This essay focuses mainly on the topic of repetition (agieren)—on its metapsychological, clinical, and technical conceptions. It contains a core problem, that is, the question of the represented, the nonrepresented, and the unrepresentable in the psyche. This problem, in turn, brings to light the dialectical relation between drive and object and its specific articulation with the traumatic. The author attributes special significance to its clinical expression as ‘destiny.’ He points out a shift in the theory of the cure from recollection and the unveiling of unconscious desire, to the possibility of understanding ‘pure’ repetition, which would constitute the very essence of the drive. The author highlights three types of repetition, namely, ‘representative’ (oedipal) repetition, the repetition of the ‘nonrepresented’ (narcissistic), which may gain representation, and that of the ‘unrepresentable’ (sensory impressions, ‘lived experiences from primal times,’ prelinguistic signifiers, ‘ungovernable mnemonic traces’). The concept—the metaphor—drive embryo brings the author close to the question of the archaic in psychoanalysis, where the repetition in the act would express itself. ‘Another unconscious’ would zealously conceal the entombed (verschüttet) that we are not yet able to describe—the ‘innermost’ rather than the ‘buried’ (untergegangen) or the ‘annihilated’ (zugrunde gegangen)—through a mechanism whose way of expression is repetition in the act. With ‘Constructions in analysis’ as its starting point, this paper suggests a different technical implementation from that of the Freudian construction; its main material is what emerges in the present of the transference as the repetition of ‘something’ lacking as history. The memory of the analytic process offers a historical diachrony whereby a temporality freed from repetition and utterly unique might unfold in the analysis. This diachrony would no longer be the historical reconstruction of material truth, but the construction of something new. The author briefly introduces some aspects of his conception of the psyche and of therapeutic work in terms of what he has designated as psychic zones. These zones are associated with various modes of becoming unconscious, and they coexist with different degrees of prevalence according to the psychopathology. Yet each of them will emerge with unique features in different moments of every analysis, determining both the analyst’s positions and the very conditions of the analytic field. The zone of the death drive and of repetition is at the center of this essay. ‘Pure’ repetition expresses a time halted by the constant reiteration of an atemporal present. In this case, the ‘royal road’ for the expression of ‘that’ unconscious will be the act. The analyst’s presence and his own drive wager will be pivotal to provide a last attempt at binding that will allow the creation of the lost ‘psychic fabric’ and the construction, in a conjectural way, of some sort of ‘history’ that may unravel the entombed (verschüttet) elements that, in these patients’ case, come to the surface in the act. The analysand’s ‘pure’ repetition touches, resonates with something of the new unconscious of the analyst. All of this leads the author to underline once again the value of the analyst’s self-analysis and reanalysis in searching for connections and especially in differentiating between
what belongs to the analyst and what belongs to the analysand. A certain degree of unbinding ensures the preservation of something ungraspable that protects one from the other's appropriation.

**Keywords:** repetition, memory recollection, destiny, represented, nonrepresented, unrepresentable, ‘drive embryo’, archaic, enacted repetition, entombed (verschüttet)

**Introduction**

Writing about ‘Remembering, repeating, and working through in psychoanalysis and culture today’ entails the challenge of creatively revising, from the perspective of present-day psychoanalysis, the ideas that Freud developed at the time of the terrible massacre of World War I, when he found amid the horror some valuable elements to ponder life. The Congress ‘summons’ us 93 years later to focus on these ideas in order to reflect upon psychoanalysis and human suffering—*when similar horrors are being repeated*, albeit with a different mode of expression. Berlin is emblematic for this meeting, which invites us to ‘remember–repeat–work-through.’ Berlin tells us that destiny may be changed not just by the emergence of memories, but especially by the construction of the new, the different; by opening doors, ‘tearing down walls,’ opening paths for the drive in its transforming potential.

From a broader perspective, ‘remembering and repeating,’ in their various combinations and alternations, define distinctive features for each culture. In the social and cultural realms, repetition also translates into the effect of a trauma that, unable to find a way toward representation and working through, reappears and is actualized in a new return to the same, to the identical (de M’Uzan, 1978). In the case of both individuals and nations, a demonic repetition ends up murdering time. Time seems stalled in some (even many) countries, and not just in those poorest and less advanced technologically. It has stopped also in those countries where either conservatism or the imposition of political or religious doctrines maximizes the strength of bastions of resistance to all forms of change. These are repetitions marked by the ‘death drive,’ which leaves its imprint in a certain ‘naturalization’ as destiny: famines that coexist with immoderate opulence, ethnic or fratricidal wars fostered by shady interests that remain in the shadows, or terrorist tendencies that seek justification, on both sides, in a thirst for endless revenge; a general state of mistrust of one’s fellow man; indifference to or tolerance of the worst ignominies (subjugation, exile, torture, and so on); and an increase of social marginalization (which gradually becomes ‘invisible’ through its own evidence), criminality, and extreme violence. The death drive also leaves its trace through its most subtle and destructive effects, namely, the perversity of leadership, the loss of social points of reference, and the degradation of altruistic cultural ideals and identifying bonds, which leads to intense feelings of helplessness and social exclusion.

From the psychoanalytic viewpoint, it is precisely in these instances of ‘this side of …’ that the devastating force of the ‘death drive’—the uncanny ‘creativity’ of its tendency toward unbinding, which may generate new resources that will destroy, erase, or stall everything—appears with special forcefulness. ‘Destiny’—what ‘is written’ as foundation or revealed truth and explains so much misfortune—acts as a ‘dead letter’ that thwarts any attempt to register a new history. In the race after the
‘promised destiny’ or against the oracular ‘doomed destiny,’ the excess of repetition compulsion is unleashed, and any questions that might give rise to working through or to transformational work are hushed. In the face of these situations, the potential for acknowledging trauma and culturally historicizing it plays a key role in the halting of repetition and in the transformation of ‘destiny.’ Culture shows this need for historicization not only when it seeks, through its various modalities, to remember time and time again the phenomena of social violence that convulsed it, but also when it tries to reverse its compulsion to repeat such phenomena and strives to defend itself from the destructive tendencies and the terrible effects of pathological disavowal.

The potential for acknowledging trauma and culturally historicizing it plays a key role in the halting of repetition and in the transformation of ‘destiny.’ Culture shows this need for historicization not only when it seeks, through its various modalities, to remember time and time again the phenomena of social violence that convulsed it, but also when it tries to reverse its compulsion to repeat such phenomena and strives to defend itself from the destructive tendencies and the terrible effects of pathological disavowal.

The incorporation of this and other cultural problems into psychoanalytic thinking is a significant proposition. It constitutes a step toward the possibility of settling a debt that I believe contemporary psychoanalysis owes culture, perhaps because we have not yet been able to clearly define the role the latter plays both in the creation of subjectivity and in the production of pathology. Psychoanalysis might offer such a definition and thus follow the tradition Freud instated with his social writings, which culminated in his striking *Civilization and its discontents* (1929) and ‘Why war?’ (1933). The contributions presented at this Congress may constitute an important step toward this goal.

But I will abandon analogy and constrain myself to my task. This essay focuses mainly on the topic of repetition (because that is what I have been asked to do) in its metapsychological, clinical, and technical dimensions. I discuss repetition along with recollection, repetition instead of recollection and, going a little bit further, repetition in the manner of destiny. Repetition (agieren) involves a problem that lies at the core of the debates in contemporary psychoanalysis, namely, the problem of the represented, the nonrepresented, and the unrepresentable in the psyche. At the heart of this matter, and in the dawn of the birth of the psyche, rises the dialectical relation between drive and object. Repetition brings to light the ‘traces’ of this relation, with its transformations, its blockages, and its particular articulation with the traumatic and even with that which is beyond trauma—emptiness, absence, and nothingness. In the face of his inability to subjectivize this agieren, the subject seems to be trapped by ‘destiny’—by that halted, coagulated time—in the repetition of those early ‘traces’ [a conception akin to Roussillon’s definition of ‘psychic–prepsychic’ (1995)]. The subject remains crystallized in that nucleus in which the particular configurations of the drive are condensed with the first identifications, and where the clues to what is expressed in the clinical manifestations of the ‘beyond’ may be found. These manifestations cause the most intense ‘discomforts’ and present the greatest obstacles to the process of the cure. That is why I attribute special relevance to the problem of repetition and to its clinical expression as ‘destiny.’ Furthermore, I believe that we must recognize its true value so as to ‘calibrate’ our technical instruments.

Referring to repetition in the life of non-neurotic people, Freud tells us that ‘The impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some “daemonic” power … determined by early infantile influences. The compulsion which is here in evidence differs in no way from the compulsion to repeat which we have found in neurotics, even though the people we are now considering have never shown any signs of dealing with a neurotic conflict by producing symptoms [my italics] … This “perceptual recurrence of the same thing” … [astonishes us much more when] the subject appears to have a passive [original italics] experience over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality’ (1920, pp. 21–2).
To achieve a greater clarity in my exposition, I have divided the remainder of this presentation into sections: ‘Metapsychology of repetition: A new return to Freud,’ in which I include an *après-coup* concerning the notion of repetition in Freud’s work from the perspective offered by the incorporation–integration of significant contributions by some post-Freudian thinkers; ‘Repetition in clinical practice: The analyst’s positions;’ ‘Transference, repetition, and the analyst as a person;’ and ‘Repetition of the archaic and the analyst’s mind.’

**Metapsychology of repetition: A new return to Freud**

Having crossed the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, our return to Freud is not a sign of orthodoxy. His text is always a fundamental pre-text to carry out an unpostponable assessment of his ideas from the perspective of present-day psychoanalysis, and to keep developing our ability to consider it with creativity and a certain boldness. Klein, Winnicott, Bion, Lacan, and others have done so, and they all guide us toward new connections, links, and articulations of the Freudian texts.

Metapsychology constitutes a privileged vantage point for the debate of psychoanalytic ideas. A focus of agreements and controversy, it is likely the best means to discuss the problems clinical practice poses for us. Reflecting on contemporary psychoanalysis entails the revision of its methodology, of psychopathology, and particularly of the analyst’s work in the performance of his *analytic function* from the perspective of his inclusion as a *person* in that ‘encounter between singularities’ that constitutes the analytic field. To progress in our practice and further contribute to its development as a conceptual corpus that may be transmitted, explained and debated, we must keep ‘Freudian metapsychology’ alive. This metapsychology is the common element that guides us through different theoretical paths that sometimes meet and sometimes part. (I believe that we are facing a big challenge—to compare the various theoretical formulations in order to find new ways to integrate them and, at the same time, avoid dogmatism.)

The first Freudian topography rested on the theory of the representation of desire, of repression, and of the modes of the return of the repressed. The theory of the cure based on the possibility of recovering repressed memories finds both its culmination and its challenge in three texts that are like windows—‘Remembering, repeating and working-through’ (Freud, 1914b); ‘On narcissism: An introduction’ (1914a); and ‘Mourning and melancholia’ (1917). The significance of Freud’s 1914a and 1917 works lies in their unambiguous reintroduction of the object, the other, into the constitution of the psyche. This reintroduction broadens the theoretical field, which had been focused until then on the drive and its vicissitudes. Following Freud’s opening, Green (1996) defines the object as revealing the drive, and Laplanche (1989) grants it as much significance as to consider it ‘creator’ of the drive (its object-source). Finally, Freud (1914b) emphatically includes the concept of repetition as a product of his clinical observations. Repetition and its compulsive insistence find a transcendent place in *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920), where Freud faces the dreams of traumatic neurosis. Repetition shifts from its fixation to pleasure, to the...
compulsive reencounter with the effects of a trauma without representation; in other words, to an active (and apparently senseless) quest for suffering.

This is a description pregnant with consequences, for it gives way to the incorporation into psychoanalysis of a key concept—the death drive. In this way, the latter appears not just as a reconceptualization of the theory of the drives, but as the inaugural notion of a new and somewhat ‘dramatic’ understanding of the psyche and its activities. The sexual and signifying unconscious founded by repression will gradually lose its hitherto hegemonic place, and, in the same way, the goals of the cure will no longer be constrained exclusively to the recovery by unveiling of significant memories. (Nonetheless, my position does not imply detracting from the value of recollection in psychoanalysis.) Furthermore, instead of referring exclusively to a historical event, illness will appear as a present potential. Challenged by clinical practice, Freud (1914b) will attempt at first to take those traces that emerge as ‘acts’ back to the past—to ‘make remember,’ as he had suggested in his earlier texts, where the logic of representation dominated. Yet clinical practice will lead him to ‘make repeat,’ a slippage caused by the emergence of the ‘compulsion of destiny’ (Freud, 1920). We might define this clinical find as the progressive displacement from the repetition in dreams of the ‘fulfilled’ wish, to the compulsive repetition, in analysis and in everyday life, of the pain of trauma.

The failure of the Freudian attempt to master this enacted drive (agieren) within the field of analysis (despite his forced creation of transference neurosis) was fruitful for psychoanalysis. Such an attempt would reach its boundary in the confirmation that we repeat not only in analysis but also in everyday life, a confirmation that entails grave danger. (These difficulties, revealed to Freud through repetition outside analysis, allow us to infer that he had already sensed that the concept and the clinical fact of transference neurosis could not encompass all the expressions of repetition.) An affirmation dominates the clinical manifestations of repetition: there is ‘something’ that cannot be remembered. What is it that resists recollection? That resists being put into words? That resists, in sum, representation? As Freud would say later, we are dealing here with that ‘something that has been experienced in infancy and then forgotten returns—something that the child has seen or heard at a time when he could still hardly speak’ (1937b, p. 267, my italics). Shortly afterwards, the author ratifies this statement:

We have learnt from the psycho-analyses of individuals that their earliest impressions, received at a time when the child was scarcely yet capable of speaking, produce at some time or another effects of a compulsive character without themselves being consciously remembered. (1939, pp. 129–30, my italics)

What kind of inscriptions or traces are these? Auditory? Visual? Or sensory in a broader sense? In any case, they are ‘prelinguistic signifiers.’

And it is under the shining light of ‘Constructions in analysis’ (1937b), and in a last turn of the spiral with regard to that psychic phenomenon about which repetition had queried him in 1914, that Freud put forth a new clinical and technical proposition—the construction (almost a reconstruction), which emerges as a better technique to reach those unconscious elements that, unable to find a signifying
representation, are repeated as act. (I will refer later to the construction as a theoretical concept whereby I attempt to achieve a technical implementation different from Freud’s.) To summarize, the overpowering movement of the drive unleashed as repetition in the act requires technical reformulations that will enable us to go beyond the incandescence of desire and its representants.

I digress here to give a first description of the clinical manifestations of repetition. Various kinds of repetition will appear in the course of analysis, such as the repetition of fragments and ramifications of the Oedipus complex (Marucco, 1998). This type of repetition allows the expression of historical neurosis as an ongoing potential. In this way, aim-inhibited drives (tenderness, trust) that develop after the resolution of the Oedipus complex will express themselves as repetition through positive transference. At the same time, the vicissitudes of oedipal rivalry will be repeated instead of remembered. Let us recall here that mistrust toward the father will be expressed as mistrust toward the analyst. In the same way, there will be room for repetitive expressions of the suppressed oedipal love. The analyst will interpret the vicissitudes of this historical neurosis turned transference neurosis in its relation with the castration complex and within a representative frame. In other words, we are in the midst of a repetition with representational displacement.

A different type of repetition is that derived from the theory of narcissism. Its clinical expression appears in ‘narcissistic pathologies,’ which express themselves as reiterations of a wounded narcissism, of narcissistic injuries. These are attempts to maintain alive, through eternal repetition, the ‘passionately desired baby of … childhood’ (Freud, 1920, p. 21), who does not resign itself to becoming a dying memory (Marucco, 1978b). This ‘narcissistic’ child will settle in the transference and will try to interrupt completion of the cure. Transference interpretation and the construction of the forgotten and repressed history of that mythical child (screen memories) will be necessary to conjure this ‘almost not represented’ repetition.

Finally, I must mention the repetition that occurs as an effect of what we call ‘psychic–pre-psychic trauma,’ those mnemonic traces—early childhood experiences (Freud, 1920)—that elude signification. I have characterized such traces as ‘ungovernable’ (Marucco, 1980) due to their inability to bind with the secondary process. Manifesting themselves as nonrepresentable or unrepresentable repetitions, they block the analyst’s access. The concept of transference neurosis developed in Freud (1914b), according to which repetition ‘could’ be mastered in the scene of the transference, gives way here to the devastating pain brought about by these traces. From their location ‘beyond desire,’ they demand that the unconscious produced before the arrival of language have the chance to bind. At that stage there was neither ‘time’ nor a sufficiently structured psyche for the ‘traumatic experience’ to be contained by representation and included under the regulations of the pleasure principle, so that it could traverse the signifying courses that would render this experience more accessible to analytic work.

The lack of representation of the trauma and its compulsion to repeat seem to eliminate in advance every effort to incorporate it into the analytic field. Even though psychoanalysis has confronted these aspects of trauma and confronts them yet today, it does so from certain positions and somewhat pessimistically,
coinciding with the pessimism Freud evinced to some extent in ‘Analysis terminable and interminable’ (1937a). In this text, the enthusiastic and bold thinker who had gathered all the diverse psychopathological expressions in the transference field as a way to achieve the cure was confronted rather dramatically with the acknowledgment of the boundaries of ‘his’ psychoanalysis. These are the death drive—the ‘unmasterable’ aspects of the drive—and the unrepresentable elements of castration, understanding ‘castration’ as the ultimate acknowledgment of the difficulty to signify the enacted drive. Those ungovernable mnemonic traces…? The drive in the id, fixated on a trauma and practically without an object? We find ourselves almost in the realm of pure repetition.

A new paradigmatic axis may thus be postulated, namely, a nucleus of the psyche where desire and trauma dwell—desire and trauma, the place where paths fork. We are dealing here with a quasi-primal trauma, the product of a wordless inscription that coincides in clinical practice with a monotonous, invariable repetition that is also a re-petition (a request for help). In other words, the concept—metaphor of ‘drive embryo’ brings us closer to the archaic in psychoanalysis (a topic I develop in detail in the section headed ‘The repetition of the archaic and the analyst’s mind’), thus posing a question: What is the archaic that repeats itself? Is it something that emerges in the act from the regressive push toward a state almost prior to the encounter with the other? Or is it the product of the intrusive force of an object that imprinted the destructive trace of the unbinding where the path toward the potential for representation should have been opened? We are ‘far away’ from the repressed unconscious and, at the same time, very close to the cauldron of the id. Now, wouldn’t this psychic zone where the enacted repetition is expressed allow us to talk about ‘another unconscious’ that zealously conceals the ‘entombed’ (verschüttet), the ‘innermost’ traces? We might say that, rather than ‘buried’ (untergegangen) or ‘annihilated’ (zugrunde gegangen), these traces are ‘entombed’ by a mechanism we are not yet capable of describing.

Nonetheless, they return. Freud says it as follows:

All of the essentials are preserved; even things that seem completely forgotten are present somehow and somewhere, and have merely been buried and made inaccessible to the subject. ... It depends only upon analytic technique whether we shall succeed in bringing what is concealed completely to light. (1937b, p. 260, my italics)

In my opinion, this statement suggests the need to create a new topography as well as technical reformulations that will enable us to locate that ‘somehow and somewhere’ where the ‘innermost’ lies. Further, it is my contention that the entombed in

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3With this metaphorical term, I am trying to define the primal moments of the psyche, when the drive, unable to attain representation, tends basically to discharge either through the act or through the body. According to Green (2001), in this moment of the psyche, the drive is a maximum of potential and a minimum of signification. At the same time, the ‘drive embryo’ concept enables me to precisely locate the origin of the psychic close to the notion of implantation, both from the body and from the other (Laplanche, 1989).

4Translated by Strachey as ‘buried’ (Freud, 1937b, p. 260); that which has been completely forgotten; the arcane. Why does Freud use this term? Might he be referring to ‘the innermost’ that is transformed into repetition, into what ‘the child has seen or heard’ prior to language (p. 267)?
Freud is akin to the concept of ‘drive embryo,’ which I believe may take at worst two possible paths, and has at best just one option. The two paths are the passage to the act and the passage to the soma. The option, which is actually a transaction, lies in the possibility of attaining desire and, masked in it, manifesting itself as symptom. Under these circumstances, the new course analysis opens up for the subject is the creation, through the encounter with an other (the analyst), of new representations inherent to the dimension of desire. In other words, we are talking about the possibility offered by psychoanalysis of incorporating the repetition of the entombed traces into the repressed of the unconscious.

We know that, on the matter of repetition, analysts have gone a long way. We have progressed from Freud’s conceptualization to the formulations of Winnicott and Lacan and, in present-day psychoanalysis, of Green and Laplanche, among others. Relying on different theoretical models, these conceptualizations offer us instruments that bring us closer to deciphering this hidden nucleus of the psyche. For instance, based on Lacan’s ideas (1977), we might wonder whether, with regard to the entombed, analytic work involves not simply traversing the fantasme but rather construing it (since it is precisely the inability to ‘construe the fantasme’ which structurally marks the subject). Following a very different line of thought, with his description of transitional phenomena, Winnicott (1971) offered the possibility of formulating some kind of ‘representational conjecture’ that might stop the repetitive action of the drive. In addition, Green’s (1986) contributions to the relation intrusion/absence of the object bring us closer to the possibility of reversing the terms of that maximum of potential and minimum of signification, the enacted drive, in the context of the presence–absence of the analytic relationship. In this context, the increase of signification leads to the decrease of potential. Laplanche (1996) seems to locate this psychic nucleus (the entombed) within what he describes as the implantation of signifiers produced by the relationship with an other. The gist of his approach lies in the ideas he has developed based on the notion of the mother’s surplus of unconscious sexuality.

As for me, I have attempted to add my own approximations to those ‘entombed’ traces that, in the absence of signification, stay trapped by the hidden compulsion to repeat expressed by destiny. I develop this topic further in the next section, but I would like to introduce here just one comment. Even if it seems obvious, I believe it is important to point out certain risks that the analyst faces when he works with this zone of the psyche. First, the risk of being tempted to offer a ‘better’ destiny, ‘different’ from the one that appears in the repetition of the entombed. Concomitant with it, the risk of the patient’s trying to adjust to what either the analyst or the local culture assumes to be ‘healthier’ or more convenient. And finally, the risk of assuming the position of the Other instead of working toward his removal. In sum, this is a reminder that warns us against the danger of the ‘return’ of suggestion to psychoanalysis (especially when we force the latter to compete in ‘effectiveness’ and ‘speed’ with other forms of psychotherapy). We are not talking about ‘offers’ or adaptations, or about placing oneself in the locus of the Other, or even about the material reconstruction of a fragment of history (for this type of repetition was never inscribed as such).
I summarize here the ideas I develop in the following sections. It is my contention that, faced with the power of the atemporal synchrony of enacted repetition, our best recourse is the ‘construction.’ Yet such construction must be founded mainly on the productions that emerge in the present of the transference as repetitions of those traces that are absent as history. In this way, making use of the memory of the analytic process, the analyst may gradually instate in the analysis a liberating historical diachrony, a diachrony that is doubtless utterly unique for each analysand.

Concerning the analyst’s construction, Freud emphasizes that it is the patient’s conviction (which he considers as valuable as his memories) that will both incite and bring to light psychic change. Would this change stem from the binding that the analyst’s words introduce in the repetitive weft of the act, or from the affective impact that a conjectural fragment of history has on the analysand? Or even from inventing the origins of a history that may halt repetition, an invention that is a ‘product’ of having relived such history in analysis? Or could it also offer a potential for figuration that might grant signification to the nonrepresented? In all these cases, instead of a historical reconstruction of material truth, we would be dealing with the construction of the new, i.e. with creation.

To end this section, I would like to point out that contemporary psychoanalysis faces the challenge presented by three forms, namely: ‘representative’ (oedipal) repetition; the (narcissistic) repetition of the ‘nonrepresented,’ which may attain representation; and the repetition of the ‘unrepresentable’ (ungovernable mnemonic traces that sometimes disguise themselves as destiny). In the face of this last form of repetition, the analyst’s positions vary, oscillating between viewing ‘neuroses of destiny’ as a boundary, and viewing them as a new challenge for analysis to overcome.

**Repetition in clinical practice: The analyst’s positions**

Having traversed the realm of the psychopathological expressions of neurosis, psychosis, and perversion, contemporary psychoanalysis has gradually entered the realm of narcissistic pathologies, of the ‘borderline’ pathologies, of psychosomatic pathologies, of addictions, and so on. In the last analysis, we might say that it has entered the realm of the concept and the clinical fact of borderline states. Current clinical manifestations include the well-known symptoms of anxiety, obsessive rituals, phobias, and so on, and particularly those clinical expressions marked by the pain of repetition. More and more subjects come to analysis asking about their ‘destiny.’ They formulate the question as follows: Why do I stumble on the same stone time and time again? Why can’t I prevent this, even if I am aware of what I am doing? This question contains another one: Why is today’s time the same as yesterday’s and tomorrow’s? I would like to digress here to ask a different question: Isn’t this ‘murder of time’ (Green, 2001) one of the most revealing symptoms of humankind’s suffering in present-day culture? (Our present is defined by the power of cultural ideology, and it de-subjectivizes us. It makes us the victims of speed rather than longing, a speed that will devour us unless we go in step with it and that leaves little room for affects, thought, or creation.)
As we have seen, those seeking therapy today do not express their need only as a search for the relief of this or the other symptom; there is also an attempt (more or less manifest) to find the whys of a way of life that always ends in suffering. Such questioning encourages individuals to look for the traces that will enable them to understand those entombed marks that, deep in the very root of their being, drive them to become lost in the senselessness of the act, of what is hidden in each compulsive repetition.

Returning now to clinical practice, I feel the need to explain, albeit briefly, some aspects of my conception of the psychic apparatus—and therefore of my therapeutic work—in terms of what I have designated as psychic zones (Marucco, 2001, 2005b). According to this formulation, each psychic zone refers to a particular configuration in the dynamics of the drive–object relation, and in clinical practice, to a particular demand to the position of the analyst as object, as ‘the other’ in the context of the analytic situation. Doubtlessly, these psychic zones that have become unconscious coexist, and each prevails to varying degrees depending on the features of the psychopathology. Yet each of them emerges with unique traits at different stages of the analysis, determining both the analyst’s positions and the very conditions of the analytic field. We are dealing here with a sort of ‘lattice’ in which the zone of dreams, that is, of the repressed, sexual and signifying unconscious, coexists with other zones, such as the narcissism zone. The latter houses both the relationship of the ego with the ideal and an unconscious that is no longer the repressed unconscious, but rather one linked to the feeling of guilt and to the problem of self-esteem and sense of self.

One psychic zone accommodates what I have called ‘the unconscious of identifications,’ where the object—the Other (with an initial capital) and the other (without)—is identified in the ego or the superego. In the first identification, the subjectivation process involves the task of unveiling the signifier; in the second, the deepening of the analysis of idealization; and, in the zone of identification, we must work on the disidentification of what has been pathologically identified. More specifically, analysis must discover the roads leading toward a disidentification capable of restoring the subject’s drive force, which has been crushed or even erased by excess of identifying (passive primal identifications) (Marucco, 1978a). If we go a bit further, we find the zone that is constituted through the relationship of the psyche with castration and/or the external world. It is basically a particular mode of psychic structuration constituted on the basis of the mechanism of disavowal (Verleugnung), which thus gains a structural role in the psyche along with the splitting of the ego (Marucco, 1997).

Since it constitutes the focus of this essay, the final zone description given here is that of repetition and the death drive. (I just want to clarify that analytic work, in my view, progresses through the various psychic zones, which appear at different times during the analytic process.) When the atemporality of the unconscious explains the very essence of the eternal present, the ‘royal road’ of expression of the unconscious is also the act. In that case, can we still think of our therapeutic course in terms of free association–regression–memories? In the clinical field, pressed by the demonic compulsion, the enacted repetition demands binding. This binding,
however, must be mounted on the structure of a psychic fabric constituted by traces that have coagulated in the absence of meaning. The analyst is then summoned to halt this circularity of repetition in which the subject loses himself. The retrieval of the lost temporality would thus constitute the true occurrence of the subject, and in this process the analyst’s position is pivotal—it is the drive wager (Marucco, 2006) that the analyst is able to put into play.

Now, I understand that the traces of this destiny marked by repetition return in the ascending impulsion of the entombed. By means of the emerging drive (Freud, 1920), the entombed is ‘dragged,’ or should we say ‘attracted,’ by elements from the repressed unconscious and embedded by desire. Desire is thus used to mask and, at the same time, conceal the ‘subject of repetition.’ Furthermore, the old repetitive destiny ‘elevated’ to the field of the repressed acquires some symptomatic masked signification—phobias, obsessions, and so on—which are now accessible to some form of analytic work. Yet, at the same time, ‘pure’ repetition (commanded by the death drive, almost in the realm of the pre-psychic and outside the realm of the repressed signifiers) is expressed in a halted time that, through the succession of acts, constitutes a permanent repetition of an atemporal present. What is more, ‘pure’ repetition, that ‘drive embryo’ that is only discharged either through acts or through the soma, or as destiny, produces something else—in its release, it drags the signifiers of the repressed, leading to the impoverishment of the psyche. Pure repetition slowly causes the silence of the representative capital, rendering it mute. Green (2001) describes this process very clearly in patients lacking in analysis, whom death reaches too soon or who are doomed to silence, or, I would add, to a delirious overflow. Perhaps my proposal of the drive wager of the analyst as a final attempt at binding is now clearer, as is the need to create along with these patients their lost ‘psychic fabric.’ Otherwise, time is ‘murdered,’ and those traces that only find their expression either in acts or in a ‘way of being’ in everyday life find a way to grow. From now on the analytic cure will consist both of remembrance and, above all, of the retrieval, by means of the act, of what cannot be remembered.

In this zone, clinical practice faces a twofold challenge. It must find a way to produce ‘memories’ where there is only ‘amnesic memory’ (Green, 1986), and a way to undo what repetition has structured as destiny, so that patients, thanks to the force of their life drive, may transform their present and future into something different. Now, while we do not have a metapsychology capable of fully describing this particular psychic expression so as to determine the right technical approach, we must offer some sort of outline of representability to attain the subjectivation of pure repetition. This constitutes an analytic task par excellence. And how else to do it but through the conjectural construction of some form of ‘history’ that may unravel the entombed marks that surface in the act? Is it clear now why I insist on the entombed?

We know that, in the process of an analysis, analysts decipher a patient’s free associations through evenly suspended attention. In the moments of ‘pure repetition,’ however, it is precisely the instant when suspended attention ‘breaks’ that will give rise to the emergence, from an analyst’s own unconscious, of something capable of granting representation to that innermost trace that is both concealed...
and expressed through repetition. Evoked in the analyst’s mind, the construction is gradually built, in my view, on the basis of the different moments of subjectivation that occur throughout the history of the analytic process, of whose memory the analyst is custodian. In this way, construction will expose the stretch of life that had remained in the pre-history of the psyche, so to speak, arrested in the instant of the trauma and hindering subjectivation. When discussing this issue, it is particularly important to note that, even though it is the analyst who formulates the construction, the meaning capable of stopping the imposition of a destiny (hermeneutics) is the meaning that patients, with their own particular conviction, grant this history when they appropriate it.

Analysis then should not only tend to rebuild the ‘psychic fabric’ (Marucco, 1998) unwoven by the unbinding power of repetition commanded by the death drive, but also work with the patient to create that lattice capable of containing what has not been able to attain representation. In this way, a psychic weft may be constituted that, working as a ‘contact fabric,’ may also serve as a screen in the face of the onslaught of the traumatic compulsion (Marucco, 2006). I insist: the analyst will find the best support for the implementation of these technical resources—the only force that may ‘liven up’ this time halted by the repetition of trauma—in his own drive wager. In sum, we must incorporate the presence of the analyst into the dimension of the cure—the presence of an analyst committed with his whole being and knowledge to the analytic task; ‘heart and soul,’ we might say. To a certain extent, this issue is associated with the question of the true singularity of the analyst (Marucco et al., 1995), which refers to the ‘ergogenous body of the therapeutic presence,’ for a long time considered a ‘bothersome’ interference in the analysis.

Transference and repetition: Analytic function and the analyst as a person

Accepting that the transference was characteristic of neurosis required a subsequent acknowledgment that not only would the intrapsychic be retrieved as memory, it would also be relived as present potential (agieren) in the transference, i.e. with the other. An important shift took place here. While in the transference of the dream Freud had downplayed the signifying quality of the object (through the day’s residues) in order to give more significance to ‘the mission’ of unconscious desire, with the emergence of the concept of transference neurosis he once again emphasizes the preeminence of the object. We can see thus how the figure of the analyst as object gains significance throughout the treatment. ‘The assiduity of encounters and the analyst’s features generate a relationship that renders the unfolding of “transference moments” possible’ (Marucco, 1998, p. 256, my italics). (I refer here to those key moments that are decisive for structural change, wherein patients integrate what they relive in the transference with their structuring history. Constructions are thus revealed as the best technical instrument to insert the atemporal lived experience of the transference–countertransference in a particular historical time. Transference moments become the movement in which the construction constitutes an attempt to integrate once and again the patient’s fragmented history, trying to find its irremediably lost ‘unity.’)
In these ‘transference moments,’ there is a repetition of the clichés of the fantasmatic structures of narcissism and of the Oedipus complex, as well as of their possible modified and revised reiterations, which are supported by the ‘true singularity’ of the analyst (Freud, 1905; Marucco et al., 1995). In other words, in the analytic situation, the presence of the analyst as function and as a person (that is, as a true singularity) would enable the transference to be more than mere repetition and become a revised and extended reiteration. Such ‘true singularity’ might constitute an element of symbolization in the transference when it enables an unchanged repetition to become a new represented occurrence.

We must then differentiate these oedipal and narcissistic representations from those that, stemming from the analysand’s almost ‘pure’ repetition, touch analysts as people in that aspect of their unconscious that was not stirred in their own analysis. This awakening of the analyst’s ‘unanalyzed’ new unconscious (which is obviously not present in the analytic function) may be appropriated through the work of self-analysis. In this sense, it could be said that analysts as people (as true singularities) will house different elements of their relationship with analysands that must gradually ‘fall’ into the analytic function. From this perspective, while the analytic function implies a position of ‘supposed knowledge,’ it also includes the analyst’s true particularity and affects with their binding and unbinding effects (and with the new unconscious aspects of the analyst as a person, which resonate with the pure repetition of the analysand’s unconscious). Here I find myself close to the notion of ‘field’ in psychoanalysis (Baranger and Baranger, 1969).

The repetition of the archaic and the analyst’s mind

We might concur that when we talk about the ‘analytic function’ we think of a device that facilitates our analytical operation. Such a device is supported basically by what we designate as ‘the analyst’s evenly suspended attention,’ by the patient’s free associations, and by the unveiling of the signifiers that emerge to be incorporated into the representational field.

Now, when the structure of repetition—a product of the earliest inscriptions during the constitution of the psychic—bursts into the analytic field, the question of what is representable becomes significant. The nonrepresented and unrepresentable aspects of the drive, which do not reach the realm of words, produce a ‘short circuit’ that leads to their discharge either through the passage to the act or through the body. Psychopathological manifestations in the soma and in passages to the act allude, as I said earlier, to the ‘archaic’ in psychoanalysis—to the clinical manifestations of residual phenomena, i.e. of the realm where acts and, I add now, passions replace word representations. A query returns: How do these inscriptions beyond or this side of word representations, which do not form a fantasme, manifest themselves clinically? In this quasi-‘pure’ repetition there is not just representation; there are fusional and passionate presents that are expressed in different ways, from a destructive fury to a tendency toward Nirvana or, more clearly, a tendency toward the desire for death.

1 I believe that the archaic is connected to a logical time in the construction of the psyche, and not to a developmental temporality.
Contemporary clinical practice is shaken when it questions the extraterritoriality of the act and the soma, and it reflects the vicissitudes of analytic work when it ‘treads on’ these sites of convergence and separation that constitute borderline categories. I should clarify here that this ‘psychic zone’ is situated outside the signifying realm (in whose labyrinths of metaphors and metonymies we may still glimpse the outline of desire). These expressions located ‘beyond representation’ challenge us to develop a clinical reading that we might describe either as the construction of the act, or as an attempt to ‘represent the body. If, besides describing this kind of reading, we thought of how to carry it out, we might develop the following strategy. A process of analytic work whereby, in a regressive movement (Botella and Botella, 1997) based on word representations, the analysand could gradually summon some form of representation closer to the sensory (auditory, tactile, olfactory, or visual representations). And when, starting from the sensory level, the perceptive sign close to the hallucinatory realm is reached, something might be suggested that is challenging for analysis and that I will formulate as follows. In the analysis of the repetition of the archaic, there is neither history nor words—there is only ‘analytic situation,’ i.e. transforming encounters. Just as in the realm of neurosis (or in the zone of the signifier), suspended attention enables the analyst to perceive the signifier’s blow in the patient’s free associations. The analyst will try to respond to that sensory, traumatic potentiality by bringing into play something more than countertransference; namely, the capacity for reverie (Bion, 1962), almost ‘his mind.’

This contribution might be defined as the new, non-analyzed aspects of the unconscious that emerge in the analyst when the opacity of the signifier prevents the analysis of free associations and even the application of suspended attention. The opacity of the signifier, which comes before the repetition in the act, may at the same time stir in the analyst the ‘capacity for reverie,’ which will enable the inscriptions to be found that will grant, rather than representation, the traces of a thought that has not been thought. This analytic task might temporarily be defined as the work of the analyst’s mind when faced with the repetition of the archaic. Such work involves the analyst’s working through, which is both revealing and unsettling. When these ‘other,’ nonlinguistic signifiers are summoned to the analyst’s mind, they are expressed as ‘lived experiences,’ not as representations—lived experiences of the new, the different, of what never ceases to be inscribed and will eventually become memory. Once again, we find ourselves facing the challenge of construing fantasmes where there were only preverbal inscriptions. Shall I insist here that the great risk we run in this analytic moment is the shift of the analytic field toward a hypertrophy of the irrational that will bring it closer to the order of the magical, where the analyst as a person is transformed into an ideal (Marucco, 2005a)? How do we prevent this from happening? I cannot but refer to that aspect of the analyst that is perhaps inaugural and everlasting, namely, self-analysis, a reanalysis that will

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*With this definition I come close to the topic addressed in ‘El inacabamiento fundamental de todo psicoanálisis [The fundamental endlessness of every psychoanalysis]’ (Botella and Botella, 1997, pp. 187–209).
facilitate finding connections, relations, and, principally, the differentiation between what belongs to the analyst and what belongs to the Other and to the relationship with the other.

I would like to conclude with a question. What resources do we have to ponder the ‘analyst’s mind’ and its mode of operation in the face of the analysand’s repetitions? These are some possibilities: a) ‘true singularity,’ which would facilitate the mutation of unchanged repetitions into extended and revised reiterations; b) capacity for reverie, which would enable the analyst to grant representation to the repetition of the nonrepresented; and c) ability to listen to the enigma of the unanalyzed, new unconscious, which is activated in the face of the analysand’s repetition of the unrepresentable and is always striving to acquire new representations.

With these instruments available, how does the analyst intervene? On one hand, by means of construction: the analyst may construe the history of the analytic process in the synchrony of the transference, almost as a kind of reconstruction of the material truth experienced with the patient during the process of the cure. We may add to this the interpretation of the intrapsychic, i.e. of the drive joined to the primal identifications with and from the object, which are expressed in acts. And, on the other, the analyst will conjecturally construe those fragments of history that will contribute to unravel the entombed. Once we get to this point, we would be, metaphorically speaking, faced with the creation of ‘psychic fabric,’ of the unborn that may be born; in other words, of the emergence of the new in psychoanalysis, which gains ground over the nonrepresentable and also advances on the unrepresentable. In any case, to carry out analysis instead of synthesis, we need an indispensable degree of unbinding7 that guarantees the preservation of something ungraspable, unrepresentable (the navel of dreams) that escapes appropriation by the other and defends the patient from it.

I have reached the end of this essay. I do not know if all the questions I have posed, let alone the answers, are clear, but I want to bear witness to something that I have seen very often in my clinical practice. I am referring to the uncontainable pain of those who cannot stop; the furious and frightful suffering that repetition ardently maintains; the urgency of these analysands, who summon in the analyst a request they perceive as their last one. In the face of the repetition of the beyond, of the death drive, analysts often feel uncomfortable or discouraged. Other times, our own destiny plays a role, thrust into the fray of vicissitudes that we recognize in the analysand’s repetition. I think that analysis constitutes a new potential for binding, for a change of direction in the face of the repetition of destiny. For the analyst, it implies a drive wager with vague results; sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it barely moderates repetition, and sometimes it fails. Ultimately, the topic of this essay puts to the test our convictions regarding analysis and invites us to revise together our therapeutic failures. In doing so, and if we reflect upon them, we will be able to offer the new millennium a metapsychologically solid psychoanalysis that takes risks in clinical practice. Such boldness is necessary

7This is a clear example of the ways in which the drives act in relation to means and ends. In this case, unbinding would express the death drive as a means to an end connected to Eros.
not only to face the cruelty of destiny through clinical work, but also, and fundamentally, to unmask behind that ominous fate the compulsion that brings despair. We must construct and reconstruct time and time again from its rubble, until the subject of analysis may sow, in that razed time of repetition, the seed of his own new, open-ended history.

Translations of summary


Entre el recuerdo y el destino: la repetición. Este ensayo aborda fundamentalmente el tema de la repetición (agieren), en su concepción metapsicológica, clínica y técnica. El problema medular que desarrolla es la cuestión de lo representado, lo no representado, y lo irrepresentable en el psiquismo. Este problema, a su vez, pone en evidencia la relación dialéctica entre pulsión y objeto, y su particular articulación con lo traumático. El autor atribuye especial relevancia a la emergencia en el campo de la clínica de la noción de “destino”. Señala el viraje que se produce en la teoría de la cura, desde el recuerdo y el develamiento del deseo inconsciente, a
Entre mémoire et destinée : la répétition. Cet essai a pour objet la répétition (agieren) dans ses conceptions métapsychologiques, cliniques et techniques. Le problème central développé est la question du représenté, du non-représenté et de l’irreprésentable au sein de la psyché. Ce problème, en retour, met en lumière la relation dialectique entre pulsion et objet et son articulation spécifique avec le traumatique. L’auteur attribue une signification particulière à son expression clinique en tant que « destinée ». Il signale un changement dans la théorie de la cure depuis la remémoration et le dévoilement du désir inconscient jusqu’à la possibilité de comprendre la répétition « pure », qui constituait l’essence même de la pulsion. L’auteur met en lumière trois types de répétition, à savoir, la répétition « représentative » (oedipienne), la répétition du « non-représenté » (narcissique), susceptible d’accéder à la représentation, et enfin celle de « l’irreprésentable » (impressions sensorielles, « vécus issus d’époques primaux », « signifiants pré-linguistiques », « traces mnésiques incontrollables »). Le concept – la métaphore – de pulsion embryonnaire conduit l’auteur à la question de l’archaïque en psychanalyse, où la répétition dans l’acte s’exprimera elle-même. Un « autre inconscient » dissimulerait jalousement l’enseveli (verschüttet) que nous ne sommes pas encore capables de décrire – le « plus profond » plutôt que « l’enfoui » (untergegangen) ou « l’anéanti » – grâce à un mécanisme qui s’exprime par la répétition dans l’acte. Avec « Constructions dans l’analyse » comme point de départ, l’article propose une mise en œuvre technique différente de celle de la construction freudienne ; son matériel principal est constitué de ce qui émerge dans le présent du transfert comme la répétition de « quelque chose » de manquant en tant qu’histoire. La mémoire dans le processus analytique offre une diachronie historique tandis qu’une temporalité libérée de la répétition, totalement singulière, peut se déployer au sein de l’analyse. Cette diachronie ne serait plus la reconstruction historique d’une vérité matérielle, mais la construction de quelque chose d’inconscient. L’auteur introduit brièvement quelques uns des aspects de sa théorie du psyché et du travail thérapeutique en termes de ce qu’il a désigné comme zones psychiques. Ces zones sont associées à différentes modalités de devenir inconscient et elles coexistent à des degrés divers de prévalence selon la psychopathologie. Cependant, chacune d’entre elles émergera avec des traits spécifiques à différents moments de toute analyse, déterminant à la fois les positions de l’analyste et les conditions mêmes du champ analytique. La zone de la pulsion de mort et de la répétition est au centre de cette hypothèse. La répétition « pure » exprime un temps suspendu par la rétention constante d’un présent atemporel. Dans ce cas, la « voie royale » pour l’expression de « cet » inconscient sera l’acte. La présence de l’analyste et son propre pari pulsionnel sera le pivot pour fournir une ultime tentative de liaison qui permettra la création du « tissu psychique ».
Fra ricordo e destino: la ripetizione. Questo articolo si concentra principalmente sul concetto di ripetizione (agieren), nella sua accezione metapsicologica, clinica e tecnica. Il nucleo della problematica considerata consiste nella questione del rappresentato, del non-rappresentato e dell’irrepresentabile nella psiche. Questo problema a sua volta evidenzia il rapporto dialettico fra pulsione e oggetto e la sua relazione specifica con il trauma. L’autore attribuisce un significato speciale alla sua emergenza, in campo clinico, nella nozione di ‘destino’. Fa notare il passaggio, nella teoria dalla cura, dal ricordare e lo svelare il desiderio inconscio alla possibilità di capire la ripetizione ‘pura’, che costituirrebbe la vera essenza della pulsione. L’autore sottolinea tre tipi di ripetizione: quella rappresentativa (edipica), quella del non-rappresentato (narcisistica) e quella dell’irrepresentabile (‘impressioni sensoree’, ‘vissuti arcaici’, ‘significanti prelinguistici’, ‘tracce mnemiche ingovernabili’). Il concetto – la metafora – di embrione pulsionale porta l’autore a trattare la questione dell’arcaico in psicoanalisi, in cui si esprimerebbe la ripetizione dell’atto. ‘Un altro inconscio’ nasconderebbe con zelo il ‘sotterrato’ (verschüttet) non ancora passibile di descrizione – l’intimo più remoto – piuttosto che il ‘sepolto’ (untergegangen) o l’annichilito (zugrunde gegangen) – mediante un meccanismo il cui modo di espressione è la ripetizione nell’atto. Partendo dalle ‘costruzioni in analisi’, questo articolo suggerisce un’ implementazione tecnica diversa da quella freudiana, che si concentra invece su ciò che emerge nel presente del transfert come ripetizione di una ‘mancanza’ a livello storico. La memoria del processo analitico apporterebbe una diacronia storica in cui una temporalità libera da ripetizione e unicamente pertinente al soggetto possa esprimersi nel corso dell’analisi. Tale diacronia sarebbe allora non più la ricostruzione storica della verità materiale, bensì la costruzione di qualcosa di nuovo. L’autore introduce brevemente alcuni aspetti della propria concezione della psiche e del lavoro terapeutico in termini di ciò che egli ha definito ‘zone psichiche’. Tali zone sono associate a vari modi del divenire inconscio, e coesistono con diversi gradi di prevalenza a seconda della psicopatologia. Eppure, ognuna di esse emergerebbe con caratteristiche diverse in diversi momenti di ogni analisi, determinando in tal modo sia le posizioni dell’analista che le condizioni stesse del campo analitico. La zona dell’istinto di morte e della coazione a ripetere si trova al centro dello studio. La ripetizione ‘pura’ esprime una temporalità arrestata dalla costante reiterazione di un presente atemporale. In questo caso ‘la via regia’ per l’espressione di ‘quel’ particolare inconscio sarà l’atto. La presenza dell’analista e della sua propria intuizione pulsionale saranno fondamentali nell’apportare un ultimo tentativo di rilegatura che consenta la creazione del ‘tessuto psichico’ perduto e la costruzione, in modo congetturale, di un certo qual tipo di storia che consentirebbe di svelare gli elementi sotterrati che, nel caso di questi pazienti, emergono nell’atto. La ‘pura’ ripetizione dell’analizzando tocca, fa vibrare, nuovi elementi inconsci dell’analista. Tutto ciò porta l’autore a sottolineare una volta di più l’importanza dell’autoanalisi e della rianalisi, che consentano all’analista di trovare nuovi nessi e soprattutto di distinguere ciò che gli appartiene da ciò che appartiene all’analizzando. Un certo grado di mancata coesione garantisce la preservazione di elementi ineffabili che proteggano l’uno dall’essere spodestato dall’altro.

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