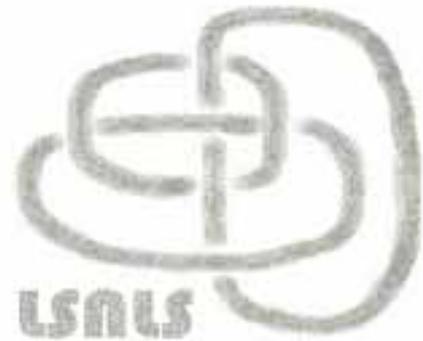


The child and the siren

Josiane Cassin



From the first session, Sajiv expressed his anxiety in a dramatic way. His father said that he confused dreams with reality, but he corrected him: 'That's not it', he said, 'it's worse than that', and he illustrated his assertion with a drawing.

The fortress

"I'm in a fortress with forces behind the walls and in a labyrinth with many doors and there are kings behind the doors with keys and the keys are on the other side of the doors and I cannot open them and they send me stones which get bigger and bigger and which send me more and more dreams and I'm not there on the ground but rising and I can no longer be in reality. After one hundred times the doors are armoured and no one can open them. This happened to me seven years ago, for seven years I have been in the prison and it will take seven years to liberate me from this prison. I should be eight, but I'm seven." He represents the king in the form of a spider [*une araignée*]. It is derived in a metonymic way, since the king is called upon to rule [*à régner*].

"There is the King who has the crown and who is seated upon his throne. He told me to open the door of the wall of the imaginary and he wanted to give me a gift: he offered me his crown. The wind dragged me into the labyrinth. The wall exploded, the door of the labyrinth was open and when I was inside it closed again.

The villain had a key. It was the key to all the prison of the labyrinth and above all to the door of the invisible armoured wall. Only the King can make it visible with his crown and no one can open this prison even those who help me. What is needed is the crown and it's inside the armoured door. Instead of casting good spells, it casts bad spells towards me and this uses up my energy. But it's a spell [sort], I mustn't pronounce it, I am not allowed to, the King forbids it, so I whisper, I whistle."

A birth marked by mourning

This young boy of ten often finds himself alone in the family, ignored for the most part by an older brother and a younger sister for whom he shows a lot of affection. He lives in a climate of discrete persecution. He speaks of it with a feeling of regret and sadness, without aggression.

Sajiv's father is a musician but, at the time I met him he was finding it very hard to earn a living. His life was made up of many displacements. He says that his presence is important for Sajiv at this time, 'as he is not well'.

Shortly after the conception of his son he went back to the country of his birth, called to the death bed of his dying father. He will thus be an absent and depressive father for Sajiv.

His mother will say that during his early childhood, he would cry from morning till night. But his schooling went without problems, with no evidence of retardation and without any great difficulties, despite his intense anxiety. However he had great difficulty in concentrating and his contributions in class were often incongruous, provoking surprise and even rejection. He was all the more dejected, as we shall see, in that he'd had a special relationship with his former teacher in a previous school. The sudden death of this teacher — who had taken him under her protection and become a friend of the family — intervened as the triggering factor for his psychosis. Placed in a paternal position through her place as a master, her death, which echoed with the mourning for the paternal grandfather, had called to the Name-of-the-Father, in other words to the absence of this function and this entailed the triggering of a psychotic state.

Phantoms

In the course of the following sessions, Sajiv evoked fantasmatic scenes, between dream and reality: "I've already seen phantoms, with white sheets, nearly right next to me or in the door of my wardrobe, and then when I turned on the lights the door was closed". He evokes auditory hallucinatory phenomena: "Sometimes I hear noises. They speak quickly, cry out and scream from all directions TA-TA-TA-TA..."

"When you see the phantom you mustn't move, you have to stay quite still, he takes a knife and sucks me in — like Merlin the enchanter: there is god and there is the devil and I'm on the side of god and the devil says: 'come, come...'. His brother is placed in a persecutory position on the side of the devil.

He is confronted with a real, with manifestations which, as Lacan says about President Schreber 'without being extraordinary are produced for his benefit'. He tries to protect himself with fictions constructed on the basis of elementary phenomena — auditory hallucinations — which are elaborated in a metonymic way in relation to the noise of the fathers drumming. They are enriched with fictional elements taken from stories, cartoons and comic strips. But his recourse to these fictions does not allow him to obtain a sufficient pacification of *jouissance*. A fiction is not a delusion and this fictional world is a provisional and unstable apparatus which can be changed from time to time. He pays for this lack of fixity with anguish.

The father's footsteps are coming, he must be careful — a lot of things could crash down on top of him — the father took the child in his mouth but did not swallow him — and didn't chew him up. He clung on to language — the father spat him out. He looked at him through a magnifying glass, he saw the little child who was annoying him — he took him in his spoon and looked at him.

His father appears to him in the form of an ogre and the child is Tom Thumb. The father is a devouring figure. Here the mouth of the crocodile is attributed to the father, not to the mother and there is no phallic stick with which to keep the jaws open. No phallic signification.

The Ciranoë

Over the course of the following sessions, the feeling of persecution dies down, allowing a father to appear who could either loose him or save him.

Progressively, Sajiv comes to protect himself from these persecutions with pseudo-phallic representations.¹ By using fictions more efficiently, he places himself under the sign of ideal characters, comic book heroes which are more and more virile: he draws a Batman under the letter B, while Superman: “is a first name of super heroes. I am Superman”, he says and he declines it: “superman, super man super hero-man”. He draws himself under the letter S. I indicate to him that this letter is also the initial of his own first name.

Finally, this fictional search leads him to discover an original solution: the invention of a surprising character, at once male and female, which represents him. He says: “Instead of being a female siren, he is a male siren: Ciranoë. He has a cage, he looks through a rock, he’s heard a noise, a piece of gold, a crown and his vision is yellow and his vision can go through any colour, it’s strong, it’s green and I’ll draw a C to say it’s him”. He adds that the Badge is a protection. He identifies himself with this character Ciranoë, which has the value of a neologism, condensing the word siren with two heroes, Cyrano and Ivanohë, who appear in a feminised form.

The Ciranoë marks an end for his search for a virile character. This time the pseudo-phallus is clearly feminised. The ballast provided by the neologism stops the metonymical drifting, it constitutes a quilting point. The character is also an accepted representation of his ‘push-to-the-woman’. On his drawing, Ciranoë’s gaze detaches itself in a ray which comes to strike a breast, the areola of a breast or a gaze, once again an allusion to the persecuting gaze.

The Game of Drafts²

In the course of one of these last sessions, he evoked a time of distress when *jouissance* was more disturbing: “An enormous dog pooch with flies and wasps and I was inside it. I was trying to get out; it smelt horrible. It was full of things which were going to kill me and that scared me to death and I didn’t know what to do about it”.

He then said, relieved of all his anxiety: “I don’t want to become one of those men who lie about in the streets. This game of drafts [*jeu de dames*] helps me, there are black squares, as if hard, and white squares, like falling into the void, and I don’t know where the white squares are. If I fall in there’s a necklace. It’s imaginary, without this necklace I would fall, it keeps me company. If I fall into a hole it will help me to tie myself on, then I will climb back up”. He indicates that he has acquired a certain ability to avoid the abyss which opens in the imaginary through the absence of phallic signification: “I must find the key — I think that I have already found it, the door is there...”

The stabilisation that he had managed to achieve led him to decide to suspend the sessions. It was a decision that I acted upon.

(...)

Sajiv’s fiction finds its nodal point of support in his hallucinations and it is on the basis of this knotting that he constructs a resolving figure: the Ciranoë. This figure functions as a neologism and knots the imaginary and the real of *jouissance*. One must note the effect of pacification that is brought about by this knotting which condenses the question of feminisation and the ideal. Sajiv thus keeps the persecuting Other at bay

and setting out from the lack of the Name-of-the-Father, he constructs an agency which, although not a function, nevertheless permits him to treat *jouissance*.

- 1, J.-A. Miller, *La psychose ordinaire* in *La Convention d'Antibes*, Paris, Agalma, 1999, p. 276.
2. The French for the game of drafts '*le jeu de dames*' literally means 'the game of women' [TN].

This text was first in *Les mille et une fictions de l'enfant* in *Archive de psychanalyse*, Cereda, Agalma, Toulouse 2000.

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