



## CLINICAL STUDY DAYS 2 DISCUSSION OF CASE

### ***Case: The case of J***

(by Alicia Hadida-Hassan)

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First of all, I would like to underline the psychoanalytical precision we can find in this case. It presents the specific way psychoanalysis deals with signifiers. Signifiers are always from the Other. But, as far as psychoanalysis is concerned, we cannot accept any signifier derived from the discourse of the Other as a representation of the subject.

That is exactly what the analyst respects from the very beginning of that treatment. As she says, she refused the school label of 'violent' applied to that child; she also refused the parent's complaint that they were immigrants and faced a certain opposition from the local culture. By doing that, she refused the most common trap of our contemporary times. She did not take the current signifiers offered to identify the subject, no matter how suitable they sounded.

The analyst paid attention to the signifiers brought by J in her discourse, such as the ones which appeared in the *name calling* that girl had complained about: 'nerd', 'crooked' or 'disgusting'. They were helpful to indicate that identification was a major

question in that case. The analyst avoided them, however, as well as the word 'bully', which has recently been considered a new kind of pathology in people's behavior everywhere, not only in schools. Another name for social trouble surrounded by lots of statistics, comments, special literature and so forth. Those words did not disguise the analytical listening. A link to a more singular question would have to be made.

In a recent paper<sup>2</sup>, a Brazilian colleague, Ram Mandil, underlines that identification can be considered as an extraction of a signifier from the Other. It is through that extraction that a subject would meet a symbolic complement. The success of that extraction depends on how the well available, contemporary master signifiers can fulfill that function. He also reminds us of the matheme conceived by J.-A. Miller for contemporary identification  $I(A)/a$ , in which the symbolic identification to an ideal provided from the Other  $I(A)$  stands for the object  $a$ .<sup>3</sup> The object  $a$ , as we know, corresponds to another kind of extraction. One that falls on the subject's body, and it is useful to remember that the body is an Other for the subject as well.

Such comment suits this case, in my opinion. We can say that some of the signifiers produced around J are like that: they are handy and easy to use. But they are not related, necessarily, to an extraction that corresponds to a body trace of *jouissance*.

So the names the analyst listens to and isolates from J's afflictions are other than those. They are: *alone* and the *only one*. Very common words, in fact, nothing special. Nevertheless, they were particularly more appropriate to J's question.

There lies the psychoanalytical precision: when Alicia Hadida-Hassan began her case presentation by selecting those signifiers, she indicated, at the same time, what analytical symptom was aimed in that treatment. They are not only signifiers that came from the Other, from the way J was *spoken*, but signifiers that came from the Other to translate into words some *jouissance*. J attributes her angry outbursts to the fact that she is left alone, as if she did not exist. So, the treatment aims at the cause in J's desire rather than its unpleasant effects.

They can also indicate how J's symptom can be a response to what is symptomatic in the parental couple. I'd like to bring a sentence by Lacan from a brief and condensed text called "Note on the Child". He says: "the child's symptom is found to be in a position of answering to what is symptomatic in the family structure".<sup>4</sup>

That can be seen in the way those words connect to some aspects of the family story: J's parents are old, they probably cannot have another child; her mother has

another son, J's brother, who was left behind (alone?) in South America; her mother's only sister died and that was related to immigration; her maternal grandmother says she looks like that aunt. So, through all that historical background we can trace some roots for the *only one* and *left alone*. They probably indicate her position in both her father's and mother's desires.

These signifiers, however, must be taken as nothing else but signifiers. It is not wise to rely too much on the historical meanings or to expect the story to give the key to a case. On the contrary, the story is the fictional aspect of the question, it shows the symptomatic work the subject has already made – that is what a symptom is: some significant work done around *jouissance*.

So, the family story and J's school stories help us see the effort she is making to pass *jouissance* from a private to a public sphere. The treatment aims at the passage of that *jouissance*. Might there be other possibilities, instead of the angry outbursts?

So all the story telling, the cuts, the transformation of words into other words go in that direction. They help her find ways to transmit what had been transmitted and affected her in the family. That is another point to underline. Lacan assigns, in the same text I have just mentioned, that there is a transmission of what is not transmittable in the family. The transmission of something that cannot be transmitted in words and, in fact, will never be. The paradox is: that which cannot be transmitted in words is the most important thing transmitted in a family. We name it *jouissance*, object *a*. But these are generic and theoretical names. Every psychoanalytical experience has to face that challenge: how to treat that thing that cannot be named. How to make the *jouissance* flow through different names, escaping from the ones that keep it fixed?

So, it seems that J has to make out of the signifiers – *only one* – a new version of her father's desire caused by a woman and her children. A desire that is not anonymous, more human, as Lacan says, which could help her deal with sex and love – questions that are becoming more and more urgent for her.

Apparently the father's regret that she is the *only* child did not provide her an identification that could separate her from the *left alone*, the position she was apparently taken in her mother's fantasy. It was then necessary to make a larger separation of these terms *only, one* and *left alone*.

That was the work done and worth being praised in the analyst's direction of the case. In fact, a bridge was offered in that treatment. A bridge from the private to the public and from an identification full of *jouissance* to one emptied of such excess. She could find a public usage to her private signifiers by means of her skills in that Other language. To be invited to the *unique* program called the Gifted has really been an opportunity, but the subject could only take it because some new usage of signifiers was made possible through the psychoanalytical treatment.

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<sup>2</sup> Mandil, Ram. "A psicanálise e os modos contemporâneos de identificação". Paper presented at the XV *Jornadas de la Escuela Lacaniana de Psychoanalysis – EOL: Patologías de la identificación en los lazos familiares y sociales*. Buenos Aires, November 2006.

<sup>3</sup> That *matheme* can be found in: Miller, J.-A. *El Otro que no existe y sus comités de ética*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Note on the child*. Translated by Russell Grigg in: *Analysis*. Number 2, 1980.