, 2021), or the notion of the autobiographical (M'besso, 2016).

comparison being done⁸—this essay deliberately turns to Cixous’s work first, engaging with it most patiently, lovingly, so as to ultimately reveal that despite this text’s seeming distance, if not outright disconnect, from our Philippines, the latter turns out to be a kernel that resides in Cixous’s *Philippines* all along.⁹ In this sense, the literary text, as agentic nonhuman material, is considered a “writing force” (Chittiphalangsri, 2023, p. 15) constitutive of, and even compelling, the act of comparison: the text is held here to be the material activating of such comparative reading, and being so, also intimating of decolonial possibilities through which it can be reread.

This essay thus regards words as “discursive entry points,” particularly in their being nonhuman “embodiments of particular contexts and materialities” (Benitez, 2019, p. 459-460). In the same manner that Cixous claims the title *Philippine* simply “sprang up” (“*a surgit*”) to her (2011, p. 19; 2009, p. 33), or a book, itself an assemblage of words, is an agent capable of “summon[ing]” (“*convoqu[er]*”) and “bewitch[ing]” (“*envoûte[er]*”) (p. 31; p. 50), words themselves are recognized here to be agentic nonhuman matters that “participate...in and influence...intra-action”¹⁰ (Benitez, 2022c, p. 99)—indeed, as in the particular instance of discourse that is this essay. Through this “reading-affect” (Royle, 2008, p. ix), despite the “absence of an explicit referentiality” between the words being coincided here—that is, “the referents [simply] not coher[ing] in the signature of the *Philippine*” (Jacobo, 2013)—the loving promise of telepathic philippine is practiced, and perhaps more faithfully so, by way of

⁸ Derived from Hayden White’s (1987, p. 2) observation regarding the aversion of “realistic discourse” from the potency of tropics: “tropic is the shadow from which all realistic discourse tries to flee. This flight, however, is futile; for tropics is the process by which all discourse *constitutes* the objects which it pretends only to describe realistically and to analyze objectively.” An example of explicit deployment of such heuristic is Allan Punzalan Isaac’s (2006) work on “American Tropics” which particularly “demonstrate[s] how America...continually gyrates and generates tropes about itself to underscore its identity or difference against its perceived others” (p. 1), including the Philippines. It must be noted, however, that Isaac’s work, similar to those of other contemporary Filipino thinkers (see, for instance, Tadiar, 2009; and Gonzaga, 2009), foregrounds the extraliterary first, setting it as the crucial discursive field in which material texts are to be placed—a standard, of course, in any historical materialist reading (see Neyrat, 2020). In the case of the present essay, although it shares the endeavor of these works to initiate decolonizing readings in relation to the Philippines, such a strategy is being eluded, at least until Cixous’s text demands it so, as an attempt to demonstrate another methodological possibility, namely that of a new materialist reading which recognizes “literature... as matter in itself that is capable of stimulating an ‘intra-active’ encounter among other matters” (Benitez, 2022c, p. 97). Simply put, in White’s terms, “realistic discourse” emerges here from the material “tropic.”

⁹ Or by way of another geographical figuration, Cixous’s philippine and our Philippines as *antipodes*—diametrically opposed sites “not joined by being adjacent to one another, but through the impossible distance underneath our feet” (Chittiphalangsri, 2023, p. 6). Paul Giles (2021, p. 488) explores the potential of this figure as a method in what he calls as “the polymorphous antipodean,” which insists on juxtapositions where “integrated or systematic knowledge is of less relevance than provocative proximity.” And yet, as Phrae Chittiphalangsri (forthcoming, p. 12) points out, Giles’s “exciting reading of the antipodes does not seem to include the antipodal pairs belonging to the same socio-economic sphere, ones that belong to the same level, or lack, of hegemony,” such as those that are similarly “situated in the equatorial zone and considered to belong to the global south,” that is, the tropics. It is then here that the currently harnessed figure of the philippine contributes to such an “antipodal turn,” with its double kernels heralding the possibility of symmetry.

¹⁰ *Intra-action* refers to an event that “mutual[ly] constitut[es] material agencies” (Barad, 2007, p. 33) of matters involved, in contrast to the assumption that these materials enter such encounters already possessing their fully-formed agencies. In the case of literature, intra-action can be demonstrated in how “signification, above all else, is an instance of materialities already at work and enmeshed in an encounter, with the literary material itself as an agent just as active as the human reader” (Benitez, 2022c, p. 97).

expanding its seemingly exclusively Euro-Western and temperate ideation. In this sense, the endeavor becomes a decolonial gesture, an interruptive linking of the tropics to Cixous's reverie that is ironically a "delinking," too, in the opportunity it presents for "bring[ing] to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, [even] other economy, other politics, other ethics" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 453). In a nutshell then, in insisting the Philippine tropics in Cixous's *Philippines*, decolonially yoking these two together, this essay ultimately intimates their being twin kernels, too, dwelling in a single shell—that same shell that is *this* planet.

Philippine philippine

Cixous's ideation of the philippine is rooted not only on its being a suggestive figure, a "metaphor...that take[s] us *beyond*" (Zupančič, 2017, p. 202), but also on the very materiality of its name:

D'abord on pense que c'est du grec. C'est du grec. On ouvre. Dans l'amande il y a plus d'une amande. Dans l'amande se tient l'alemande. On ouvre? Ouvrons le dictionnaire. L'alemande qui dit Philippine la première est ellemande. C'est la Surprise merveilleuse. En réalité Philippine est l'altération par attraction du prénom Philippe, du mot allemand Vielliebchen. Ma petite toute aimée mon cher petit bien-aimé mon androgyne chéri... Qui nous dira les secrets de la force d'attraction?

...Philippe aura attiré et séduit Vielliebchen cependant que Philippine est attiré par Vielliebchen, mais en vérité personne ne pourra jamais dire lequel a commencé à attirer lequel laquelle, c'est le mystère du transfert. (Cixous, 2009, pp. 40-42)

First one thinks [the word *philippine*]'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 one open? Let's open the dictionary.¹¹ 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 my dear little

¹¹ Here, Cixous (2011, p. 75n10 ; 2009, p. 40n1) includes a note quoting at the length the entry for *philippine* in the *Le Robert Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*. Such detail is noteworthy, for it signals a "new trend" in Cixous's writings (Zupančič, 2017, p. 194; see, for instance, Cixous, 2010). Particular to the case of *Philippines*, this strategy of citation can be regarded as crucial to the text's intention of "open[ing] the doors to an unexpected set of references (Zupančič, 2017, p. 195)—indeed, the performance of the itinerary that is reading itself.

beloved my darling androgyne... Who will tell us the secrets of the force of attraction?

...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*. (Cixous, 2011, pp. 24, 26)

As this brief etymological detour reveals, the word materially demonstrates telepathic linkages among languages. While on the surface, *philippine* might come across as Greek in origin, with its first two syllables especially reminiscent of the Greek *philos* (love), Cixous's leafing through the dictionary discloses the word as, in fact, an alteration of the German *Vielliebchen*—the conjunction of *viel* (much) and *lieb* (love), that is made diminutive by *-chen* (hence, much loved little one). Such change in the German word is said to be induced “through attraction” (“*par attraction*”) of the French *Philippe*, a name whose first half, in turn, can be traced back to the same Greek *philos*. With two such possible kernel roots—one in German and another in French—residing within a seemingly Greek shell, the history of *philippine* renders the word again as a philippine, and thus affirming—and, at the same time, anticipating—Cixous's oneiric discourse on telepathy. It only then becomes understandable why it was crucial for Cixous to halt her philological inquiry at this point, for it is here that a telepathic relation can be summoned once again: what this “attraction” between the French *Philippe* and the German *Vielliebchen* might mean remains—and *must* remain—a mystery for Cixous, which she calls “the mystery of transference” (“*c'est le mystère du transfert*”). For in being such an enigma, the philippineness of the word *philippine* is also preserved: with neither of the two words preceding the other, the twinship of *Philippe* and *Vielliebchen* is maintained.

Etymology, therefore, is useful as a discursive strategy for Cixous's dreaming true insofar as it instantiates her intuitions on telepathy. Foremost, it allows *philippine* to be projected as a word that is most singular, and more crucially, untranslatable: for Cixous, not only does the *philippine* signify the telepathic notion that she attempts to convey, but its very roots also materialize the same concept. In a way, this makes *philippine* similar to onomatopoeic words in the way it simultaneously “perform[s] embodiment” of what it means (Benitez, 2022c, p. 102), virtually communicating what it signifies through its very materiality as revealed by its etymological roots. And so, given the contended singularity of *philippine*, while the word is said to “not exist” (“*n'existe pas*”) in English,¹² Cixous insists that it still “cannot not exist” (“*ne peut pas ne pas exister*”) (2011, p. 22; 2009, p. 37). Hence, even when it “crosses the Channel”

¹² Zupančič (2017, p. 198) curiously affirms this, saying that “the American edition of *The Oxford Dictionary* does not contain the word *philippine*.” However, the entry for *Vielliebchen* in Grimm and Grimm's (1919) *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1854–1961) confirms that English equivalents do exist: *philippina*, *philopœna*, *fillipeen*.

(“*passe la Manche*”), from French to English, “when it gets to the other side” (“*arrivée de l’autre côte*”), Cixous claims that “it’s [still] called Philippine” (“*ça se dit Philippine [quand même]*”): considering its purported peculiarity, the word is imagined to be fated to remain as such, becoming a foreign signifier that is integrated into the target language. Such wager is evinced, if not fulfilled, by the English translation of Cixous’s book that bears the same name from French—*Philippines*.¹³

Granted that Cixous’s etymological consideration of the word is expectedly rooted on the French language, it still warrants to consider that the word *philippine*, as a material in and of itself, has an existence that extends beyond what has been—or can be—re/constructed by etymology as a discipline. After all, words are most animate, sharing intimate entanglements with other matter (Benitez, 2022c, p. 99; De Landa, 2000, p. 183), every instance of which inevitably alters both themselves and their others in aleatory ways. And so, words such as *philippine*, in their sheer materiality, are already predestined to, say, disseminate as signifiers (Derrida, 1981), oriented as they always are toward “the undecidable moment” which allows them to “reverse...the resident hierarchy” (Spivak, 1997, p. lxxvii) that presumes their being merely signifying and not constitutive of the signified.¹⁴ In this sense, *philippines* can only exceed how it has been defined and delimited, even by the most apparently scientific of etymological procedures; one can even say that in *philippines* already lie the seeds toward decolonial reappraisals of Cixous’s oneiric discourse. Therefore, as much as the word “sprang up” (“*a surg*”) to Cixous with the piercing authority of an arrow, it is simply bound to commit other forms of transgressions too, in its performance of its most “tropic” materiality (Benitez, 2022a, pp. 239-240)—that is, its capacity to turn to other directions at any given moment.

It is then by this perpetual possibility of words to turn on their own heads—if not “lose [their] head[s]” entirely (Derrida, 1981, p. 20; see also Benitez, 2021b, p. 69)—that Cixous’s *philippine* can be considered comparatively, “coincidentally” (Benitez, 2021a, p. 211n3; 2022b, p. 351), with our tropical *Philippine*. For similar to how the word is said to have simply “arrive[d]” (“*arriv[é]*”) to Cixous (2011, p. 18; 2009, p. 32), the same word can be intuited as now demanding, too, to be reread—and reread by *us*, Southeast Asian *philippines*—as a sign that also points to another meaning, particularly to the one that is ironically forgotten in Cixous’s lush reveries from her European standpoint. This insistence toward rereading is crucial, for it also drives at an ethical

¹³ *Philippines* was first read as papers delivered on two occasions—one in an international symposium and another in a keynote lecture, both held in 2008 (Cixous, 2011, p. iv)—before it was published as a book with the title *Philippines: Prédelles* (Cixous, 2009). Prior to the publication of the complete English translation of the text, Laurent Milesi, in a special issue of the *Oxford Literary Review* dedicated to telepathy, published an English translation of the text as it had been given as a keynote lecture, bearing the title “Philippines: Sweet Prison” (see Cixous, 2008). Across these translations, the name *Philippines* has been insistently retained.

¹⁴ In some cases, words can even surpass their being signifiers—as utter aural or visual materials that might not necessarily pertain to an idea but exhibit agency by other means, such as “perform[ing] embodiment” in and through themselves, as simply sensorial matters (Benitez, 2022c, p. 102).

imperative: it is a decolonial reminder that “to buy a self-contained version of the West”—as in to be complacent with a linguistic consideration of the signifier limited to a Eurocentric circulation—is, after all, “to ignore its production by the imperialist project” (Spivak, 1988, p. 291). Therefore, the attempt to reinscribe *philippine* with our *Philippine* is indeed an urgent decolonial endeavor; if the attempt might appear forceful at first glance, it is only insofar as the tropics has been long overshadowed by the empire, tempered to seeming exclusion from discourses such as Cixous’s dreaming true.

Despite its nonmention in Cixous’s text, the name of the *Philippines* as a sign that points to a particular geopolitical reality has always been a kernel in the linguistic circuit of *philippine*. Originally in Spanish, *Philippines* is *Filipinas*, a diminution (-inas)—as “either an endearment or pejorative” (in Jacobo, 2013)¹⁵—of the name *Felipe*. This is the equivalent for the French *Philippe*, that is, the same name that purportedly “attracted” the German *Vielliebchen* to be altered as the French almond *philippine*. At the same time, and more importantly for Philippine history, *Felipe* was also the name of the Spanish crown prince at the time of the 1543 Villalobos expedition, during which the twinned islands of Leyte and Samar were given the name *Felipinas* in his honor (Scott, 1994, p. 6); this took place long before 1839, when *philippine* was said to be “introduc[ed]” (“*implant[é]*”) to French, as specified in Cixous’s cited dictionary entry (2011, p. 75n10; 2009, p. 40n1).¹⁶ During the course of Spanish colonialism, lasting for more than three centuries and extending beyond the two islands, *Filipinas* became the name of an entire archipelago bound together by empire, which was eventually Anglicized as the *Philippines* through American occupation.¹⁷

From this parallel etymological consideration of *Philippine*, it becomes evident that yoking it with the name for Cixous’s almond is more than a simple “circumstantial conjunction” between referents that seem to “not cohere in the [same] signature of the *Philippine*” (Jacobo, 2013). For between the two there already exists an intimate, albeit almost invisible connection, which can open up the possibility of understanding them differently. Through their understated entanglement, *Philippines* and *philippine* attract and are attracted to each other, twin kernels contained in a single shell, and in so

¹⁵ It is worth quoting here the rest of Patrick Flores’s consideration of the diminution in the name of the *Philippine*: “It is a re-scaling in light of a norm to the point that it is reduced to an ornament, a fixation on painstaking detail... The Philippine itself is a figurine, crafted from the name of a future Spanish king to ordain an archipelago of several thousands, of a colonial figuration as it is a formation dispersed across the waters” (in Jacobo, 2013).

¹⁶ Meanwhile, in German, as noted by Grimm and Grimm (1919), *Vielliebchen* was not yet listed in the dictionaries by Johann Christoph Adelung and Joachim Heinrich Campe, which were respectively published from 1793 to 1801, and 1801 (republished in 1813). What bears underscoring here then is that the Spanish *Felipinas* appears to predate the French *philippine* and even the German *Vielliebchen*.

¹⁷ In the Filipino language, one of the recurring contentions is whether to spell the name of the country as *Filipinas* or *Pilipinas*; see, for instance, the recent revival of the debate in Almario (2021), De Guzman (2021), and Manahan (2022). Aside from this, there have been attempts to change the name of the country altogether, supposedly as an ultimate gesture of decolonization; see, for instance, the proposal of the former President Rodrigo Duterte to change the name of the country to *Maharlika* (Winn, 2019).

being, alter the very ontology of one another—a “reworking” that is characteristic of material encounters in the tropics (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 215, in Benitez & Lundberg, 2022, p. 2). It is this opportunity for reconfiguration that the colonial underpinnings of the tropic *Philippine* precisely offers in its disruption of the temperate conception of *philippine*, so as to make apparent a crucial point: that simultaneous to the temperate term’s privilege of telepathy to reach “through the prison bars” (Cixous, 2011, p. x) is its ironic foundation, too, on the same bars—specifically those of coloniality.¹⁸

To explicate, it is worth considering here the critical phrase repeated throughout the Cixous’s book, which overtly invites one to dream of an idyllic past: “Let’s return to the starting point” (“*Revenons a notre point de départ*”)¹⁹ (Cixous, 2011, p. ix; 2009, p. 5). This phrase is reminiscent of how in Du Maurier’s novel, *Peter and Mary*, in their mutual rehearsal of dreaming true, would nightly reunite in the Paris of their childhood. For Cixous, such a point of origin is the “unforgettable address” (“*adresse inoubliable*”) (p. 1; p. 9) of 54 rue Philippe, in Oran, in the subtropics of Algeria (p. 5; p. 16)—a place that has been the locus of many of her writings, especially from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s (Kaiser, 2019, p. 109).²⁰ This city is the home of the Cercle Militaire, one of the “primitive figures of [Cixous’s] Algerian scene” (Cixous, 1998a, p. 213), which she considers as “Eden in Oran” (“*Eden oranais*”), and indeed “the first garden” (“*premier jardin*”) (2011, pp. 39, xiii; 2009, pp. 60, 8). It is this site that Cixous evokes in metonyms whenever the above affective phrase, with its “promises of incredible delights, and...magic nostalgias” (“*promesses d’enchantements inouïs [et] nostalgies magiques*”) (p. 4; p. 13), would be uttered: with the signal to *return*, the “neat, pure and ruling sun” (“*soleil net, pur, régnañt*”), or “the extraordinary beauty of trees” (“*l’extraordinaire beauté des arbres*”) would be conjured, and “warm winds” (“*vents chauds*”) are said to “hail...from the word” (“*ven[ir] du mot*”) (p. 1; p. 9).

In her rousing of an Edenic space, what simultaneously takes place is a movement across historical time. For Cixous, seeing this garden means “seeing a bygone time return” (“*voir revernir un temps disparu*”): it is to go back to her “childhoods: infancy, the first, second, fourth, etc. childhood” (“*enfances: la petite, la prime, la deuxième, la quatrième, etc.*”)—all the way back to what she nominates as the ultimate “prehistory” (“*préhistoire*”) or the “legendary times when we were toddling and telepathing round the world on all fours and eight paws” (“*temps légendaires où nous faisons à quatre*

¹⁸ The bars of the gate, after all, have served as an important motif in Cixous’s writings in “bring[ing] a structure of colonial discrimination and drive to racialized segregation to the point and permits [a] stress [on] a precarious zone without belonging...” (Kaiser, 2015, p. 195). Similarly, there is also an observed “remarkable passion” in her writings “for borders, fences, gates and doors [as] a means of making these open up into scenes pulsating with linguistic, economic, political, racial or sexual disturbance” (Hilfrich, 2003, p. 187). For instance, Cixous (2006, p. 18) writes: “We looked at one another. Between us, the gate, impossible. I am miserable. I am miserable... The impossible gate comes between us, again, between us the children with two loaves [of bread] and us the children without loaves. Without a word.”

¹⁹ Cixous (2011, p. 1-2; 2009, 9-10) takes this sentence from Proust (2002, p. 50), with whom she also consistently engages throughout *Philippines*.

²⁰ See, for instance, Cixous (1998a; 2006) and Cixous and Calle-Gruber (1997).

pattes et huit télépathes les tours du monde") (2011, pp. 20, 31; 2009, pp. 35, 50).²¹ Such recovery of childhood is crucial, for to do so is to recover as well that particular version of one's self—perhaps, like a kernel, *that* kernel, in such a shell of the self—"who dreams, thinks, senses the world, and who is the genius" ("*qui rêve, pense, sent le monde [et] qui est le génie*") (p. 35). In other words, to "return to the starting point" is to also return to one's past self, if not *the* past of history as a whole, that supposedly makes possible (again) the telepathic philippine, the loving promise of nonseparation among things. It is then here that Cixous acknowledges once more the instructiveness of Du Maurier's novel: through the examples of Peter and Mary, in reclaiming their younger selves as Gogo and Mimsey in their dreaming true, "Peter Ibbetson's garden [has] been able, at a distance in time and space, to be the dazzling prefiguration of the Garden of the Cercle Militaire" ("*le jardin de Peter Ibbetson [a] pu, à distance dans le temps et dans l'espace, être la préfigure éblouissante du Jardin du Cercle Militaire*") (p. 31; p. 49), attracting Cixous, and thus inviting her to also learn the art of dreaming true herself. For Cixous, ultimately, it was as if the novel, all the way from 1894, has been telepathizing with her in the early 2000s, indeed "as if *this lesson in dreaming true* were addressed to [her]" ("*comme si c'était à [elle] que ce cours de rêver vrai s'adressait*") (p. 47; p. 72).

And yet, in the midst of this retrospective performance, it is crucial to attend particularly to the names of Cixous's street in Oran and the "primal" garden located there. For it is through the very materiality of these names that the present oneiric discourse can be further interrupted by the steel bars of modern reality, revealing that the purported return evoked by telepathic philippine, in both spatial and temporal terms, is ultimately grounded on the discourse and actuality of colonialism.²² The street name *Rue Philippe*, firstly, does not only simply reiterate the word *philippine* that has shaped Cixous's excursion in dreaming true; more importantly, it is also a name that pronounces the fundamental coloniality that has made the over-all enterprise possible in the first place. For similar to the name *Felipinas* to our archipelago in the tropics, "the first name Philippe juxtaposed with the city name Oran serves as a metaphor for the French presence in Algeria. Why, after all, would [Rue] Philippe be in Oran"

²¹ The relation between childhood and telepathy can be understood further via Jean Piaget's (1953) notion of the early sensorimotor stage, according to his model of the child's development of cognitive capabilities. Especially instructive here is how White (1978, p. 7) translates this stage to topological terms as the "metaphor phase," in which "the distinction between self and other, container, container and contained, is utterly lacking." Recovery of such mode of relating to the world, for Cixous (2011, p. 66; 2009, p. 94), is tantamount to "turn[ing] [one]self into a cat, [to] pass through the bars" ("pou[voir] [se] faire chat, passer à travers les barreaux")—hence, the above description of the child to be on "all fours" (totalling to "eight paws," the additional four of which come from, perhaps, the simultaneous cat-double of the self). For further reading of the animal in Cixous's writings, see Segarra (2006).

²² Anne McClintock (1995, p. 40) sharply describes the colonial discourse that entangles time and space: "imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory. By extension, the return journey to Europe is seen as rehearsing the evolutionary logic of historical progress, forward and upward to the apogee of the Enlightenment in the European metropolis. Geographical difference across *space* is figured as a historical difference across *time*."

(Everett, 2017, p. 206), an otherwise Berber space?²³ It is this colonial presence that is further affirmed by Cixous's garden name *Cercle Militaire*—literally meaning “military circle”—which demarcates the garden as, in reality, a place only “reserved for the class of officers” (Cixous, 1998b, p. xiv), to which Cixous's father had become a part in 1939, only to be excluded from the following year due to their family's Jewishness (1998a, p. 155, 159). Such a name, in other words, signals a garden that is far from Edenic, being founded on the presence—and thus, violence—of the colonial military.

This dreamt true Oranian Eden, therefore, is unsurprisingly not “the beginning of times...the origin...the first days of the creation...” (“[les] commencements des temps...l'origine...[les] premiers jours de la création...”) as much as it is a mere “construction of a prehistoric scene” (“construction d'une scène préhistorique”) (Cixous, 2011, pp. 5, 10; 2009, p. 15, 22; emphasis ours). Being a “construction” of the garden, however, can be intuited not only as referring to Cixous's very act of dreaming true that summons the landscape “each time there's Prison” (“chaque fois qu'il y a Prison”) (p. 68; p. 97); instead, it also crucially points to the garden as being a construction in and of itself, which “underlines the fact that [even] nature [writ large] is a human creation as much as any picture of the natural world would be” (Zarobell, 2010, p. 4). Nature, after all, is invented and reinvented too by colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal discourses, among others (see Haraway, 1992) and gardens, as a material and a gathering of other materials, have always been a testament to this: their existence is entwined with the colonial projects of the temperate world, not only in the case of subtropical Algeria (see Osborne, 1985), but as well in other parts of the tropics occupied by Europe (Blais, 2022), including the Philippine islands (see Pagunsan, 2021). Even contemporary modes of regarding the garden—as a supposedly apolitical source of emotional pleasure, relief, and meaning for an individual amid the vicissitudes of modern life (see Hewer, 2003)—can, through enough metonymic associations, be traced back to the long-standing colonial imaginary of the tropics, that is, tropicality as the “West's environmental other,” most “paradisical, luxuriant and redemptive,” albeit contained now in designated plots of land, precisely in order to defuse its purported “primeval, pestilential and debilitating” potency (Clayton, 2012, p. 180, in Benitez & Lundberg, 2022, p. 2).

What ultimately emerges then is a recognition that Cixous's telepathic garden, as a material landscape, insists on being firmly grounded within this planet, rooted in its very “alterity” (Spivak, 2003, p. 72), especially in light of colonialisms throughout history. It now becomes clear why even in Cixous's telepathic return, violence inevitably intrudes in the philippine dreamt true, forbidding the idyllic tropicale from fully flourishing. For in such a garden, Cixous says, one can only feel “fear lest it turn

²³ The name *Oran*, in contrast, came from the Arabic *Wahrān*, from the Berber *wa-iharan*, which means “place of lions” (Wild, 2009, p. 511). Is this perhaps the genus of the feline that Cixous becomes in her rehearsal of telepathy (see note 21)?

into a prison from one moment to the next” (“*crain[te] que d’un instant à l’autre il ne tourne en prison*”) (2011 p. 68; 2009 p. 97) precisely because such a site, in the first place, has always been entangled with colonial violence. And so, at the telepathic cue of *return*, “days of a neat, pure and ruling sun, moments when one truly sees all the realities...” (“*journées de soleil net, pur, régissant, premiers moments où l’on voit toutes les réalités en vrai...*”) would appear, only for the bars of colonial reality to assert themselves soon enough—“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*” (“*à commencer par le cœur embrouillé des hommes et l’arène brûlante des premières guerres et l’extraordinaire beauté des arbres qui regardent la tuerie humaine, nouveauté, et la douleur sans voix du veau écorché*”) (p. 1; p. 9; emphasis ours). Ants, too, could not help but “mutate into the military” (“*muter en militaires*”), if not “bombings, witchcraft trials, diseases” (“*bombardements, procès en sorcellerie, maladies*”) (p. 68; p. 97). Indeed, “everything is treacherous” (“*tout est traître*”), as Cixous laments, for the garden, to begin with, is already a treachery—a garden is always already a treachery. In this sense, Cixous’s *philippine*—and, by extension, in Du Maurier’s novel, Peter and Mary’s *philippine*²⁴—in its manifestation as such a garden, inevitably coincides with our tropic Philippines: indeed, no matter the seeming distance between all these places, they are all kernels dwelling in the single shell, namely that of our planet most stricken with violent colonial temperaments and temperings.

A Philippine Garden

This essay has been an attempt to read Hélène Cixous’s *Philippines* Philippinely, which has been rehearsed through patiently engaging with the former, necessarily closely reading it at length, if only to eventually make apparent the latter’s presence, insisting that it has always been a kernel in the text. Through dwelling on the homophony between the names of her almond and our tropics as a critical opportunity, the materiality of the words *philippine* and *Philippines*, in their very histories, reveals an intimate connection between them, despite the seeming distance between their respective referents and the complete nonmention of the latter word in Cixous’s text. As such, *Philippine* becomes a crucial interruption to the propositions of *philippine* regarding telepathy and dreaming true, critically instructive as a reminder of how colonial discourses and realities are intimately constitutive of such notions. Moreover,

²⁴ As such, aside from being a “develop[ment] [of] an inner world” as way to “compensat[e]” from the harshness of the waking world, and thus, a manifestation of modern alienation (McCann, p. 72; see also Zieger, 2018), the garden dreamt true by Peter and Mary in Du Maurier’s novel can be read, too, as demonstrative of the breadth and depth that tropicality and colonialism writ large have reached, pervading even the most secret of dreams—a phenomenon that has been observed elsewhere (see, for instance, Plane, 2014; Tadiar, 2004). Particularly instructive in the case of Du Maurier’s (1919, p. 73) novel is Peter’s description of the garden he dreams true, citing colonial constructed landscapes as the crucial basis of comparison: it is “an inner world of my own whose capital was Passy, whose fauna and flora were not to be surpassed by anything in Regent’s Park or the Zoological Gardens.”

through yoking these two words, the telepathic garden that is summoned in Cixous's act of dreaming true, contrary to its orientations toward ahistoricity, is also recognized here to be inevitably entangled with *our* planet, in which the tropics is pervaded by the enduring constructions from the temperate colonial world. Therefore, to speak of Cixous's *philippine* is to also speak of our *Philippine*; there is no way of talking about philippines without evoking at the same time the Philippines, in the same way in which even the most seemingly detached dreaming true or pure imaginary of a garden is also built on grounds of coloniality.

As a final turn of this essay, if only to provide a preliminary glimpse as to where the aforementioned insight can further lead, one can consider here another garden—a Philippine garden: the Jardín Botánico de Manila, built in 1858 under the Spanish colonial rule.²⁵ In the decree regarding the establishment of this garden, the then Governor-General Fernando Norzagaray y Escudero says that the structure was ultimately built “in consideration of the recognized value from the viewpoint of ornamental purposes and public health...rest and recreation for the people...the acclimatization of plants not grown in the Archipelago...[as well as] instruction in the principles and practice suitable for the cultivation of native plants” (in Merrill, 1903, p. 31). However, in the course of the Jardín's history, especially with changes in its leadership as well as the conditions of the Spanish empire at the time, its original orientation toward production of agricultural knowledge was eventually “shifted...to include descriptive and classificatory botanical research that addressed concerns for international science and domestic colonial ends” (Gutierrez, 2020, p. 13)—a strategy that has been similarly deployed by other empires over their respective colonies, such as the British (see Arnold, 2006). In the case of the Philippines, this has been demonstrated in how Sebastián Vidal, a crucial figure in Philippine botany and the director of the Jardín from 1878 until his death in 1889, collected and studied Philippine botanical specimens to be compared with materials from other European herbaria (Calabrese & Velayos, 2009, p. 292).²⁶

And yet, despite its rootedness from the thickets of colonial enterprise, the Jardín, like the very word *p/Philippine*, in its materiality, still holds an ironic potency toward decolonial possibilities.²⁷ Instructive for imagining how such an opportunity might materialize is a moment in the novel *Noli me tângere* (1887) by the Filipino polymath José Rizal. In the chapter simply titled “Recuerdos,” the protagonist Crisostomo Ibarra, a returnee from Spain after seven years of study, wanders through the streets of

²⁵ Annette Condello (2011, p. 113) describes the Jardín as “Asia's oldest botanical garden at the end of the nineteenth century” and “recognized as Asia's first Botanical Garden.” However, it must be noted that other botanical gardens in Asia have long existed before the Jardín, such as the Kebun Raya Bogor in Indonesia, established in 1817; and the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden, in 1786.

²⁶ Such comparison can be linked to Benedict Anderson's (1991) intuition on the formation of nations as ultimately comparative too.

²⁷ For examples demonstrating such possibilities in the case of other gardens, see Toto (2022), for the Philippine context; Bourg (2019), for South Africa and the Carribeans; and Boonstra (2022), for Indonesia.

Manila. As he sensed his way through the suburbs, letting himself be touched by “all, noise, movement, even the sun itself, a particular odor, the motley colors” (“*todo, ruido, el traqueteo, hasta el sol mismo, cierto olor particular, los abigarrados colores*”) (Rizal, 1996, p. 64; 1902, p. 61), his reminiscing of fond memories was interrupted by a particular sight:

El jardín botánico ahuyento sus risuenos recuerdos: el demonio de las comparaciones le puso delante los jardines botánicos de Europa, en los países donde se necesita mucha voluntad y mucho oro para que brote una hoja y abra su caliz una flor; recordó los de las colonias, ricos y bien cuidados y abiertos todos al público. (Rizal, 1902, p. 63)

The sight of the Botanical garden drove away his gay reminiscences: the devil of comparisons placed him before the botanical gardens of Europe, in the countries where much effort are needed to make a leaf bloom of a bud open; and even more, to those of the colonies, rich and well-tended, and all open to the public. (Rizal, 1996, p. 67)

Such is an instance of telepathy, long before Cixous’s articulation:²⁸ here, a garden communicates with Ibarra, effectively “driving away” his happy memories; indeed, the garden impresses its materiality upon the returnee, and the consequence for him can only be paradigmatic. A sharper translation of Rizal’s prose in the original Spanish makes the case even clearer: “*El jardín botánico ahuyento sus risuenos recuerdos,*” writes Rizal, which can be rendered more directly in English as, “The botanical garden drove away his beaming memories” (translation ours).²⁹ The moment thus underscores the material agency of the garden to cause such a crucial change in atmosphere—and later on, in the course of Philippine history itself—through rousing and foregrounding in Ibarra other memories, particularly those that are entangled with the reality of colonialism in his Philippine tropics. It is at this moment that the sheer telepathic power of a garden can be recognized, as its affective assertion of a “faithful claim” that hopes to “enact and extend desiring movements that escape the debilitating, life-taking dreams of the New World Order” (Tadiar, 2004, p. 265): in having planted the seeds for the eventual radical sentiment that will bloom in Ibarra’s heart, and by extension, in the hearts of many Filipinos across the archipelago, allowing them to dream true, in time, of revolutions.

²⁸ But curiously, just a few years after the coinage of the term *telepathy*, by the English psychologist Frederic Myers in 1882 (see Luckhurst, 2002). Considering his education in Europe and his propensity for wide reading, could Rizal have encountered Myers’s word? Rizal, after all, only began to write *Noli* between 1884 and 1885.

²⁹ It is worth noting that Patricio Mariano’s (1912, p. 65) Filipino translation of the same sentence renders rather faithfully the agency of the Jardín as the subject: “Ang ‘Jardín Botánico’ ay nakapawi sa kaniyang magagandang pag-aalaala,” which approximately corresponds with our above translation.

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Christian Jil Benitez is a queer Filipino scholar and poet, dividing his time between Manila and Bangkok. He is currently pursuing his PhD in comparative literature at Chulalongkorn University, working on a manuscript on the nonhuman and comparativity under the Second Century Fund (C2F) Scholarship. He teaches at the Department of Filipino at the Ateneo de Manila University, where he earned an AB-MA in literature. His essays on time, tropicality, and materiality have appeared in *Kritika Kultura*, *Philippine Studies*, *Rupkatha*, and *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Ecofeminism*, among others. He is the associate editor for *Katipunan*, and a co-editor of the recent special issue of *eTropic* on tropical materialisms. His first book, *Isang Dalumat ng Panahon*, was published by AdMU Press.

Phrae Chittiphalangsri is a Thai scholar based in Bangkok. She is an Associate Professor at Chalermprakiat Center for Translation and Interpretation (CCTI), Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, and acts as the chairperson of the center's MA program. She was co-editor of *New Voices in Translation Studies* (2008-2012), and now serves on the journal's advisory board. She was elected member of IATIS executive council in 2015 and went on to be assigned the role of co-vice president in 2021. Phrae Chittiphalangsri has published articles on the role of translation in Orientalism, and Thai translation history in several international journals such as *Translation Studies*, *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies* and *The Translator*. She is also a contributor of entries on Orientalism in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, and Thai translation tradition in *A World Atlas of Translation* (2019). With Vicente Rafael, she co-edited *Of Peninsulas and Archipelagos: The Landscape of Translation in Southeast Asia* (2023), the first of several projects planned to expand translation studies in Southeast Asia.