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Begin Again: Hysteria as Forgetting, Repetition, and Atonement

Summary:

What do we learn as analysts from the hysteric's narrative style? Open, fragmented, something insisting as it circles a hole in memory or affect, a sometimes stubborn refusal to close, a multiplicity of positions occupied; these characteristics that immediately become apparent to the analyst when listening to the hysteric might embody an ideal of analytic listening, analytic discourse, and even analytic writing. Using the work of Serge Leclair, several case examples, and a theoretical investigation of forgetting, repetition, and atonement, the author tries to show the importance of hysteria for rethinking not only how we work with hysteria clinically, but an ethic that the author calls, "always beginning again" that mirrors the difficult position of what it means to be and continue to be a psychoanalyst.

Originary Amnesia

Hysteria, the splendid child of psychoanalysis, has, since Freud involved the overt manifestation of repression. In the case of Dora, Freud compares listening to her history to trying to navigate an unnavigable river 'whose stream is at one moment choked by masses of rock and at another divided and lost among shallows and sandbanks.' He wonders how anyone could produce a smooth and exact history with a neurosis whose main feature is fragmentation of memory by virtue of repression. Neurotic narrative gaps, if not formed through the willing distortion of conscious shame, are formed by an uncontrollable unconscious resistance that arises in the act of speaking, wiping away intention, and/or, by real amnesic holes into which past and present memories fall. The removal of symptoms and the restoration of memory are the bi-directional pathway of treatment: when one is reached, so is the other.

Hysterics are often judged for this functional fragmentation— 'She remembers nothing! And certainly nothing accurately!' When not assessed on the basis of the ideal unpunctured surface, hysterical narrative holds open certain possibilities. Freud for one extols the virtues of working with repression, not against it. And certainly gave up trying to force a narrative from the get-go. Any fragment of a dream, no matter how small or incoherent, can work in the direction of analysis, and, as many analysts know, it can work even better than a dream remembered in total. Work, in the method of psychoanalysis, allows for forgetting. It is always only consciously forgotten after all.

One of the peculiar aspects of hysterical amnesias is that this way of being by forgetting allows one to begin again... and again. It is a constant twilight of the world whose naïve power of charm is not lost on either those who experience it or those who encounter it in another. From what primordial darkness did the human creature emerge? One need only watch the hysteric emerge and sink into an abyss to give shape to an answer. To forget is to inhabit an Other scene, an underworld, closer to unconscious life.

Of course, always beginning again surely, at some point, defeats the idea of beginning—enter the psychoanalyst— but, one must admit that on some level always beginning again has more potential than never beginning or always ending and bringing to a close. During Anna O's night fugues she lived-out the memory of the prior year in exact facsimile, allowing her to begin again every night with her precious Dr. B, but also if she liked, to begin again any time, all that was prior. The prior is priority.

A patient often described to me an uncontrollable act of almost constant self-divestiture. "It is as if I have nothing at all points in time, life lived in a space of emptiness," something that left her feeling monstrously helpless, but which she seemed unwilling to give up because it constituted a particular way of being. This way of living felt to her as if she never knew what she was doing and all encounters were potentially surprising. Good. But, they were also always potentially horrifying as well. Should she arrive a little more prepared? Her answer was always unreservedly, No. When listening to her, one wishes, as an ego-psychologist might, for more signal anxiety... preparation... a series of anxiety dreams, some modicum of mastery, rather than constant ravishment.

Her lack of a 'no', it must be said, worked well for her in her creative capacities, but not, so she claimed, in a world in which one is required to be self-invested rather than divested. And she detested those who operated in the register of having. "Self-investiture is self-satisfaction," she exclaims (and to hear the echo of a reaction to masturbatory *jouissance* is not wrong)... "Identities forged in stone were done in the spirit of meanness." This is a sentiment a little too much in the register of having itself in relation to her particular ethic. It gives way to an identity, no less a judgment, and so doesn't make its way towards the divestiture that she is searching for.

One could imagine the contemporary therapist pushing her toward assertion, seeing her refusal of ownership as an inability to recognize her transgressions or failures, her inhibiting fear of exhibitionism, a morbid disposition to penis-envy, a hatred of her body, or issues around self-esteem. "Why do you feel like you have nothing," she is asked smugly, or worse, "Why do you choose nothing?" Said therapist in some ways wouldn't be wrong. However, this just simply misses what is more interesting in an imperative to 'begin again.'

The hysteric is a never-ending beginning. The act of erasure in an amnesiac symptom leaves something radically open, too open even, as so many have claimed. What is shut out of awareness *en bloc and en masse* in fact makes something else possible. History lives-on in this repetition, history is memorialized in a rhythmic liturgy to a past held in abeyance. It renders the historical sonorous. She never wants to recover herself in an opening, which, when repeated, surfaces like a gaping hole, a cry or a howl. It calls on those around her, a call not limited to the psychoanalyst, though he or she may be in the best position to respond.

'Stitch her up.' The doctor has been ordered for an operation of suture. The edges of the hole are not easy to circumnavigate. Serge Leclaire, in opposition to Jacques-Alain Miller, asked that the analyst never suture. "The analyst" he says, "whether he likes it or not and even when he attempts to discourse upon psychoanalysis, the analyst does not suture, or at least he ought to strive to be wary of that passion"(Leclaire 2012, p.103). He then admits that he might stop there, the statement might be the most concise form, but alas, one must continue to try to speak of analysis. This necessity, he feels, is intolerable, almost as intolerable as it is in the face of patients.

So one thing I have learned is that it would be wrong to assume that hysterical amnesia, forgetting, isn't an act of creation. It attempts to hold open possibility, in the same way that we've learned repetition does. Paradox of paradoxes... Perhaps, like Penelope, the hysteric, as the analyst, is engaged in an act of weaving and unweaving, sewing a mourning shroud designed for a particular purpose, namely, to keep suitors or sutures at bay.

"Lord we know what we are, but not what we may be?" sings Ophelia pondering her dead father and errant lover. "May God be at your table." Contrary to Hamlet who knows what he may be, namely the King, but

not what he is, Ophelia knows what she is. The gap for Hamlet from nowhere to his Kingly somewhere, always in the direction of an ideal, is a gap impossible to cross.

As Freud controversially commented in his 1925 paper *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes*, the castration complex brings the Oedipus complex to grief in boys, whereas girls begin there. Can we not imagine with Ophelia how the leap into nothing might have been taken? Is this not the reason why her death in the river is the one given representation again and again throughout history? Melville's most hysterical novel, *Pierre, Or the Ambiguities*, tackles the question of love in a reenactment of Hamlet. Pierre, in his final pleading lines, says:

Here, then, is the untimely, timely end; — Life's last chapter well stitched into the middle; Nor book, nor author of the book, hath any sequel, though each hath its last lettering! — It is ambiguous still... I will mold a trumpet out of the flames, and, with my breath of flame, breathe back my defiance! But give me first another body! I long and long to die, to be rid of this dishonored cheek. Hung by the neck till thou be dead. — Not if I forestall you, though! — Oh now to live is death, and now to die is life; now, to my soul, were a sword my midwife (p. 247)!

If life requires the presence of death, then life must be stitched from its middle to its end. Pierre, faced with ambiguity, can only mold a trumpet out of the flames, a last lettering, breathing back his defiance. But first, he asks, give me another body. A body that contains death. The midwife that he cries for, we might remember, is one of Freud's most important metaphors for the psychoanalyst.

But this is not a story of the birth of a subject. Poor Pierre cannot accomplish an act of re-birth or renewal, and for all his Hamlet like contemplative philosophizing and un-Hamlet like impulsive reconciliation of the loose threads of his past, he only confronts his literal death and tragic ruin. Melville's lesson is always one where neither contemplation nor action has the power of redemption. Whatever renewal there might be is perhaps centered on Pierre's writing of an unpublishable book that we do not get to see. It functions as a kind of hidden sequel. Perhaps like Bartleby's refusal and that inherent to hysterical amnesia, writing what cannot be written, "preferring not to," is the outcome of an important repetition. The amnesic strategy writes a formidable hole that goes to the very center of being, ignorance resting on the juncture, for Lacan, between this real and all the rest. Breathe back her defiance!

Same patient: When she was a little girl, like a lot of little girls, she kept a diary. One writes in a diary always a little bit hystericized. This writing takes place in a kind of hysterical blindness where one can always claim ignorance: 'I know not what I do or write'. The diary itself plays on the border of the intimate and extimate. The space is wholly intimate and yet, one writes for someone else's eyes, imagined and addressed... Dear Diary. What is inscribed on the page is felt neither to exist in the world nor in time. This patient said she never read prior entries. The space felt very close to the space of her body. The writing was not felt as separate from her body, this separation being one way to define existence. It was a kind of deferred separation.

Every entry was an almost bodily appeal to begin again, soliciting a new beginning as all else vanishes. So when her mother read her diary it was experienced as the purest of violations. One need only imagine the intrusion of these eyes in a space that she didn't even let herself know about. From that moment on— she began to say in her analysis—everything would be written on the outside, which is how she formed herself. Not a lot can carry on hidden, she was a compulsive truth teller and gossiper and naïf whose facial expressions got her into trouble. I believe, she said, this started with my response to my mother's trespass— I wrote obscenities directed specifically at her on post-it notes that I posted in her room. Who does that? I did, she said, age 14.

It was as if I was possessed (as opposed to self-possessed). Perhaps the idea of posting— well before the age of the internet— brought her to this form, taking up the fact that the letter had unwittingly arrived at its destination. For my patient—the violation finds a way to reverse course, the writing will be on the wall. So

you want to see mother? How can we forget Lacan's uncovering of just such a moment in his analysis of Freud's Irma Dream: the writing is on the wall... *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin*. You will be numbered. You will be weighed. You will be divided. Divided! Who knows division better than our hysteric?

What this patient recovered in this piece of work in her analysis was a place that she could feel inviolate again in the act of writing even when that writing was on the wall. Everything— not only diary writing— can be done as if it was never meant to be seen, even by oneself, and sometimes that is an enormous help; a little piece of repression, or even, god forbid, disavowal, used in the act of writing. It is a way to begin again, to put consciousness or self-consciousness, the image, out of order. But never entirely— then she would be mad— but rather to live through the vertigo of a momentary disruption. It is a way that she makes use of the division and self-divestiture of her own symptom.

There is a lesson here for the psychoanalyst: In a striking passage in Lacan's Seminar VIII on transference, he speaks about the forgetting of the analyst, especially as it concerns their position in the transference. He states:

The conquering of forgetting isn't quite remembering... it has something more to do with a mutation in the economy of the desire of the analyst. If we really consider our relation to the unconscious we can excise that fear which we may experience of not knowing enough about ourselves... I am not claiming to urge you to dispense yourselves entirely from any worry... but recognition of the unconscious does not in any way put the analyst beyond the reach of his passions. It is not a taming of the unconscious but rather something along the lines of the way the life drive or Eros is privileged, captivated, captured by the mainspring of the signifying chain in so far as it is what constitutes the subject of the unconscious. I would go even further- the better he is analyzed, the more it will be possible for him to be frankly in love or frankly in a state of aversion, or repulsion with regard to the most elementary modes of bodies between one another with respect to his partner... It is precisely in the measure that he is possessed by a desire stronger than the one that is in question, namely to get to the heart of the matter with his patient, to take him in his arms or to throw him out the window, that happens, I would even dare say that it would augur badly for someone who never felt something like that. The analyst says, "I am possessed by a stronger desire". He is established qua analyst, in so far as there has been produced, in a word, a mutation in the economy of his desire. To conduct themselves in a game of 'the loser wins' (p.159).

Lacan is speaking about what it takes to find one's way as analyst qua analyst. The mutation in the economy of one's desire is not to be confused with dispensing with one's unconscious or conquering forgetting. It is something else. One must always be on the losing side, to not-know, to always have one's eyes on a desire that is beyond— beyond demand, beyond symbolization even, we all know that racket. But in really being beyond, it is nothing that we can ever understand. The loser in this game wins.

We have to lose ourselves *in* the game. We have to begin again and again and again. It is, as I think Leclaire put it so succinctly, an intolerable desire not to suture. A hysteric's technique, if there ever was one. In fact to push the analogy with hysteria, Lacan says that it is only in knowing what desire is— having had some particular experience of it in our own analysis— but never knowing what it is for the analysand, never really grasping what their object of desire is, that we are in a position to have in ourselves this object of desire for the patient. Every manifestation of our willful having dissipates the force of the transference. My patient will make a very good analyst:

Desire is this margin beyond the demand for the object. What the neurotic obliterates or forgets are a certain number of the most essential principles which played a part in the accidents of his access to the field of desire!... Every premature mode of interpretation in so far as it understands too quickly... it is in this measure than an analysis stops prematurely and in a word fails (p.179).

Is this not a technique that must involve a play with amnesia, a play with those holes that we know only too well from our own analysis, where so much of what there is to be discovered is found or encountered. And finally, is this on the side of structure or contingency?

Apocalypse, Repetition, Jouissance

Lacan elevates and universalizes hysteria and hysterical amnesia as a defining characteristic of the subject. This is *the* discovery of psychoanalysis. Division, fragmentation, and lack are the essence of the subject and not simply symptoms. The psychoanalytic cure aims not for restoration but the callous grace of this headless, acephalic, diary writing, self-divested voice that knows not what it says. This act of self-eclipse, the faint, is an act wed to the *mise en abyme* of the unconscious. Lacan pushes hysteria into the abyss so that she may find precisely how she might better live there. No byss for the abyss.

For Lacan, the abyss is the locus of an apocalyptic desire or *jouissance*. Why is satisfaction apocalyptic? The hysteric's desire is a desire for an unsatisfied desire, we know the mantra. But clinically, it a question concerning how each patient lives through keeping satisfaction in abeyance, and how this abeyance forms the center, the crux, of an unfolding treatment as it makes its way towards what was staved off, or starved like the Butcher's wife's friend. But this center is not on the side of meaning.

Lacan criticizes hoisting up the symptom through which she satisfies herself unbeknownst to herself as the truth. It doesn't mean that there isn't truth, certainly there is, but it is not simply the restoration of meaning that is her cure. Rather, it is on the side of a confrontation with her *jouissance*. This confrontation is always apocalyptic. It shreds the last vestiges of self, pushing one towards the utmost limit, posting her there where she is not, in the hole of her own forgetting, facing the writing that is on the wall. I'd like to illustrate with another clinical case.

After forcing a 17 year old patient of mine to write down his dreams 3 years into treatment, after a kind of play in session about having them, but forgetting them that he teased me with, he had the following dream: I am in an old medical room, you know, like the one's you see in the pictures that they use for teaching, like they are round and there are bleachers where people watch. You know what I'm talking about. Yes? Well, its there, and I can't see who is in the audience, all blurry anonymous faces, and I'm on an operating table and you are carving me like a turkey. Just removing huge chunks of me and putting them in a bucket and I don't want you to know how much it hurts. You were just going at it. After much discussion of the dream— a dream he more or less interpreted himself with ease— I asked him if I was going at it because I didn't know that it hurt him. He had said that he hid it very well. He replied, that he didn't know, but asked, now that you do know, will you do anything differently? I looked at him quizzically. Probably not, he said. You're so god damn evil... that look on your face... But, this was a lot of fun, more fun than I thought.

The dream had a profound impact on me. First of all, it was funny when he was telling it to me, playing at accusing me of being at total sadist. Violence and humor mix with rapid force, a sardonic attack that stretches in both directions. As well, on a more touching side, this young boy more or less re-imagined the primal scene of psychoanalysis: Charcot with the hysterics at the Salpêtrière, adding the element of cutting so important to Lacan. The analyst has probably always been a demonic Faustian figure who demands a pound of flesh. The one whose desire is imagined to be a desire for something brutal... His appeal to me not to do anything differently in the face of his pain is certainly a desire he holds for himself, a wish to be able to sustain his desire, even if that means a certain kind of 'brutality'— namely the brutality of drive pure and simple.

Jouissance is this element of transgressive violence. This dream was certainly a first link to a *jouissance* that he began to uncover in the analysis and it is certainly also a response to my having displayed my desire as analyst, forcing him to bring me dreams. The weirdness of the analytic relationship is contained in the

image— amphitheater turkey carving, translating the untranslatable act of talking about dreams and about *jouissance*. Is the comedic undertone, its place in the transference, what allows this dream not to be simply a nightmare? Does the violent comedy of analysis spell the possibility of something new in his life, something like sublimation and the road towards it? Or is this simply defense?

He had another dream: ‘I jack a car, pulling the driver from the driver’s seat, get in, drive it recklessly, crash it, get out, and do it again. I jack another car, pull the driver out, drive it around the block, crash it, do it again.... And then, guess what?’ He looks at me. ‘What?’, I respond. He makes a comedic well-timed pause. ‘... Well... I jack another car, pull the driver to the ground, get in, drive it around the block, crash it, I jack another car, pull the driver to the ground, get in, drive it around the block, crash it, and I do it again. And again, and again.’ There was a joke in the dream about repetition, repetition itself a pivot between humor and its other side, brute tragedy. He allows this other side, and his fear to creep in: ‘it felt like it went on forever, it felt like it would never stop.’

Lacan famously told the dream of one of his patients at a conference in Leuven in 1969. She dreamed of an infinity of lives springing from herself in succession, a Pascalian dream of being engulfed in an infinity from which she awoke half mad. As the audience burst into laughter, he assured them that while it might seem funny, it was not in the slightest funny to her. Infinite repetition is madness incarnate and indeed this car-jacking dream is mad. But the infinity points the way forward.

The, as he put it, ‘endless, pointless, chaotic, violence’ was a metaphor for his tie to his mother— a maddening masturbatory jacking-off game that they both shared and which neither could end. ‘It ends when I pull her down with me,’ he told me in a state of glee. ‘I’m in this fight to the death. I’ve got it all mapped out.’ And he did, it is true. He had told me the rules of the game for the past year.

The *jouissance* in this dream was even more palpable than the first. There in the sexual language— pull her down with me— but also in the very rhythm of the dream, pulling one off again and again and again. ‘And you spare me such torture?’ I asked him at one point. ‘I don’t think I can win against you’, he quipped. This is not entirely true since some game of withholding was certainly at play; an obsessional strategy that I took on by force, forcing him to tell me his dreams. It is not a tactic I generally use, but something moved me to try and break-up a kind of dead repetition. One lives through games of *jouissance*, games that my patient managed to force (with difficulty) into the intersubjective arena. I did him the service of likewise forcing some of this into the arena or perhaps better, amphitheater, of his psychoanalysis.

His satisfaction, from my perspective, was never totally insular, although it could become so during earlier periodic severe depressions and for periods in the analysis. Three years into treatment, he could exude a new charm in certain contexts in his life, in particular when he ‘played games’ with his friends, with authority, and with girls. The game is something he loves to constantly renew, with greater and greater demonic force, an upping of the stakes that he relishes. He attributes, in the dream, this demonic force to me, the analyst, someone who he sees as asking him to play every session. Every session feels like a renewal of a command. What are you going to talk about today? How far will we take this? This is how I would describe the particular exigency of the question that emerges in his analysis: In what way can we play with an elusive pleasure, always bordering on sadism, so that we aren’t just engaged in pointless repetition?

After the carjacking dream, I pointed out to him that he wanted his own car, that for the first time he would be in the driver’s seat if he got one, and that most of the fights with his mother that I can remember took place with him in the passenger seat, especially when she drove him to see me. ‘I’m going to car jack that bitch, pull her out of the driver’s seat,’ he squealed with delight. He then told me that the car he picked out turned out to be the same car his father had when he was young. A Datsun. He didn’t remember that. His mother told him. I don’t doubt that the ‘Da’ joined to the ‘son’ in the name of the car is coincidental. But then again, I wouldn’t.

Is it always this iteration of an Oedipal story that is the force behind repetition—violent, incestuously sexual, hilariousness? Does masturbatory *jouissance* always rear its head in a joke, the play of the punchline? What transformation makes repetition something humorous and not simply tragic? Sheer symptomatic repetition in treatments, as many of us know, feels lethal, and we perk up as the work of analysis mutates this repetition into something else. But the something else, at least as I'm thinking of it with this patient, is still repetition.

Lacan's early distinction between the repetition of a need and the need for repetition seems crucial. The first, he locates as a kind collapse of desire into interminable need and frustration, landing one in a stuck economy, harkening after objects that tend more towards a zero, than the tension of iteration and the play of difference. The second—the need for repetition—is located more on the boundary between the symbolic and the real, the place where language brings itself to bear on one's desire life, forcing us into an interminable search for what is already accepted as lost. As Serge Leclaire described it:

the driving factor is the difference between the pleasure demanded and that which is achieved. It is this difference that is expressed in the drives but also in the signifiers that emerge from their repression. The drive therefore appears as the dynamic of difference, and it would be justified to say that the goal of the drive is to maintain this difference, because by virtue of the satisfaction it demands, it re-animates at every instance the experience of a difference with the memory of primary satisfaction (Leclaire 1966, p.133).

What Leclaire is showing here is how drive is structured through repetition, but repetition always brings with it some difference. If we search time and again for the same lost object, turning around this hole, we nonetheless can find our self somewhere new and unexpected. The drive needs the force of repetition—transgressive, on the edge of violence, often flying in the face of reality—with which it carves this trajectory in the world. But it is not the aim in the end (always the lost object) but the way taken.

Heidegger made an important distinction between the repetition of tradition and the repetition of heritage. Tradition is the repetition of something dead and sedimented, heritage is a reactivated tradition that is submitted to what Heidegger calls *Wiederholung* which can be translated as both repetition and fetching back. The condition for newness in Heidegger is paradoxically repetition, the repetition of repetition, a kind of second order repetition of greater intensity. Not, I would say, the bitching in the car that happened over and over and over but the wild exclamation: Carjack that bitch! It reminds me of Lacan's command, taken from Revelations, to 'eat the book'. This command is put in conjunction with Lacan's ethical injunction: have you lived in conformity with the desire that is in you. Indeed the two—eating the book, raising through your desire the object to the dignity of the thing—form the play of his characterization of an ethos of desire.

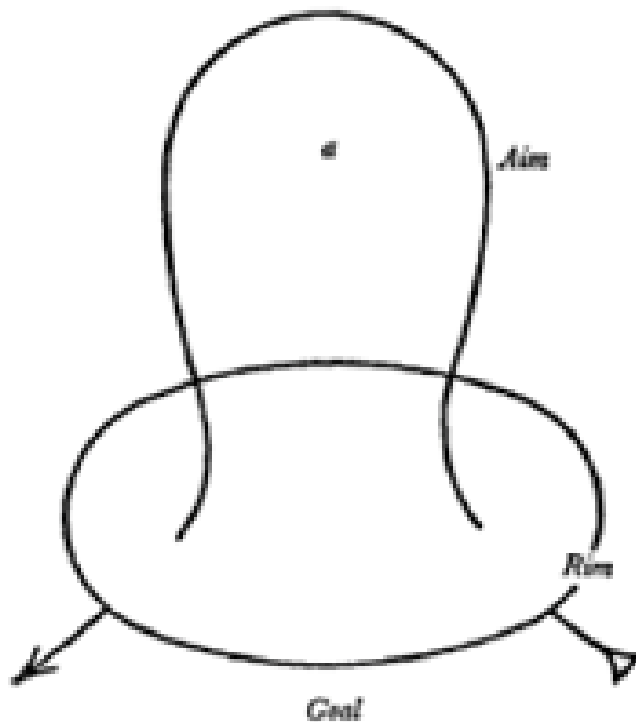
Having linked desire to the lost object, what Lacan is pointing to is a kind of faith that can be put in desire, in the hole in which it always escapes. Like the Heideggerian potter who sculpts his vase around an interior emptiness, what is made is made there: the work of repetition, infinite carjacking, whose point is this acknowledged horizon of *jouissance*. *Jouissance* contains history, a history that is fetched back, relived, repeated, if not sublimated. One of my patient's main symptoms was kleptomania. The car he doesn't know that he infinitely steals, drives, and crashes, is his Father's. Far from this being a renunciation of a wish, the analysis brings about its demonic fulfillment.

From Nothing to Nothing

The drive is a demonic movement of repetition and the object that it snatches only serves the function of constant renewal. It must begin this movement again. For Lacan, in Seminar XI, there is something impossible in the drive, its refusal to stop or find a resting point in satisfaction. "Even when you stuff the

mouth, it is not the food that satisfies it, it is the pleasure of the mouth... Mouth comes back to the mouth” (p. 167-168). The object, as Freud showed from the beginning, is the most indifferent aspect of drive life. The object is only an avatar of an always and forever lost object that causes us to desire. Through the drive’s repeatedly missed encounter with satisfaction, analysis renders it readable through the signifiers of desire that arise from this hole. Nevertheless, this writing of a hole that we might call the analytics of drive, I’d like to put on the side of movement and experience rather than any readability.

What proves most fundamental at the level of the drive is the very movement outwards and back in which it is structured; this circular character; eternal return; repetition. “What matters is not what goes in there, as the Gospel has it, but what comes out” (ibid., p.144). In this loop, the subject will become only insofar as the loop is completed. This is the only transgression allowed in the Lacanian model— this movement towards the Other, circling the *object a*. Lacan says, “I suggest that there is a radical distinction between loving oneself through the other (little o)— which in the narcissistic field of the object, allows no transcendence to the object included— and the circularity of the drive, in which the heterogeneity of the movement out and back shows a gap in its interval” (ibid., p.194). The drive traverses or outlines this empty place, it turns around it, is tricked by it into making this turn:



Puncturing the ready-made holes in the body— the rim structure of our erogenous zones (mouth, anus, vagina, eyes, ears)— the drive traverses another hole and makes a kind of stitch. This stitch, at its final point of return X, defines a locus in which one might momentarily signify oneself. The stitch seems to tie an original hole through a new one— from nothing to nothing. Lacan showed through *Hamlet* that it was only in turning around Ophelia, in confrontation with her as lost, that Hamlet finally names himself, I. This desiring I, Lacan likened to Heidegger’s potter, who forms his object around an empty center. What is involved in the drive is always this creation of a hole more than the vase that merely outlines it. Lacan names this movement around the hole with the verb *se faire*, a grammatical writing in an act of folding back around again upon one-self. Lacan quotes Heraclitus, “to the bow is given the name of life and its work is death” (ibid., p.177). What the drive integrates is the dialectic of the bow, this movement out and back whose aim of eternal return Freud labeled the death drive.

Lacan had funny ways of speaking about this movement: from the blackout or syncope of the signifier, the submission to the law or castration, and the singular disappearance of the subject in the metonymy of desire. All are situated on the same level, by Lacan, as similar phenomenon in relation to the subject's modes of disappearing. But what the figure of the drive, its stitching, obviates, is the very movement, the repetitive movement between appearing and disappearing that it must put at its disposal. The paradox of appearance in Lacan is that it is always tied to different shades of disappearance. Never one without the other. Never a final act of knotting. And yet, Lacan does make a distinction: there is a difference between this radical act of appearing and disappearing in the drive's trajectory and a kind of narcissistic closed loop that cannot make this leap into the unknown.

Take the following dream from an analysis: I am driving a car. My three children are in the back. I'm going too fast and my father is across the way trying to wave at us to stop. I'm afraid. I've done something terribly wrong. My father is impotent to stop me, which I suddenly find funny because I know nothing terrible is going to happen. I can see that no other cars are coming. I slam on the brakes and skid into the intersection half way just before I wake-up. The patient, not having crossed the gap, the intersection, putting on the brakes, wakes up feeling guilty. Nothing bad was going to happen? Why did she even have to break?

It is Lacan's contention that one has to follow the drive, one cannot stop, and that stopping and having to repeat, is different from completing the circuit and having to begin again. Beginning again happens at the point when difference is achieved. In the former nothing is transgressed, the move from nothing to nothing has not been attempted. The loop is not completed. My patient, for example, would not be subjected either to the impotent law of her father, who she derides, nor to what she knows, nothing is going to happen really, nor even to her desire, clearly driving off with her three children. In the latter, demonic though it is, there is a great deal of possibility. She wants to drive off, a transgressive incestuous wish, but if she could find the means of satisfying it beyond the repetitive *agon* of fighting it out with her father (or husband), she might find herself somewhere new. With this horizon approached, the necessity to create desire anew, would be allowed to arise and in it a difference: a difference between satisfaction demanded and satisfaction achieved, between object lost and object present, between a lost remainder in the movement of pleasure and an excess felt in its re-animation.

Is it any wonder why cars and driving make their appearance as often as they do in analysis? And, funnily enough, their appearance in so many references to Lacan's analysis and his life. Does anyone remember his transference fantasy with Lowenstein? His little car playing chicken with the big truck in a tunnel? Or, more recently in Jacques-Alain Miller's biography the important place accorded to Lacan's refusal to stop his car at stop lights?

So, why, in Lacan, are all drives death drives? The transgression by the drive into the field of the Other, the confrontation with *jouissance* in the act of circling the object a, the impossibility of satisfaction which pushes us towards the limit of difference, the necessity for repetition, characterizes in Lacan all drives, and not simply a death one. Freud himself said that one never finds the death drive without Eros. They are wholly intertwined. Lacan's genius from my perspective stems from pushing this thought further—it is not the taming of the death drive that we seek as psychoanalysts, it is the removal of the blocks we erect in the face of satisfaction. Only when the drive is truly followed do we escape. Say anything! You must continue to speak. *This is the mutation in the economy of the analyst's desire.*

A patient said to me once, "I can't bear opening and closing. I keep thinking this is the moment, the moment when it won't close again, that I'll have gained my ticket of admission! I have to find a way to get used to this. I close up so radically. It's like with sex, when I'm finally there I think how am I not doing this all the time. And when it's over I can't believe what I was doing. And I forget completely the other feeling." Always on one side of the divide, or the other. Lacan said the unconscious was a like a cave which, in order to gain entry, you have to knock on the door from the inside. Perhaps every time we manage this knock from the inside, we can make a stitch. And that stitch, like a trace, like cave paintings on a hidden rim, are points we can return to, to begin-again, to find our next knock.

The stitch, or quilting point, has been given short shrift lately by contemporary psychoanalysis, the stitch sided with ideology and the imaginary. A bad fixed point. Nothing, as I'm sure you can see, seems to me more mobile or more potentially mobile. Drive-life in the form of the stitch is, at its very source, one of movement and the rhythm of opening and closing. Patients, especially after some years, are more able to begin again and to begin again more quickly. The stitch doesn't have to act like a fixed point. Meaning always slips and *jouissance* is always there ready to gnaw at the edges of any frozen locus. I think Lacan's contention is that using this possibility is the mutation in the economy of desire in the psychoanalyst... making that analyst an analyst.

In William Gaddis' first novel, *The Recognitions*, 'atonement', is the name for this mutation:

Look back, if once you're started in living, you're born into sin, then? And how do you atone? By locking yourself up in remorse for what you might have done? Or by living it through. By locking yourself up in remorse for what you know you have done? Or by going back and living through. By locking yourself up with your work, until it becomes a gessoed surface, all prepared, clean and smooth as ivory? Or by living it through. By drawing lines in your mind? Or by living it through. If it was sin from the start, and possible all the time, to know it's possible and avoid it? Or by living it through. I used to wonder how Christ could really have been tempted, if He was sinless, and rejected the first, and the second, and the third temptation, how was He tempted?... how did He know what it was, the way we do, to be tempted? No, He was Christ. But for us, with it there from the start, and possible all the time, to go on knowing it's possible and pretend to avoid it? Or... or to have lived it through, and live it through, and deliberately go on living it through (p.896).

This atonement is a recognition, or series of recognitions rather, of what one has done. It is not a reversal or undoing of what has been done. One can avoid the effects of one's sin no more than one can their cause (i.e., for his main character, Wyatt, a question of original sin). Like movement, one cannot help but keep doing it unto the very end. Indeed, also like movement, it is precisely the desire for authenticity, the stasis of a life lived without sin, that one is consumed by a madness that knows no end. Sin is atoned, then, when one is made, in effect, sinless, not through the cessation or avoidance of sin, but by owning up to what one has done, what one is, and deliberately living out its consequences. It is, as it were, actively *living* one's end.

Which is to say, it is recognizing the "end" that one has never quite left, the inevitability and accumulation of effects, be they those of our own creation or those created for us through the actions of others. Instead of resisting and/or overcoming this end, atonement resides in recognizing one's role in actively creating what was, paradoxically, always there. Gaddis' lesson is perhaps important for the analyst, and links something of the trajectory between religion and our science. We are decidedly not on the side of a gessoed, clean, smooth as ivory surface, we are not on the side of at-one-ment, but this living it through, atonement. Ironically, Gaddis' calls this *The Recognitions*.

Atonement: No Place for the Psychoanalyst

To conclude, this way of writing, this clinical assemblage— too theoretical from one angle and not enough from another— has its roots in the one analyst I most admire and that you have heard from time to time as we moved along in this series of reflections on hysteria and psychoanalysis. Serge Leclaire's writing is, for me, unlike any other. And I take seriously his impossible call for an un-sutured desire that leaves the analyst asking— what and how can I write or speak about psychoanalysis?

There was a moment recently, when, what I take is common knowledge, was revealed to me about Leclaire's infamous patient who dreams of the unicorn (see Leclaire, 1988). The patient was in fact Leclaire himself, from his own self-analysis. I was shocked by this revelation— WHAT! Angry even— the liar! He and Kohut should kiss and make friends, the French and American analysts obsessed with primary narcissism

and who wrote falsified treatments that were their own!

But, the reason for all of this hubbub, is that his analysis of the man who dreamed of the unicorn formed part of what was a kind of menacing super-ego for me— real analysis looks like this, what the hell am I doing? Knowing this, it finally occurred to me that only from one's self-analysis could we glean the miraculous unfolding details that he did in the case of poordjeli. Something else happened in his analysis proper (something else happens in analysis proper)— this change in the economy of desire that Lacan signals. But the minimal difference between that change in economy and what takes place in his writing was, and is, an incredibly important distinction for me. One can work on these kinds of details regarding the signifiers in one's life, but only after the change in economy has taken place. After the circuit of the drive is completed, at least once, most likely several times over, which leads to termination. Freud, for example, could only examine his dreams after the transference exchange with Fliess. Lineaments of the work are there during analysis, but it is not, and never will be, anything *in toto*. There is no grand unfolding of the case.

Leclaire's writing is a wonderful after-image of what is possible after analysis — self-analysis as it is too blithely called. His discourse is a play with difference rather than its encounter. I had to encounter this difference in him before I understood what kind of play that gives one over to. And this failure, this ignorance even, to make this distinction, reminded me of the deadliness of ideals, the destructiveness of imagining too quickly the end of any analysis, the image of the analyst, a proper mode of discourse, for the psychoanalyst. What encounter is left in all this? This is *the* imaginary of psychoanalysis.

What was and has been important for me in Leclaire's work is always his reference to the true object of analysis, which he centers on the drive, and the unknown achievement that can be gained in following its movement and modes of appearance as rigorously as possible. This, he promises, will always bring with it the difference that is crucial to the subjective life of desire. But he never says anything about how that *should* look. It's admittedly a rather hearty promise, and the discourse as discourse is rather thin, as many have complained. But he wants it that way, and his words are soothing. He shows himself not as a speaker, or even a theoretician, but as a listener. The analyst listens to discourse; he does not construct one. He never lets on that this will be easy— quite to the contrary:

The domain of the analyst is a domain that is necessarily a-veridical, at least in its exercise... in fact, he does not construct a discourse, even when he speaks... the analyst... is more like the subject of the unconscious, which is to say that he has no place and cannot have one... Only one thing is sure: the day the analyst is in his place, there will no longer be analysis (p. 105-106).

The irony on which I will end is that, despite knowing all of this, clearly, I sutured Leclaire. I used him and his unbeknownst to me self-analysis, to put the analyst in their place. Today, in this non-discourse, in this treatise on hysteria, I have tried to take the analyst out of their place so that there will be psychoanalysis again, so that I could begin-again to write as a psychoanalyst, so that I could go on living it through. I wanted to speak about what it is like to listen... which doesn't make for much of a paper. My hope is that in offering this to you, we see again what hysteria has to offer to psychoanalysis: how to know that we will never be in our place, that the only strategy as an analyst in the consulting room, or in the written word, takes its bearing from our elusive child.

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