



PREAMBLE V – The pea as symptom¹

The symptom is that small thing that persists, disturbs, awakens.

When the princess manages to take refuge from the prince, all she has is his word². She is wet, alone, lost in the night. What could identify her - her clothing, her hairstyle - everything is undone, crumpled, and makes her unrecognizable. He has nothing but his words to try to say who he is. The Queen is not satisfied with her princely statement, a statement that seems to confuse said and being. The Queen is waiting for another word, for another truth to be told.

What is a princess? How to recognize a "real" princess in this poor disoriented girl? What could be a sign of her truth, of the truth of her difference?

Hidden under two dozen mattresses and feather quilts, layers that one could imagine are made up of peels, narratives, identifications, various and different ruminations of her unconscious, egoic and superegoic dreams, hopes and fantasies, something still makes itself felt, still marks her body. This speaking body, a body of signifiers, which preserves the memory of the debris in the sieve, of the pebbles in the shoe, of the grains of sand in the functioning of the subject.

Under many mattresses and duvets designed and made to fall asleep, this small object hides a lot of strength. It's so durable! It is a small pea that has survived the weight of what could have uprooted it, crushed it, annihilated it, silenced it, repressed it forever. The princess doesn't know what it is, but she knows that she slept badly and that her body hurts. « The symptom, we must define it in this way, is a knowledge that is already there, which is reported to a subject who knows that it concerns him, but who does not know what it is. » ³

¹ Note by tr., In the English translation of *pois*, pea, the homophony of the French language between *pois* and *poids* (weight) is lost.

² From *The Princess and the Pea* by Hans Christian Andersen, 1835

³ Lacan, J. The seminar Book XII, *Problèmes cruciaux*, (Crucial problems in psychoanalysis) lecture of 5 May 1965, Paris, Editions du Seuil et Le Champ Freudien Ed., 2025, p.264

The princess, unbeknownst to her, got away with the pea, which kept her awake. What has been knotted by this pea to keep her awake all night?

What has this pea signaled to her, so that she will stay all night in this castle that will become her home, her *dit-mansion*?

This pea which is so annoying does so many things! It signals to the queen, allows the meeting between the prince and the princess, united by the same trait.

A delightful symptomatic fairy tale, passed on to posterity, who dream of a pea that has become an enviable treasure.

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