

## Naming the Other

Nearly a year ago, I started working with a 30-year-old woman who had given birth to a daughter six months earlier. The woman is a nurse caring for young children. However, she did not think that taking care of her own child would be so *demanding* for her. I emphasize the word "*demanding*" because P. uses it both to refer to her daughter and also to describe her mother's attitude towards her when P. was a child.

P. was sent to me by a psychiatrist because she constantly feels anxiety when taking care of her daughter, but also when she has to leave her. She is accompanied by a strong fear that something will happen to her daughter. P. recalls the same feeling related to difficult childhood experiences. It was then about fear for her mother during arguments with her alcoholic father, which P. witnessed many times.

For Lacan, anxiety is an affect attached to what produced it, accompanied by strong bodily manifestations without a clear cause<sup>1</sup>. Anxiety affects the subject in an immediate and non-dialectical way, which makes it "an affect that does not deceive"<sup>2</sup>. It is also a signal of a gap, a crack that remains after the lost object<sup>3</sup>.

In Seminar X, Lacan gives us at least two tips on how to deal with this affect, which occupies a special place in psychoanalytic theory and experience.

First, Lacan draws attention to "the action that allows us to tear away certainty from anxiety and transfer it"<sup>4</sup>. Secondly, Lacan concludes at the end of the seminar that "overcoming fear is only possible when the Other is named"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Soler „Lacanian affects : the function of affect in Lacan's work", trans. Bruce Fink, Routledge, Nowy Jork, 2016

<sup>2</sup> J. Lacan Seminar X, „Anxiety"

<sup>3</sup> J. Lacan Seminar „On the Names-of-the-Father"

<sup>4</sup> J. Lacan Seminar X, „Anxiety" (fr. Et c'est justement ce qui me permet d'introduire maintenant le rapport essentiel de l'angoisse à l'action comme telle, c'est justement, peut-être, de l'angoisse que l'action emprunte sa certitude : agir, c'est arracher à l'angoisse sa certitude, agir, c'est opérer un transfert d'angoisse - Staferla, page 43).

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem (fr. L'interprétation que nous donnons porte toujours sur le plus ou moins de dépendance des désirs les uns par [www.champlacanien.net](http://www.champlacanien.net) [www.Champlacanien.net](http://www.Champlacanien.net))

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rapport aux autres. Mais ce n'est pas l'affrontement à l'angoisse : il n'y a de surmontement de l'angoisse que quand l'Autre s'est nommé, Staferla, page 204)

At the same time, there are some significant difficulties when dealing with anxiety - making it talk. The first lies in its close connection with the Real, which is beyond what is Symbolic and Imaginary<sup>6</sup>. That is, remaining unsaid beyond what can be said. The second is that anxiety is not without an object<sup>7</sup>. But this object is not an ordinary object, but an object *little a*, which is at the same time associated with desire, but also remains beyond the possibility of being grasped by speech.

Thus, for Lacan, anxiety is not only a signal of a threat, as it is for Freud, but also a moment and place of marking the subject affected by the desire of the Other. Importantly, this also applies to one's own desire, which always remains linked to the desire of the Other.

In turn, in "The Neurotic's Individual Myth"<sup>8</sup>, Lacan talks about a subjective constellation formed within the family tradition, in which appear elements defining the parents' relationship<sup>9</sup>. These elements are signifiers, which unconsciously influence the history of the subject. This was already perfectly demonstrated by Freud in his analysis of the case of the "Rat Man"<sup>10</sup>.

One of the dogmas of analytical work is to stay close<sup>11</sup> to the signifiers, close to what the analyzand says, because only this guarantees the emergence of subjective truth<sup>12</sup>. It's about listening carefully while not trying to understand<sup>13</sup>. The problem of understanding is related to the risk of falling into the trap of the illusion of meaning given by the subject. And bearing in mind that the aim of analytical work is to capture what is specific, what is repeated in the subject's discourse as a manifestation of the Real<sup>14</sup>, up to the extraction of the "absolute difference", that is, the only difference worthy of a psychoanalysis<sup>15</sup> - and not about understanding.

Returning to P., it seems justified to treat her anxiety as a symptom. And again there is an analogy to the previously mentioned Rat Man - P.'s

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<sup>6</sup> J. Lacan Seminar „The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis”

<sup>7</sup> J. Lacan Seminar X, „Anxiety”

<sup>8</sup> J. Lacan „The Neurotic's Individual Myth”

<sup>9</sup> ibidem

<sup>10</sup> S. Freud ”Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis”

<sup>11</sup> J. Lacan „The Function and the Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”  
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<sup>12</sup> ibidem

<sup>13</sup> J. Lacan Seminar I „Freud's Papers on Technique”

<sup>14</sup> Real - as what always returns to its place - L. Izcovich Seminar Warsaw 2016

<sup>15</sup> C. Soler „Lacan Reading Joyce” trans. Devra Simiu, Routledge, NY, 2017

apprehension that something will happen concerns her closest, beloved family members: her daughter, husband and mother.

In the course of the work, there were successive scenes of the return of the repressed *jouissance*<sup>16</sup>, from which important signifiers emerged, connecting the anxiety related to the daughter with P's childhood.

During subsequent sessions, P. said that the anxiety related to her daughter was connected to the apprehension of possible choking while being fed, and P. would not be able to help her and then something terrible would happen, that is, her daughter would die (it was not easy for P. to say it out loud).

Further work allowed P. to connect her apprehension of choking to the fact that during her childhood, P. had often heard her father choking.

P. had clearly ambivalent feelings towards her father, with few moments of love intertwined with hostility and a desire for the brawling father to stop disturbing [Polish: storming in] the family's peace and disappear. And also in this case, it was not without difficulty that P. recalled her death wish for the father.

Moreover, drawing attention to the double meaning of the word "storm" (in Polish: the signifier "storm" means 1) to destroy or tear down a building, 2) "of the storm", the genitive of the word "storm" as a meteorological phenomenon) allowed to associate it also with the fact that P. in her childhood was afraid of "storm", but also that now her daughter, like her father in childhood, "disturbs" [storms into] her peace.

Though it was not easy from the beginning, P., encouraged to talk, slowly learns to give herself space to express even such difficult thoughts as those regarding the death wish to her relatives.

Moreover, she notices that her symptomatic anxiety is woven from signifiers for which she finds references in what concerns her present and her past. And although the subject calls it suffering, the symptom is a carrier of the *jouissance* of the unconscious<sup>17</sup>.

It was also possible to reveal that what Freud called "the gain from the illness" is the fact that since the moment P. started to feel a strong, unbearable anxiety, her mother has moved into her place, where she stays with her from Monday to Friday. P. admitted that, out of several

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<sup>16</sup> C. Soler „Lacan Reading Joyce” trans. Devra Simiu, Routledge, NY, 2017

<sup>17</sup> *ibidem*



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siblings, she was her mother's most loved child, whom she now has only for herself.

The aim of the work so far, which in some key respects is not strictly analytical work (if only because it takes place in an institution where the visits are paid for by the state) was to make P. stop running away from anxiety (also by taking medications) and to begin to elaborate it with words that ultimately can and even should lead to change and possible relief from suffering.

However, Colette Soler emphasized that the aim of psychoanalysis is to analyze unconscious desire, and so the improvement of life, i.e. the therapeutic effect, is a side effect and not the aim in itself<sup>18</sup>. And although P.'s anxiety has decreased; the work has not resulted in the emergence of a subjective question that would push the work beyond P.'s demand for the symptom to disappear.

Time will show if this changes.

Marcin Piotrowski  
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<sup>18</sup> C. Soler „Clinic of Desire according to Lacan” June 2023



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