

Repetition, iteration

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I suggest we differentiate iteration and repetition, as J.-A. Miller invited us to do on June 30 this year, at the time of the conversation on autism. "For Freud," he said, "repetition is 'that's not it;' it fails and it is repeated. Iteration, on the other hand, is 'it's precisely that.' Repetition is difference [whereas] iteration suppresses the Other" (citation 2012?).

This distinction is a valuable move which allows us to throw light on the two planes on which the analytic process is located. This move overcomes another distinction, namely that which Lacan made between the two modes of repetition drawn from Aristotelian categories: in the automaton, which obeys the symbolic order, this is associated with homeostasis, whereas the *tuche*, which obeys no law, disturbs the subject by interrupting without warning.

You will have recognized, in this last mode, the inassimilable real of Freudian trauma which Lacan also emphasized in his last teaching. As Miller emphasizes, "It is a repetition which comes to rent . . . the tranquillity of the symbolic order" (citation ?). Before Lacan, Freud was faced with two modes of repetition.

As you know, very early on he located the phenomenon of repetition - in 1895 - and did so precisely on the basis of the structure of trauma which is formed in two stages, with the phenomenon of retroactivity which is constitutive of it. Later, in his text "Remembering, repeating and working through" (1975 [1914]) repetition becomes the cause of the frequent aggravation of symptoms in the course of psychoanalytic treatment; he had hit upon a stumbling block which, and he failed notice this till much later, could not be reabsorbed.

For the Freud of 1914, the subject looked for the eternal return of a supposed satisfaction which supposedly took place in a bygone era and he interprets repetition as the search for the traces of a loss. This search for pleasure, never satisfied, the eternal return of failure, is the motor force of repetition.

In 1920, traumatic dreams and the game of fort-da signalled to him the existence of a compulsion to repeat, which was placed under the pleasure principle. His conclusion was to be a radical one: "The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts." (Freud 2001 [1920]: 57).

In his own analytic work, something in repetition still resisted. Freud would eventually translate this obstacle as a negative therapeutic reaction, then as remnants of symptoms at the end of the analysis. We can see it: the "it's always not quite right" as the motor of repetition which pushes the subject to pursue a lost object indefinitely, meets an "it is the same that returns" of which trauma is the mark.

For the Lacan of the *Four fundamental concepts*, repetition only ever occurs because the encounter is always missed. "We are always called with a real that eludes us" (1998: 53) he said. But what constitutes the power of repetition, is that the real is found behind the automaton. Tuche, is the real as encounter which Freud explained by what in traumatism always insists. In *Seminar XI*, therefore, we find both the drive which demands something new - we never repeat in the same way - and a drive circuit which keeps reproducing itself identically and indefinitely because it misses the object. Finally, over and above missing the object, we realize that this very circuit is replete with jouissance that can neither be assimilated, nor miss its goal.

We can discern, then, how repetition seeks a forever-lost jouissance and is always comes unstuck at dissatisfaction which obliges one to start again, but also how jouissance insinuates itself into this iteration itself, the reiteration of the same. This same jouissance is what Lacan later calls the One of jouissance. "The subject is happy," he will say in *Television*. "This is even its definition since it owes nothing to happiness, to wealth in other words, and that all happiness is good for him who holds it, so that he repeats it" (1990).

J.-A. Miller showed us how addiction is at the root of the symptom: "one always drinks the same drink one more time . . . It is in this sense that Lacan could say that a symptom is an etcetera" (Miller 2011: 58). Along his trajectory, the analysand will inevitably come upon these two aspects of repetition that I have just briefly touched on. I will go back over some points of my own journey, keeping to the common theme of this distinction repetition/iteration.

First point: Traversing the fantasy

This traversing was what made me realize, in disturbing them, the scattered elements which stuck together to form the fantasy: the fear of being discovered and the reverse, "the disappearance of being desired," according to a formula which condensed a series of identifications, a traumatic sentence from childhood - "we wanted you when we knew you were going to die," a double nomination, perfectly disguised to hide / show, the fleeting moments of exhaustion where the body no longer complies; the object of regard, present at all stages, the system was operating so as to imitate ad infinitum a same jouissance: tirelessly fighting the death drive and the life that was being torn off.

If one follows the later Lacan, the fantasy is a lucubration which gives meaning to the real yet is fundamentally outside meaning. Moreover, repetition makes it function: initially one notices it's about meaningful repetition, the insistent repetition of signifiers drawn from history. Thus, for her, the traumatic sentence had been a fixation - an attachment, Freud would say, around which a fantasy had been built, nourished by deadly identifications. But once traversed, it no longer appears as a scaffold attempting to assemble heterogeneous elements, namely an inaccessible real, the looked-at object, and the Other as desire inasmuch as desire is the desire of the Other. Because in fantasy, the Other is always implicated; here, it was to make me disappear for the Other and to be desired by the Other.

The dialectic of hide-show and its correlate of anxiety, the meaningful equivalents between disappearance and death, came to be concentrated, strengthened around the traumatic sentence whose two faces I had already caught sight of, mortifying and desiring.

However, as we see here, there is not only that of the imaginary and the symbolic in fantasy, but also a pure repetition of the trait, a pure iteration. It's here that Lacan says it's "a window on the real" (Lacan 1967: 254). By examining it closely, one can distinguish there this repetition which feeds it because it is never that, and iteration because it enjoys, iteration of the One of jouissance, the real of which the fantasy itself carries the mark. This is what continues to repeat after the subject has separated from his fantasy, this most opaque jouissance, without the Other, reduced to its most simple expression.

This leads me to my second point:

In the space J.-A. Miller has called "beyond-the-pass," which seems to me therefore infinite, arose the dream which propelled me towards the exit. Without repeating the text here, I will simply note that the significant "young elm" which appeared there, bringing with it a cascade of ambiguities, touched me, at a time when the direction of the analysis seemed to have dried up, with the pure materiality of the signifier, "motor-force" its "driving-force."

This was indeed a novel use of the words, and of the letter I was dealing with. I would only take its full measure after a final interpretation by the analyst: "Write out of the fear of being stupid."

If I single out this comment, it is because it was an interpretation aimed directly at the symptom, which breaks up the defences more than disturbing them, to use the terms used by J.-A. Miller in the meeting at BA. Like any interpretation, this one could also only appear as an afterthought, by its repetitive effects, which led to the conclusion of the analysis; thus, the signifying young elm, which arose from the dream, had put me face to face with the fundamental ambiguity of language; a joke which had brought back, by the analyst's act, an early memory that was related to the trauma of lalangue.

I recall it briefly here: humming a song whose meaning I didn't understand, I caught a word, "hirondelle" (swallow), which I found charming, then my father's laughter burst forth, bringing with it that of the whole family assembly: because the hirondelle (swallow) was only a "rondelle" (a slice),

ridicule that immediately made me want to disappear out of shame. Even before learning to read and write this blunder came to make me view ambiguity at my own expense. My world was turned upside down.

The text which was the outcome of this last interpretation is a kind of story which shows that writing was not a defence, but also a jouissance. This was the analyst's interpretation which here had touched the real included in the practice of writing. The hironnelle (swallow) is not only a jolt, a screen memory, the impact of a shock-wave, an echo of the impact of language on the body, which lays bare the symptom. It still took the analyst's act to make me realize how radical ambiguity, unveiled by the dream of the young elm, had not only returned my rapport with writing, but also hinted at "the impact of the signifier on the body" (Miller 2010-2011). The "writing" of the analyst amounts to a "handling of the sinthome" after which "unfamiliar words" had definitely rid me of this fascination with impeccably ordered words, those words that a long analysis had moreover already well disturbed. What had been traumatic in the first days of life naturally remained elusive; one only recovered the trace in the traumatic equivocal sentence; the memory of the hironnelle (swallow) is only a slice. It is the savage manifestation, although accessible, of the traumatism of lalangue. The end of the analysis and the new function of writing that she had produced made merit of the fact that there are other possible uses of trauma. This new alliance with words led me to play around differently with writing which until then had been a container for anxiety, but the jouissance it had held endured.

If the symptom is so elusive - says J.-A. Miller - it is because it is not a representation . . . nor an image . . . nor a fantasy . . . nor even an idea . . . "One cannot say what it is, one can only say that it is".

One last point:

It concerns the expression "watch out," which had emerged in what was called the pass (Miller 2010-2011), when the desire of the analyst was evoked in me, which one now knows is never a pure desire.

I can say that this meaning made me able, in a flash, to catch sight of what had always made my position waver. In its simplest form, the most condensed, what my unconscious had found, so to speak, impenetrable, was the shock produced by the signifier on the body at birth.

If this "watch out" is an inaugural and invariable position, it is also a production of the analysis. Indeed, to accomplish this long journey full of pitfalls, I needed to recognize, beyond the symptoms and the distressing repetition which had brought me to the analysis, this vital pulse that made me move, jump, desire and so on . . .

Behind the real which encumbers us, there is . . . the real.

"Watching out" is pure iteration which points to both what had changed in the analysis and was invigorating and to that which didn't change.

"The sinthome," says J.-A. Miller - is the real and its repetition" (Miller 2010-2011).

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