http://www.geology.19thcenturyscience.org/books/1857-Agassiz-NatHist/README.htm

and Polypi have been known to do; that is, by turning inside out, and at the same time sliding through its own base, like the inversion or eversion of the finger of a glove, or the feelers of a snail: but nothing of the kind occurs. In the first place *the thread is solid*, and therefore demands a mode of extension correlative with this peculiarity, and a mode, too, which is typically different from the method by eversion. We must confess to having been completely taken by surprise when we discovered that part of the cell opposite to the base of attachment gaping wide open (*Figs.* 8, and 11 *c*), as if a segment of a sphere had been cut off, and the thread, more or less uncoiled, thrust out, directly from its point of attachment, freely into open space. Sometimes the thread was partially extended; but the aperture of the cell was closed around it (*Figs.* 6, 7, 9, 12), and, as in the first case, it was the free end of the lasso which projected. It might be supposed that the extension was effected by the contraction of the cell wall, or by pressure from surrounding parts, or from behind, were it not that the cell is seen to open widely, drawing back as if by means of retractor muscles, in order to let the lasso spring out, through the broad-spread aperture. No amount of compression can straighten out, or even partially extend, the thread; but this is evidently done by its own inherent power, the mouth of the cell simply gaping to let it pass. This must of necessity be the case, or how otherwise could the thread coil itself up and retreat into the cell, as we have seen hundreds, and we might say thousands of them do? At one time the tentacle was as if covered by short, curly hairs, and the next moment the little curls had disappeared, like magic. After the thread is out, the cell closes or remains wide open (*Figs.* 3, 4, 8), and contracts more or less upon itself, the wall thickening according to the amount of contraction.

After the foregoing description, it hardly need be remarked that the base by which these cells (*Fig.* 13 *b*) are attached to the subjacent outer wall (*c*) of the tentacle is the same side on which the lasso-thread has its connection (*Figs.* 1 to 12 *c*); and therefore the latter can never be wholly extruded, unless the vesicle turns inside out. The thickness of the lasso is not only uniform from base to tip, but it does not change either by extension or by contraction. There is much difference between the degree of consistency of the wall of the cell and the lasso-thread, as may be demonstrated by allowing decomposition to set in, when the wall will disappear altogether, before the thread shows the least sign of decay (*Fig.* 5). As to the manner of proceeding when these coils have arrested any foreign body, we have made no positive observations: we only know, that, as far as their tenacity of hold is concerned, they cling as pertinaciously to a smooth glass rod or a well-polished needle as to any other body; not by coiling the tentacle around them, but by simple adhesion of the thread itself; and this is the more remarkable, since the latter is not only short, but perfectly smooth, possessing none