

# BECOMING AN ANALYST

*Heather Chamberlain*

## **I suppose I am “something of an analyst”**

How did I arrive at this place? I have forgotten almost everything about my first analysis, except that I had met several analysts to no avail and that the transference to that analyst was established immediately. To my question: “Can you cure my problems with academic work?” he had replied “I don’t know” and, stupid hysteric, I had thought: Perfect, I’ll help him to know! Then I hallucinated a Hitler moustache onto his face and for the next 8 years or so he remained the Other who loathed and despised me. The opening by the Freudian Field offered by the *Passe a l’entrée* came just as that had faded.

Pierre-Gilles Gueguen wanted me to talk about my testimonies, but again I can’t remember anything about them, only the quality of the experience. The opportunity came out of the blue, I grasped it with dizzy enthusiasm, put my demand to the EEP president, picked 2 *passeurs* randomly from the hat, called both of them immediately and that evening spent 2 hours with the first. I had barely thought about what I was going to say but out it came, my experience of analysis, the interpretations, the dreams, the turning points, the shifts. The second *passeur*, whom I met early the following morning, was American and her only question was “Why are you speaking to me in French?” I was quite shocked and my testimony in English seemed to me to be completely different from the one the night before. The whole experience was ....I would use the word “stunning,” but it’s been hijacked by ebay. Not that kind of stunning! It all happened so fast, it really was like leaping off a cliff in a blindfold.

And I did land somewhere new. The transference to the analyst broke and I left him. I felt fraudulent, especially as, almost immediately after I was made a member of the *Ecole Européenne de Psychanalyse (EEP)* the door I had passed through closed, and it closed him out. And I had asked for the *Passe a l’entrée* purely for reasons to do with my own analysis, the *entrée* bit, becoming a member of the School, did not inter-

est me at the time, so I was neither inside nor outside, I was in limbo.

The desire for a second analysis was provoked by a repetition of the symptom that I had taken to the first analyst. I had been asked to present a paper at Lacan's centenary celebration in Armenia because of my family ties with that country. I had never been there before so it was a very important moment for me, but the paper I presented had come out as disconnected bits and pieces. Repetition of the presenting symptom and repetition of castration displaced onto the analyst too. She appeared in a dream with a large hole in her tooth!

I will try to bring out just 3 elements from that rich and complex experience that I hope will show a little of how it worked for me.

I discovered that Bits and Pieces, the words I used to describe the Yerevan text to my next analyst, actually described not only my relationship to knowledge – peck peck here, peck peck there like a chicken, but the character of my whole life: my love life and all my relationships, my 34 no-homes, all those squats that I fixed up and then left, my second hand clothes, my too-many- bits of skills and the things I made: stained glass, jewellery, paintings in assembled pieces, bits and pieces of life in different places in different countries. A colleague remarked: “Tu te déplaces très facilement!” I produced things endlessly but nothing went anywhere. Massive output, endless production wasted, functioning only to shore up my fantasy of being complete and to prevent my taking anything in.

My only reference to my mother hitherto had been to her stupidity, identifying with my father and his view of her as stupid, and with what he shouted at me when I couldn't understand something: “Don't be stupid!” Now she made a new appearance linked to the bits and pieces of my symptom.

My mother talked a lot but didn't say much. Something she often repeated though was: “I've got 2 beautiful children”. This was never elaborated, that was it. Her desire in relation to me, beyond her own having, which was apparently satisfied by 2 children and plenty of alcohol, was zero, and my identification with this zero had produced only aborted bits and pieces.

The oedipal situation went along with that. A little vignette of a swimming race that I could easily have won but gave up, was associated with the birth of my brother, at which point I had given up everything that I had imagined I had when I was the only one. Meaning evaporated. I dropped to the bottom of the class. My relation to the Other became “Everything for the Other” (and zero for me). I did not put up any fight for phallic value, for me *Penisneid* took the form of giving up or giving away absolutely everything and became a mode of jouissance. Eventually the ravage of being bits and pieces for the Other very nearly cost me my life.

These elements were brilliantly articulated by the analyst in relation to an image I produced: it was my father’s jumper which had a hole in the sleeve. He particularly enjoyed wearing this jumper to places where dress code was important, to give the impression that he was too wealthy to have to conform to norms. In fact he was only ever loan-rich and since he never repaid loans he was actually a thief. He was also a gambler who bet the family home on a horse and lost it.

The analyst’s interpretation was very striking: “The hole is in the wrong place! There are common holes and uncommon holes. *Tout s’en fuit par ce trou!*” I had “stayed faithful to the hole in my father’s jumper” and analysis was the only thread capable of bringing together scraps so unrelated, so divided, and beginning to darn this hole.

The endless production, the serving and stuffing could give way to *s’en server* (to use itself up). The play on words between “jumper” and “sauteur” led to “s’authoriser”, and “se faire”, and to the possibility of *being* a jumper with a hole instead of all that having/not having.

My life had changed a lot under transference – I had married my partner of 26 years, started a second practice in London, and I could write. My relation to knowledge, while it remained and remains a bit chicken like, is just my way for better or worse, and I can make one out of two if I want to.

I stopped that wonderful analysis at that point. The sessions were as exciting as ever and I knew that it had not reached its end, but it seemed ridiculous to go on after I was 60, though other colleagues have done so. And so I became

something of an analyst, not completely in the right place,  
aware of slipping sometimes, but I can't imagine my life (the  
life I owe to psychoanalysis) without this work....