

“The subject of the pass: on taking a leap into the open air of history”

Lacan Circle of Australia
Forum: “Another Lacan” by Jacques-Alain Miller
with Daniel Roy 15/10/2022

Jonathan Redmond

Introduction

Miller’s “Another Lacan” (1980) provides a compass for navigating Lacan’s teaching concerning themes related to the direction of the treatment, the status of the symptom at the end of analysis, the formation of the analyst and the relation of the analyst to the school. For Miller “the pass is and remains one of Lacan’s major advances. It confirms and sums up the fundamentals of his teaching.” The pass is directed to the status of the symptom at the end of analysis which necessarily emphasises the object *a* rather than the signifier - although as we shall see reference to the signifier remains essential. Miller’s paper is useful in presenting “two Lacan’s” – the first and highly successful version which can be orientated around the aphorism the “unconscious is structured like a language;” the second speaks to the pass and questions concerning the “separation from the object petit *a*” and the analysts formation. Both versions of Lacan are essential to study informing the overall architecture of the symptom; however, Miller, at the time of writing the paper, is bemused that the first version of Lacan had “triumphed” at the expense of the second Lacan. In one sense the paper is a correction to this tendency – he states that to emphasise the logic of the signifier and formations of the unconscious at the expense of the object petit *a* and the logic of fantasy *disorients* analytic discourse. Hence *Another Lacan* orients us to the moment of the pass

which concerns the separation of the object *a* and the subject’s altered relation to their symptom – the passage to the pass formalises the end of analysis and how the formation of the analyst.

My comments today are focused on issues arising from the separation of the object *a* which concerns my title. I was recently listening to a podcast on the current civil uprising on streets across Iran and the commentator stated, paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, that while the current revolutionary potential of this protest was unknown it was clear that at this moment civilians were taking a “leap in the open air of history”. I found this poetic turn of phrase poignant and have tried to put it to use in relation to the pass and more particularly how the separation of object *a* concerns subjective history, destiny and the possibility of a new or different relation to the Other, the object and the signifier. To develop this thread, I will first articulate some key points from Miller’s “Another Lacan” to situation my discussion.

The pass

The pass is a solution to the end of analysis and this this solution is orientated around separation from the object *a*. Miller states that Lacan’s pass is a major contribution to analytic discourse – in terms of the formation of the analyst what is at stake is “the transformation of analysand into analyst, a reversal from one position to the other...The question thus

concerns not only the analyst, but also, and foremost, the analysand” (1980). The pass is fundamental to the analyst’s sense of their own formation because there is a transformation of the symptom. In Miller’s text, “Schizophrenic irony” (2002) he ends the paper by stating “before the psychotic, before the delirious one, do not forget that you too, that you were delirious as an analysand, that you too spoke of what does not exist.” In sense the pass provides a framework for considering the direction of treatment in relation to the separation of the object *a* and the consequences this has for each subject’s caught up in their symptom delirium that is rooted in the object *a*. Miller provides the following summary concerning key features of the pass:

for Lacan the end of analysis is played out at the level of the fantasy, specifically on the level of the object petit *a*. The pass is Lacan’s name for the disjunction of the subject and object brought about by the analytic experience, for the fracturing or breaking of the fantasy. The fundamental structure of the fantasy is not the same as the structure of the formations of the unconscious. Relying on the latter, the analytic discourse reveals the former-and therefore consists of the correlated pairs $S1 \rightarrow S2$ and $\$ \rightarrow a$ (1980).

Here we have an implicit reference to the architecture of the symptom – the symptom is formed by both signifiers linked to the symbolic (i.e. $S1 \rightarrow S2$) and to the object ($\$ \rightarrow a$). Moreover, the symptom as a formation of the unconscious comes to be articulated via signifiers spoken in the “blah, blah” of analysis; however, it is through this process that the fantasy can be constructed. Miller gives another perspective on this twofold distinction with reference to desire and the object. Here he states:

the subject of desire is a drifter, but it is tethered to a fixed point, to a stake about which it drifts in a circle... We have here a dimension of the analytic experience the phenomenology of which is surely different from that of metonymy. There one lets oneself go with the drifting subject, here we emphasize its being tied (1980).

The analysand’s symptom formation is tied to the object – Lacan’s theory of the desiring subject and the symptom as formation of the unconscious have

a reference point tied to the object *a*. The passage to a separation of the object *a* through a staging of the symptom in the analytic setting constitutes the analytic drama of the cure.

The pass and the sexual non-relation

We can reconstruct the passage to the pass and the drama of the end of analysis via the status of the sexual relation. The first key point worth emphasising is that Lacan’s develops the pass with reference to Freud’s comments on the different forms of impasse encountered by men and women in analysis. For Freud, analysis ends in a structural impasse of the castration complex – for men this is the fear of castration and for women it is penis envy. In Freudian theory, the “resolution” of the Oedipus complex assumes castration and as such remains a structural loss and impasse in analysis in terms of an attempt to reclaim a lost drive satisfaction via the substitutive satisfaction of symptom. Miller asks whether the pass is beyond the castration complex? In answering this he takes a detour into the theory of sexualisation – as Lacan develops from Freud – with a focus on the sexual non-relation. Miller states that “the castration complex lies underneath the absence of the sexual relation and more specifically the absence of signifiers to articulate the meaning to be a man or a woman” (1980). He states that the “question of the end of analysis cannot be posed in terms of the sexual relation which does not exist” and that “the pass has to be posed in relation to the sexual non-relation” (1980). I take this to mean that the end of analysis can’t be considered in terms of any reference to either a normative relation between the sexes or an assumption of a social ideal concerning the meaning of what it is to be a man or a woman; rather, directing the pass to the sexual non-relation orients analysis to the object *a* and the real. Miller summarises this in the following way:

Two sexes are strangers to one another, exiled from each other. But the symmetry implied by this statement is slightly misleading. In fact, the missing sexual knowledge concerns only the female. If nothing is known of the other sex, it is primarily because the unconscious knows nothing of woman. Whence the form: The Other sex meaning the sex which is Other, and absolutely so. Indeed, there is a signifier for the male and that is all we’ve got. This is

what Freud recognized: just one symbol for the libido, and this symbol is masculine; the signifier for the female is lost. Lacan is thus entirely Freudian in stating that woman as a category does not exist (1980).

For Miller, Lacan’s thesis concerning the sexual non-relation and in particular the affirmation that women as a category that does not exist constitutes a passage to the creation of the pass. Miller states “the question of the end of analysis thereby finds a solution in a way that was previously inconceivable. The solution appears on the side of the object” (1980).

The sexual non-relation and separation from the object *a*

Lacan develops the solution to the end of analysis via the pass which fundamentally is orientated to the separation of the object. However, we might say that the passage towards separation from the object *a* is orientated towards the real that is veiled by the semblant, a veil affirming the existence of the sexual relation. Miller clarifies this by stating that “the object is that which stops up the relation that does not exist, thereby giving it the consistency of the fantasy. In as much as the end of analysis supposes the advent of an absence, it depends on breaking through the fantasy and on the separation of the object” (1980). Thus, the subject’s passage to separation of the object *a* occurs via an encounter with the real; this encounter entails that the semblants supporting the existence of the sexual relation qua fantasy are shaken and fall.

Throughout “Another Lacan” Miller comes back to the proposition that the solution to the pass lies on the side of the object. This solution asks us to question the status of the symptom both at the end of analysis and in the formation of the analyst. As I have been suggesting throughout, the object *a* is the reference supporting the symptom. To this end, it is the symptom that is supported by fantasy. In the paper “Interpretation in reverse” Miller states that “we must abandon the symptom as reference and use the fantasy instead, to think the symptom from the fantasy” (2007). I find this statement most useful for several reasons. It highlights how the symbolic architecture of symptom, the signifiers at play in the formation of the unconscious are supported by the fantasy and the object *a*. Moreover, it highlights how the object functions as an obturator

“mediating” the hole of the real in the symbolic. In this sense, the object *a* as fantasmatic obturator, has a specific function in relation to the real – that is as a stop up, a block of an opening, or a close of a breach. Miller states that the object *a* is not the real but has a unique “topological locus” inso-much as we encounter the object *a*, a semblant of being as we move from the symbolic toward the real. Miller’s comments on the object *a* in his paper “Schizophrenic irony” (2002) helps me to understand the function of the object *a* in relation to the real and the fantasy. To surmise, he states that “the object *a* finds its place in the fantasy, the fantasy holds the place of the real for the subject.”

Taking this venture concerning the object *a* further I would like to make some additional points from Miller’s paper “Schizophrenic irony”. This paper has implications for the pass due its commentary on the function of object *a* in relation to the subject’s symptomatic delirium. He states that “the secret of the universal clinic of delirium is that the reference is always empty” (2002). Here the notion of reference has a link to the philosophy of language and logic developed throughout the 20th century. However, Lacan’s “linguistic turn” is not philosophical or semantic but a turn to the object *a* as empty reference. That is, the subject’s signifiers find signifying reference in the object *a*. Miller states that:

what comes from Lacan is the introduction of a reference of a new type which is born of the articulation itself, that is, of the linking of signifiers to one another. This is not a reference that would already be there and that one could represent, or about which one could say “there is not.” This reference of a new type, born of the articulation of signifier to signifier, is what Lacan called “the object *a*” (2002).

At the end of and analysis Lacan’s invitation of the pass is for analysts to bear witness to the consequences born out from separation of the object *a* – this separation functions as a *constitutive loss* inso-much as the subject’s symptom or destiny is altered and deformed yet the object *a* necessarily remains in place.

Separation of the object *a*, constitutive loss and the formation of the analyst

Recent comments on the pass in September at an NLS conversation in Lausanne highlight the topic

of constitutive loss concerning the end of analysis. We might say that the breaking of fantasy has an effect on the obturator object - the subject experiences a new response from the real breaking the mediating filter of fantasy that had hitherto functioned to support symptomatic repetition and articulation of destiny. The pass is built on the encounter between signifier and the real – the paradoxes of this are worth briefly mentioning and returns me to the title of my paper, where the subject of the pass can “leap into the open air of history”. The pass as a dimension of encounter is paradoxical in the sense that the real - which as Roy states “is not made of words and signifiers” (2022) - is the locus of encounter for the subject producing a new kind of object and word.

Here my final comments on constitutive loss and the pass are oriented to Roy’s response to Clément “who asks the question of whether at the end of the analysis one passes from the hole to the void and wonders if there is a link between the void and the Witz of the pass” (2022). Roy’s response is in reference to Miller’s text “Four the pass” where he quotes “The device of the pass recovers at the level of the signifier the moment of the pass, the essence of which is the object”. Roy discusses the essential component of “separation” in the separation from the object a . He states “separation, in the witz, of jouissance when it passes to the saying, is the moment when the real function of the object becomes apparent”. This passage of separation from the object to “the saying” is constitutive of a response from the real. Roy goes on to state:

in the moments of the pass, there is indeed something that is lost and, at the same time, that is not lost: there is something of the hole from which the unexpected signifier emerges, the good word that arrives at that moment. There is loss, of course, but also this moment of crystallization, of flash, of witz. There is something that falls, something that is hollowed

out, and from this emptiness emerges a new element that perforates all that (2022).

The “good word” as a response from the real is constitutive of a new kind of object and signifier replacing the fallen object. Here we should be reminded of Lacan’s comments on Joyce regarding the epiphany and that Joyce, via this writing, took analysis to its furthest point (without entering into analysis). Roy takes this point up further stating:

There are multiple “signifying epiphanies” in a cure, but there is a particularity of this type of phenomenon that articulates in the witz an emptiness and an emergence. This dimension is present in Jacques-Alain Miller’s text on the object: the object is indeed not made of signifiers, but at the same time the object only becomes a separator at the moment when it passes to the saying (2022).

These signifying epiphanies are testaments to moments in the cure where a constitutive loss of the object occurs - both in the new sense of an emptiness and emergence - where the subject of the pass leaps into the *open air of history* via a response from the real; that is to say, the destiny of the subject, the subject hitherto caught up in the symptomatic repetition across a singular network of signifiers link to the object a is fundamentally altered. The pass as an *experience* of constitutive loss is an essential feature of the cure and indexes the transformation of the analysand in analyst. Testimony of the pass provides *a transmission of knowledge to the school* concerning *how analyses end* by isolating the passage to the pass, the effects of subjective deformation and the separation of object a and, the issue of symptomatic remainder. As such, I believe that the pass - despite current debates regarding its status in the school - remains an essential compass in the formation of the analyst and in the work of the school.

References:

- Miller, J.-A. (1980). *Another Lacan*. Presented at the first Rencontre Internationale du Champ freudien, Caracas, Venezuela, 1980.
- Miller, J.-A. (2002). A contribution of the schizophrenic to the psychoanalytic clinic. *The Symptom*(2).
- Miller, J.-A. (2007). Interpretation in reverse. In V. Voruz and B. Wolf (Eds.), *The later Lacan: an introduction* (pp. 3-9). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Roy, D. (2022). *Paradoxes of the pass*. "School Time" at ASREEP-NLS September 17, 2022 in Lausanne.