

Early bird's conspiracy with ladybirds. A six-day undisclosed writing performance.

PA-F, St Erme France, 2010

Day one. Pollen. Water.

A ladybird is having a walk on the table. Two. And two are walking on the window. Perhaps they can smell the pollen, perhaps it drives them crazy.

We have reached here yesterday. Talks. Looks, gazes, bags, suitcases, laptops. Rooms, bed sheets, pillow covers, jokes, wine and cigarettes. Cooking. Not doing much. Wandering through the building, recognising the smells. The walls of the rooms are very thin, with holes at the top, you can hear the two girls in the next room laying in their beds next to each other, with their laptops on their laps, late past midnight, talking, laughing, breathing, sighing.

At 5.45 first deliberated eyes opening. At 6.04 am in the peacock studio and the night already fading away. Candle, thin plastic mat, rolled blanket, shawl around the shoulders covering the knees till the floor. Eyes closed. Thoughts. No thoughts. Sensations. No sensations. Reactions. No reactions. Judging. Waiting. Losing interest, patience, interest. Feeling. Wanting to move. Watching the time. Watching time. Waiting. Steps on the corridor, the door opens, a sleepy female voice whispers - "my God", and quickly retreats. Silence. Birds outside, different sounds, rhythms, noises. Steps outside near the window. Curiosity. I break my rule again, I look ahead. A woman made a cup of her hand around her eyebrows, sticks her nose on the window as to better stare inside. Must be strange to see someone, at this time of the day, sitting, facing a candle and not knowing why. Later on A joined. He was sleepy, slept well, but still sleepy. Looking for a common ground we shared some very basic simple movements between Indian martial arts, *taijiquan*, yoga and nothing. How to find a physical common ground when distance is that huge? He did. At the end we were laying each on our thin plastic mat, talking about India, Belgium, Romania. And about food. A wanted a coffee, we moved on. Back here. Pollen, water, ladybirds.



First I saw only one, then one by one two more. And then another one. Time for some water (a coffee would be nice).

13.30 I cheated one boiled egg and a vitamins pill. Headache. Why to fight it away? Tiredness. Low energy, needing to lie down all the time. The cold feels colder, the head heavier. I lie in bed and sleep an hour. I fell asleep only after the alarm went off. Two hours later I was just where I started. Looking up pollen on *Wikipedia*. Pollination. Falling in pollen. A supplement, not a food itself. Headache. Boiling barley for the

evening meal. Two girls are singing and cooking in the kitchen. Out, in again. Some innocent lentils landed in the pot with the cooking barley during a singing gesture between two gazes at the neighbouring pot. Like tiny little light green yellowish errors, they cheerfully helped deviate once more the experiment for today. I add to that error some drops of lemon and a tiny slice of butter. From the pot in a bowl, from there via a spoon in my mouth, pieces of outside slowly becoming the juice that feeds the inside. Waiting for the cells to express their opinion. 8 pm and it feels like 1 am. 22.08 or should I say 10.08 pm? It feels rather like 22.08. Mean while 22.09. Dinner was lovely. It was an easy failure of the plan. It can happen tomorrow again, in the other sense. A movie will start downstairs in a few minutes. The boys are playing ping-pong. One ladybird is on the ceiling, the other two are out of sight. Participation is a choice; not partaking is a way of participating as well, seen in a larger context. Partly partaking is an emancipated form of participating. Thinking about participating could be refined way of relating. Participating at something that seems to be something else could be ignorance, caused by someone's limited understanding or by someone else's deformed presentation of the context, deliberated – in which case is political and can be extensively discussed - or caused by lack of discernment at that other side. The ceiling ladybird got down on the window above the desk, on the top half of it. Headache almost gone. Some part of the body feels like barley. Tomorrow there will be a new wish or at least a desire or a mood, which in the interaction with the wave of the moment will result in the choice that will need to occur.

Day two. Coffee. Apple. Coffee.

The movie we saw yesterday was a good reminder of what freedom of speech is about. Creating the space for the opinions you *dislike*, to be expressed openly. Else we only favour masquerade, an illusion of democracy, of equal rights. And more. Morning 5.47 today. A quick superficial wash, to limit noise for the neighbours, down the stairs, left on the corridor, left again, straight on, into the studio. No need for more thinking than this. Mat, blanket, shawl, no candle, sitting. Daylight is taking over earlier each day. Watching the breath, the thoughts. Yesterdays words randomly revisiting the spirit. Not quite randomly actually but let's not go into that now. Yesterday's peacocks are back on the seal. Unlike Calvino's Mr. Palomar, they seem to be hanging around rather than going by. First half an hour passed by like a minute, the only physical reaction worth mentioning were some tears that at intervals slowly rolled down on the chicks. So slowly that they felt thicker than regular tears. I remember once, incidentally having tasted someone's tears as one of them dropped on my lips. It made me breed a theory about how the feeling that generates a tear will determine its chemical composition and its taste. This morning tears I needed not to taste. The eyes perhaps needed a cleaning, nothing more than that. Tears are the shower that the body gives to its eyes. Just as it gives smile to its lips. And sneezing to its nose - and not only, according to Chinese medicine. And so on. One hour feels too long today. It's Sun-day. No Sun though on the visible frame of the sky. The need to move. The need to decide. Why think? Why insist? Why *why*? Standing up, starting the newly learned movements meant to Taoistically awake the body for the day. 45 minutes felt longer than long hour. Time for a coffee and a book. Back to my room. Typing, reading, thinking. Searching a room to bridge a homeless week, back in Antwerp. 10.35 am. The noises through the walls tell about colleagues and neighbours starting to wake up. Back to the couch-surfing website. The internet connection slowed down terribly. Downstairs, kitchen, an apple, lunch from yesterday's fresh rests and some extra, plus barley from the planned diet experiment, cheated with one cardamom seed. Talking about The Flemish G and The Dutch G. The gReat difference and all it carries within.

Discovery-walk through the other side of the building with A, three ping pong games to help him get accustomed with the game rules, as I know them. I bet tomorrow he wins if he wants to. Coffee again. Back

to the same room on the same second floor. Observing and absorbing the changing, slow choreography of clouds at the horizon. On the table, the laptop, two websites, papers and some books. Someone calls up the girl in the room next door. I play some music to half cover the conversation. Someone knocks at the door. "Would you like to read up this text for a recording?" Yes of course. The place has a life, the place is a-live. So do I. *One* certainly, the rest could only be ungrounded speculation (regarded from various western – Greek, Christian, atheist, scientific etc perceptions) or wishful intuition. Or pure fantasy, for which luckily there is *writing* as a never-ending, never-limiting playground. One of the four ladybirds suddenly fell on the book "Getting Lost Together" from her temporary ceiling. A real ladybird will always find her way out, unless someone crashes her when inside. "Beware of the horny hungry hunting peacock though", I mentally whisper as I blow my breath on her. That makes her stop and gather her many legs under her half-round body, waiting for the hurricane to cool down. Would you think her heart beat faster, would you think she has a heart? A knocks at the door, he needs the charger, he takes it. I review this text as to post it online. Hard to keep the focus on the screen with one ladybird walking on the notebook on the left side of the laptop and another one walking on the seal in front of me. As if they could communicate and suddenly decided to simultaneously move clockwise with about 45° on the circumference of a wider hexagon. Timing *is* communication, I decided, or at least it is the way it feels now. They're out of view again. Mr Palomar, what are you teaching these poor submissive ladybirds? Let's cut some vegetables now. A nap, a fight in the kitchen, shifted to the corridor and then to the newly painted floor studio across. Healthy vegetarian dinner. Ping pong session in between table cleaning and people gathering for projects presentations. Mushy desert very sweet. Slowly all people here. Talking and listening. What a difference.

"The grand thing about the human mind is that it can turn its own tables and see meaningless as ultimate meaning" - John Cage

Day three. Mind. Walk. Barley and extras.

This night the clocks were adjusted to summertime. Which means we slept one hour less, some of us. The new 5.45, followed by a shower. Down the stairs, same corridors, same studio. The night and the silence are thick, soft and cocooning. Light on just to arrange the setting. Mat, thin blanket, shawl, light off, eyes closed. Joy. The walk in the forest is supposed to start at 7 am, so I choose to combine sitting with some of the Taoist movements to slowly awake the top half of the body. Neck – it works on the whole spine – turning of the head toward right and left with fluid movements, breathing normally, keeping the back erect. Eyes: directing the gaze towards right and left; then up and down; then on the diagonals; then in circles, anticlockwise and clockwise. Each direction 9 times. Eyes wide large open and strongly closed, repeating 9 times. Turning the tongue inside the mouth 36 times, one set anti clock wise, then a clockwise direction set, twice outside the teethes, twice inside. Clapping teeth: three sets of 36 times, swallow the accumulated saliva in between sets, deeply. Shoulders: circulate in both senses, symmetrically and simultaneously. Keep a continuous focus on the breath. Slow down movements, conclude. Resume to breath. The exercises are meant to sharpen the awareness of the mind, by deliberately directing the *at-tention* to various places, circuits, following patterns and cyclical aspects of the body. Mind, attention, awareness, consciousness are - at least in the beginning - abstract concepts. If one would say direct your mind onto your mind and see what is, what would you do? To let the mind follow a simple head movement or the breath for example, is closer to having it watching an external moving object, like a car, and that we know how to do. By analogy, we follow the breath inside the body, starting with the inside of the nostrils. Keeping the attention on the movement of the breath inside the nostril is a good simple exercise to start with. We may come to experience that by observing the breath, we allow our breath to carry the mind, such as by watching a car, our gaze it's been carried by the movement

of that car. The watching of breath becomes a vehicle for watching the mind. The next step will be to try to see *who* or *what* is it that which is watching. Let's stick to this for now. Shaking the body, ready to go. Sounds in the kitchen. Coffee, in the other kitchen. Tea. Boots, extra socks, shawl around the hips, following the two girls who did wake up for the walk. One of them is the guide. The walk, the forest, the earth, the grass, the leaves, the branches, fresh traces of a horse on the muddy path, the trees, the birds, the bushes, a dog briefly chasing away a deer, woodpeckers, and a lot of other unknown and unseen living beings. One of us had a question about time, question she *gave* to the forest. Back to the village, wiping the boots against humid, fresh grass. Inside, back to the studio, back to taijiquan. Kitchen, one more girl. Tea, barley, a rice waffle with chocolate paste, two. Room, book, laptop. 9.55, down the stairs, kitchen, dancers, trainers. Studio – shaking, standing, balancing, rooting, pushing, walking, resisting, finding the opening. Stretching, breathing, foot massage, thanking. Out. Room, laptop. Window. Birds. Bed. Eyes closed. Eyes open, stairs, corridors, kitchen; barley with some carrots, brie and a slice of ham. Tea. Apple. Room. Table, window, laptop, sky. Open. Birds. Book, open. Words. The tastelessness of barley in between the few bits of marinated carrots, ham and brie is what matters. The memory of a voice in a given situation - or rather created - murmuring "No taste. The best taste." A book on the desk is entitled "In Praise of Blandness" and I will go through it these days. Let's walk with L. Back now.

Day four. Movement. Walk. Dhal-rice. An interesting talk.

5.46 out of bed. 6.02 peacock studio. The silence emphasises the size and feel of the building, of the enclosed spaces. It's a gift, this solitary part of the day. The silence rules until the sky starts to change colour and a bird utters her first song. I wonder whether it is the same bird or each day another one. Other birds start adding their own morning chants. The darkness makes the sounds feel richer. Among thoughts and birds, breath and physical sensations, hard to decide where to put the mind. I let it be where it wants to, where it enjoys. Time. Coffee. Back. Movement fills the coming two hours. Alone. The I is acting, the I is observing, the I is enjoying. There is a feeling of congruency, of complicity, of aloneness. Of no needs. A temporary feeling. One of the days in this process, I shall write nothing. I will go for a walk in the woods later this afternoon, if the weather is dry. Maybe meditate again later tonight, and resume to that. Barley in the morning, barley at lunch. Barley. Forest. Dhal-rice. Coffee. 20 minutes rest. Presentations. Talks. Dinner. A cigarette. Presentations, a talk. An interesting talk. Sleepiness. A colourless mood.

Day five. Planned delay. Planned talk. Revolution. Stories reading.

6.30. and so much light. The need to talk and write are fading away. The sounds of birds invading from outside. Down the stairs, the corridors, the peacock studio. Sitting. Light. No, this is not working now. Why react and if reacting, how? *You bitch!* And make it sound like a joke, put two fingers together near your lips, head them towards the other saying *dhooff* and explode in a loud laughter. *What is wrong with you? I like the sensational.* Some breathing and moving as if not really wanting to do it. This is not working. Am I still here? Should I put it this way or that way? Or simply ignore.

I can recognise a Iuliana text by now. Keep working on skills.

The nation state has gradually scattered and shifted its borders in the realm of telecommunication companies, insurance companies, banks, taxes and social security. Today's borders have rather an economic than any other kind of meaning. They generate costs for some, income for others.

Day six. Waiting. Planning. Cleaning. Dreaming.

7.07 this morning. Same morning rituals, short version. Bright sunny morning. Coffee. Cereals. Japanese green tea. Room, window, table, laptop, books. Looking for the ladybirds. Where are they? One is on the table, laying on her elytra, with open wings pointing outwards, her legs up in the air. I blow on her; it makes her fly straight into the dustbin near the table. A soft pressure, as if breathing got stuck a moment too long, in a vague location inside the chest. Is death part of life? Soon... on my way to a next unknown space-time destination. Saying *goodbye* to things views people and to you dear reader.