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Forget

Even as I deliver my argument the great vault of this place, its true extent visible only to God, is bought down so low that I might dare to touch it. It is not in its true form, but is represented to me as a cold dank ceiling illuminated only by the thin blades of light that shine between the boards on my window. I know there truly exists something else, but I do not see it.

When I turn to look upon the feet of the Judge I see, now and then, an insect. It crawls so low that it is able to make it beneath the locked door, and it comes and goes as it pleases. It eats the pieces of filth I excrete. These are the facts. There will be no denying the truth.

God will demand that I am purged for my desecration of Heaven. How can it be that I am dead and yet I take a piece of bread, dipped in soup, my elbows resting on the table, and I part my cold lips, and poke out my tongue, just a little, so that it rests on my lower lip, and the bread, heavy and drooping, is taken through the hole I make with my mouth, down into my body? How can it be that I taste it? How can I, that am dead, and who, in his relation to the world of objects has only an abstract curiosity, how is it that I am filled with the taste of soup—tomatoes, onions, leeks—and with bread and yeast?

How can it be that when I sit on my pot and strain to remove this stuff from within me, and I crouch red faced, my hands on my knees and my nightshirt gathered up, how is it that I feel these exertions, even as I stand here now before the great court of God, judged by a coalition of souls that his existed since the profligation? And how is it that I am held to be to blame for this failure of the proper division of the divine and the worldly?

§

Dr Dannenberg to Fräulein Fridoline Schreber

Dear Fräulein,

Further to your instructions, I am happy to say that your father is safely admitted to the new asylum in the village of Dösen, which is to the south of Leipzig, a very pretty spot overlooked on all sides by the most beautiful countryside and by all accounts a wonderful place, having the best of modern facilities and a very open policy regarding its patients. It is as well that the public Asylum at Sonnenstein was full, in the final analysis and despite our initial concerns, because, in both my personal and professional opinions, I do not believe there is a place more happily combining familial proximity, medical care, and an advanced outlook on treatment.

In light of your father's reputation and previous position, Fraulein Gerhardt, you will be relieved to hear, has no intention of pressing charges and the police will not be levying any fines for the disturbing of the peace. Frau Gerhardt has stated that she will press charges on her own account, but, the police say, without her daughter's co-operation there will be little chance of a successful prosecution.

All in all, he is well, physically; although I am afraid his emotional state is still very disturbed, even to the extent that his doctor, Rössler (you might wish to make a note of the name) has confined him to a locked room. This is hospital policy and perfectly sensible, certainly nothing to worry about. In the early stages of treatment it is wise to keep the patient as free of overstimulation as possible. Doctor Rössler estimates that he should be better in no more than a few weeks sufficient to see guests, and after that time you and your mother (and indeed any other relatives) may arrange to visit him as often as you wish.

While I am sure you have spoken to him yourself, please let me assure you that your mother's doctor, who has kindly written to me, has every faith in her eventual recovery to good health. I know you have expressed concern about her altered mood—this is something that is reported often in the case of women who have taken a stroke, and in most cases the previous character asserts itself over time and, if not, there are medications which can be offered—please discuss this with her doctor if the necessity arises; it is often difficult for the patient herself to recognise the changes, let alone the fact of their being a problem.

My dear child, if you have any concerns about your father, or on any other matters, please inform me immediately by letter or telegram. I am only a few hours away and can appoint a locum very easily when necessary. Can I add, at the risk of offending your modesty, that you are a very impressive young woman and a credit to your family, and that, whether they know it yet or not, your mother and father owe a great deal to your cool-headedness and maturity at this difficult time. I will be certain to mention it whenever I see them.

Yours,

Dr K. Dannenberg
(Klaus)

§

3rd May '07

Having made cursory readings of Santner, Lothane, Freud and Israels there seem to be three basic questions to address:

What style would be most appropriate?

Which diagnosis/clinical angle would be most fruitful and supportable?

What ideological stance is most appropriate given the answers to the above?

My initial feeling is that I would be most comfortable with a modified use of Schreber's original style, removing some of the exposition and making more use of passages of closer psychic distance and greater dramatic force. Clinically, I feel myself steering away from a straight Freudian reading of paranoia as a defence against

latent homosexually (and repressed desire for the male parent) and more in favour of schizophrenia with paranoid delusions as a defence against historical difficulties in Schreber's biography, both because it seems to me more consonant with the *Memoirs* and less of a forcing of the issue, and also because it will make the justification of aspects of my own writing that much easier. There is also the fact that Santner's analysis is primarily materialist, and I do tend to prefer his approach to the competing organicist/psychoanalytic tendencies in the literature.

As for the ideological content, I think there is scope for a working through of imperialism and islamophobia, mirroring the anti-Semitism and rising German nationalism Santner identifies in the *Memoirs*. My initial thoughts are that I can use Schreber's hospital notes stating that he was convinced that his head was alive while his body rotted away as the basis for a continuation of the messianic theme of the *Memoirs*, having Schreber in conflict with God (divided, perhaps against Himself, in consonance with the Order of the World) over the pregnancy of the rotting cells of his body, the different body parts hierarchically ordered, equating to the new races of mankind that will repopulate a world currently occupied by phantoms.

Will finish Lothane and Israels and make a start on Niederland. Hopefully there will be some clarification of the antagonism shown in Lothane for Niederland's approach. While it is impossible to question his scholarship, Lothane's overstated distaste for Niederland, and Israels' outright hostility, make me instinctively suspicious of their arguments.

§

Prejudice against the name of Schreber in the realms of God. The history of a soul murder as it concerns members of my family.

3

THE CONTENT OF Chapters one and two was a necessary preliminary to what follows. What could so far only partially be considered axiomatic will now be proved, as far as it is possible.

I will first consider some events concerning *other members of my family*, which may possibly in some way be related to the presumed soul murder; these are all more or less mysterious, and can hardly be explained in the light of usual human experience.

While I am not a medical doctor, I can at least claim to have consulted among the best physicians available in Germany, and therefore the world, on a number of matters, and nowhere have I found satisfactory or even partial explanations for so many events that have occurred in the recent history of the Schreber family that it

is impossible for me to believe that there is not some external force acting upon my lineage, specifically in that the mental life of the male members of the line is being actively disrupted. That it is the male aspect of the line that is affected is evidenced clearly by the unfailing good health of the female side, so that any suspicion of an inherited flaw is easily discarded, errors in this area being equally distributed between both sexes as Mendel describes in his *Plant Hybridisation*.

The voices make clear that there is prejudice against the name of Schreber. The repetition of the phrase ‘only a Schreber soul,’ to give just one of many possible examples, is so regularly made that it would be impossible for me to number the times it is said in an hour, let alone a day.

This is not merely a prejudice of opinion, but also of action, God never being able to restrain the movement of His understanding into the manifestation of His will simply because for Him to understand is the same, in all important particulars, as for Him to act, and a prejudice held finds itself acted upon without further mediation, so that for God to believe the Schreber name is at fault, as the voices make absolutely clear that He does, even though God is not familiar with the individual members of that family, is enough for particular members of that family to be acted against within the Order of the World.

It is impossible for me to point to a clear initiating moment for this prejudice against the name of Schreber, that factor being only entirely within the understanding of God, which even the voices are unable to fully share, but I might suggest that if such a moment exists it is not in recent history. I can trace the influence of God’s anger in the lives of members of my family as far back as my father’s paternal grandfather, Daniel Gottfried Schreber, who, while being a celebrated biologist and a pupil of the great Linnaeus, was unable to prevent the deaths of both of his wives, in succession, each after the woman had delivered him a living son. It is here that I have identified a common aspect of God’s punishment against the Schrebers: namely that He wishes to interfere, in a mysterious way, with the proper generative function of the human being. What His aim is can only be guessed at, but it would not seem unlikely that He intends for the line of Schrebers to be wiped out entirely (an aim in which He is almost successful in completing, as we will see) but regardless of the motive, the actions are clear—my great grandfather having to resort to a second marriage to ensure his line against tragedy.

While some might argue that should God have wished to eliminate the Schreber seed entirely, He need only do so, it must be remembered that to act outside the Order of the World has the gravest consequences and one cannot also know the extent of God’s grievance at that time, or whether it was properly directed against the man, or rather was aimed at another aspect of the soul of that man, or even at the progeny which were prevented from coming into being, the extent of God’s knowledge being so much more expanded than that of man’s that he knows possibilities of what might come to be as well as a man knows what is, and we are left to wonder whether this was done in a spirit of remedial or preventative action, rather than in spite.

When the prejudice continues against my grandfather, Johann Gotthilf Daniel Schreber, it is of a lower order, restricted to petty ailments directed against the body,

namely his eyes, his feet, and his lungs, and also against his material circumstances which, despite his father's great wealth, were strangely depleted, so much that on his death what was expected to be a great inheritance was nothing more than a few hundred thalers, and when that money was gone, he was left to his own resources, though all around him were men of wealth who might otherwise have helped and supported him. Indeed, he was never to make a fortune for himself. It should be noted here that while he was able to produce my father, thus assuring the survival of the Schreber line, a second son was taken by a sudden fever and again the line was put in peril, enough that posterity could have taken the family to extinction, without the Order of the World becoming disturbed by direct intervention.

The prejudice becomes more clear the closer the line comes to myself, the effect of God's current intervention against me and the crisis in His realms having the effect of reaching both forwards and *backwards* in time. If one is not to posit an originating instance of crime against God in an early ancestor (although, as I will point out later, there is evidence of a man bearing my name implicated in a crime against God of sufficient seriousness to merit this campaign, although the voices are not specific on what that crime may have been) and the aftershocks of God's breach of the Order might well have led to these factors as a means of correcting the causative problem by removing me from the world entirely, by attacking my ancestors and so preventing my birth. Here I go beyond the extent of my own understanding, as limited as that already is, and I cannot suggest even the mechanism by which this might be achieved, let alone provide any evidence that such a thing has occurred, above that limited account I am able to give later.

The prejudice becomes most obvious in the mysterious illness given to my father. Having suffered the poor financial legacy left him by his father, it was only with the greatest effort and the support of his wife that my father was able to secure some reputation and security for himself and us, turning himself from a feeble and impoverished man into someone once more worthy of the Schreber name. Though I have no evidence that God takes notice of such worldly concerns, except perhaps as they are magnified in the spiritual realm, it may have been his ability in turning the fortunes of the family that forced God to become more actively involved in suppressing it, because there were acted upon my father a number of mysterious tragedies. The most blatant example is that following a very simple and innocuous blow to the head he was laid low for the rest of his life (with a few exceptions) with pains that no doctor had any ability to cure.

My father's reputation as a man of fitness and health is absolutely central to his reputation and there can be no-one who is familiar with his works on education and gymnastics that could be unaware of the importance he placed on bodily health. This was not an academic pre-occupation unmatched, as so many lesser men's work is, by practical commitment. Quite the opposite: it might be said that his ideas flowed in the opposite direction, his belief in the benefits of gymnastics having come from a personal understanding of the benefits to the body and mind of daily exercise, his having grown from a slight and sickly youth, often taken by disease, into a tall and broad-chested man who ought never have a day of ill health. It should immediately

raise suspicion to the reader when he learns that nothing—a blow to the head from a falling apparatus—was enough to absolutely cripple the man, and to introduce into his thoughts murderous impulses, directed specifically at his own sons, impulses that he fought against for his lifetime, to the extent of taking himself away from the family that he loved so that he would have no chance to act out his desire to, as he put it to me, ‘choke the weeds’ (a phrase I had never heard him use before for any purpose). His attitude to my brother, Gustav, changed almost overnight from one of fatherly pride and love, to murderous desire, so that I once found him with his hands around the boy’s neck, and it was only by the use of an implement that I was able to remove them. Gustav maintained that should he meet his father about the house he would launch into verbal attacks even where he was able to restrain the physical violence, and I have no doubt that this withdrawal of fatherly love was an important aspect in my brother’s decision to end his own life, against his own fiercely held religious beliefs.

My aim with these revelations is not to bring the character of any of my relatives into doubt, nor to give pain more than already has been given to them by the course of my own illness, but rather to shed light on the mystery of why this situation has come about, and, indeed, it would be difficult for the intelligent reader to place blame on those who suffered under this persecution, anymore than I expect myself to be blamed. Is Job blamed for the afflictions put upon him by God? Or is the opposite true—that he is held up as the most pious of men, despite the tests to which he was put? I do not wish to be the cause of any discomfort to my living relatives, but I must, in order to be true to myself and also to the unprecedented importance of the situation that has opened up in the spiritual realm, the consequences of which are to be felt everywhere, I must, though I fear to do so, also give as evidence those experiences of my wife in her attempt to give birth to a successor to the Schreber line (there being no other male heir capable of continuing the line and here is the most obvious sign of the persecution). Despite six successful fertilisations there has been no living child delivered to us. Four of them were interrupted at an early stage, as can be expected, but also two who were born, perfectly formed, but without the seed of life within them, without a soul, as if God had, in order to further His own motives and against the Order of the World, *withheld the spark of life*. It might be that He reserved the living souls from these children in order that, all else failing, there should be no successor to the line if His policy against me was, in the final judgement, unsuccessful. It might also be that, should my unmanning proceed as planned, God requires there should be no other claim to my succession of greater validity than that of the new race of man to be born from my own womb, by mysterious means, to repopulate the corrupted world.

As I mentioned earlier, there is no way to be sure of anything other than the facts of the persecution, and any imputation of motive or idea is done only on the evidence of the word of the voices, which is contradictory and often nonsensical, nor is there any possibility of identifying the crime which the Schreber name has supposedly committed, but the strongest feeling in me is that it is to do with soul murder, and a soul murder attempted, perhaps even on the person of God by an ancestor predating

me, presumably by many centuries, and that this soul murder was unsuccessful. God seeing something in the construction of the Schreber soul that predisposes toward soul murder (or perhaps that is predisposed to having soul murder carried out upon it, or even that other souls, such as those possessed by the Flechsig line, feel some obligation to carry out soul murder on Schreber souls, erroneously apportioning blame to the successors in the line) has conspired against me, against the Order of the World, as a means of averting continuing crises in the realms of Heaven.

The extent to which there is a crossover between the spiritual existence of the soul and the physical existence of man is a matter which is clearly central to the issue, it being nonsensical to imagine a situation in which punishment is meted out, or blame laid at the feet of the physical manifestation of a soul if there is not natural interplay or relatedness between the two aspects. Established theology, particularly that laid out by the Catholic church, makes a claim for a strong, indeed absolute, link between the actions of a man on Earth and the holy status of the immaterial soul, the one being capable of soiling the other, and the soul after death having to answer for the actions of the man. While there is, from my own experience, evidence of the same process at work, particularly in the blackening of the nerves of certain souls that are drawn into me, there is almost equal reason to suggest that this link is only at best a partial one and that no clear cause and effect exists. Indeed, as I would argue in the case of Flechsig, it is possible under certain circumstances for the nerves to splinter from their original closeness with man and take on a life of their own—an idea which should not seem unusual when one understands the largely separate concerns and environments in which the two aspects of a being exist—the soul concerning itself after all with Heavenly matters, in particular the uninterrupted enjoyment of the closeness with God.

Whether there was any physical action by any of my predecessors which might have bought them into conflict with God is a question which I find it hard to answer, knowing of nothing but the purest of motives in any of my relatives, and having no knowledge of those that I know nothing of, and while I cannot rule out that there was some mischief done in the far past, perhaps when the practice of witchcraft was more widespread than it is today, or in the days of the scriptures, when the link with God was, if one is to believe the literal truth of what is written, more concrete than it is today, it is my feeling that whatever physical action that might exist by which the Schreber name can be held complicit against God it must have been largely innocent of intent, or purely accidental, or coincident with some other action which was not intended to offend, just as my actions have in no way consciously bought me into a conflict with Him, though I am considered now to be the worst type of scoundrel in the eyes of Heaven.

I have examined the actions of my relations with a hard heart, looking for any transgression, and there is nothing that I would consider worthy of the kind of punishment that is visited on us. My father, perhaps, was guilty of the sins of pride and anger, taking himself to be a man who was able to dictate the proper rules for the health and education of the body. While he was always acting in a pious manner, and God was foremost in his house and hopes, it is possible that there was offence

given in the degree to which he sought to prescribe his advised mode of living. This was no more than any man of science and education who takes an opinion on any subject, but like any such man he became angered when his ideas were not taken seriously, or observed with the appropriate fervour. While he was strict when it came to the discipline of his children, not sparing any of us when it was clear we required guidance, this was less so than many men of his generation, raised as they were in an era when the physical punishment of children was a duty which was rarely shirked, and despite that we loved him, and it was only after his accident that we truly understood how much.

Here is a possible cause for complaint—abandonment of parental duty—though, clearly, for the crime to be subsequent to the punishment is a nonsense (at least for man, who has a limited understanding of the true flow of the universe), but it stretches credibility to assume that God should become angered by an event He Himself has bought about, though there is evidence to suggest that God might act in exactly this way, as he has done against me, who is innocent of the attraction felt by his nerves, but is daily punished on its account.

If we are to allow for the possibility of retroactive punishment, then the self-killing of my brother might also be seen in this light, however illogical it must appear to the rational man, and it is also a possibility that the failure of my children to live is a punishment for my later accidental breaches of the Order of the World, and perhaps that every one of the misfortunes that have been visited on my line find their origin in my present illness and therefore in the actions of Flechsig, and his attempts at my soul murder.

It is impossible for me to know and, unless there is change in the present circumstances and it becomes possible for me to die, perhaps I will never know, the facts of the matter being, as they must be, known only to God and the higher agglomerations of souls to which I will never become close while my unmaning proceeds. This is not something that I can feel too much sorrow over; what man, after all, knows the intricacies of his fate until his life is over? However, in order to make sense of what is happening to myself and to the world, it is essential that these matters be taken into account. They may provide the key to the whole business. Given that I am blind to the matter, except only in that the voices might offer me hints from their own limited comprehension of events, I can only concentrate on the situation *as it pertains specifically to my person*, this area being the only aspect which I can know in truth, as I live it without pause for every minute of every day, and have the ability to understand it in a way that no-one else can claim. If there are historians or theologians who can prove one way or another the truth or otherwise of my suspicions as to the actions of my, or Flechsig's, relatives then I would welcome that knowledge, but I have no access to them and so cannot rely on their testimony at least for these memoirs, and can only hope that such knowledge will come later, and add support to the learned opinions of those doctors and scientists who I know will work to find an explanation for my condition.

The court must not imagine for a second that I do not understand this fact. I do, more than anyone else. That said, it is my duty to put certain matters before you, for the sake of completeness and also in my defence. The litigator has pointed out, repeatedly, that the archives are already available, but these factual transcriptions do not do justice to the events, and Herr Schreber's own attempts at making sense of them are pitifully misconstrued. It is my duty to posterity, to those souls to come and, as must be quite obvious, to myself, to clarify those recordings that exist, and while they can be consulted by anyone with an interest, if the current action before the court is successful, the same will not be able to be said of me! Yes, I understand the requirement for brevity. Of course, I will do my best to represent only those things to which I can claim a privileged understanding, and to make sense of them for the court. Please understand that I am placed under duress, and do not have about me the facilities necessary to carry out my duty to the court and simultaneously remain calm. I will try my best, despite the onerous conditions to which I am subject.

I suppose I am not in a position to disagree, and it is not my place to question, merely to state that I will faithfully attempt to carry out my duty before the law. Where my memory does not serve, I consult the system-of-writing-down, and where the failures of my recollection and the inadequacies of the basic-speech coincide, robbing my testimony of the necessary detail, I will elaborate around what does exist, taking care not to include anything that I cannot justify. It has been suggested that there was a conflict of interest in my having been appointed to the task of monitoring Schreber. I can only state again, in the defence of my masters, that the practicalities of the matter made me the only sensible choice. The court should have no trouble in separating any partisan commentary from the salient truths and may hold each up to the other and gain more insight from the comparison than by the examination of one or other alone.

If the litigator is satisfied, I will begin with the testimony.

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4th May '07

Need to look into literary responses to Schreber–Sass, Canetti, Chabot seem to be the most important critical sources, and there is a play by Caryl Churchill that was written in the seventies that might be relevant.

Further thinking on the examination of the causes of Schreber's symptoms makes me want to steer clear of any direct correlation between repressed episodes of sexual abuse, whether from the brother Gustav, or from the father, particularly because it was assiduously kept out of the *Memoirs* and also for fear of being associated with the Niederland/Schatzman interpretation (although Schatzman's *Soul Murder* was apparently translated into a successful off Broadway play. No idea as yet as to the author/s, but it is something I will need to look into, if only to distance myself, or work against it). Might be useful material, though, if I should ever attempt to write the missing chapter three of the *Memoirs* as it is precisely the kind of biographical

detail that the family would try to suppress.

There seems to be a poorly received new film treatment of the *Memoirs* released last month in the US by a director I've never heard of, and whose resume is, at best, not promising. Will attempt to get hold of a copy.

§

At the beginning of the year 1900, a breach was made in the walls of heaven that threatened to destroy both the world of man and God himself. At the centre of this breach was the man Daniel Paul Schreber whose nerves, by virtue of the malfeasance of his doctor, the sorcerer and heretic Dr Emil Flechsig, became the source of a terrible gravity enacted on the pure nerves of God, by which He was sucked down, inch by inch and against his will, into the human world, drawn by Schreber's excitation. To rectify this transgression against the Order of the World, a plan was drawn up whereby the Earth would be destroyed and made again. Schreber would become bride to God and mother to his children, a new race of men. This thought was repugnant to the man Schreber and, in defiance of God, he took every effort available to him to thwart divine will. In this he was aided by renegade factions of the Heavenly host and so weakened was God by the contact with the nerves of a mere man, His eventual success was in no way assured. Schreber was the battleground on which this battle was fought, and the fate of God and man rested with him.

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Dr Rössler to Dr Dannenburg

Further to your request to be kept informed as to the progress of Herr Senatspräsident Schreber, I am afraid I have little to relay except that he remains much as he was, in spite of my best efforts to force a chemical cure upon him. I have exhausted the pharmacy on the poor man, and none of it seems to have had much effect on anything other than his bowels, which alternately under or over produce—something the patient fights in either direction, withholding when he needn't and evacuating when we would rather he did not. He weaves this rhythm into his hallucinations, I'm told, although I cannot attest to this first-hand simply because when he is not withdrawn, which is extremely uncommon, he is very surly with both myself and the other staff. He constantly demands the presence of his wife, or to be returned home, or makes other similarly unreasonable demands, and will not listen to sense. He then returns to his isolation. I have resorted to procuring for him a lengthy period of sleep—something he is unable to manufacture naturally—by means of narcotics. His notes suggest that something of the sort was tried before, unsuccessfully, but, frankly, I don't know what else I can do for him.

This brings me to the next consideration. I do not know on which side of the fence you fall on this matter, but it is my opinion that if there is nothing one can do for a man, there is no reason—if an alternative is available, as it is in this case—for him

to be kept in a hospital. Quite the opposite. I fear I have learned from a long career (I am tempted to say *overlong*) that a medical environment is often less conducive to a man's recovery, in the absence of a clear cut cure, than a natural domestic situation and I have known it, indeed, to be fatal. There is a certain sympathy that a man finds essential and which, try as we might, is never consistently created in an institution. Consequently, I think you will understand me when I say that, in my professional opinion, I am minded to return Herr Schreber to his home in Dresden, if this current course of treatment does not prove effective, regardless of whether his symptoms are alleviated. This is certainly his wish, and I wonder if his illness might recede of its own accord in a proper home environment. Most of his complaints are related to his desire to return home and to see his wife.

Please relay this information to his family, or, if you would prefer me to do so, let me know and I will arrange for a meeting with them.

I am
yours

Dr Rössler

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15th May '07

There is an Italian novel based on Schreber's life and writings by Roberto Calasso, called *L'impuro Folle*. Will try and get hold of a copy. Unfortunately, unlike the rest of his work, it has not been translated.

Received the Burgess screenplay of Schreber a while back and he makes much use of the idea of Schreber père as an abusive disciplinarian with anti-sexual/repressive tendencies and ties these in with Schreber's development of psychosis. Very influenced by the Niederland/Schatzman school of thought that I have previously steered away from. However, such is the quality of the screenplay that I may have to let the thematic and dramatic possibilities of the reading rule the day.

§

And then he was overtaken with the sensation that there was, behind his eyes, the consciousness of another being intercepting his sensations and filtering them, directing his gaze to places in the darkness, and though Schreber could see nothing there to look at—only the mortar between two bricks, or the space where a previous occupant had chipped away at a corner—there was clearly something there that fascinated the intelligence which mediated everything, and what was worse was that this interest was in some way provoking the sensation of voluptuousness, as if was looking on the naked female form, and Schreber could feel the excitation that such an image might provoke acted out on his own nerves—though there was no

image associated with it—and he found his head moved up and down along the walls, his eyes darting in the manner of one who sees ever more provocative sights, but there was nothing, and it occurred to him that the owner of the desire was stripping his sensations of their content, painting visions on the field of his vision only to the erase them, or consume them utterly, before allowing the sensation to reach his mind, his body still being alert to them, and he felt his hands on his own flesh, moved by another consciousness—that consciousness he now knew belonged to God—searching out in the darkness those forbidden parts of his body, in answer to the nerves' desire for provocation, and when he tried to close his eyes he found they remained open, and when they became unbearably dry, deprived from the natural humours provided by blinking, the water they lacked was created by miracle to facilitate clear vision for God who, having the power to create whatever He required, made and unmade images of erotic congress on the walls of that cell, the scenes becoming more and more arousing to the nerves, and the nerves arousing his consciousness in turn, and though Schreber saw nothing he felt it all, the nerves being so entangled with his own that they could not be silenced in the way that his eyes could, that requiring a simple neutering of content in a single nerve, and Schreber felt that he might—in this chaos of provocation and manipulation—be lost, his soul washed away and separated from the body, allowing God to occupy him utterly and take his body for whatever purpose He so chose, and it was only the fundamental Order of the World that prevented it from happening in spite of anything, that law providing him one final recourse, to claim his mind and nerves as his own, as was his right despite what even God might wish, God having instituted this provision at the very beginning of creation, that no man might have his soul taken from him without his agreement, and Schreber did not agree, though his life had become so pathetic he could still bring to mind the soft touch of his wife's hand on the back of his neck, and on his brow as she checked him for fever on some night long in the past, and wasn't that night a presage of this one? He rolling there beneath the blankets, wet with sweat and muttering and mumbling, his head ringing with the sound of a bell chiming though the windows were shut and the churches shut for the night, and she made him sip water and when he opened his eyes he saw her, young and pretty and unbowed by her failure to bear a child, and in her eyes he saw love, though he could not rest still for a single moment, the aching of his arms and legs requiring him to move whether he was exhausted or not. He recognised her love and its partner in his own breast, and he reached out his hand and touched her cheek, and she took his hand and held it to her breast and told him he would come through, and that a boy had been sent to secure laudanum to help him sleep, and where was that boy now? Couldn't he be persuaded to run to the doctor and get what was necessary, that little rascal with the sken in his eye, whose father drank their money away, and who preferred to be paid in bread and eggs. Peter. Where was he now? And where was Schreber's wife? Where was Sabine? Who would be mortified to see where Schreber's hands now felt, and what they were provoked to do by God, but the shame of which Schreber would have happily borne to see once more that look in her eye, of care and love, to take her husband into her arms and lift his head and trickle the bitter wine over his cracked lips, and stroke his

hair until it took effect. And who was it there instead, positioning itself between the nerves of Schreber's eyes and their junction with the lobes of his brain, a fragment of God's consciousness, but with his intent, nonetheless, making these women f-k in front of him and put his finger up to the second knuckle, and why had she deserted him? His saviour and bride, lying there on the ground, suddenly no more than a shopkeeper's dummy, her manufacture revealing her to be nothing more real than the fleetingly-improvised-men, nothing more than the iron rims on a cart wheel, unoccupied by a soul, and if only he could be with her now, as she had been on that fevered night so many years before, wouldn't she have been proof against God's contention that he was a woman now, a fertile piece of soil into which He might place the seed of a new and less corrupted race of men? And wouldn't God have been forced to understand that conditions contrary to the Order of the World were being brought into existence, He having, after all, overseen and sanctioned the holy union between a man and his wife? And to see her love for him acted out in front of his eyes, He could not have believed anything other than the truth, that Schreber was a man, a husband, loving and loved. But now, God used him for his own purposes, forced on him these degradations that would have been better directed at a less continent man, if they had any justification at all, and though the voluptuousness eased the pains Schreber felt in his bones, he strove now to resist the sensation, bringing to mind those evenings his wife had recited her lines, and Schreber had taken his place at the piano as her accompaniment, and if she didn't sing was that not from consideration of the others in the house who were trying to sleep? Anna and Sidonie and Schreber's mother all gathered there in Dresden, despite their preference for Zeitzer Strasse, just this once, in recognition of Paul's prior commitment to the election, this yuletide to be spent away from home becoming a strange but wonderful break from tradition, great pains gone to with the decorations, and the cook and her girl labouring from early morning to dusk with matters below stairs that were only dimly understood except in the mouth watering smells that slowly blended over the course of days, from boiling oranges to beef fat, and Sabine hoping to make a great show of her singing, and now not wishing to disturb the surprise, or their rest, and Paul had his foot on the dampener and restrained his usually vigour with the keys, and her hair was pinned up and her hands clasped in front of her, and she looked so like the picture of her mother on the wall that he almost interrupted her to make the comparison, only stopping himself because she seemed so rapt in concentration, and he turned his attention to the sheet music and followed the notes as the rose and fell across the staves and when the time came to turn the page there was not the slightest hesitation in the rhythm of the notes.

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The litigator questions the relevance of my testimony so far to this court. He fails to understand the need for such close observation of the evidence. It has been suggested that I insult the intelligence of the court by representing banalities as matters worthy of consideration. I can only apologise. Banalities will be the crux of

my argument. Close observation will be the method I use. As I look around these halls, from a position no soul of my lineage or wider experience has ever taken, I am rendered almost bewildered by their beauty. That those accused of crimes sufficient to justify absolute dissolution, as I have been, to be able to experience the wonder of these heavenly vaults is a testament to the love and generosity of God in all His aspects. The litigator suggests that it is a crime in and of itself to despoil this place with talk of cabbage and bacon, of a man's bodily position, of the concerns of men. I agree. It is a gross inversion of the Order of the World for the low condition of the man to be elevated to Heaven, and while I risk the worst kind of disrespect to the institution of the celestial court it is absolutely necessary for me to do so if my case is to be made, because, dear Judges, it is precisely this confusion of worlds to which I have been subject that is the cause of those failures the Confederacy believes are worthy of my removal from this place. Even as I deliver my argument, the great ceiling, its true extent visible only to God, is bought down so low that I might touch it and not in its true form but in the form of a cold dank ceiling, illuminated only by a thin blade of light that creeps between the crack in a single piece of wood that bars the window where I know there truly exists the road to the eastern expanses. When I turn to look upon the feet of the Judge I see, now and then, an insect, crawling low enough that it is able to make it between the door and its frame. It gnashes at pieces of filth that the Schreber man excretes. Please allow me to continue. I mean no heresy. These are the facts. The litigator rises from his chair and demands the floor, but there will be no denying the truth. That basic fact, so obvious to us all, that a man and his soul are two separate entities, in my case has been contravened. The man leaks into me. His baseness spreads through me like a plague. The litigator will argue that this is precisely why I must be purged from this place, but I ask, why must I be purged when the fault exists in the man and, I will say it, in God's relationship with him? How can it be that when the man Schreber raises to his lips a piece of bread, dipped in soup, his elbows resting on the table and he parts his lips, his tongue poking a little out, resting on his lower teeth and the bread, heavy and drooping is taken through the hole he makes with his mouth, past the tongue and into his body, how can it be that I taste it? How can I, that have neither tongue, nor lip, nor the organs to transmit smell, who, in his relation to the world of objects has only an abstract curiosity, how is it that I am filled with the taste of soup, tomatoes, onions, leeks, and with bread and yeast? I speak of matters so far beneath the court's understanding that the question is risible, but it is of the most absolute centrality. How can it be that when the man sits on his pot and strains to remove the very sustenance he has taken in only hours before, crouched and red faced, his hands on his knees and his nightshirt pulled up, how is it that I, a soul, feel his exertions, even as I stand here now before the great court of God, judged by a coalition of souls that his existed since the profligation? And how is it that I am held to be to blame for this failure of the proper division of the divine and the worldly? The litigator shows his disgust and calls for my dissolution. He, it seems, is perfectly comfortable with the notion of my dissolution, a thing that has happened only once before to my enemy, Flechsig, and yet he will not understand that the vile matters of which I am obliged to speak, by which I sully this court, are

of the utmost importance to us all, because if the precedent is set, here and now, how can we be sure that the same will not, at some time in the future, be the universal fate of us all? There is a rent in the miraculous structure of the world. There is a bleeding between the two spheres. This hall of justice is one, to my perception, with the cell in which the Schreber dog lies weeping. Even the stench of his putrefaction is sensible to me. The court may be disgusted at this idea, but who is to say that the rent will not widen? Who can be sure, in the absence of God's will, that this will not be the template for a new order, that Heaven will not become bound, as I most certainly and indisputably am, to the senses of man? If the court decides, in its wisdom, on the advice of the litigator, that the fault for my failures is entirely mine and within the natural course of affairs, allowing that I am a liar in the face of God, how will the rent be closed, given that to call me a liar is to call into question its very existence? Heaven would become a place of horror, of sand running across skin, of the sound of water lapping against a shore, of friction and gravity and if we turn our backs on the threat, would we not be doing those things for which we despise men? Their stupidity and ignorance of the way of things? We know what they do not. We know that there is a separation between a soul and the man. They do not. Men are of the opinion that the soul and their personality are one and the same entity. They imagine heaven to exist, as their worldly domain exists, only elevated, perfected, sensory, but transformed. We should not chide them overly for this! It is a simple mistake to make, and is a function of their limited scope of sensation combined with the physical embodiment of their selves. They are separate from us, where we are not separate from them. We have no such excuse. They are separated from us in the medium of their dwelling, first and foremost, but also by the range and quality of their experiences. We know what they can never know. They originate from the same germ, but from there they diverge, even whilst remaining tied by the structure of the nerve law, and where we see them, if we lower our eyes to look, they do not see us. And, although the germination of the soul is timeless, as are all those things pertaining to it, when a man is born there is an anchoring into the stream of cause and effect that is physical, and from this anchoring the man may not escape. I understand this where other souls do not. For those souls whose men are living, this may sound like nonsense and even those souls whose men have been absorbed into them at the point of their death will have forgotten everything the man experienced, but I am different. I know that the man is led in a linear fashion in one direction through time. It is a nauseating sensation. While the soul, albeit tethered by the centre of the circle, may travel in all directions or none, the man is obliged to move always at the one speed and in the one direction. I am obliged to feel the sensation of this, even while I retain the freedom proper to the soul, but the sensation itself has an effect. When Schreber awakes in the night and screams, I stay with him for as long as that scream lasts and it is only by enormous effort that I do not feel it as he does, the vibration of the strings in his throat, the passage of warm air from his lungs, the sinking in of his chest as the bellows empty. The litigator makes it clear that he finds such talk irrelevant, but he does not experience it constantly, as, at best, an undertone to his existence, and, at worst, as the very substance of his conscious observations. There is an analogue here: the

litigator acts as does the man, when he sees the action of the soul, and specifically as Schreber himself acted, when he was bought into consciousness of God—he does not understand it. It is my contention that so finely is the knowledge of the proper existence of the soul ingrained within the fabric of my prosecutor that it is impossible for him to understand me. Indeed, such has been my overwhelming experience when examining the popular reaction to my case that I feel justified in saying that a single soul cannot understand the matters of which I speak, and that only an agglomeration of entities is qualified to hold any kind of judgement on the matter. It is my contention, then, that I should be tried by compound entities, and that, in the first instance, this court should be dissolved and a new session ordered with more appropriate personnel, specifically higher entities, or, indeed, appropriately qualified aspects of God Himself.

§

It is so obvious, it almost seems ridiculous to point it out, but a man and his soul are two separate entities.¹ We should not take knowledge of this fact in ourselves as an indication that men are aware of the separation.² They are not. Much of the trouble that has been bought about by this affair for those souls involved could have been spared if this realisation was more widely shared in Heaven. To state again, human beings are of the opinion that the soul and their personality are one and the same entity. We should not chide them overly for this! It is a simple mistake to make and is a function of their limited scope of sensation combined with the physical embodiment of their selves. Moreover, they are separate from us, where we are not separate from them. They are separated in the medium of their dwelling, first and foremost but also by the range and quality of their experiences. They originate from the same germ, but from there they diverge, even whilst remaining tied by the structure of the nerve law, until after a period a soul will be a very different person from the man, despite this being absolutely imperceptible to them.³

Additionally, although the germination of the soul is timeless, as are all those things pertaining to it, when a man is born there is an anchoring into the stream of cause and effect which is physical and from this anchoring the man may not escape. He is led in a linear fashion in one direction through time, while the soul, albeit tethered by the centre of the circle, may travel in all directions or none in a manner which is so alien to the man that he finds it incomprehensible. If he should observe the freedom of the soul, it is liable, should he speak of it to other men, to have him labelled insane. It has been argued that this is, to borrow a phrase from the basic language “old news”⁴ and it has been countered that this is nothing a soul does not

¹In Schreber’s “Open letter to Professor Flechsig,” which introduces the *Memoirs*, he allows for the possibility that there is a volitional separation between that part of the soul that ascends to heaven and the human person remaining on Earth (M. p.9).

²Despite suggesting the splintering of Flechsig’s soul, and believing his own soul to have been murdered, Schreber does not apply the “volitional separation” rule to his own soul, and makes no mention of either its fate, or any differentiation into separate aspects.

³There is a distinct pseudo-scientific tone to Schreber’s writing, and the use of bogus scientific terminology, .

⁴The “basic language” makes use of cliché and euphemism (M. p.26).

know in the very core of his existence. It is my contention, however, that so finely is this knowledge ingrained within the fabric of the soul that it is often overlooked. Such has been my overwhelming experience when examining the popular reaction to the case at hand and I feel justified in continuing my chain of thought simply because a return to first principles can often be useful. In this case such a return is clearly necessary, if only to rectify the constant and dangerous misunderstanding of the role the Schreber man has played in this matter beyond that which is attributable to my soul and against which I am called to daily defend myself in the courts of Heaven and in the more usual meeting places.

So, as the man is limited in his direction, the soul is limited by the extent it may travel, each year that progresses in the world of the man extending its reach through Heaven and also proliferating the range of noumena against which the soul might measure itself, expanding as the man experiences. So, while at the birth there is little qualitative difference to be discerned between the infant man and the infant soul, with each day that passes the experiences of the man, in one simple direction, are magnified by virtue of the soul's ability to travel in all directions, spherically. The matter is complex, but there a clear and definite rules, established by the architecture of Heaven and Earth so that where a man may only travel from the ground to the summit of a mountain by going in the direction 'upward,' so a soul may only experience that aspect of Heaven that its tethering allows, extending no further in either distance or *spiritual quality* than is naturally correct. There may be exceptions in individual circumstances—the soul may extend its reach at the expense of its heavenly density and strength, stretching beyond its scope, by the will of God—but the effect is always temporary and comes at a cost.

It is clear, then, that the soul owes something to the man, as often as we might wish to deny it and as distasteful as it may seem. To put it another way, while the soul exceeds the man in every conceivable fashion, it is, in a very important way, fettered by the man. In the general run of this relationship the effect on the soul is mild and largely harmless, but in my own circumstance, there has been a definite strengthening of the effect and a change in the quality of the interaction that other souls cannot and will not be able to properly take into account for the simple reason that it so rarely takes place. The effect requires some explanation. In the proper run of experience it is impossible for the man to owe anything at all to the soul because he comes into contact with him only when his time on Earth is over, and at this point, given that the experiences of the man have always already been a subset of those wider and more complete experiences of the soul, he becomes absorbed and ceases to understand himself as a separate being. In my case something different has occurred, because the dog Schreber is an exception to the rule. In drawing the attention and attraction of God in both His aspects—not entirely by his own actions, it must be said—he acted against the Order of the World and forced God to attempt (and fail) to correct the issue by countervailing *Himself* against the Order of the World. Now, it is obvious that God, unlimited by the initial tethering point that a germination creates, is able to go where He wishes about Heaven and the world, even, and this is central, *when there were parts of Him that were dangerously attached to the nerves of the dog Schreber.*

It is equally clear that the range and scope of God's experience is vast, tending toward the actual extent of all things, from the Earth to Cassiopeia,¹ to the most distant stars, to all of which He is attached and, as much as such things can be sensibly written down, He is absolutely close to all parts of all things simultaneously, experiencing all and everything in one breath. Now, those parts of God—his own concentrated nerves, that were drawn down toward Schreber—vibrated with and contained the energy of His experiences and the closeness of, for example the internal workings of the stars, or the birth of other things—strange to souls of our experience—which, because of germinal tethering, no soul of our circle could possibly experience. It is my contention that the Schreber dog, in absorbing those parts of the nerves of God that vibrated with the energy of these experiences, has exceeded the range of knowledge of his attached soul in a fashion that has never before occurred, and the subset of his noumena has suddenly and albeit temporarily (all things returning to the soul after death, as is consonant with the Order of the World) expanded beyond my own understanding and control. The man operates outside my volition or ability to alter his behaviour or intentions.

Consequently, I, an aspect of the whole soul, which has been appointed to archive this record as a warning against future transgression of the law, is subject to much criticism in Heaven, and I elaborate the above explanation in my defence, knowing the importance of the task that has been set aside for me—namely the recording of this document, and determined that the project should not be undermined by any diminishing of my reputation that is caused by an incorrect association of the acts of the Schreber man with those of his innocent soul. I make no apologies, but, because I am subject to criticism, though it may seem peculiar in the extreme for a soul to despise his man, I do despise this Schreber, and all of those who have borne the name. This is a simple fact. I have been charged to be accurate and, except in areas where the matter is redundant—namely style and commentary—I have restricted my natural impulse to denounce the bitch, and have attempted to present the facts as they are laid out in the weft of the world. If I have failed, then I hope the reader will excuse me, but, I can say as an absolute surety, they will not have suffered at the hands of their physical bond in the way I have, and so will have to extend to me some leeway.

Regardless, this document will suffice in its purpose no matter how badly I execute my task for the simple reason that transcription alone will allow greater souls than I the material they require, from which can be stripped any extraneous matter and leave a blueprint that will prevent any repetition of the Schreber Case, as it has become known in Heaven and on Earth.

§

These men were heavy sleepers, snoring in their bunks, curled up like babies, exhausted and drunk and self-righteous, and they couldn't hear the slinking of an old man in his bare feet any more than they could understand what went on in his head. Schreber had no guilt in him when he took one of their uniforms and put

¹See M. p.81.

it on over his nightshirt, knowing them to be nothing more than figures conjured up out of the ether, shadow puppets with neither feeling nor sense, like those men that one sees about on a city street, walking and talking and going through the motions of living, but who, once they have passed the field of your vision, disappear like a pricked bubble, and who, if the progression of people down a street is observed for long enough, repeat: the same faces, the same motions, like the trees one sees through a train window on a long journey. On the surface each one is different but, if one stares long and hard at a single point in the distance for an hour, perhaps more, they are clearly revealed to be duplicates of a template, the whole sequence possibly containing a thousand varieties, but no more. These men were like that, different enough from each other that they didn't arouse suspicion in the casual viewer, but to a man of acuity willing to concentrate, they were definitely not unique, and Schreber knew that if he picked up all their clothes he would find two items that were identical, not merely similar, as two apples are similar, but identical, the same item twice, a stocking perhaps, and so certain was he of that fact, so convinced in his belief that it was not necessary for him to check empirically. He buttoned the coat, turning his back, and he walked away and, indeed, as if to prove his contention, the sound of snoring and creaking of mattress springs faded to silence long before it ought to have done, before he was out of the door and selecting from the boots that had been lined up in perfect size order—further proof offered by the degree of gradation in size, the contour of the tops of the set of boots forming a perfect bell curve such as might be seen in a book of mathematics.

Schreber put his foot into one after another of the boots until he found a pair of the right size and he sat on the cold flags and pulled them up to his knee. The house was empty, he was sure of that, no sound or sight of any of them, and not of Ehrlich who he knew now was no less improvised for the occasion than his men, the Confederacy drawing on Schreber's memory to make a figure whom her might have taken for real, and it was only their intrinsic failure to understand the true nature of a man, his absolute singularity, that undermined the image. Or perhaps this was precisely their aim, to leave room for Schreber to doubt his reality, to test if he was true, if he did not have an otherwise blinding desire to hide the nature of those men around him from himself, as he had when he was well, too closely tied to his own selfish desire for true companionship, for love, and only when that love was taken, on the falling of his wife—to cite the most recent example—did it become obvious to him what should have been obvious all along: that these things that surrounded him were replicas of which the originals were long destroyed, even these boots that he pulled on were created only for him. He struggled to get them on his foot, boots which had seemed at first to be the right size now appearing too small. He pulled until his face was red and he grunted and was about to give up when he realised that it was ridiculous to assume the boot did not fit when there was no boot except that placed there for him, and with that realisation his foot slipped inside, turning the corner easily and if, when he stood, the leather pinched, then he soon stopped noticing it and became aware instead that the boot was a perfect size, as it must have been, created as it was for him. He stood by the door that led out of the house, and behind

that door, before he opened it, he knew there was nothing, a void, his existence now taking place in the remnants of his own attachment to the world, the world of objects having been suspended for that time in which he was required to take up his place, to act as the bond between Heaven and Earth, and if it should come back at all it would be in a new formation, bound my new laws, a new Order of the World, no longer at the whim of God, but representing the Confederate tendency, the Monist tendency, and he opened the door and the world was created for him, by him, perhaps, or by what he would become. That was it! By his soul! To purge him of his final attachment to the world, and he knew where he must go: first to Zeitzer Strasse, and then to his own home, a few hundred feet from the other, and he must see for himself how meaningless the old world had become—his memories, his needs, his loves—how they had passed from one place to the other, and he stepped out into the darkness and walked, and his perfectly fitting boots, though they scraped at his heel, crunched the gravel beneath his feet in a regular rhythm and he made good progress, back through the world as it was miracled up in a perfect dome whose radius was exactly the distance Schreber could see in any direction, and if he could have been said to move at all it was only as much as he moved through his memories, through time, through commitment, through the trees and his attachment to the trees, seeing it all for the last time, the last hedgerow, the last swallow, the last wall, the last great mansion house, the last sunrise.

It was an hour before he saw the Zeitzer Gate, where his father had bought land on the frontier of the city, then, but now huddled between a hundred other plots and offices and factories and houses as the city swelled past its western extent and found space in the farming land that had succumbed to the expansion. There were people now, and coaches and horses, and Schreber paid them almost no heed, except as much as was required not to collide with them, and this only out of habit, because if he had walked straight at them they would have stepped aside, even if they were not stage decorations, outlines painted onto board and moved through the streets as if by a huge child's hand moved the props of a toy theatre, and not one of those people was anything—even the animals—nothing more than moving flesh, a missing aspect, they had no volition, no intention, no instinct, even, for anything that was not provided for them by an external force. Schreber fixed his sight on the house where he had lived with his family, and despite everything, because his memory had the effect of distorting those things he saw that he recognised toward reality, it seemed that that building was the only solid object remaining in the world, and from the child's block on the horizon to the three story building he saw in front of him as he stood on the pavement outside its fence, it seemed to glow with significance, and this became more so as he opened the gate and walked up the path.

When he reached the door and read the plaque—*Orthopaedic Clinic, Schildbach*—it rang so clearly in his eyes that he was made to wipe them with the back of his hand, and he let his finger run through the grooves that made up the lettering on the brass plaque, and it was all so convincing that he felt his conviction ebbing, and so powerfully did he feel the sentiment engrained in the stone and wood of that place that he wondered if perhaps he had been mistaken, and he walked around the side

of the house. The shutters were open and he looked in through the windows, at the gymnasium, at the very iron ladder that had laid his father low, and the horse over which he had jumped, and the polished wooden floors he had slid over in his stocking feet when his father was in bed, and further round the house he could see the treatment room where his father had taken those poor boys and girls and hung them from straps looped under their arms and freed them from the failures of their birth, slowly, painfully, over years, but successfully in so many cases, and if these things too were nothing but illusions, these children with twisted arms and spines, and their joy and the joy of their parents at his own father's successes were nothing at all then they were nothings of a very particular kind, and Schreber could not quite resolve them in his mind.

§

18th May '07

Anti-Oedipus has a good quote:

"The schizo... has at his disposal his very own recording code, which does not coincide with the social code, or coincides with it only in order to parody it."

Anti-Oedipus, p.15

This is something attempts to map the forms of psychoses, and make suppositions as to origins (Niederland/Schatzmann) do not take into account.

Had some ideas about elements to include in the fiction. It might be good to have Schreber paint, art-brut style, as a way of rendering his religious ideas in a way that I can make descriptive rather than expository. The precedent of his therapeutic use of the piano is enough justification. He might, at the allowance of the asylum director, be initially allowed paints and paper, and then, when the director loses interest in him as he fails to recover despite the director's best efforts, have these taken away by a cruel orderly who undertakes more and more of his care, and eventually Schreber finds himself required to use the walls of his cell or the underside of his bed as a canvas, and faeces and blood as his paints.

§

To contemplate decide, to have that notion inside oneself, even were one not to act on it, that is a crime against Heaven. For a soul to wonder at it, to have comprehension of it, to understand it, that is a crime—to be of that mutinous tendency, of which Satan was the first, to have the germ of it represent itself in a soul by thought, that is a crime. I understand that. The litigator makes a case that I cannot argue, but I can say that I have a defence. It is not a legal defence—that route is closed to me—but it is a defence nonetheless. I argue that, by virtue of the effect of the attempt made by the Monist Confederacy, and by the exceptional action of God, I should be made exempt from the law, in this matter only, simply because, as a soul

who has been exposed to the lower nature of the man, I cannot be held responsible for the leakage into me from the base desires and criminal notions of a human being. I have striven, as has been made obvious on so many occasions, to free myself of the curse that has followed my line, from the actions of Gotthild and Gottfried, who first made efforts to undermine the holy structure of Heaven, and against me were taken actions that are themselves illegal, by members of this court who now stand in front of me as if clean of any sin, but who took from me, unlawfully, that most basic of rights—profligation of my line—intervening in the world by miracle, to ensure that no Schreber soul could come into being, despite the readiness of them to be born, interfering in, and now, it is clear, *damaging* the weft of the world.

If it were open to me to turn the tables of this court, I would accuse those souls, the litigator in particular, of being the instigator of this situation in his ignorance and pride, in the name of God, to overturn the Order of the World, his organisation being so arrogant as to assume they could predict and control the outcome of their meddling, where instead was created only pain for us all, and myself the most, for it is I who face dissolution, although I am innocent of any crime, where the active parties remain safe and, indeed, are elevated in the sight of this court, taken high by the withdrawal of the Monist Confederacy. But this is a matter for another day.

I will not stray from clarity. I am not responsible for my own desire to destroy God. It is not a thought that comes to me naturally, it is not an indication of Satanic taint, it comes from the nervousness of the man, and has been passed to me as a virus passes through the membranes of a man, and the desires in me are an exact analogy of the swelling of the man's mucous membranes—an automatic function, a means by which the infection can be purged, and to suggest it is part of my essential make up, as the litigator proposes, is to ignore the particularity of my case, and while it may be distasteful for the court to bring this understanding into themselves, preferring as they do to remain clean of the influence of man, it must be understood that the barrier was breached by the actions of the litigator's miracled persecution of the man Schreber prior to the dangerous proximity of God, and further by that proximity and by the miracles performed to ease it, and if there is a source of my taint it is that action and not my own nature, and that, therefore, there can be no just application of the law to my case, because it was not designed to address it, any more than the Order of the World was designed to allow the close contact of the man and the soul. Were it not for the conditions that pertained on the transgression of the law, and the failure of the prohibition against contact between the earthly and spiritual realms, I would come to the court, if at all, perfectly transparent, the heresy of inheritance having long ago been discredited despite what the litigator would demonstrate by his actions against the descendants of Gotthild and Gottfried, and there would be no case for me to answer.

I cannot be held to account for other souls' actions, or for the designs of my superiors, which are as beyond my understanding as the motion of Heaven exceeds man's ability to grasp it. As he fails to see the movement of the ether through him, I failed to see the extent to which I was used by the Confederacy and to what end. There is precedent here, in the case bought against the soul of the man Judas—who

betrayed the Christ child—who was absolved of any stain, and in the converse of the souls of many of the saints appointed on Earth to great works, to provide a means of avoiding the situation we find ourselves in, of disturbing the natural law while allowing God some influence, still the souls of saints have been accused and found guilty of crimes, although admittedly few in number, whilst thinking themselves pure and have been acquitted on these grounds at appeal, the court accepting that good faith is a defence. It need only be extended to my case, on the basis that my fundamental corruption is an act over which I had no control, and that could not have undermined the principle that I acted on good faith, because a soul cannot be accused of sin when his intention was pure.

The litigator has argued that no intention of mine might be considered pure, because I am corrupted, but I ask that the court look into me and see that the corruption to which I suffer is contained, and does not effect my general judgement, that being whole and secure, and that I am only compromised when I am called upon to address myself to the subject of the man Schreber and his relationship with Heaven, something that I would never be called upon to do in the general run of things, and would never have been called upon to do if the Order of the World had not first been disrupted in the way I have previously outlined.

§

This man Schreber, he is a dog. He is a forsaken bitch. Like the rest of his sickly line,¹ he foams at the corner of his mouth and in his final hours he disturbs the dirt around him with his kicking and flailing. He is an animal. More than the rest of them. His fingers are cracked with his own dried filth—they have been in his blood, poking at the wound in his side and now, speared, he will die. That said, it is my duty to record his final chapter, for completeness, if nothing else. The archives are already available—the rays’ recordings of his words and actions²—as are his own attempts at making sense of them, pitifully misconstrued as they are. They can be consulted by anyone with an interest. I have done my best to represent what is difficult to find, despite my reservations.

It astounds me that the world can be born from a thing like him.³ Why should

¹Anxiety over the heavenly status of the Schreber family appears on several occasions. Schreber attributes the genesis of the “Crisis in God’s realms” to actions undertaken by “the names of Flechsig and Schreber (probably not specifying any individual member of these families)” (M. p.33). Soul murder is supposed to have occurred before between the Flechsig and Schreber families both of whom were of “the highest nobility of heaven” the Schrebers holding the title “Margraves of Tuscany and Tasmania” (M. p.35). Schreber names members of Flechsig’s family and denounces them as soul murderers, while all the while defending his own ancestors, despite both he and them having also been named in heaven as soul murderers. Schreber is particularly concerned to hear the repeated phrase “merely a Schreber soul” (M. p.38).

²Reference to the “writing-down-system”—*das Aufschreibesystem*—“Books or other notes are kept in which for years have been written down, all my thoughts, all my phrases...all persons with whom I come into contact...” (M. p.123).

³Schreber’s fantasy of unmanning and of becoming the mother to a new race—“the basic plan on which the Order of the World seems to rest, that in the case of world catastrophes which necessitate the destruction of mankind... the human race can be renewed” (M. p.59)—is a central issue in readings of the Memoirs, Freud relating it to his castration complex, Lothane to a compensatory fantasy designed to justify Schreber’s turn to “soul-voluptuousness”. Santner to the conflation of misogyny and anti-Semitism.

God find so inescapable¹ this thrashing, bloodied mongrel? I don't know. Some will say that we owe him everything. They will add that it is always the way with his sort—the vessels of change—their baseness and corruption contrasts with their destiny. They will say that it is to be expected. I suppose I am not in a position to disagree and it is not my place to question, merely to do. I have faithfully attempted to carry out my instructions. Where my memory does not serve I have consulted the system-of-writing-down, and where the failures of my recollection and the inadequacies of the basic-speech² coincide, robbing this report of the necessary detail, I have elaborated around what does exist, taking care not to include anything that I cannot justify. It has been suggested that there is a conflict of interest in my having been appointed to this task. I can only state again that the practicalities of the matter make me the only sensible choice. The intelligent reader will have no trouble in separating any partisan commentary from the bare facts and may hold each up to the other and gain more insight from the comparison than by the reading of one or other alone.

I will begin: Dawn is approaching. On other less heralded days, the dog Schreber might have felt only relief at the beginning of the day.³ The nights were, for him, an endless stream of torturing voices and nonsense requests.⁴ The morning, while not banishing pain completely, did at least allow him to muster his defences. He might have taken out his paints,⁵ closed his eyes and let his hands work. For every stroke there would have been a causative movement in his hand and his arm, in his shoulder and his neck, across his lips and below his cheek, in his jaw—each movement dictated by God against the man's own will,⁶ each movement freeing something inside him, so that he could rest that part of his mind and the corresponding physical lobe and nerve-concentration inside his brain. On the paper in front of him the brush would leave a mark and each mark would, in some way, be linked to that process of freeing, as the meaning of a word is linked to the letters that make it up and after time an image would be formed. When he opened his eyes, after an hour or two, he would be amazed, in that aspect of his mind that was freed by the opening, to see, flat on the canvas, those things that had danced, full bodied, inside his skull through the night,

¹Schreber's nervous illness is the source of immense undesired attraction for God. "The power of attraction, this even to me unfathomable law, according to which rays and nerves mutually attract one another, harbours a kernel of danger for the realms of God..." (M. p.40) "For God's nerves also it is unpleasant and against their will to enter into my body" (M. p.42) "God is inseparably tied to my person through my nerves' power of attraction...; there is no possibility of God freeing Himself from my nerves for the rest of my life"(M. p.250).

²a somewhat antiquated but nevertheless powerful German, characterised particularly by a wealth of euphemisms" (M. p.26) the language used by purified souls and by God himself.

³I spent the night almost without sleep, and once even left the bed in an attack of anxiety in order to make preparations for a kind of suicidal attempt"(M. p.49).

⁴"...I then have to remain awake, the senseless twaddle of voices in my head causes an absolutely unbearable mental martyrdom..." (M. p.183).

⁵Schreber was given use of a piano in 1895 while in Sonnenstein and he found the creative outlet extremely helpful: "a small piano was put into my room... I must confess that I find it difficult to imagine how I could have borne the compulsive thinking and all that goes with it during these five years had I not been able to play the piano"(M. p.157-8). I have substituted painting for piano playing for the reason that it gives a useful means of visualising Schreber's delusions, but otherwise the dynamic remains the same (additionally, his medical records state: "never plays the piano that was moved to his room" (Lothane p.480)).

⁶The template here is the schizophrenic artist Augustin Lesage, a mediumistic painter from northern France c.1920, who painted complex illustrations of the structure of heaven under the influence of spirits. His work and method suggested itself for obvious reasons.

now beautiful where they had been ugly, ordered where they been amorphous, Godly where they had been demonic. Such are the benefits that can be bought to a soul when it comes over to the Monist Confederacy.¹

On this day there are no paints and Schreber will not see the dawn. There is a foot on his throat, crushing the life from him.² That foot is mine and soon he will die and be taken out of this room. The stench of corpses³ will disappear, leaving me to free me to take my place in Heaven—the ties will be broken, at last, once he is brought to death. My commission will be finished.

When he was a boy, this Schreber, he lived in Leipzig,⁴ a mile or so from where he will die. This may seem of little import but, in fact, it is central to the matter. He played in the garden with his brother and sisters.⁵ He played with the children of the Institute.⁶ When it was cold he skated on the lake and in the summer he took off his shirt and swam in the same water that was frozen in winter.⁷ He exercised on the lawn, bending and turning precisely,⁸ with his toes digging into the earth and his fingers stretched and straight. He reached up into the sky and down onto the earth and on rainy days the worms would rise from the soil and sprawl here and there on the grass. When the sun came out the worms would sink back below. All these things are of the most vital importance, though they seem to be nothing. Such is the way of things.

The sun rose and set daily, and by its own volition.⁹ The boy Schreber followed its example. One morning it was summer and the boy was seven. The children's room was painted white—the floor, the furniture, the walls and the ceiling. The shutters at the window were white. The sheets on his bed were white. His nightshirt was white. On this day he was woken, as he often was, by the crying of his sister in the nursery.¹⁰

¹Medical records: "December 12th, 1907. States he is not in Dösen but in a 'Colony of the Monist Confederacy'" (Lothane p.479).

²Certain readings of Schreber's *Memoirs* (particularly by Niederland and Schatzman) have stressed the centrality of the sadistic super-ego to Schreber's delusional framework, citing it as evidence, by substitution, of an abusive father.

³Medical records: "...he murmurs something about 'the odour of corpses rotting'" (Lothane p.478).

⁴Schreber was born in Leipzig in 1842 and lived with his parents in the orthopaedic institute his father directed.

⁵Gustav, Anna, Sidonie and Klara.

⁶Lothane reports that the Schreber daughters wrote of their childhood in the periodical *Freund der Schreber-Vereine* and gives a number of quotes. There were other children at the institute, but whether they were there for treatment or because their parents were being treated is not made clear – 'with the boarders of the Orthopaedic Institute we were altogether about ten to twelve children.' (Lothane p.18)

⁷*Freund der Schreber-Vereine*: "Movement in clean open air, bathing, swimming and other kinds of athletics were for him [Schreber Senior] a life requirement." (Lothane p.17)

⁸"Even though Moritz Schreber established himself as a specialist first in internal medicine and later in orthopaedics, it was the practice and philosophy of gymnastics as sport and therapy that made him famous. Turnen and Turning, Americanised as turning, was the name given to bodily exercises..." (Lothane p.118). I do not specifically use the word turning in this sense, only suggest it for readers already aware of Schreber's father's usage.

⁹For the Schreber the sun occupies a number of positions—it is an avatar of the God Ormuzd ("I saw the upper God (Ormuzd), this time not with my mind's eye but with my bodily eye. It was the sun..." (M. p.132); and also of the lower God Ariman (M. p.91); it is the source of the rays that afflict his body; the means by which God observes the universe (M. p.23); Schreber is capable, by virtue of his miracled body, to stare at the sun without blinking or suffering damage; he refers to the sun and "the good lord" as whores, in the same breath (Lothane p. 475), and he also at times believes he has some influence over the movements of the sun (see also M. p.222).

¹⁰Schatzman quotes from Moritz Schreber's *Kallipädie*: "if the child is lifted from the bed and carried around each time he makes noises—without checking if there is something really wrong—and is calmed by gentleness of one kind or another, this may often lead to the appearance of the emotion of spite in the later life of the child. I wish mothers and nursemaids would recognise the importance of this point!" While Lothane is critical of Schatzman's

She would have been a year or so old and not yet aware of the pointlessness of her noise, even less of its moral weakness. I remember this particular morning clearly, although the same thing must have happened dozens of times; little Klara crying behind the closed door, like a lamb—softly and without malice—but urgently. She was too young to understand that the desire for comfort from without was a weakness and Schreber, despite having been told firmly a thousand times, did not understand it either.¹ Klara went on crying in her ignorance for a while, and no one came for her. This wasn't a surprise to the boy, lying straight as an arrow in his bed.² Even in the children's room no one paid her any attention. The sound did not register with them, the brain neutering it of importance, as it does with other repetitive but pointless noises: the beating of the heart, or the passage of blood through the veins and arteries of the ear. Gustav might have curled slightly to the left under his covers;³ Anna's mouth might have fallen further open, wetting her cheek and then her pillow, her eyes darting under her lids. These things may have happened and they may not. It is irrelevant: it is Schreber who demands close observation. He heard everything and for us nothing in his life is trivial and many things are central.

It was very early. The sky revealed in the gap between the shutters was barely blue and the birds singing in the garden were sparse and shrill. Schreber slipped out of his bed without disturbing the springs and, rubbing his eyes, went over to the door. The boards were cold⁴ and smooth on the soles of his feet, and when one creaked he stepped back and listened for an answering noise from above, over the sound of his breath as it came out between his lips. When he heard nothing else he followed the gaps in the floorboards with his toes until he found one he could put his weight on. The baby cried until he reached her door and when he opened it he stood there, Schreber—Paul⁵—in neither one room nor the other, both feet on the door frame, shifting from heel to heel and yawning despite the tension in his throat, wondering if she had gone back to sleep on her own. Her crib was white and high-sided with little carved curves and filigree and it was stock-still. He watched it closely for a minute or so, looking for the rocking that would start up if she kicked her legs, or waved her arms. There was nothing, and the muscles in his neck relaxed although he had not realised they were flexed. He turned to go back to his bed, but as he did, she started

translations of Moritz Schreber's work in general, it is clear that crying babies would not likely have been attended to immediately in the Schreber household.

¹Moritz Schreber was keen to avoid "softening" (*Verweichlichung*) in his children—particularly the boys—the concept containing the idea of an undesirable effeminacy (Lothane p.17)

²Moritz Schreber believed that any form of curvature of the body that was not symmetrical was detrimental to the child's development. Failure to lie straight in bed was countered by a device that strapped the child to the bed around the arms and over the chest (Schatzman, p.42). It is not difficult to imagine a child might voluntarily lie straight in bed to avoid its use.

³While Gustav's life isn't comprehensively written about, Paul's hospital chart mentions that he was "paralytic" which Lothane qualifies as meaning he suffered from "tertiary syphilis" (Lothane p.23) which manifested itself at least in the form of psychosis (according to a letter from one of his sisters quoted by Baumeyer in his publication of Schreber's Sonnenstein medical records). He later went on to shoot himself. Burgess, in the unpublished screenplay *Schreber*, has Gustav as a sickly child, unable to satisfy his sadistic father's desire for purity, playing him off against Paul's terrorised, but more robust, character.

⁴One technique Moritz Schreber used to avoid softening was to leave children's room unheated, whatever the time of year: "The bedroom should no longer be heated at all from the sixth or seventh year onwards" (Schatzman p.36).

⁵The Christian name Daniel is a Schreber family name (his father was Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber, his brother was Daniel Gustav Schreber and there are many other appearances) and Schreber was known as Paul to his family.

up again, as if she could sense him in the room and knew he was leaving. The crib rocked briefly from right to left. He took a deep breath and tiptoed over to her. She looked at him, and for a moment the sight stilled her. He smiled and reached down to stroke her cheek. When he moved his hand back she kicked and cried again, louder, so that Schreber looked up at the ceiling and hurriedly put his hand under her back. In one fluid movement he lifted her up and over his shoulder. She cried for a second, but when he bounced at the knee¹ she went quiet. He hummed a tune, very quietly, all the while looking up at the ceiling, and he bounced her on his shoulder. With his other hand he scratched at his buttock. This I remember perfectly. After a minute or two she fell asleep and he put her back in the crib as softly as he could and went back to his own bed. Nothing really, this first time, but I remember it in its every detail because it was different from another time, the memory of which is engraved with a heavier hand.

He may have slept on until his mother woke him, or he may have lain there, hands folded on the blanket in front of him as he was told to,² that I do not remember and, indeed, it is less relevant to what came after. In any event, it is unlikely he was there long: the days began early in that house, winter or summer, spring or autumn, by the progression of the hands on the clock, regular and reliable, whether the sun was up or not, the nature of the world being subservient to the larger concerns of the Institute. It is possible he lay there for a little while and watched Gustav sleep, or Anna.³ It doesn't matter now. Now he twitches and struggles on the damp ground in his cell and his bed is gone because he will not now need it and at the first sign of light from the cracks between the boarded window⁴ and the brick wall I will crush his neck and put him out of his misery. His body is already dead but the head lives on,⁵ sustained by the energy of his nerves, by the miracled force of God that permeates every sinew and cell. I stand here ready to send this dog to his grave and it has been a long time coming. Although he protests, I know it is what he wants. I know that he is aware of the importance of his passing. I know everything about him, even those things that I do not wish to know, things I wish I could forget. But still, that is becoming irrelevant. Tomorrow they will dig his hole, Muller⁶ and his cronies, and he will be fit to be put into it. That is inevitable because that much is consonant with the Order of

¹Another reference to the father's medical gymnastics.

²Moritz Schreber, like most physicians of the nineteenth century, viewed masturbation as both physically and mentally enfeebling (an idea that lasted well into the twentieth century) and took precautions against allowing his children to lie in bed past the time of waking—"One must see to it that children rise immediately after awakening in the morning... that is because with this is mostly connected the temptation of thoughts into an unchaste direction" (from Schreber's *Kallipädie*, quoted in Schatzman, p.74)—or touching themselves. The prohibition against putting hands beneath covers is one of the less severe methods.

³Another reference to the prohibition against lying in bed.

⁴"I must therefore regard it as an extremely strange regulation that I was made to sleep in cells furnished for maniacal patients... most of the time they were completely blacked out by heavy wooden shutters" (M. p.182).

⁵Medical records: "It will happen that 'the body will begin to rot' while 'the head will keep on living'" (Lothane p.479).

⁶The majority of Schreber's care at Dösen (and in asylums in general) was carried out by orderlies and attendants. There are numerous mentions in both his memoirs and medical notes of attendants (e.g. M. p.52, p.139, p107-8, Lothane p.471, p.479) Burgess uses an attendant in his screenplay for comic value, but my intention is for the orderly in this novel to play more of a central part, moving between confidant and persecutor and playing foil to Schreber's madness.

the World¹ and God Himself is powerless to prevent it.

His lungs have rotted away, turned to water.²

But it would be wrong to think that Schreber came here, to Dösen,³ without hope. Perhaps not in the early days and weeks and months, when he was bound,⁴ prior to the completion of the secession,⁵ but once he was released and realised where he was, when the transfer of his soul was complete, then he had hope. And it may be that he was right. Such is the way of things that not all events that seem to have been preordained come to be—I will admit that where one might imagine that I should not! So often has one thing happened where another ought to have happened in its place that I cannot, in good faith, stand here and state that there was no hope for him. Secession might have led to reversion—it is rare, but it can happen. It is simply that in his case it was not intended for him, and so it did not occur. When he thought that he might be able to explain, to people who could help him, he was thinking correctly. If he had opened himself up, from the neck to the navel and from the tip of the tongue down to the vocal cords and pinned himself out on a board and let them examine him, know him, in the end they might have saved him⁶. He had that hope. If things had progressed differently in Heaven, if he had not been required, then he might have been discarded, forgotten. There was hope.

He came to, one day, and he was in the garden. Let's say it was in May.⁷ He had been there many times before: every day since his arrival. The men's garden was laid out in front of the observation lounge, a simple rectangle of grass surrounded by trees to every side and the central part given over to the cultivation of flowers and small shrubs.⁸ A shallow bank had been carved in the earth and a ramp set into this bank and, once wheeled down from the house, inmates sat and breathed in the smells of irises and hyacinth and lavender and listened to the trees rustle in the wind, all the while under watch from the house, even if they were free to imagine they were alone. Schreber was taken here everyday and if the patients stayed tense in their chairs, gripping the arms, eyes shut and lips bitten, then this was of no concern to the orderlies who bought them out. If Schreber was not aware of his environment, if that part of him that experienced the world was somewhere else, on Phobos,⁹ on a distant celestial body, that is not to say that his body was not put in precisely the same spot,

¹“The Order of the World” is a central concept in the *Memoirs*, representing universal laws which even God is unable to overturn, but which can be broken with disastrous effects (e.g. M. p.38, p.41, p.56, p.67).

²Miracles against the lungs are common and various in the *Memoirs* (e.g. M. p.143) and his cause of death is given in his medical records as “lung gangrene” (Lothane p.483).

³While Schreber would usually have been returned to the asylum at Sonnenstein, where much of his memoirs was written, it was full in 1907 and cases were referred to a new asylum in the village of Dösen, just to the south of Leipzig (Lothane p.89).

⁴Medical notes: “November 27, 1907 [day of admission] Physical findings cannot be determined due to the complete inaccessibility of the patient and refusal to co-operate.” (Lothane p.478)

⁵Military and national metaphors in Schreber in relation to heaven are common (e.g. M. p.58)

⁶Schreber's request to be examined by the scientific community is repeated a number of times in the *Memoirs* (e.g. M. p.10, p.243, p.305, p.307).

⁷Medical notes: “May. Believes has not slept for three months, is at times more accessible, is more outgoing; eats better again, stands about a lot in the garden...” (Lothane p.480)

⁸Unlike the image of the British Victorian asylum, Pierson's asylum, Sonnenstein, and Dösen had extensive gardens, suites of rooms for patients and, for those who were able to pay, special considerations such as evening meals taken at the table of the director (M.p72, p.102).

⁹“...in the year 1895 I still considered the possibility of my being on Phobos...”(M. p.81).

every day, close enough to the trees to shade him from the sun and yet not so far away that his orderly could not attend to him immediately should he, or his doctor, require it.

That first day of consciousness was marked by a clear sky and a warm breeze. Upon waking he could feel the short cropped grass of the lawn tickling the backs of his ears. The smell of it was sweet and strong. The sun was orange on the inside of his closed eyelids. He could feel warmth on his chest and belly. He laughed, as men will; not in the way he been called upon to laugh,¹ as defence against the idea that he had fallen into darkness, but a quiet laugh, full in the natural elation that accompanies it by right, even if it was still deficient in volume. It was a boyish laugh, as one might hear from a child who sees his sister smile in her crib for the first time, or who catches sight of a cat chasing a bird² only for cat and boy to watch it fly away at the very last moment. He stretched his back against the ground, his palms on the warm earth between the greenery, the tips of his fingers pressing into the soft clay. The sun above him was a perfect sphere, every edge of which he could see in its entirety. His shirt was torn open to the waist³ and mother of pearl buttons lay scattered here and there around him, one resting on the tweed of his trousers, another between the hairs on his belly, another at a great distance, half blocking the entrance to an ants' nest. The sun illuminated everything, making clear tiny details of the world: the motivations of insects, the motion of the ether as it rippled in waves through the solid world. Who could not have hope, finding himself like that?

As the sun shone, Schreber felt the withdrawal of the putrefacting influence, its taste passing from his fore-mouth to the back of his tongue. It was as if Ormuzd had retreated, relented in his tirade against him for a single afternoon and had instead determined to bolster Schreber's defences—perhaps against some whim of his rival, Ariman.⁴ He picked the pearl button from his belly and turned it around in his hand, seeing it clearly as if through a microscope, down to the irregularities of manufacture in the two holes where a piece of cotton still wound in and out, magnified a hundred times, down to the weft of the cotton thread itself, to the braiding of ever smaller filaments and the nerves slid away from him, and the rays, and the souls with their chatter⁵ became quieter and less dense, never going altogether, but in the sunlight he could find space between the questions, as if the telegrapher's hand had wearied and his rate of the transcription of the code was reduced, dots and dashes coming ever further apart and more faintly and to no discernible purpose,⁶ and Schreber picked the thread from the centre of the button and rubbed it between his finger tips. It

¹Medical records: "February... A few days ago he started intermittently to emit tones like 'Ha-ha-ha' when spoken to" "March... Lately due to his disturbing calls of Ha-ha was kept in single room 21." "April...The suddenly uttered 'Ha-ha' especially in the presence of others, has become louder" (Lothane p.480).

²Birds in Schreber are the bearers of nonsense messages transmitted by rays (M. p.194-5).

³Schreber's exposing of his torso is a feature of his illness (e.g. p.369) and also appears in his Dösen medical records: 'May...suddenly lies down on the lawn, the vest and shirt opened over the chest' (Lothane p.480)

⁴Ormuzd and Ariman, Zoroastrian deities, are used by Schreber to describe God, although never in the way they are used in the Zoroastrian religious system (see M. p.30-31, p.134 for example).

⁵Schreber's internal voices are variously attributed to rays, nerves and souls throughout the *Memoirs*. (e.g. M. p.55-6, p.58).

⁶The lack of purpose and intelligibility in the voices is taken by Schreber as an improvement of his condition (Lothane p.477).

picked up particles of clay and balled together in an orange brown pellet which he brought up to his eye. Could it surprise anyone that he felt hope, even this tormented dog, to find the world malleable in this way? To see that it could be changed and controlled, even by someone who was acted upon so cruelly and that the sun might ally herself with him, now, in defence of the old world and against the coming of the new? Even though he had called her a whore?¹

He flicked the clay cotton ball high into the air and it arced over the lawn. The birds sang and there was no message for him there either, no idiot warbling, just the empty purity of sparse, shrill birdsong, one note and another, separate, clear, with no import or intent, other than that proper to birds in the age old Order of the World, one empty note after another, run together to no other purpose than that which was claimed by the bird itself, a purpose closed to the ears of man, like random notes on a piano.

He popped the button in his mouth and felt its smoothness with his tongue, felt into the holes and blew air through them and the odour of corpses was only very faint, the putrefaction held in abeyance by the sun and his own natural regenerative functions taking over, repairing what the souls had miracled away in their anger. The nagging of the voices was quietened to a susurrus accompanied by the sensation of a thread drawn through a hole in the skull at the back of his head,² a whispering with no meaning, animus or animosity, just the drawing of a long thin piece of cotton of infinite length through the crack in his skull. Nothing.

I will not begrudge him this relief, even if, in the end, it will all come to nothing and the souls will rot him from the neck down and leave the head living and then this too I will kill, in preparation for his burial and for the initiation of the new world.

Here he lay for hours or seconds turning the button in his mouth.

The care of Schreber was given over to the orderly Muller when the doctor was otherwise engaged and that man saw him after a while. Muller stood in the doorway of the Observatory—an ape dressed in a white frock coat; a Neanderthal man surrounded by glass windows and their frames—and he looked from under heavy brows down the gentle slope to where Schreber's Bath chair lay overturned. The checked blanket was spilled and the old man lay on his back, grinding his teeth and clenching his fists. Muller sighed, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and glanced over his shoulder toward the doctors' quarters. Seeing nothing to worry him, he spat brown onto the flagstones of the patio and went over.

'We can't have you lying there in the dirt can we?' Muller said, kindly in voice in case he was overheard, but with the muscles in his great arms knotting. His fat knuckles were taut white against the red of his skin.

Schreber was too far away from the man to hear him. Not physically. Physically he was right there, close enough to smell the disinfectant soap the man used to scrub himself clean every morning, but in his mind he was too bound up in the nature of

¹Sonnenstein medical notes: "September 1896. Not quieter. Thunders on the piano and bellows still, at times really obscene words. 'The sun is a whore,' or 'the good Lord is a whore.' At night in isolation" (Lothane p.475).

²Medical records: "The voices never completely disappeared. But he did not speak at all about the illness. When questioned, he said there was a spot at the back of his head where he experienced a constant buzzing noise, as if a thread were pulled." (Lothane p.477).

the world, in the rotation of the button between his tongue and his cheek and his teeth and his tongue. Even when Muller reached out to touch Schreber's shoulder with a smoothed and blunt finger tip, he was still too far away, wearying now of the button object, having taken it down to its constituents and back again. Schreber spat out the button onto his chest and reached down for the one on his trousers, never opening his eyes or moving his head, patting over the bunched fabric at his groin with a blind hand.

'And none of that either,'¹ the orderly said, and in one fluid movement Muller put the old man over his shoulder, bending as if it was easier for him to be stooped, as if he was fresh down from the trees and only straining when he was obliged, against his nature, to stand straight again. When the ape was upright Schreber pushed up too, his hands planted on the orderly's broad, rounded back, pushing until he was horizontal and, seeing the house in front of him he knew suddenly what it was and where he must be. He woke up to the situation he found himself in.

'I wish to be examined,' Schreber said, 'I wish to be examined by the Doctor. It's very important,' and as he spoke his eyes blinked rapidly, as if he was clearing out dust.

Muller shifted Schreber further over his shoulder roughly, as if he hadn't heard and didn't realise he was using too much force. He had heard and, not understanding what Schreber wanted, sought to quieten the old man by jostling him, a technique that had worked innumerable times before. Schreber lost his balance and slipped until he was bent double, his face in the small of Muller's back and his hair hanging thinly down, wafting in the breeze. Schreber was not so easily put off and in a second he was back up, pushing against the orderly again, and lifting his head back as far as it would go so that he could see the house.

'I want to see the Doctor! Please.'

'Dr Rössler?'² Muller said, stalling for time.

'Yes! Please can I see him? It's very important.'

'I'm sure it is,' the orderly said and he hefted Schreber forward, ungently again, back into his chair. Then he stepped back and ran a hand through his thick black hair and looked Schreber up and down. Schreber stared at him, waiting, like a boy hoping for a visit to the zoo and Muller coughed. He looked off around the garden, at the other men, some shaven headed and others with wild tufts of grey hair that rippled in the wind, and he turned and spat.

'Let's tidy you up old man.'

Schreber looked puzzled and then, realising, said:

'To see the Doctor? Are you tidying me up to see the doctor?'

Muller pulled Schreber's shirt together and parted his hair and wiped the grass from his clothes and rearranged the rug on his knees all the while flexing the muscles of his jaw so that when he spoke it was through wide, tight lips.

¹Schreber was accused, much to his horror, of masturbation by a senior attendant (M. p.107-8).

²Rössler (also cited in Lothane as "Rösler") is the only physician mentioned in regard to Schreber's treatment at Dösen, and only then as the physician who diagnosed Schreber's final illness "a gangrenous lung process openly communicating with the pleural cavity. The only treatment that might save the patient's life is surgery. However, I believe this is pointless given the dreary condition of the patient" (Lothane p.91).

‘We’ll see,’ Muller said.

‘But I must see him! It’s a matter of enormous importance. I am well. I can feel it. I am well!’ Schreber looked at the orderly with round eyes but the man just shrugged.

‘Won’t he be pleased...’ Muller said, his inflection denying the question the words implied.

Schreber frowned, but behind Muller the sun rotated in the sky and there was no sign of malice in the world, and it was impossible for Schreber to feel unhappy, so he said, slowly and clearly.

‘Yes, I’m sure he’ll be delighted. Take me to him!’

Muller smiled. When he went behind Schreber and put his big hands on the handles of the Bath chair. He was still smiling and he only stopped when he had the chair back into the observation lounge, rattling on the parquet, making for Dr Rössler’s room.

§

Given the compromises identified in Schreber’s production of his memoirs, can Freud, in attempting an analysis based only on the written work, be said to be doing anything more than psychoanalysing a piece of fiction (not that this would be the first time, obviously)? And one conditioned by its influences, literary and teleological?

At another remove, can those analysts who use the Macalpine and Hunter translation to perform supportive or dissident analyses be doing anything other than analysing a doubly compromised text, and asserting a claim to truth that ignores that fact?

Why, then, can one not make a similar claim to truth in analysing something that is functionally fictional, and therefore can one not also make a claim to truth for rigorously researched fiction, given that, once processed in the same way that the functionally fictional memoirs are processed, we might have something equally interesting to say?

Cannot, in fact, fiction be as truthful here as memoir?

What kind of truth is it? It might be argued that fiction can bring no new historical truth—but then if memoir is, as we have seen, impossibly compromised, then memoir, in the same way as fiction, may only present as truth those things which may be independently verified—that is that it too relies only on pre-existent truths. The truth of memoir then lies in the insight it gives us into the intentions and personality of the author. Does this hold true for the schizophrenic author, or for authors whose intentions are other than representing their own intentions? In reading memoir are we not in precisely the same position as that adopted in searching for authenticity in fiction—appealing to external sources for verification, and therefore forced to admit that fiction, which makes no claim to accuracy, is in the same epistemological position as memoir, but with the one benefit, it is not structurally bound by an expressed requirement that it court those truths that memoir fails to assert properly for itself?

In fact, given the structural freedom allowed by the severing from fact and

truth, fiction is able to call upon the entire range of re-presentational resources in advocating a position based on the available material in a way that theory is unable to (because it is obliged to exclude anecdotal material) and that memoir cannot (because it is obliged to adhere to reality). Fiction, therefore, is uniquely placed to advocate positions that are otherwise unavailable to either theory, or memoir.

It might be argued that the intention of the author to advocate a point is precisely the same as the intention the author of memoir has to present the material of their life in a particular way, but, in the necessary call to authenticity made by memoir, the intention of the memoir writer is hidden, whether the author intends it or not, or repressed. In fiction no such hiding is possible and, therefore no repression either, and no return of the repressed material which undermines the claims to truth. No claim to truth is made in advance of the reading, only that advocacy will take place, and therefore, like the arguments of a lawyer before the verdict is given by the jury, the truth of fiction is contingent on the acquiescence of the reader, and not by a prior claim made by the author.

For example, Schreber's boyhood—where some theories are obliged to exclude anecdotal evidence, fiction can (and must) use it to strengthen an argument create new arguments which can either be justified after the fact by the reader's willingness to believe the argument, or can be taken back within theory as metaphor and justified theoretically, just as Freud uses myth as a structuring metaphor, and uses Schreber's fictions as a foundation for his theory of paranoia.

If fiction avoids the claim to truth, it is capable of taking disparate and contradictory evidence (whether that be in the form of theory, or anecdote, or historical text) and represent it as an argument, advocating a position from which the evidence can then be reclaimed by theory in a way that theory cannot achieve by itself, in a process similar to the unavowed process of inspiration which is the basis of any new idea. Fiction can then act as a means of delineating new truths while never itself being bound by the laws which are required to justify it, instead answering to the wider direction that a work of art must be consistent within itself.¹

§

‘So, you're awake at last,’ Rössler said, pulling his glasses down a little from where they pinched the bridge of his nose and leaning forward in his chair for a second before slumping back again and returning his glasses to the notches they had left over their years of wear.

Schreber blinked. Inside the light was dim and grainy, blurring the edges of the heavy leather furniture so everything seemed to blend into the dark patterned wallpaper. The only light came from beneath a green glass shaded lamp on the doctor's desk. The air was opaque and milky and smelt strongly of spice.

Schreber blinked again, rubbed one eye with his hand, but couldn't think of anything to say to the doctor who was now staring off to his left and paying him no

¹This doesn't make much sense.

attention whatsoever. Then another voice came out of the gloom.

‘Is this him?’ said a well-dressed man whom Schreber had not noticed. He sat on the far edge of Rössler’s huge desk, swinging a slim gold letter opener between two fingers and chewing the end of a lit pipe. He wore a lively moustache and high, starched collar. ‘I imagined someone bigger,’ he went on. His voice was mediated by a rumbling burr that came from his throat, which regular punctuating coughs did not seem to shift.

To the sound of complaining springs, Rössler pushed back into his chair and shrugged. ‘I don’t see what size has to do with it.’ He turned back to look again at Schreber, once more adjusting his glasses and from the look that came across his face, he was not pleased with what he saw. Quite the opposite.

‘Muller,’ he said, ‘bring the patient nearer, I want to take a closer look.’

‘Dr Rössler, I have important things to say...’ Schreber said as the Bath chair struggled across the lushly piled rug that covered the majority of the middle of the room.

Rössler held up a hand, palm out and made a brief interjecting ‘ah!’ sound, which could have meant anything, but which stopped Schreber’s words on his lips. After a short period of silence, Schreber opened his mouth to try again, but Rössler was back with his ‘ah!’ and the upraised palm. The other man coughed, longer and more energetically this time, and emptied his pipe into a waste paper bin by tapping it on the high heel of his shiny boot. This distracted Rössler, and he watched him, apparently curious to see whether his friend intended to start a fire. When it was clear that all was well, he turned back to Schreber and put his palm flat down on the table with a slap.

‘I am absolutely positive,’ he said, before the ringing of his slap had faded from the air, ‘that a man with your history is sure to be brimming with matters of the utmost importance, enough probably to enliven any conversation, Herr Schreber. However, in this room, it is I who decide who speaks and when. Is that understood?’

Schreber nodded politely and smiled.

‘Certainly, Doctor,’ he said, ‘it is just that...’

Rössler rapped on his table with his knuckles and held up his hand again. He turned back to the well-dressed man.

‘You must start as you mean to go on, Ehrlich, in matters of this sort and with specimens that might otherwise prove difficult. It is something a man of my profession learns very early. I am sure it is the same in business?’

‘Very much so,’ said the man with the pipe, which he held now by the bowl. He applied a match. ‘If one lets them get the upper hand at such an early stage, who knows where it will end.’ He coughed twice and winked at Schreber.

‘Precisely,’ Rössler went on. ‘We’ll have him nearer still, Muller.’

Schreber was pushed forward a little more in his chair, but apparently, by too small a distance. Rössler was up out of his chair.

‘Good God, man! We’ll have him over here, by the table, where we can get a good look at him. Do you expect me to use a telescope?’

‘No, sir.’

‘No, sir! Well bring him over here then!’ He turned back to Ehrlich. ‘These orderlies are scarcely more than lunatics themselves, Ehrlich. Lunatics, or some other species of underman, if you are familiar with the term. I wonder sometimes if I’m the only sane person in here.’ Rössler scowled at Schreber, as if Muller’s shortcomings could be attributed to some failure on his part.

Ehrlich stood up and walked over to Muller. He slapped him on the back and continued over to the cabinet where Rössler kept his whisky. He poured himself a tumbler full and returned to stand between Muller and the Doctor.

‘I’m sure you’re a good fellow really, aren’t you, Muller?’

Muller straightened and pushed out his chest.

‘Yes, Herr Ehrlich.’

‘Good man, have a bonbon.’ Ehrlich reached into a bag in his jacket pocket and pulled out a dusty white ball.

‘Good lord man, don’t feed him! This isn’t a zoo!’

‘Carrot and the stick, old man, carrot and the stick,’ Ehrlich said, sagely.

‘No, thank you, Herr Ehrlich,’ Muller replied.

Ehrlich wrinkled his nose and offered the bonbon to Schreber.

‘Get away from him,’ Rössler said, rushing out from behind his desk and putting himself between Ehrlich and his patient. ‘What you believe you know about business affairs and the methods of handling factory workers and draymen, or whatever, will not help you here, Ehrlich. Lunatics are their own breed, and a certain amount of professional experience is essential in dealing with them. It is a delicate business.’

‘I’m sure,’ said Ehrlich, and returned to his perch at the corner of the desk.

Rössler stood directly in front of Schreber and bent over to get a better view, with his hands on his knees. He peered over the top of his glasses. His eyes were sharp and blue.

‘Now, Schreber,’ he said, ‘let’s have that shirt back open, down to the waist.’

Ehrlich raised his eyebrows. Schreber clutched defensively at his shirt.

‘I don’t see the necessity,’ he said, looking from face to face for an ally. He found none except Ehrlich, who watched him as if he thought the old man might ascend into heaven at any moment.

Rössler looked over at Ehrlich, who raised his eyebrows and tutted theatrically.

‘He doesn’t see the necessity, Rössler.’

‘Do you see the necessity, Muller?’ Rössler said,

‘Sir, I... I don’t know, sir’

‘No, sir, you do not. Do you, Ehrlich?’

‘Not entirely, but then...’

‘But then—if you’ll allow me to finish for you—you are not a doctor, are you?’

‘Precisely not.’

‘Are you a doctor, Schreber?’

Schreber pictured the sun outside in the sky, and tried to remember the feel of grass tickling his ear and the warmth of things, of the sky and the daylight, and how that warmth had differed from the pain of miracled degradations to his mind and body, his skin and organs. It was hard to remember with this man peering over his

small circular glasses with their silver rims, his hard, sharp blue eyes and his mouth, dry and straight. It was hard to remember. Why was he here?

‘Answer me, sir! Have you qualified as a doctor?’

Schreber answered the question, though he couldn’t remember its relevance.

‘I have equivalent qualifications in law, but...’

Rössler held up a finger.

‘Is law medicine?’

‘It is not.’

‘Then you could not, in all honesty, call yourself a doctor?’

‘No,’ Schreber said. On the fabric of the elbow of the shirt on his right arm, there was a grass stain. Schreber tried to remember how it had been made, but nothing came to him. The hard-faced man was inching closer, peering at him like a bird peers at a snail as it retreats into its shell. The expression on his face suggested that he was preparing to seize Schreber in his beak and strike him against a stone. This man wanted to crack him open and eat what was inside.

‘No, you are not a doctor,’ the man said, ‘Might this be the reason that you are unable to see the necessity of stripping to the waist, whereas I, a trained physician, can see it very clearly?’

Schreber felt utterly lost in this dark room.

‘It must be so,’ he said

‘Then open your shirt to the waist!’

Schreber nodded, and he pulled his shirt open.

‘Very good,’ Rössler said and stood up in triumph.

Schreber was pleased to feel the man’s closeness retreat and in the space freed up, he remembered something.

‘God has withdrawn from my body, entirely, or to a very great distance,’ he recalled, but Rössler held up a hand.

‘Muller, bring me a stethoscope.’

The orderly let go of the handles of the Bath chair and it was only when the front wheels banged down on the floor that Schreber realised that he had been tilted at a slight angle ever since he had come in from the garden, the weight of the man behind him forcing the chair to lean him backward. Now the weight was gone he felt like he might fall forward. When Muller came back he handed the doctor his stethoscope, and replaced his hands on the handles of the chair. Schreber felt, as he tilted back again, a little safer in the world. The hard-faced man, Rössler, the doctor, came forward with the silver disc of the stethoscope leading the way.

‘You will find no evidence of him in me.’

‘What did you say?’ said Ehrlich to Schreber, ‘What did he say?’ he repeated to Rössler.

‘God has withdrawn from me,’ Schreber replied, before Rössler could stop him.

‘His rays and all of that?’ Ehrlich got down from the desk again and only stopped shy of coming forward further because Rössler caught his eye.

‘Don’t encourage him, Ehrlich.’

Ehrlich pursed his lips and turned away, only to turn straight back again.

‘Only asking, no harm in that, is there Schreber, old man?’

‘The Monist Confederacy has forced his retreat,’ Schreber went on, as much to himself as to the others.

‘Really?’ Ehrlich was fascinated and even put down his pipe entirely and rubbed at the middle of his moustache, where it was trimmed down to the skin.

‘Ehrlich, if you intend to carry on like this I will have to ask you to wait in the corridor until I have examined my patient.’

Ehrlich put his finger on his lips, but quickly took it away again.

‘I’m curious that’s all. I read the man’s book. *The Great Thoughts of a Nerve Case*. Fascinating stuff. Absolutely fascinating. Man in my club managed to get a copy. Hard to find. Talk of the town though, even so. Never read the like of it. Flechsig’s in a rage, apparently.’

‘Really, Ehrlich, that is enough!’

Schreber sat forward in his chair. ‘You will have some understanding of my predicament then?’

‘I and half of Leipzig! I only hope that I can claim as much understanding as is allowed any reasonably educated man on the close reading of a text. I will not claim to have got it all, but my fair share, certainly. Fascinating work old man. Wonderful concepts.’

‘Do not talk to the lunatics, Ehrlich! I’m serious. It only excites them and makes it harder to hear what’s going on in there.’ Rössler put the cold metal of the stethoscope on Schreber’s chest and he flinched without meaning to. ‘Heart is soft and the beat damp. Lungs are straining,’ the doctor stood up. ‘You have over stimulated the man!’

‘Oh, come on! I’ve barely said a thing,’ Ehrlich said, but he looked a little worried and took a step or two back toward the desk.

Schreber leaned further from his chair, shuffling and clutching his shirt back together.

‘The rays have departed or,’ he went on, ‘at the least their length has become so exaggerated by the retreat of God that what energy they possess is sufficient only for them to remain in a weakened form, only partially substantive, very thin. They cannot communicate to me and they cannot produce miracles on my person. Do you see?’

Schreber’s head bobbed to and fro on his neck, straining to catch Ehrlich’s eye, but the doctor kept standing between them, with his back to Schreber. The man was paring his nails and looking irritated.

‘Ehrlich, every word you say to this man has a compound effect on his illness. If you give him any cause to believe his delusions have a wider acceptability, even amongst men so clearly debauched and spoiled as yourself, it will only serve to deepen his failure to understand that every word he utters is pathologically and demonstrably nonsense.’

‘Now, now,’ Ehrlich said, clearly believing the doctor had gone too far.

‘Do you contradict me?’

Schreber edged forward again and Muller had to pull him back and put his hand firmly on his shoulder to prevent him from getting up from his chair.

‘He is gone. God is gone. My secession to the Monist Confederacy has cured me. Don’t you see?’

No-one was looking at him. He waved a hand so that Ehrlich could see, but Rössler was blocking his line of sight.

‘Sorry, old man, doctor’s orders. I’d better, well, keep out of it. Don’t you think?’

At last Rössler turned back to look and when he did it was with a look of satisfaction.

‘Muller,’ he said, ‘has the patient received his bromide?’

Muller looked sheepish and lowered his eyes before he spoke.

‘It was given to him this morning, and again this lunch time.’

‘And he took it?’ Rössler asked, aware, seemingly, of the orderly’s attempt at evasion. There was a long pause where Muller’s attempts to think of something to say that would not get him in trouble were almost audible.

‘There was a little spillage, sir.’

‘Spillage?’

‘It’s inevitable.’

Rössler took off his glass and rubbed his eyes. When he returned the glasses to his nose he pushed them up as far as they would go. There was a second pause, and this time the sound of grinding teeth could be heard. Whether they were the orderly’s or the doctor’s, it was impossible to tell. When Rössler spoke it was at a volume that made everyone in the room jump.

‘Orderly! It is not inevitable. Why should it be inevitable that a sixteen stone man, who, I understand, is capable of restraining a horse unwilling to be shod, cannot force a few ounces of liquid into a geriatric lunatic?’

Ehrlich had lit himself another pipe and was chewing away at it, determined to keep quiet but the news was too much for him to allow it to pass.

‘He wrestles horses?’ Ehrlich’s eyebrows raised a quarter inch on both sides ‘You wrestle horses?’

‘When I need to, sir.’

‘Answer me, sir, not him!’ Rössler shrieked, with a banged fist on the desk top which rattled the paperweights.

‘Sir! He... the patient... Schreber... he is stronger than he looks.’

Rössler could not believe what he was hearing.

‘Stronger than a horse?’

‘No, sir, I suppose not.’

‘Then, in future, when he is ordered to take his bromide, ensure that he does so, in full. Or you shall have me to deal with, and, while I am not stronger than I look, I can quite cheerfully suggest to the director of this house that you are immediately dismissed. Is that clear?’

Before Muller could answer, Schreber put up his arm.

‘Please, examine me,’ he pleaded. ‘You will see that my stomach, an organ that was miraculously disappeared, so that all the medicines you have given me, will, in any case have soaked directly into my thighs... that organ is returned.’

‘Oh, yes!’ said Ehrlich, ‘You live without a stomach... yes, I read as much. And

you are tormented by a lung worm?’

‘On occasions.’

‘And little men who open and close your eyes against your will?’

‘No longer, which is what I am saying. A simple examination will prove my point.’

‘An examination which you, Ehrlich, are making impossible with your continued nonsense. Really, I am new in this post,’ he looked around the room and lowered his voice, but he was still clearly audible, ‘I am new in this post. You are making matters extremely difficult. It is essential I make a good impression.’

‘But Rössler,’ Ehrlich laughed, ‘you must see that to me, this is all extraordinarily interesting. I mean, to meet a man like this, after what I’ve read. It’s almost an honour.’

Rössler removed his glasses.

‘Nonsense,’ he said. ‘He, for one, is under the impression he has met no-one, that you have been fleetingly-improvised for this occasion, and you are mistaking a lunatic for a saint. Neither of you have met anyone, as I’m sure Schreber will agree.’

‘This is just my point,’ Schreber said, standing up from his chair.

‘I’m not talking to you!’ Rössler shouted. At a nod from Rössler, Muller pushed Schreber back down but he went on talking.

‘I no longer believe that you are play-with-human-beings,’ Schreber said, struggling against Muller’s grip and looking back at the orderly, unable quite to understand why he was being restrained.

‘I don’t believe that you are fleetingly-improvised. I no longer believe that the world is coming to an end, and I no longer believe that my unmaning is necessary.’

Schreber reached down and began to unbutton his trousers.

‘Please,’ he said, ‘examine my genitalia. You will see that they are those proper to a man and have ceased to be retracted or inverted.’

Ehrlich held up his hands. Schreber ignored him and struggled with the buttons, trying to get each from its hole, which was seemingly too small for the button ever to have gone through.

‘Muller, stop the patient from undressing, please.’

Muller grabbed Schreber’s arms and held them behind him. The old man tried his best, his fingers still working, but he was unable to move them down to his waist and they waggled at either side of his breast.

‘Perhaps I will wait for you somewhere else, after all,’ Ehrlich said.

Rössler shook his head and rubbed the bridge of his nose

‘Amazing how a man can stared goggle-eyed at a committed lunatic for half an hour, but at the prospect of genitalia becoming visible, he is off, without a second thought.’

The doctor got up and came to lead Ehrlich out of the room, but he was already half out of the door.

‘Go into the corridor,’ Rössler said, ‘I’ll be finished shortly, and then we can go to my rooms and I’ll have the cook bring us lunch.’

Ehrlich was reluctant to leave completely.

‘I’ve barely had chance to speak to him at all! I will have to insist on coming back when the... examination... is complete. Or tomorrow.’

Rössler pushed him the last few inches through the doorway. ‘Another time man, if at all. This is not a circus,’ Ehrlich could be heard complaining in the hallway, but he made no attempt to come back in. ‘Muller, you go too,’ Rössler said.

‘You are sure, sir?’

‘Unlike you, Muller, I do not imagine Schreber to have superhuman powers of strength. I will be fine. Remain outside the door, I will call for you when I have finished.’

§

20th May ‘07

Augustin Lesage seems to be a good model for Schreber’s painting. Schizophrenic miner who painted religious works under the influence of spirits. Extremely detailed paintings and embroidery dealing with similar subject matter to the *Memoirs*.

The basic dramatic structure could be a reconciliation between the internal life of the asylum, the extant medical records, and the internal life of Schreber as explored through his painting.

As he enters the asylum, voluntarily, his doctor, who initially is earnest and enthusiastic, treats Schreber as many private voluntary patients were treated—with respect and deference—and allows him freedom to act out his ideas, but as these ideas and requirements become more extreme and difficult to fulfil (unusual and expensive materials he can no longer afford?) and he fails to respond to treatment, the doctor becomes first concerned (and more extreme in his methods of treatment), then annoyed, convinced Schreber is wilfully standing in the way of his own treatment, and then angry, disinterested, and, when the money has run out, he forgets Schreber all together (scene in which the doctor defends himself and reveals that he has been supplying Schreber with materials out of his own pocket, and, despite his best intentions, he is no longer willing to do so, particularly if Schreber will insist on holding to notions that they have discussed and dismissed on many, many occasions before). He is left in the care of the attendant, a man whose brother—unknown to the staff of the institution—was sentenced to a harsh and punitive punishment by a judge (not Schreber, but enough like him that it’s an easy mistake to make). Schreber fights to continue his work, but, in a scene where the attendant takes a knife to the canvas and almost—but he wouldn’t give Schreber the satisfaction—to Schreber himself (no, it won’t be that easy), Schreber is prevented from painting and lies catatonic until he is sure he is unwatched, and then draws with the miracled substances he finds in his cell (which, the reader understands, are his own faeces). Eventually his mistreatment by the attendant, corresponding poignantly with his religious and psychotic conception of what is happening, results in his health deteriorating, and he dies while all the time believing he is achieving his great purpose.

I’m going to have to make a decision as to what and how I’m going to echo chamber in the text. I think there is room in the religious delusions to do all of this,

but it should also seep into the narrative where possible. The intriguing line in the medical notes about “the Monist Confederacy” might provide a good starting point, Schreber feeling he is trapped within it, and that, as an embodiment of the book’s ideological condition, the Confederacy could be moulded into whatever shape I need it to occupy.

§

Rössler shut the door and the room seemed darker than ever and oppressively quiet. Schreber became acutely aware of his state of dress, but when he came to button his shirt, to make himself decent, he was surprised to find every button was gone. Instead he held the two sides shut with both his hands, one by his throat and the other by his waist. When he looked down he realised he had no hands free to rearrange his trousers which gaped awkwardly.

Rössler stood by the door and said nothing, and Schreber suddenly had nothing to say either. The air seemed to vibrate in the silence, as it had when Schreber was a boy when his father, paralysed by migraines, retired to his quarters, and the rooms of the house sang in the absence of any sound, and the children slid here and there through the house in their stocking feet, playing softly in corners with their wooden toys removed and replaced with dolls they were too old for, and if so much as a chair was scraped on the wooden floor, they froze like statues and stayed that way for thirty seconds or a minute, and Schreber’s own thoughts must have been too loud, and his heartbeat, so that when he thought something he flinched, wondering if his father had been disturbed, and if his heart beat faster then he tried to stop it by squeezing his chest with his arms, wrapped tight and waited to see if his father—who looked the same as he always had, but was another man entirely—to see if he would thunder red faced down the stairs as he had when they had played too early in the nursery, and his mother would be white, like a ghost, with reddened eyes and cried for the days they had all loved, before the accident, when things were good and why must a good man be cursed with these blasted headaches, and make everything so miserable?

The doctor returned to his place behind his desk.

‘Now, Schreber, you will understand me when I say that a doctor’s relationship to his patient is an analogue of the relationship that exists between a father and his son. The son must submit to the will of the father in his own best interests. Yes?’

Schreber had no choice but to agree. He had submitted, as was right. Even on that day when his father had fallen from the ladder, when he’d staggered from the rose bushes to the wall and walked backwards, his knees bent, and soiled his trousers and shouted in Greek, even then Schreber had tried to obey. Even when the father cursed them all to hell for waking early, he had wanted to submit and now...

‘Of course,’ Schreber said, ‘I will do whatever you ask.’

Rössler slapped his desk with a booming crack that made Schreber look up, despite the years, to his father’s room. He waited as the slap echoed around the room and became nothing, but there was no answering knock or shout and his mother did not appear, ghost-white and drawn to a thin line by being stretched between the

requirements of her husband and those of her children, with her fingers on her lips and tears in her eyes.

‘You will submit to me, sir,’ Rössler said, ‘when I remind you that it is I who make the decision as to whether you are ill, or whether you are well. It is I who decide which parts of his patient will be examined and when. You are not to dictate the course of your treatment, nor are you to form opinions of your own as to how your illness may be progressing.’

The doctor came out from behind the table and sat on the edge of his desk. From somewhere he had taken a book, without Schreber noticing and it was shut, on his knee. Schreber strained to see its title, but, in the low light there was nothing he could make out. Rössler leaned forward so far from the edge of his desk that he was barely inches from Schreber’s face.

‘But doctor...’ Schreber wanted to tell him how he was better, how the sun had shone and it was not cruel and that he had felt the benefit of the cessation of all harmful miracles against his body, that the Monist Confederacy had succeeded in making possible the withdrawal of God from the system of Schreber’s nerves. That he was better. But he no longer felt it, and the doctor would not, in any case, allow him to speak.

‘Enough!’ Rössler said, moving the book from hand to hand. ‘It is some indication of improvement in your condition that you do, at least, feel inclined to speak more than one word at a time, but it is plain to all of us here—your orderlies, the other staff, even the other inmates—that you are not better. You were not better yesterday, indeed you were worse than you have been. Incontinent. Dribbling. Muttering. You are one of the worst we have here. You laugh, HA HA, incessantly.’

‘To ward off God’s suspicion that I have lost my mind,’ Schreber said, but he no longer felt the words, as if they were far off on the horizon, or from a time far back in the past, or away in the future. They were words learned by rote, like a mathematical table, or the conjugations of the Latin verbs, or passages from the scriptures intended to impress a priest.

‘But that is no longer necessary,’ he added, but he was no longer convinced, and the thread that was drawn from the back of his skull caught and dragged, and the whispering of voices became almost comprehensible again, leaning on the edge of sensibility.

Rössler stood in front of him and as if he was about to read aloud from the book, held it open at a random page in his outstretched arm and turned his face away from Schreber. Then, theatrically, he began to speak.

‘It is no longer necessary, for you to exclaim ‘HA! HA!’ because the Monist Confederacy has driven Him, God, off to a safe distance, and he is no longer in a position to monitor your every thought?’

Schreber nodded, but Rössler could not have seen him. Schreber looked down, suddenly exhausted. He watched his hands gripping and ungripping the arm of his chair and he felt no sense of ownership over them. They worked by their own desire, or by the desire of another, like a puppet moves at the twitch of the string and the puppeteer watches in the darkness, clad in black, so he is invisible to those who watch

on.

When he looked up Rössler was still holding up the book.

‘You are in constant nerve contact with a cruel and thoughtless God. But now, that contact is so dispersed as to be bearable? Am I correct?’

He dropped the book and rushed over to kneel in front of Schreber, fixing the old man’s downcast eyes. Schreber let his gaze be caught, but he did not have the energy to reply.

‘You see I do listen,’ Rössler went on, his hands holding onto the arm rests of the chair and forcing Schreber to cross his arms protectively over his chest. ‘I am even listening even when it appears I am not. I do take notice, even when it appears I am uninterested. I see and know everything.’

He sniffed twice and, with his point made, Rössler returned to his desk. He replaced his book on the shelves behind and turned to face Schreber again. Now he looked pleased with himself and fiddled with the blinds at the window by his desk. The light from the garden, when there was room for it to come through, striped Rössler’s face.

‘It would surprise you, what I know. I know for example that you fell from your chair and ripped your good shirt open to the waist and lay writhing in the grass, not an hour ago. Would that surprise you, Schreber?’

The sunlight lit Rössler’s mouth, his pink lips and the fresh sprouting of hair on his upper lip. Schreber said nothing.

‘Would it surprise you that your sister knows, too?’

He left the blinds alone and they clicked shut, cutting off the light and leaving a darkness that seemed all the more intense because of the contrast.

Schreber found his voice.

‘I don’t understand,’ he said.

‘Your sister, Anna.’

Anna. Long blonde hair gathered in perfectly symmetrical braids, one hanging down behind each shoulder, wearing a white slip and paddling, water soaking her hem, pulling a doll behind her through the mud at the margins of the lake.

‘Anna?’ Schreber said to himself.

‘Whom you were supposed to see today?’

‘I don’t...’

‘Your sister, Anna? Your elder sister, Anna, whose visit you have been looking forward to? Whose visit you have demanded, stridently, repeatedly, every day for the last month. I will see Anna! You will bring me Anna! Do you remember?’

‘I...’

Rössler waved a hand.

‘It is of no importance. She has left now. I won’t say she was disgusted. She has seen too much to be disgusted now, but she was... saddened. But still, that is irrelevant.’

Rössler went over to the window and opened the blinds and through the window Schreber could see the garden, old men and men with shaved heads in their night gowns, dotted here and there amongst the trees and over the lawn.

'You are not well, Schreber,' Rössler said, silhouetted in the window frame by the daylight that now filled the room. 'You will not become well in the short space of time it takes for a man to be picked up from the grounds, there...' he indicated the exact spot where Schreber had lain in the grass, 'and wheeled to his doctor's office.'

Schreber blinked against the sunlight and while he was pained by it, the light acting on his eyes that were still used only to darkness, there was no hint of malice. He did not let it show, but he knew he was right. Rössler's silhouette continued to speak.

'Moreover, a doctor will not be able to set about curing a man who proclaims himself, against the evidence, to be already cured. Do you understand me, sir?'

Schreber nodded. His words were comprehensible.

'Let me make it clear,' Rössler continued, 'when you can come to this office and ask me for my help, knowing you are ill, I will listen to you. Until then, you will return to your room and take your bromide. Muller!'

Schreber nodded again and felt that if he agreed he might be allowed to make his point. He said:

'But... God...'

'God is of no interest to me, Schreber. God's creation is perfect, I am not needed where perfection is present, only where matters have gone astray, and God provides me no active assistance in my work. These are facts. Muller! Where is the man?'

The light from the garden shone at such an angle that it illuminated Schreber's stocking feet where they sat on the footrest of his chair. They were still. Anna? Could he mean the little girl he had known then? What was she doing here, in this place? The light on his feet was neutral, it had no desire toward him one way or another. It did not act as a gateway, or carrier, for any malicious energy and it bore him no message, but how could Anna be here? Surely she would be dead by now? But Rössler had been very clear. He had wanted her presence to be known. Was Rössler then compromised somehow? But Schreber would have known... And Ehrlich? And Muller? Surely not Muller? Was this then a test? The Confederacy testing his worthiness, now that the secession was complete? He could not rule it out. There had been talk of a bargain. Perhaps this was the beginning of it, now God was withdrawn. Perhaps their power was waxing, power even to bring back to life that little girl? Schreber watched his feet. They were still. The sunlight was passive. Wasn't this an indication of their power? And what was to be the bargain? Little Anna. And the others too? Perhaps even father and mother. A colony? Here on Earth, under the new influence of the Confederacy? God was withdrawn, was not anything possible?

Rössler marched to the door and for a little while he left the room. Schreber turned to look for him but the door was too much closed behind the doctor. He could hear his voice. He had found Muller smoking in the doorway to the garden and sharing some witticism with Ehrlich. There was shouting. The sunlight crept up Schreber's shin and would, given time, have made it as far as his knees. He did not feel his bones dissolve or hear the ligaments of his ankles replaced with wire, or wood, or rubber, or nothing at all. There were no messages in the air. The thread grated but did not speak.

Anna!

Rössler came in at a march followed by Muller.

‘We will have words, Muller, something will have to be done. Take Schreber back to his room and return here immediately.’

‘Sir...’

‘Say nothing.’

‘Rössler, old man,’ Ehrlich poked his head around the doorframe.

‘Ehrlich,’ Rössler said, ‘the day I come to your factory and interfere in its efficient running is the day you can come here and lecture me on how to treat my staff.’

‘Point taken old man, but you are forgetting lunch.’

Rössler sighed, shut his eyes and rubbed his temples with the fingers of both hands. After what seemed an eternity he opened his eyes again.

‘Muller, you will return here in precisely one hour.’

‘Yes, sir.’

And with that Schreber was returned to his room.

§

23rd May ‘07

Looking into “Schreber’s spiritual granddaughter” as documented in Marion Milner’s *In the Hands of the Living God* and also into Joyce’s own daughter, who neurotically transcribed her father’s work (obvious, but powerful connotations). Might well be something to steal for Schreber.

What kind of books Schreber might have been able to read (tutorial to this effect with German expert is to be arranged).

§

In the night, before the what light of the dawn found its way between the cracks in the boards over the window, Schreber was visited by a devil, red faced and smelling strongly of sulphur. If Schreber had meant to question his wits he could have wondered how it was that he saw this fiend in the complete darkness of his cell, but there is a time in the dead of night when even a sane man is unlikely question the evidence of his own gullible senses and Schreber was far from well, being so long out of the sunlight.

§

Later in the day Schreber discovers that the clock has been joined by another unexpected object from his past. The mysterious man calls at his door. Schreber is called to by voices. Schreber makes a request that Muller finds ungrateful.

10

On returning, Muller was required on some little task, and Schreber opened the door by himself and went in. Now, in the middle of his room was a piano and he met it with no less surprise than he had the clock, perhaps with more, because the object was impossible to miss, and its presence could not be apprehended gradually, being, as it was, placed directly and firmly in the middle of the room, at an angle that prohibited Schreber's easy progress to his bathroom.

He stood in the doorway, neither in nor out of his room, for several minutes, watching it, and only the progress along the corridor of one of the other boarders—Alexander—eventually spurred him to flee cross the threshold and address himself to the piano's presence. He stood only as close as the shut door forced him to stand, pressing back against it so that his shoulder blades knocked on the wood when he breathed in and out. He turned his feet inward, pigeon-toed to maximise the distance between him and it—the shiny brown walnut case, upright, the metal bar on which the sheet music should rest—and he turned his face away from it, so his cheek was on the panelled door and his ear was pressed against it, forming a seal. With his right eye he could see the piano, solid in the air. With his left ear he could hear Alexander shuffling outside the door, muttering to himself, half-words about Schreber, and hadn't he seen him, just then, he must have done, and Schreber stood there, sandwiched between the piano and a madman, with the door protecting him from the least of the two.

When Alexander rapped on the door, Schreber's body's reflexes made him flinch away, and the presence of the piano made him pull back immediately, so that he knocked his skull on the wood, as if in answer. There was a pause and then Alexander knocked again, once only this time, assuming that this was a species of game or message, and Schreber cursed to himself under his breath, but too loudly, so that Alexander heard him and said:

'Old man, are you in there?' in the singsong voice of a child.

'Go away!' Schreber hissed, but Alexander was not the sort of man who would take a hint, and even if he had been well he would have persisted, unable to understand that his presence was neither desired, nor required. He rapped three times more on the door, and the vibrations set up in the wood rang loud in Schreber's ear, the skin of his eardrum being only the smallest distance from the source of the noise, the tremors conducted through the air with almost no impedance, and it felt as if Alexander was banging on his mind, directly, shaking things up in there, disturbing the functioning

of the brain, shaking the world, and in his right eye the piano swelled and shrank like something seen through a fairground mirror, or a faulty lens, or the bottle glass of an old window, and when Alexander knocked again the effect was increased, the piano becoming first half then twice its size, oscillating between the two, filling the room, and almost touching Schreber's arm and then retreating, shrinking down to a perfect miniature, as seen in a doll's house, before swelling again.

'Go away!' he said again, louder, albeit this time to the piano against which he shut his eyes and when Alexander knocked a final time the shutting of his eyes made the noise even closer, and it was like the trumpets that blew down the walls of Jericho, but to no positive effect, and Schreber's mind rattled in his head until he could barely find the resources to remember to breath in or out, or to control the motor functions of his internal body, and he slumped down on the floor, fearing suddenly that he would die, his very existence shaken out of him.

For a while there was silence and Schreber sat on the floor, waiting for consciousness to leave him, but it did not, and with every second that it did not the vibrations in his head reduced, playing themselves out, their energy reduced by their effect of setting up waves in the ether. When Schreber opened his eyes, the piano was static except for those tiny peaks and troughs that made plastic the sensible world, and it was affected no more than any other thing in the room, and there was no more sound from Alexander, who must have tired of the game and returned to his room. He forced himself to look at the piano, and as he did the ticking of the clock became synchronised with the last disturbances in his head, and he understood from where this piano had come, from the same source as the ticking, ultimately: from Anna, from his parents' house. She had been here again, and she had left something else and again there was something missing. As the clock had no key, so the piano had no stool, and it became clear that she was sending him a message with these objects, each with a significance only he would recognise, so allowing them to pass the authorities of the asylum and come to him innocent, their true purpose hidden from them as it was hidden from him, the significant difference being that he might one day understand where they never would.

Schreber allowed the ticking to calm him and, as the final shock left his mind, each tick strengthened him, reminded him of Anna and of Gustav and the strength they had lent him. He got to his knees and inched forward across the floor with his arm extended, an inch for every tick, low so that he was barely off the ground, his fingers outstretched, and on the thirteenth tick his fingers touched the wooden pedestal that supported the right side of the piano. The wood was smooth and cold and the corner was sharp where the two sides met, a perfect right angle. He ran his finger up it, wondering if it would cut him, inching forward still with every tick until, after a little time, his hands were on the lid that hid the keys and he was standing in front of it, as a man addresses a piano he intends to play, and in his head the overture to Tannhäuser came loudly and clearly. He took his writing chair and placed it firmly in front of the piano and lifted the lid, and if he closed his eyes he could see his sister, Anna, sitting to his right on the red settee of the music room, attending to her sowing, and listening to him, although his fingers had yet to touch the keys. The score

was before his closed eyes and he let his fingers play, mimicking perfectly the music in his head, and he played for her, perfectly, his fingers falling without fail on the right notes, even with his eyes closed, and there was not a piece of that music that he played wrongly.

When he opened his eyes, Anna was not there, the red settee was not there, and when he looked down the lid of the piano was still closed. He tried to open it, but it was locked by a small mechanism in the lid and no key was present. He looked around the room. Only the clock was ticking. Even the birds in the garden were quiet. Then from above there came a sound. It was nothing at first and then it was clearly something, black noise, from a point in the decorative moulding that marked the centre of the ceiling, from the centre of the plaster sun, painted over in white and yellowed from the smoke of another boarder's pipe, rays of light radiating from a smiling sun, in a Renaissance style, and from its mouth—though it did not move—came sound, darkening the room, from a vortex in the centre of the sun, sound rolling from the spiralling edges of a whirlpool, speaking: a man's voice, high and musical, muttering first nonsensical vowel sounds, spoken through a mouth filled with clay, and then clearer.

'Take up your paints, and with them create from the void the new structure of Heaven. In the absence of Him you are appointed to fill the skies, and I will guide you. Take up your paints!'

And when that was said, the sun brightened in the sky again, Schreber was at his piano, the clock ticked, and Muller knocked at the door. He knocked in the same tune he always used, light and cheerily vulgar, uneducated—one two, one two, one two—and without waiting he came in.

'What do you think of the piano, Judge. She's a beauty alright!' In his hand he held the key, small as a single joint of his finger, and he waved it around as if it were a candle and he was painting in the darkness with its light a figure of eight, but Schreber's mouth was dry, and when he spoke his voice was cracked and came hard and very quietly.

'Bring me paints.'

'What? It really is a fine piano. My dad had one—not of his own of course, at his club—which he played every Saturday for the amusement of his peers, you understand. He was quite musical, my old pa, before he was run down by the horse. I remember it from a boy. About all I do remember about him. That and the drinking. You play I hear, Judge? Why not give us a tune?'

Muller crossed his arms, giving the impression of two tree branches curled around each other, and he smiled at Schreber and waited, tapping his foot in appreciation of the music to come.

'Bring me paints,' Schreber said, 'I must paint the new structure of Heaven.'

Muller nodded.

'Well, obviously, but why don't we have a bit of music first, eh? I don't mind what. Something fancy if you can manage it. Or something simple if, you know, you can't get the mood up. Go on...'

Schreber looked up at the plaster boss in the ceiling, but there was nothing but flaking paint and nicotine stains. He put his hands on the closed piano lid and Muller rushed over.

‘That’s the way! Let me undo the catch for you... there! Go on then, let’s have it!’

Schreber rested his fingers on the keys and he pushed down softly with one finger, but when he did he felt a stabbing in his head, above the eyes, that only retreated when his finger was away from the keys. When he tried again the stabbing returned. Muller came round behind Schreber and looked over his shoulder.

‘Go on, give it some! You’ve got to press harder than that! My dad used to bash away at them like they were naughty little boys, white and black, and by the time he’d finished they’d all had a good beating. Go on Judge, give ‘em what for!’

Schreber tried, but his fingers were weak and the pain in his head was unbearable. Slowly he closed the lid and looked round at Muller.

‘Paints.’

Muller looked crestfallen for a second, and then grimaced it away, replacing his weakness with annoyance.

‘Quite a little tease we are, aren’t we, Judge? I was told you liked nothing better than a run over the keys. Old Rössler is not going to be pleased, the trouble he went to rent this instrument for you, all in the spirit of getting you cured and back to the loving breast. Most disappointed he’s going to be, and I doubt he’ll be keen on shelling out again for paints when he’s already put his hand in his pocket for a walnut piano. But you’re the boss. Anyway, you can tell him yourself when he comes. He’s on his way over after lunch, on account of how he wants to put in the extra effort which you, if I might say so, don’t seem too appreciative of.’

§

28th May ‘07

The Caryl Churchill play is extremely literal and seems mostly to use exact quotations from the memoirs. While it does not add much particularly to anyone’s understanding of the text it is a very useful summary and benefits from clarity at the expense of complexity.

It occurred to me that it would be interesting to include some of the other famous and interesting case studies in paranoia and schizophrenia as characters for Schreber to meet at some point, as inmates of the asylum. As most of them are women, it might be nice to have Muller take Schreber, dressed up, into the women’s wing of the asylum (ostensibly on Schreber’s request, but with the intention of blackmailing him) and allow him to meet them, perhaps for short periods at first, and then leaving him there for days.

§

Muller and Rössler arrive with a piano. The Jew, Alexander, calls at his door. Schreber is called to by voices. Schreber makes a request that Muller finds ungrateful.

19

‘Get the door, Muller!’
‘Right you are, sir.’

Without a warning knock the door flew open, the brass handle hitting the wall to the side with such force that it sent pieces of plaster falling to the floor. Neither the doctor nor the orderly noticed, each one was at either end of an old upright pianoforte. Rössler was white faced and Muller was flushed.

‘Why won’t this damn thing move?’

‘It was when you came too fast down the steps, sir, you knocked a caster askew.’

Rössler heaved his entire weight against the back of the piano and pushed, achieving almost nothing; the piano pivoted around the broken caster and collided with the door frame, sending the hammers inside crashing against their strings and making a godawful racket.

‘Damn it!’

‘Let me, sir.’

Muller got his hand under one corner and reached for the top of the piano, his cheek squashed against the polished wood, and he heaved. This time it edged into the room. Rössler stepped away and applied his handkerchief to the back of his neck. Muller grabbed the lower edge of the piano and pulled. There was an audible crack which Schreber at first attributed to the splintering of the door frame but which, as was presently made obvious from the look on Muller’s face, proved to be the dislocation of something in the orderly’s spine. The man, after remaining immobile in both body and face for a long while, eventually slumped onto the ground. Schreber put his letter in the drawer in front of him, and went over to Muller.

‘What’s he waiting for?’ Rössler asked, shielded from the sight of the orderly by the body of the piano.

‘I think he might have suffered an injury.’

‘My back. Something has gone.’

The orderly went from his knees to lying flat out on the ground.

‘Well, I can’t get in there,’ said Rössler, ‘this blasted piano is in the way.’

‘You might come in through the window?’

Rössler muttered something to himself and went off down the corridor.

Schreber knelt down beside the orderly.

‘Does it pain you?’

Muller nodded, something he immediately stopped.

‘Might I give you some advice? As someone used to pain—very used to it—can I suggest that you take a deep breath, and turn your mind to something else. Something

pleasurable...’

There was a knock at the window: Rössler. He motioned to the latch and Schreber went and undid it.

‘Help me in! Right. Thank you.’

‘I’ve snapped something,’ Muller said.

‘Nonsense man, get up.’

‘I can’t. I’ve tried.’

Rössler reached his arms around the barrel-chested orderly and heaved him up, causing a chorus of cracks.

‘There.’

Muller stood, gingerly, his feet wide apart and his knees slightly bent, sweat gathering on his top lip.

‘My God,’ Rössler said, ‘pull yourself together and help me get this blasted thing in the room.’

Muller edged forward like an infant taking its first steps around the nursery until Rössler shoved him hard.

‘Pull, man! Pull!’

The piano edged into the room and the two men doubled their efforts. Once the broken coaster was over the threshold the rest of the instrument rushed in behind it, sending Muller back to the ground and Rössler sprawling into Schreber’s armchair.

‘At last! Now, Herr Schreber, I am correct in assuming you play the piano?’

‘I can play tolerably well.’

‘Excellent, because you shall have every opportunity to do so. I understand that in the past you found relief from the voices by use of the piano?’

‘Certainly. Although I am not presently troubled by voices.’

‘Wonderful. If, however, you should find yourself in need of it, then you can at least rest easier in the knowledge that the instrument is near at hand. Well then... I believe we both have work we could be attending to, eh, Muller?’

‘Certainly, sir,’ Muller nodded.

The two men edged round the piano and left.

§

The brush transcribed an arc across the top of the block, though Schreber could not see it, the edge of the line it left perfectly meeting the edge of the wood, where the splinters left by the saw jutted, despite their closeness not covered by the paint, so accurate was his hand. The beginning and end of the line were feathered, representing the first application of the bristles to the flat surface, but other than that the line was immaculate: a pristine semi circle as if transcribed from Euclid’s *Elements* in a shade of blue that was as like the sky as any of a thousand more complicated depictions, and had Schreber, or Muller, or Rössler, had eyes before it they would have identified it immediately—the arc of sky that a man sees when he is placed on a clear day in summer in the middle of a flat land where there is nothing between him and the horizon in any direction, and he is given the time to take in the vista, the

world, everything in one turn slowly made, with a slight breeze on his face and the grass beneath his bare feet. At the bottom of the canvas another perfect line was made with a second brush, in a green tinged with earth tones, as if taken by hand from the clay, the sweet tang of crushed grass, such as is left when a blade is rubbed between the fingers. This line would represent the Earth, to any man that saw it, an idiot, or a genius (perhaps more so the idiot, who is attuned more clearly to the ground, not suffering that abstraction that thought necessarily brings), and even though there was unpainted wood between the sky and the earth the image was already come together: that Schreber was painting the realm of all understanding and physical operation, the entire gamut of sensation and experience, the sky and the earth as the habitus of man.

There was a pause, a long wait where Schreber said and did nothing, did not open his eyes, or breathe, and the pause seemed to have no aim, but was made to allow the paint time enough to dry on the wood, its oils leaking into the porous material more quickly than it would on a sealed canvas.

Then the brush was back to the palette, and when it returned, its point, by rolling, was sharp, and the line it painted now was very thin, like a razor cut in red, the colour of blood, the animating force of the gross body, but also of the distant stars, oldest of the Heavens, and with immense care the brush traced the outline of a man between the earth and the sky, his arms outstretched upward so that the fingertips reached blue. It supported itself on tiptoe, and if a looking glass was taken to the surface of the paint it would be clear that there was only the lightest contact to either sky or earth, a point—an irreducible point—at which the lines met, no lesser intimacy between them being possible. It seemed that the man was suspended by and also supporting those things that he touched, and caused them to have contact with each other, as the electrical force runs between filaments of the most utter delicacy, providing a shock whose power is not dictated by the thickness of the medium through which it runs, but through its own intrinsic strength, and so here it was that the power of the sky and the resilience of the earth bled between each other, along the lines of the man's nerves.

The brush returned again to the palette and sought out the black as a snake seeks a hole in which to wait to strike, and the head of the brush ran in circles through the black paint, not first cleaned of its redness, so that when it returned, and was held heavy in front of the board, it was crimson and dark and wet, and the point had been rolled again to sharpness and now, following the outline of the man it wrote in characters beneath the line, in the body of the man: 'SCHREBER, THE IDOLATER, FLED FROM WILD BEASTS; BUT WILD BEASTS WILL FLEE FROM PAUL SCHREBER, KNOWN AS THE PROPHET, CONVERTED AND BAPTIZED IN LEIPZIG, 1907TH YEAR OF GRACE,' first in the basic language, then in Latin, then in Greek, then in Hebrew, then in the languages of the older gods, the Egyptians, the Sumerians, the Zoroastrians, and then in the base marks of the men of prehistory until, following the line of the man's form and becoming ever more densely compact, the marks became nothing more than scars in red black at the heart of the figure, random crabbed dashes and strokes, and then nothing at all at the man's very heart, blackness unspoiled by meaning of even the most obscure sort.

The brush was dropped to the ground, and another brush was taken up, and now the paint was white and the brush moved quickly and assuredly across the block. Where it saw wood it covered it in pure white, to the very edge, whitening even the rough edges and straying over the edge of the board to make clean the sides of the wood, seeming to splash paint everywhere except those places it had already been placed. Its brightness did nothing of itself, but made the image already present shine, and made its import unavoidable to anyone who had the senses to perceive it: that the prophet Schreber was come, and that he should unite the Heavens and the Earth, and though he was a frail and imperfect man, subject to the fears of his kind, vulnerable to the predations of beasts, the beasts will run from him on the event of his conversion and baptism in that year 1907, and when Schreber opened his eyes the light in the cell, dimmed by the shutters, was outshone by the meaning of this image and by its beauty.

He fell to his knees and wept tears of joy, not for what the image meant, but for its beauty alone, the meaning coming later and replacing his joy with fear of what was still to come, of what the meaning meant, and the extent to which his understanding of his cure had been wrong.

He got up and brushed away the small pieces of grit that adhered to the knees of his trousers, and clapped his hands to clean them, and he stood back, unable to remove his gaze from the picture, the smell of the oil paint filling the close stuffiness of the cell. He read the words, the familiar words that he knew without knowing how, that were familiar as all things are familiar when one knocks ones head, but unlike then this familiarity did not fade, but grew as the nerves recognised it within him. He tried as he read them to accentuate that sensation, probing it, looking to make it solid, but the solidity never came. Images came, in primary colours, with the smells of his childhood: the dog who had needed to be killed; the sound of his breaking neck; the touch of his father's hand on the back of his own neck, leading him away.

Schreber runs from wild animals, the boy runs from them, someone runs from them, and the rustling of the leaves in the garden, the sweat from exercising, the sweat of Gustav, the sensation of bed sheets on his skin, the prickling of goose pimples in the cold nursery, the running of wild animals and the animals running from him, and there was nothing concrete except one thing, this image that glared from the canvas in front of him and the words, inscribed in languages he recognised, and those that he didn't. The image took the place of memory, the impression stabilising around it as he stood and stared for hours, though he didn't know it, from afternoon into evening, all that time that exists between the lunchtime meal and the delivery of the evening meal on those days in which there is no meeting with Rössler, all that time he stood and stared, barely even shuffling from foot to foot, even though his legs must have become numb and subject to needle pricks and pins, and all that time—five hours—all that time the nerves of his thought gathered around this image, making associations with it, communicating with it, until it became the centre of the sensation of recollection, and the sensation became stronger in the exact same amount that the painting was solid in the world—which is to say almost entirely—until Schreber felt he could remember it almost perfectly, the only part reserved being that

aspect of the painting that itself did not depend on its physical presence, the meaning of the image, and the light that crept from the luminosity of the paint into the room, and when the knock came for the evening meal and Schreber was forced to look away, there was something new in his mind, the purpose and meaning of the image, strengthened by memory although it was too soon for him to understand what that purpose was.

§

12th June '07

Given the academic interest in Daniel Paul Schreber, why has so little been written creatively on his life? *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* is certainly the most discussed piece of schizophrenic writing of the twentieth century and arguably one of its most important memoirs and yet, while it has been dissected endlessly in humanities and social science scholarship, creatively it has had very little impact.¹ Ida Bauer (“Dora”) another of Freud’s celebrated analysands, in contrast, is the subject of many novels and plays,² including Hélène Cixous’ *Portrait de Dora* (and the novel *Portrait du Soliel* on which it was based). While on the face of it hysteria is pathologically suited to theatrical representation, both sharing an expressive and performative element, it could equally be said that schizophrenia is intimately concerned with the inner voice, the currency of modernist literature. Where, then, are the novels on Schreber to match the plays on Bauer?

One could argue that Dora, as she was written about by Freud, offers a different set of cultural imperatives to those posed by Schreber’s memoir and that therefore the two cases are not comparable. In the late nineteen-sixties and into the seventies Freud’s reading of the case was taken up by theorists in the feminist movement and became a contested site around which to elaborate on certain modes of subjection and subjectivity. Given the methodological variety of feminist writing in this period, it is no surprise that we should see creative material produced. What is certain is that no similar creative effort has been made to reclaim Schreber from the grasp of Freud’s analysis and, even though there have been attacks on Freud’s analysis with at least as much justification as those aimed at his work on Dora, none have crossed the boundary into creative work. So the question still remains—why not? If Cixous can find a use for theatre in working through aspects of the debate around Dora, why has no one used the seemingly equally apposite medium of literature to argue within

¹The only strictly literary interpretation is Roberto Calasso’s 1974 experimental work *L’Impuro Folle*, a short fusion of poetry and prose which has not been translated into English unlike his other work. Caryl Churchill wrote a play in 1972 (which can be found in her 1990 collection *Churchill:Shorts*) which takes a very literal approach to the *Memoirs de Ida Bauer*, most of the dialogue being direct quotations from the English translation. Anthony Burgess wrote a screenplay for Burt Lancaster on Schreber’s life, also in the early seventies which was never filmed but is available in the Burgess Archive at the Harry Ransom Research Centre in Texas.

²For example: *The Fig Eater* by Jody Shields, Eloisa Castellano-Maury’s *El Caso Dora, Mas Alla del Divan: Diario Imaginario de Ida Bauer*, *The Uses of Enchantment* by Heidi Julavits, *The Interpretation of Murder* by Jed Rubenfeld, *My Sister’s Continent* by Gina Frangello, *The Dark Sonnets of the Lady* by Don Nigro, Kim Morrissey’s *Dora, a Case of Hysteria* – there are many more.

the contested field of Schreber studies? Is there something that marks out Schreber or perhaps his memoir in particular, as incompatible with literary adaptation?

Is it, perhaps, that the *Denkwürdigkeiten* is so informed thematically by pre-existent literary texts, that it is in the position of rehashing themes and narratives that have a larger literary existence than the memoirs could hope to achieve? To put it another way, is the memoir so informed by its sources that it contains nothing of independent interest? If one maps Schreber's literary influences, both those explicitly mentioned in his memoir—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,¹ Carl Maria von Weber,² George Gordon Byron,³ Richard Wagner⁴—and those one can trace independently—Gaetano Casati,⁵ Augustin Sue,⁶ and Moritz Schreber⁷—there is an argument to be made that the *Denkwürdigkeiten* is more of a hybrid of literature and autobiography than is avowed by either Schreber, or the Freudian psychoanalytic literature. One might say that, by virtue of its becoming a confused and confusing conduit for earlier and more obviously influential works of literature, the memoirs disqualify themselves from literary adaptation simply because any such work would fall into a subset of works already primarily influenced by the same sources that influence the memoirs themselves.

While this is an argument with merit, one might equally argue that Schreber's memoirs represent their sources in such a uniquely distorted manner that they become interesting not only in themselves, but as new readings of the original source material, and that the *Denkwürdigkeiten's* reliance on narrative and literary tropes should, in fact, open up Schreber's life and the literary juxtapositions found in his writing, predisposing them to adaptation particularly *because* Schreber makes use of literary sources. Rather than undermining the *Denkwürdigkeiten* as a source in its own right, under this argument its interest is multiplied—it becomes not only an important expression of the internal life of a man but also a site at which a number of important texts intersect and merge, opening up the possibility of new readings of the original material. When one also takes into account the importance historically of the period in which Schreber writes—during the gestation and emergence of modernism—and that his writing concerns itself with modernist themes—madness, the negotiation between the subject and his environment, the questioning of the authority of the Enlightenment narratives—we must begin to wonder why there has not been an excess of adaptation, rather than the curious lack of it.

Is it, then, because Schreber has already written all that needs to—or can be—said on the matter of his own life? Faced with a work as dense and impenetrable as the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, one so thoroughly laced with arcane significance and which

¹Goethe, J. W. v. (1871). *Faust*. New York, Arden Book Company.

²Weber, C. M. v. (1977). *Der Freischütz in Full Score*. New York, Dover Publications.

³Byron, G. G. (1901). *Manfred. The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry Volume IV*. London, John Murray.

⁴Wagner, R. (1984). *Tannhäuser in Full Score*. New York, Dover Publications.

⁵Casati, G. (1891). *Ten Years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha*. London, Frederick Warne and Co.

⁶Sue, E. (1845). *The Wandering Jew*. London, Routledge.

⁷Schreber, D. G. M. and R. Graefe (1899). *Medical Indoor Gymnastics Or, A System Of Hygienic Exercises For Home Use*. London, Williams and Norgate.

exhaustively describes his internal dialogues, is our only available response to unpick it? Where *Dora* is written for us by Freud there is an obvious temptation, even an obligation, to write her out of that position, but in the *Denkwürdigkeiten* Schreber's own hand is at work and to attempt to supplement or supplant his own authority might seem somehow either presumptuous or redundant. The lack of creative work on Schreber might be recognition of the futility of undertaking the task. If this is the case then this recognition overestimates the impenetrability of the *Denkwürdigkeiten* and also affords it more authority in representing the biographical material that exists on Schreber than it merits. The mistaken incomprehensibility of the memoir and the assumption of its sovereign authority are the primary reasons for the lack of creative work on Schreber.

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Rössler has not been idle. He suggests a clandestine trial of a radical and officially disparaged new form of therapy. Schreber agrees, but in his heart he harbours hopes of his own, which prevent him from being absolutely honest.

4

This time the room was perfectly well lit, and as Schreber stood in the middle, Muller and the Bath chair outside, Ehrlich somewhere else, every detail of Rössler's office was obvious and with it Schreber understood something more of the man. He did not trouble with appearances: this furniture was solid and free of decorative flourish, blocky, heavy, and what ornaments there were were only accidentally so—glass paperweights, a baroque pen and ink set, a modern lamp—beautiful, but only by virtue of their quality: expensive objects bought for their fitness to purpose and utility and which happened to please the eye, would have pleased the eye of another man, were designed for another man, but not for Rössler, each thing being so much out of character with each other that he could not possibly have thought twice about the aesthetics of any of them. The same could be said of all the things in the room: the huge Turkish rug, and the heavy Italian blinds; an ornately framed mirror, and square leather arm chair; a decanter in the French style, glasses squat and German in clear lead crystal. Schreber took it all in as Rössler gave Muller his orders.

Everywhere there were books: on shelves, on chairs, the floor. His desk was covered with them, in piles that defied gravity, leaning so far to one side that there was nothing keeping them upright except inertia. They made towers of green, brown and blue stripes, here and there accented with black or red, and their titles shone in the sunlight—journals, medical texts, even novels—and between these, like snow on a mountainside, there were papers that gathered in drifts wherever they could find space, white pages overwhelmed with Rössler's angular script in blue and black and

green, notes on this and that, on Schreber, he imagined, or perhaps Alexander, if the strange man was to be believed, and in between all of this there were tea cups and saucers, never paired and the occasional plate, dotted with crumbs, or the end of a pickle. The window was open a crack, the width of a finger and, when the wind blew, the scene was alive with movement and the sound of a porcelain cup knocking on a glass filmed white with milk—his breakfast?

Rössler shut the door with a click, and when he came into view Schreber saw that he was changed. His shirt was open at the neck and his collar had sprung away at one side to show the shirt beneath and the man's neck was scraped red by the razor, not thoroughly, so that it was pricked with black. His jacket was smudged with something, the flour from a piece of bread, eaten at the table and absent-mindedly wiped. His fingers were ink stained, and his eyes sunken. His glasses were smudged with fingerprints. But somehow he was more human like this, more likeable. Even his rattishness was gone and his muzzle was transformed to a proud profile, strong and definite, overworked, but proudly so, and in his demeanour, as he sat and gestured to Schreber to do the same, there was the sense that he had been working hard and was proud of himself, despite the state of his room, or even because of it, it being a physical reminder of his activity for a man whose triumphs and travails were all too often invisible to his patients and his colleagues.

Schreber took his seat with a feeling in his stomach that he couldn't describe or understand. A soul has a greater sensitivity to these matters—he felt as he once had when he realised his father had been thinking about him, on the receipt of a present for example, when he was young enough to still only newly come to understand that there were other people in the world, and his were not the only needs and desires, and that those figures that occupied the world around him were people like himself, and they could be pained and pleased by him, and the feeling was one of pleasure tinged with an uncomfortable realisation that he might be responsible, that he might, by his actions or his failure to act, cause harm or upset to those people he had thought were immovable, all powerful, unshakeable—the emotion in its total being like that one receives when playing with a creature, a mouse or a cat, that makes one decide not to pull its tail, even though that was precisely what one intended to do. Schreber was not subtle enough to understand all this, but it was there nonetheless and the feeling strengthened when Rössler picked up the pen from the table, cleared his throat with difficulty and, beginning to say something important, stopped himself in his tracks and said instead:

‘You will forgive me, I know, for the state of the room.’

Schreber nodded.

‘Well, let me begin by saying that I am going to require your assistance in making you well. Does this thought alarm you?’

Schreber shook his head.

‘Excellent. There is a school of thought, you see, shared by the vast majority of the general population of whom my patients are a tiny sample, that it is the doctor's responsibility alone to see that his patients are cured, or failing cure, at least made tolerably comfortable throughout the natural course of their disease. I have some

sympathy for this view, particularly as it was one in which I shared, until recently.’

Rössler stopped and ran his tongue over his teeth. He fixed Schreber with a glare and continued.

‘I have examined you closely, Schreber. You will not, I guess, remember the test to which you have recently been subject. I have had your blood beneath the glass of a microscope, sections of your skin, your bile, your urine and faeces, on a daily basis. I have monitored your temperature and your moods. I have done everything a man of medicine may do to decipher the key to your problem, Schreber, and yet I find myself at a loss to know how to treat you. Bromide has a temporary effect, as does lime, as do a number of other preparations, but these seem only to effect some somatic change, if you understand me. Your mind seems absolutely resistant to change. Many of my colleagues, not least Professor Flechsig, with whom we are both well acquainted, consider you to be a lost cause, an incurable paranoid, and that great man, as much as he will stand to have you mentioned, has shown me on a diagram where exactly he believes the diseased nerves which bring about your delusions are located within your brain. They are not accessible, and he believes that I should, for the benefit of yourself, your family, and indeed the public at large, confine you to bed for the rest of your life. What do you think of that?’

‘My opinion of Flechsig is not one which I have found it wise to share with his brothers in the medical fraternity. As to his prognosis, as I have said, I feel myself to be better.’

‘Well here we must agree to differ. There are examples of your illness that I could give you that I think you might find convincing, but I think now, perhaps, that they might be counter-productive.’

Rössler rose from his chair and stood in the mode of a man delivering a lecture.

‘There is, in science, an irrepressible force, a movement, a motive, if you will, that propels the mind onward, from its starting point, which is that of ignorance, to its ultimate conclusion, which is that of knowledge. We can follow the course of this movement, its progress, throughout human history, from its earliest beginnings, steeped as they were in superstition and fear, through to our currently Enlightened position. We have come a long way and it is the belief of some, my colleagues among them, that we have reached the point of knowledge, or are very close to it. Now, this is not my position, for it seems to me that at each point along the road from its beginning to this very moment that each man of knowledge, must, by virtue of his desire to learn, be of the opinion that the knowledge he is given is absolutely worthy of the trust he is obliged to put in it to furnish himself with understanding. Do you follow me? A man of the renaissance must have believed himself correct in assuming that blood, for example, was present in order to modify the body’s essential humours, rather than, as we now understand it, to feed the organs. The fact that his knowledge was wrong is not enough for us to understand that it could ever be taken as wrong. It is my contention then, that an intelligent man, when faced with a problem to which the addressing of current understanding can find no solution, as is the case with your illness can have no other conclusion than that the knowledge he uses to address it, is similarly at fault and indeed that the

means by which that information is concluded as fact, must, in itself, be equally misconstrued. It will sound radical, but in this case the old orthodoxies should then, be thrown out, at least in as much as they are said to relate to insoluble problems.'

'The issue would seem to me, then, in the identification of those problems which are soluble and those which are insoluble. In my case,' Schreber said, 'I aver that there is not a problem and those things that you take to be an illness in me are, rather, new revelations and facts.'

'Indeed, and here again we must differ, for the reasons I outlined earlier. It is my contention that there are new orthodoxies in the process of being made concrete, that might—and I must stress might—have a curative effect on, we must agree to this at least, the worst symptoms of your nervousness: the bellowing, the screaming, the laughing, the nightmares, the incontinence? You will understand that these are matters of concern to us both, surely?'

'I will, except in that these symptoms, since the retreat of God, are largely gone.'

'Muller tells me that he found that you had soiled yourself?'

'A fact that I cannot deny, although I must stress that the cause is not as it was before, I merely failed to evacuate before retiring.'

'To the underneath of the bed.'

'Again, a different matter entirely.'

'It is beside the point. There is a new school of thought, derided by some, including I must say, my tutors at university and myself, that rather than treat them as pointless ravings a man's delusions should be examined of themselves and might, in fact, lead us to an understanding of the illness from which they are produced and from there to some first steps at a treatment. Now, if you are willing and able to start on such a process I am willing to attempt such an analysis of your 'cosmology' as I think you would have it.'

'This is not a trick?'

'I am not a man of tricks and, to be truthful, I do not hold out much hope, but where the old ways fail, the serious professional must attempt to find new ways. I have read everything available on the subject. I mean to start today, are you willing?'

'I am.'

'Good, then first let me say that I come to you with an open mind and I expect you to bring one of your own. I will put aside any preconceptions and associations, and from this point on we will have in our relationship a *tabula rasa*. I will not refer to my notes, or to the results of any of the tests made on you in the last months, and where I find myself making comparisons and deductions based on them I will correct myself. Likewise, I expect you to put aside any prejudices you have already formed about me, particularly any associations you make toward me that might relate to previous difficulties you have had with other physicians, I refer specifically to Flechsig and Weber. This is of the most absolute importance. You must have trust in me. You must be absolutely truthful.'

'I have never tried to be otherwise.'

'Let us begin, then. Would you like me to close the blinds?'

'Not at all. I find that the sun has a healing effect on me and on my moods. I

attribute this to the influence of the Monist Confederacy.’

Schreber waited to be stopped, but Rössler did nothing. On the table in front of him he had placed a notebook, and with one hand on his chin he wrote in it with the other. Schreber watched him and said nothing. Eventually Rössler stopped writing.

‘The dynamic is structured so that you ought to say those things which are on your mind, without interruptions from the analyst. So please continue.’

‘The Monist Confederacy are an agglomeration of souls that came to me, on the event of my wife’s collapse, with a means of releasing God from the undue attraction of my nerves. By a means unknown to me, part of my soul, that portion that contained the diseased nerves that entrapped God, was seceded to them, and by the effort of months they cleaned them, removing the blackness. By doing so, their dangerous ability to bewitch God was to be removed. I have proof that their efforts have been at least partially successful in that I am no longer subject to the aggressive miracles that God enacted in His attempts to free Himself. God is blind to the ways of man, His only effort being in their creation, and not in maintenance, or management of their affairs, and having no Earthly counterpart, He is unable to correct his lack of knowledge. The Confederacy, on the other hand, being in origin from the same germ as man, have a clearer, although still somewhat abstracted, comprehension of what it is to exist in the physical world, and have stepped in, against God’s will, but in His interests—so it seems to me—to correct the error that had been made in the Order of the World. God is now withdrawn to his proper place in the stars, and the confederacy work to keep Him at a distance. I am kept here in this place which appears to you as the asylum at Dösen, but is truly, in the spiritual realm—as much as the one place is mapped on the other—a colony of the Monist Confederacy. By virtue of their efforts, and my remaining in the colony, I become daily possessed of that rational health I once so prided myself on. There are problems, obviously. My long illness, the process of secession itself, and the close company of lunatics have their effects on me, as they would do on any sane man, but I improve daily, as you yourself must see. If I am incontinent, it is only in the same way that a man who is thirsty will continue to drink until his thirst is satiated, or a man who is out of breath will pant until his breath is returned. If I fail to comprehend that which should be obvious, if I bellow or laugh, if I sleep under the bed rather than on it, it is for the simple reason that I am affected by my previous nervousness, and that I recover, day by day, and not all in an instant. As to your worries that I will associate you with the Flechsig, you need not worry: that soul is dissolved, rendered idiot and mute and, it has been made clear to me, no longer a power in this world or the other.’

Rössler nodded and his pen scratched across his notepad, without him ever seemingly looking down at it, for a minute or two after Schreber stopped speaking. During that time it felt to Schreber as if his words were locked in the room—the scratching mimicking the sounds he had made, without their content—bouncing from wall to wall, freed from his mouth but trapped now on the page. He knew the words to be true, but in that chamber where they rattled across Rössler’s page and dimmed the light from the window, they made Schreber’s mouth dry, as if they had taken water from him as he spoke. The scratching continued and Rössler never

looked down or made any sign of comprehension, and his lips became sticky.

‘Go on,’ said Rössler, but when Schreber started to speak his throat was dry, too, and the words caught in his mouth.

‘I’m...’

‘Where is God now?’

‘He has departed to His proper place.’

‘And what does He do there?’

‘He does what He has always done.’

‘Which is?’

‘He occupies Himself with those things proper to Him. Matters that it would be impossible for us to comprehend. The operation of the world, the maintenance of the Order of the World. He controls and observes things as they are.’

‘And He takes no special interest in you?’

‘I do not believe He ever took a special interest in me. I was never the object of His fascination, it was only the attraction of my nerves, the mediated experience of my senses to which His knowledge of the world was confined. The particularities of my person were never of any interest to Him. His miracles even, though they seemed to be punishments, were simple attempts to disentangle Himself, to rob me of my reason. There was no aspect of myself to which any of these things were aimed. It was His proximity that was damaging.’

Rössler’s pen was at work again and Schreber tensed to hear the echoes of his words in the open air, not confined, at least by him, to the page or the inside of his skull.

‘This session, being our first, I will call a trial, and the rules we may to some extent make up as we go along. One rule should be that you will talk without interruption from me, unless I feel it imperative to guide you toward a particular topic, and that you should not assume that the rules of normal conversation or politeness apply to us. I will not interject unless I need to, and I do not expect you to offer me the space in a conversation to make replies, or ask questions. What literature there is, is very specific on this point. The patient should be left to his own devices and, contrary to what might be expected, it is in those instances where the patient is, so to speak, lost for words, that the most interesting material is to be found. So, please, when you find yourself coming to the end of a point pause, if you will, but always begin again, and if you are unable to think of anything at all to say, then say nothing much: start a sentence, even if you have no real idea of how to finish it, do not restrict yourself to the topics you imagine I wish to have you elaborate, follow your mind wherever it may lead—your family, your history, those things which interest you, what you had for dinner. You understand me?’

‘I do, doctor, although I can see no earthly purpose for my discussing my meals or matters of private significance only.’

‘Trust me, Schreber, even in this matter, more perhaps than in the prescription of a treatment, or in the rigours of diagnosis, I am still a doctor. I will be able to determine everything from you, if only you allow yourself to become open, or at least so much is the implication of the reading you see piled before me on this desk. We

will try, anyway, and if there is no use to it all, at least no-one will be able to accuse us of overlooking a possible avenue.'

'But doctor, as I say, I am cured.'

'Yes?'

'Yes.'

'Go on...'

'I am...well? I have not felt so well since my discharge from Sonnenstein. There was a blissful period when, my tutelage rescinded, my wife and I returned to my mother's house and there we lived in happiness, both of us delighted to have the company, finally, of each other. It was only when...'

Schreber stopped. It was only when the girl came and his wife became distracted by her that the problems came.

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What is of particular interest in these exchanges, aside from those things absolutely to the point of our requirements, is that Rössler, a man whose influence over the physical instance of Schreber is absolute, is possessed of a soul of very small importance, or lineage. Where my own fathers stretch back aristocratically to the very creation of the Order of the World, to the profligation of entities, and in a very real sense beyond into the chaos (bearing as we do that part of God's intent that determines the spiritual organisation of the Saxonate persons) Rössler's heritage is thin and weak and dominated by almost every other house (except the obviously inferior heretic confederacies, and the Moorish tendencies). There is nothing strictly insurgent in his house, but it has always been of marginal acceptability. It is clear, from this alone, why the Monist tendency was amenable to extending the supportive hand toward the noble Schreber against Rössler's interest, where it had not been with the Flechsig soul, who, as we all know, was, prior to his dissolution, of the highest respectability. If the flow of comprehension had been reversed, even for one day, and the man Schreber had discovered the extent to which he was considered in the Heavenly organisation to be above his own doctor, he could have been spared the fear and uncertainty that he suffered, and which led in no small part to his grovelling and snivelling attitude, and in turn produced some of the more aggressive attempts by souls to rectify the contravention of the Order of the World by conventional means.

However, this is all as nothing. The fact is that the Confederacy *did* become involved, and that God *was* forced to withdraw, and we as souls, regardless of the negative consequences, must come forward and, as much as it removes us from our normal and righteous contemplations, take the responsibility that our power demands of us and act, regardless of the rights and wrongs of the situation.

So we find ourselves searching through the events with a fine toothed comb, hoping to uncover a physical cause that we might correct, or avoid, and bring matter back under control. As much as we might find the material of our observations vulgar, or even disgusting, we should not turn away from it, rather we should look ever closer, and even more we should involve ourselves at a base level, using our superior resources,

picturing and inhabiting the events, and so come to an understanding of the Schreber man and the men around him so that we might feel out the fabric of the existence that, as an everyday principle, we usually choose to ignore. There will be some of you who blanch. I have anticipated this, and this report is for you. I will make the necessary sacrifice, I will immerse myself in the flesh and blood, I will eat where they eat, and breathe where they breathe, and all it will be necessary for you to do is consult this document. I will filter the matter and provide the concepts and notions and events in a form that will be palatable enough for the most tentative soul, and if initially some of the stigma of the flesh adheres to me, I hope it will not be too difficult for you to understand that what I do, I do for you. I make this sacrifice for you, and ask you to put yourself in my place, briefly, and understand that those feelings of revulsion *I share* and so see that rather holding me in a lower standing than I was originally, you must by necessity elevate me higher, despite the prevailing belief that I am someone held responsible for the situation we all find ourselves in. If you have difficulty, then I have failed, but I cannot believe that anyone could understand my point, which is a logical necessity, and come to any other conclusion than that which I have outlined for you.

I have wandered from my point. Rössler's soul is so much my inferior that I would be surprised if his presence was at all missed, and had the profligation carried on without stretching his line then there would be little missing in Heaven. His only claim is negative: he was not part of the Schism, he did not align with the Ormuzdian courts, but then who would willingly take prestige from not having done something only a dog soul would contemplate? Can those who are incapable of action, whether they are nominally aligned to one part or other of God, and who derive their name from a distant accident of creation, and whose fathers and forefathers none of them took the opportunity to bolster their influence—can either flavour of these souls be considered worthy in a sense which separates them from, say, the partial souls embodied in the rays, or that can be called upon to deliver messages, or occupy temporary bodies on Earth? The answer has to be that there cannot be a difference worth considering. Rössler's soul is a dog soul, and the man, despite his accidental elevation of position on Earth, is as much of a dog, and while the situation leads me to consider Schreber himself a dog, it is not a privilege I can extend to other souls, and the constant harping that I am subject too must cease if I am to be able to properly complete my work, the completion of which should itself be sufficient to end any doubts about me.

It is almost as if the odour of the corpses I must overlook is said to attach to me, and that therefore I am suspect. These are thoughts unworthy of Heaven and must cease immediately. Never before have such accusations been made of a soul, and even a situation of this gravity should not be the cause of persecution against me—the endless whispering and dispatching of messengers, the laughing when I am occupied with other tasks, the aligning of groups against me, the establishment of clubs who name against me in their constitutions, the motions passed at meetings, the images graven of me and moulded on gateposts, the mockery of my lineage, even going so far as to deface the records with lewd comments—none of these things have passed my attention, and it all must stop.

I can make no representation to a higher authority in the present situation, but on the

return of that part of God which is currently held in abeyance by the alternate function, there will be reparations forced if the persecution does not end. This much we all know, and no soul should secretly hope for the Moorish ascendancy to last past the scope of my memory, or the power of my vendetta against those who I believe have wronged me. If such is their hope, then they must surely understand that the consequences of passive heretical position are, by law, the analogue of any other treasonable behaviour.

I hope my point is made, and my only sorrow is that the necessity to make it is such a daily obligation, such being the extent of the abuse to which I feel I am subject, not all of which can be attributed to the oversensitivity to criticism that this affair has naturally bought about—such has not been seen since Flechsig's soul was exposed as a magician, and a mystic—and there can be no intelligent soul who would dare suggest that any action of my own is in any way comparable to the abominations against the Order of the World and of Heaven that that soul's Moorish misappropriation of God's energies and intention represented, even if the consequences, still vibrating through the world—let us not forget entirely to be laid at the door of Flechsig—are more difficult to counteract.

The fact that Flechsig was divided and rendered idiot and hence beyond further reproach should not be the cause for the innocent party to receive the approbation that should rightly be reserved for the active party in that innocent person's own persecution. It would be a double crime, an attempt at my murder, followed by an actual murder of my eternal reputation and good standing in Heaven, and while I see that my appointment to make this record is appropriate, this should not be taken, as it has in some quarters, as an acceptance of any guilt on my part, but rather as a kind, or even heroic gesture designed to correct a situation that I am not responsible for.

I should be held in the highest regard and not tarnished by my innocent association with events.

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For forty or so years after Schreber's death, under the influence of Freud's reading of the case, the academic work on Schreber, at least as it is written by the so-called "Anglo-American School,"¹ upheld the authority of Schreber's memoir. Although Freud's contention that Schreber's paranoia was the result of repressed homosexual longing was one that would have no doubt alarmed Schreber, Freud otherwise leaves the voice of the *Denkwürdigkeiten* in position, taking his reading from Schreber's account alone (along with those appendices sanctioned by Schreber for publication), respecting both the memoir's intention—to be a clear description of Schreber's cosmology and illness—and its operation as an analytic source. He pointedly refused to make assumptions based on any other material. He did not bring in Schreber's father as evidence, though material was certainly available to him. Freud did not request additional reports from, or endeavour to meet, Schreber's psychiatrists, all of whom were still alive and presumably available for interview at the time of Freud's writing. Schreber's

¹p.3, Allison, D. B., P. d. Oliviera, et al. (1988). *Psychosis and Sexual Identity: Toward a Post-Analytic View of The Schreber Case*. Albany, State University of New York Press.

memoir and its authority were all that was needed, and under these conditions any other material was not only not required, it could only detract from the analytic process.

In the late fifties and early sixties this assumption was to be tested by developments from within the analytic community and also from other disciplines. The most important development is certainly Jacques Lacan's "On a Question Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis,"¹ in which the self-containment of the memoir is exceeded in favour of an investigation into the role of the paternal metaphor in the register of the symbolic. This reading, with its concentration on linguistic analysis, along with an interest in the contextual literary qualities of the memoir, moved the site of investigation outside of the expressed content of the text. Simultaneously, in 1956, Baumeier, a German psychiatrist, published Schreber's medical notes—documents that Schreber did not require to be included as appendices to his memoir—widening and re-invigorating the analytic study of the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, by offering material outside of the two canonical texts: Freud's and Schreber's. These two developments had the effect, even whilst they were used as evidence for the correctness of Freud's diagnosis, of breaching the methodological stranglehold which had, until that point, kept Schreber studies within a carefully delimited discursive area. By allowing the critical focus to move outside of the relationship between Schreber's text and Freud's, Lacan and Baumeier separately undermined the self-containment of that dyad and after 1956 there is a visible movement away from Freud's analysis into areas that he had not considered relevant.

The most obvious new focus in the Anglo-American School was on the published works of Schreber's father—study of which was first done by Niederland and which was tied in closely with a development of Freud's argument and does not stray very far from it—but there was also a more subtle change in the method by which the *Denkwürdigkeiten* was read and the degree to which material extraneous to it was included in the analytic narratives.

Maurice Katan, writing in 1959, whose earlier work of 1949 on Schreber had been a close reading of the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, illustrating the anxiety Schreber felt over masturbation, after Lacan's reading and the publication of Baumeier's paper turns to complex and elaborate metaphorical readings of Schreber's life, still closely tied into the written text, but now speculating on his relationship to his father's spoken word, and a possible incestuous relationship with his brother—analyses for which there was no evidence whatever, certainly not in the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, and not in the medical records.

From outside the analytic community came another development. In 1960 Canetti published *Crowds and Power*,² in which Schreber is understood as a proto-fascist fantasist whose delusions prefigure the later paranoia of National Socialism. This essay is the first firm movement into what has become called the post-analytic approach to the study of Schreber—characterised by emphasis on the role of Schreber's father, the linguistic foundations of psychosis and sexual identity and the use of the

¹Lacan, J. (1955-1956). On a Question Prior to any Treatment of Psychosis. *Ecrits*. London, W.W. Norton and Company: 445-488.

²Canetti, E. (1973). *Crowds and Power*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Denkwürdigkeiten within fields external to psychoanalysis¹—and while this is certainly its most important contribution to the field, it also marks the point at which post-analytic possibilities are incorporated into the analytic field.

Throughout the sixties, Niederland went on to produce a number of works again reaching outside of the Freud/Schreber axis, regardless of his larger intention of incorporating this material within a Freudian reading. He drew on parallels between the miracled-up tortures described by Schreber and the orthopaedic techniques described in his father's medical handbooks. For the first time Schreber's father's works, particularly those advising on hygiene and child-rearing, are brought into the analysis, along with letters and personal testimony from Schreber's family in the former German Democratic Republic and publications of the *Schreber Verein*, an organisation named after Schreber's father that had tenuous links with his work, but useful collections of Schreber family history. The closed and limited textual realm of Schreber studies, already threatened by the breach in the exclusive authority of Schreber's text, was ruptured by this flood of new material. At this point the data available to critical analysis became too great for any one methodological approach to contain, and in the early seventies, to use a phrase borrowed from Rosalind Krauss, Schreber studies entered an "expanded field,"² in which, possibly for the first time, it became useful to consider using the structurally less restrictive media of the creative arts to address the excess of material.

The first evidence for this is Morton Schatzman's *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family*,³ published in 1973, an academic text which went on to be a bestseller. Later scholars were to cast aspersions on Schatzman's rigour and to question his methods and conclusions—the work is essentially a re-presentation of Niederland's conclusions used against Freud, rather than for him—but the most relevant aspect of *Soul Murder* here is that the failures inherent in Schatzman's slipshod treatment of the material and his tendency to make groundless suppositions create a kind of hybrid of theory and fiction, blending imaginative discursions and academic prose (it is interesting to note that the book was later developed into an off-Broadway play). If we also take into account that it is in this year that Caryl Churchill writes her play *Schreber's Nervous Illness*,⁴ Roberto Calasso writes *L'Impuro Folle*,⁵ and Anthony Burgess was working on his screenplay *Schreber*,⁶ it becomes clear that space had opened up in the field of Schreber studies and that creative forms of writing were occupying it.

This space was to close back down under the influence of a series of critiques of the readings Niederland, Katan and Schatzman had made of Schreber's father's work, exaggerations and mistakes made over the role and function of the *Schreber Verein*, and the increased structural tolerance for multiplicity of argument inherent in certain

¹see p. 6-7 of *Psychosis and Sexual Identity*.

²Krauss, R. (1979). *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*. *October*, Vol. 8. (Spring), pp. 30-44.

³Schatzman, M. (1973). *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family*. London, Allen Lane.

⁴Churchill, C. (1990). *Churchill:Shorts*. London, Nick Hern Books.

⁵Calasso, R. (1974). *L'Impuro Folle*. Milan, Adelphi.

⁶Burgess, A. (c.1974). *Schreber*, (unpublished) The Burgess Collection, The Harry Ransom Research Centre at the University of Texas at Austin.

post-structural methodological approaches to textual material. Han Israëls¹ and Zvi Lothane,² while they disagree over the relative merits of Freud and Schatzman's readings of the Schreber case, outlined in great detail mistakes in interpretation of the new evidence and numerous repetitions of factual errors in the analytic work, effectively closing down the analytic expansion of work on Schreber by undermining many of the assumptions that had led to the movement outside of the reading of the *Denkwürdigkeiten*. It is interesting to note here that in questioning the conclusions made by the analytic community both Israëls and Lothane incorporate extensive new biographical evidence on Schreber, evidence that, even while it is called upon to undermine arguments the authors find difficult to sustain in the pre-existent literature, threatens from another angle to do just as much to expand the field as it does to narrow it. The biographical material they use to correct erroneous analytic interpretations from without also has the effect of destabilising the analyses they seek to preserve, by subjecting the field to an excess of information that Schatzman's analysis and the canonical Freudian analysis are unable to contain.

In 1996 Santner published *My Own Private Germany*, and the work done to shore up the critical debate in favour of the original Freudian domination was further undone, opening up the *Denkwürdigkeiten* to the wider field of enquiry, implicating Schreber's memoir in the developing subjectivity of the modern self and simultaneously once again allowing history and cultural theory to intrude into something that had drifted back into being treated as an isolated frame, an untouched and untouchable product of internal dialogue and delusion, self-reflexive and, by virtue of its schizophrenic skew, impossible to retrieve as evidence of its own productive environment. Again, as if on cue, creative forms of cultural practice step into the breach and begin to take up Schreber. Peter Androsch's opera *Schreber*³ is performed in 1999 and more recently a film has been made.⁴ The authors of both pieces site Santner's work in their publicity.

If one adds to this expansion in the field of Schreber studies an examination of key influences from literature on the structure of the *Denkwürdigkeiten* and also on its content—the suspicion being that the form of Schreber's delusions was dictated as much the operas he attended and the books he read as it was by the voices he heard in his head—we can also begin to call into question the primacy of the memoir, a positioning that, we have seen, is capable of stifling creative work on Schreber. This questioning is strengthened by new work taking place on the anti-psychiatry movement⁵ that offers to put the *Denkwürdigkeiten* into a different context—that of paranoid litigious pamphleteering—further opening up the field to an excess of material that cannot be contained by the Freudian framework and which is now so

¹Israëls, H. (1989). *Schreber: Father and Son*. Madison Connecticut, International Universities Press, Inc.

²Lothane, Z. (1992). *In Defense of Schreber: Soul Murder and Psychiatry*. Hillsdale, New Jersey, The Analytic Press.

³Androsch, P. and F. Kaiser (1997). *Schreber*. Klagenfurt Theatre.

⁴Hobbs, J. (2006). *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. USA, Abject Films.

⁵Beveridge, A. (2005). "Britain's Siberia: Mary Coutts's account of the asylum system." *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians* 35: 175-181. Goldberg, A. (2002). "The Mellage Trial and the Politics of Insane Asylums in Wilhelmine Germany." *The Journal of Modern History* 74: 1-32. Goldberg, A. (2003). "A Reinvented Public: 'Lunatics' Rights' and Bourgeois Populism in the Kaiserreich." *German History* 21(2). Paul E. Mullen (2006). "Vexatious Litigants and Unusually Persistent Complainants and Petitioners: From Querulous Paranoia to Querulous Behaviour." *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 24: 333-349.

disparate that no rigidly structured teleology would be able to cope with it alone.

Because the creative arts in general, and literature in particular, are generically less structurally limited than critical and academic writing, they have at their disposal a much wider range of material and are capable of more fluid readings of this material than the requirement for objective rigour allows to academic discourses. When biographical, historical and anecdotal material overwhelms the critical work on Schreber, that material finds its most appropriate match in literature, which takes the human voice and biography as its core interests, and is consequently better equipped to make sense of contradictory and fragmentary testimony by virtue of its concentration on narrative, through which fractured and dislocated material can be pulled into a more formal—but still flexible—structure and advocate an argument which is judged by the overall consistency of the narrative arc, rather than on the merits of individual pieces of evidence, and where imaginative filling in of gaps is not prohibited by generic conditions, as would be the case in most academic writing.

While one might counter that psychoanalysis as a discipline and psychoanalytic writing as a genre are capable of making imaginative and narratological excursions without exceeding their own boundaries, the conclusions they make are no less arbitrary and contested than any similar arguments that might be made from within a creative form of writing (one only needs to examine the critical response to Katan and Schatzman from within the psychoanalytic community to see how controversial the use of analytic imagination is, even within the field of Schreber studies). For this reason, a novel based on Schreber should be capable of making a valuable contribution to the field of Schreber studies, particularly if it addresses itself to the fragmentary biographical aspects of the case (the letters of Anna Jung describing life in the Schreber household, or Schreber's poetry, for example) and makes any theoretical arguments by virtue of these otherwise excluded elements.

In the post-analytic frame, there are interesting questions thrown up by the key texts and their tendency to drift into literary tropes. Is it possible to read the form and style of some of these accounts, outside of their expressed arguments, as proto-fictional excursions that might influence more avowedly creative writing on Schreber? To what extent did the academic writing on Schreber influence Calasso's *L'Impuro Folle* and how much did that work go on to influence the reading given of the Schreber case by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*?¹ What lessons can be taken from this textual interaction and used in the creation of new writing on Schreber?

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‘What do you think is the significance of the title?’
‘There may be no significance. It is common for the souls to take grandiose titles, the rule even, and I have not noticed any reliable overlay between the name and what might be expected to be meant by it. There are the obvious religious meanings. Perhaps the Confederacy considers the duality of the two opposing forces of God, the

¹Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1984). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London, Athlone Press.

higher and lower to be heretical. I have wondered whether their approach to me was somehow made with the idea of unifying God, enforcing a Monism in that regard, a process in which I can somehow be instrumental. Or perhaps they intend there to be no separation between the physical body and the spiritual soul. Or perhaps still they intend the term to only relate to the nature of the Confederacy, a single unit as opposed to the multiplicity of souls from which they were originally derived. I can only conjecture. They have made no contact with me and all their work has been done without my conscious intervention.'

§

Rössler continues the analysis and Schreber comes to the root of the problem, though neither man is capable of recognising it when they see it.

6

'You loved him then, your father?' Rössler said.
'Don't all sons love their fathers?' Schreber replied.

Rössler sniffed.

'A question that only those who have known a loving family can ask. Next time you are in the garden, look around you. I guarantee that for every two men you see, at least one of them will not have loved his father. I will go further, I will guarantee that at least one of them will have hated his father, and that he will probably have had good reason to. It seems to me that love, when it is turned against a child, can be the most destructive force on a man's health. There is a confusion that is generated when a child is beaten through love that does not lessen with age, and this confusion is at the root of many of the problems I have seen in this place. It is not an orthodox view, at least not in psychiatry, but the evidence is overwhelming, at least as it has been presented to me. But go on.'

'What would you have me say?

'Your brother. He killed himself, I believe, with a rifle?'

'That is a fact.'

'Speak of it, if you would.'

'He shot himself in the head, in the temple.'

'Why?'

Because he was subject to the same curse that Schreber was subject to, that their father was subject to, that Schreber's children were subject to and Sidonie and Klara and Anna, that they should not prosper, or profligate as punishment for the crimes committed by Gotthild and Gottfried and to which his father had added his name, his support, and against whom Flechsig had railed, in knowledge of the original crime, the original soul murder, that he had broached in the third chapter,

and which his own family had suppressed, knowing its truth and wishing to deny it, never seeing or understanding how they cursed themselves, the Schrebers, with their pride, the sin of which God hated the most, that they should attempt to approach His stature. Now Schreber was here again, at the behest of the Monist Confederacy, the enemies of God, and he was to do what no man had ever achieved against the express will of God, in the breach that his own nervousness bought on by the extraordinary punishment of an extraordinary crime, the consequences of which God had not foreseen. The space had opened up so that a man and his soul might be united, and the power that Flechsig had desired, to act against the world with miracles that power and the power of the Confederacy would be his. God had sensed this danger to Him in the being of the line of the Schrebers, and knowing that Gustav, the older son, the source of the worst possible expansion of the line, the most undiluted seed of the Schreber lineage, linked by birth and the profligacy of the souls to the deicidal Gotthilf and Gottfried, had plagued him with visions, as his own father had been plagued when his pride rose, his mind wracked with pain, and the image of that came to Gustav as those images of the Order of the World came to Schreber, and there was no cease in it until he could stand it no longer, and he took the man's way out, severing the body from its life and by doing so prevented at least the Monist solution from finding foothold in his line. When the onus passed then to Schreber, and his children were taken because Schreber could not find it in himself to take his own life, each of those perfect souls were denied life by some unknown process. Yet it seemed as if God would be denied anyway, and that the Confederacy would take precedence over Ahriman and Ormuzd, a mutiny in Heaven unprecedented since the casting out of Satan, and Paul was to be the instrument. On the completion of the act, he would be the saviour because would not God become him? And he God? Under the auspices of the Confederacy, as punishment for God's failure to prevent the crisis in his own realms, the Order of the World establishing itself as the pre-eminent authority, even above God?

§

Schreber and Haeckel.

Corrina Treitel in *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (2004), has documented the extent to which spiritualism, and occultism were an accepted part of Wilhelmine culture, and we can identify an engagement with this popular acceptance of occultism which casts doubt on any reading of Schreber's work as simply expressive of private delusions.¹ Schreber helpfully indicates his influences in this area in a footnote to his *Memoirs*:

I wish to quote some of the works bearing on philosophy or natural science which I had read repeatedly during the ten years before my

¹An excellent account of the extent to which occult material was taken up by the German public can be found in chapter 3 of *A Science for the Soul*. The chapter title "The Occult Public" and its first section "A Mass Movement" give good clues as to the content.

illness, because one will find in many places of this essay allusions to ideas contained in these works. As examples I will quote only Haeckel, the History of Natural Creation; Caspari, Primordial History of Mankind; du Prel, Evolution of the Universe; Maedler, Astronomy; Carus Sterne, Beginning and End; Meyer's journal 'Between Heaven and Hell'; Neumayer, History of the Earth; Rancke, Man; several philosophical essays by Eduard von Hartmann, particularly in the periodical 'The Present,' etc., etc. (Schreber, 2000, p.70)

The first mentioned author is Ernst Haeckel, Professor of Zoology at the University of Jena, and the pre-eminent German evolutionary biologist of his generation. A scientist of (continuing) international reputation, he was responsible for the dissemination of Darwin's ideas in Germany, and for developing Darwin's theories into the social realm "positing a universal theory of development" (Haeckel 1876, pp.1-2). Alongside his scientific work, he established the German Monist League and wrote in areas we would now consider spiritualist and occult—on the soul, the afterlife, and the life of spirits. As Daniel Gasman has pointed out, Haeckel was taken by the dinner table intelligentsia of Wilhelmine Germany as a kind of scientific, social and religious prophet (Gasman 1971, pp.1-30) While Schreber was writing the *Memoirs*, Haeckel's influence spread: '[his] version of social Darwinism became diffused among large segments of the semi-educated masses of the German population. For those who read Haeckel and were convinced, Haeckelian Darwinism assumed the character of a political and religious ideology and faith,' (Gasman 1971, p.15). Gasman goes on to paint a picture a picture of a man whose influence could not be overstated, and who was accorded the status of a secular Christ amongst his followers (Gasman 1971, p.16).

To examine how much the *Memoirs* might owe to Haeckel's work we can take extracts from Haeckel's *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft, Glaubensbekenntniss eines Naturforschers* (1892) (*Monism as Connecting Religion and Science, The Confession of Faith of a Man of Science*) and compare it to Schreber's own writing. It is necessary to stress here that Schreber does not specifically name this text as an influence. However, it was first published in the year before Schreber entered Flechsig's hospital for the first time, and during the period that Schreber was "repeatedly reading" Haeckel's other work. From his medical records we also know that Schreber believed during his final period of treatment at Dösen Asylum that he was in a "colony of the Monist confederacy" and, given that this is one of the few statements he is known to have made from this period, that Monism was of interest to him. He also borrows certain phrases from this text—those relating to the nebular hypothesis of Kant-Laplace, for example.

The text of Haeckel's book is taken from 'an informal address delivered extemporaneously' that he made to the scientific audience of the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the *Naturforschende Gesellschaft des Osterlandes* and we see a number of shared concerns between this and Schreber's text. The central theme, as

we see from the preface, is the attempt to make clear a necessary link between religion and science and to outline the basis of a rational spirituality:

The purpose of this candid confession of monistic faith is twofold. First, it is my desire to give expression to that rational view of the world which is being forced upon us with such logical rigour by the modern advancements in our knowledge of nature as a unity, a view in reality held by almost all unprejudiced and thinking men of science, although but few have the courage (or the need) to declare it openly. Secondly, I would fain establish thereby a bond between religion and science, and thus contribute to the adjustment of the antithesis so needlessly maintained between these, the two highest spheres in which the mind of man can exercise itself; in monism the ethical demands of the soul are satisfied, as well as the logical necessities of the understanding.
(Haeckel 1892, pp.vi-viii)

To anyone familiar with the *Memoirs*, this personalised campaign to reconcile the rational and the spiritual using empiricism, and the call to the understanding of “thinking men of science” is immediately recognisable. In his preface to the *Memoirs*, Schreber writes: “...I believe that expert examination of my body and observation of my personal fate during my lifetime would be of value both for science and the knowledge of religious truths. In the face of such considerations all personal issues must recede,” and the beginning of almost every chapter emphasises the didactic function of the preceding parts of the text (Schreber 2000, p.3).

Haeckel goes on to outline his notion of the “world-soul” (Haeckel 1892, p.16) the centre of a pantheistic understanding of human existence that bears more than a passing resemblance to Schreber’s “Order of the World” and moves into scientific and pseudo-scientific ruminations on the nature of mass, electricity, magnetism and the “vibrations of the cosmic ether” (Haeckel 1892, p.22) all of which, while having no specific corollary in the *Memoirs*, are precisely those types of material on which Schreber’s influences were also known to write.

If this were all that the lecture contained, there would be only a tenuous connection between it and the *Memoirs*, but as Haeckel moves away from the scientific specifics and onto more spiritual matters—those that would have been of particular interest to Schreber and presumably easier for him to understand and remember whilst writing in Sonnenstein—the similarities become much more specific.

First, we come to a key Schreberian concept: the embodiment of the soul in anatomical structures. As Haeckel begins to discuss the centrality of the ‘soul-life,’ he gives us an evolutionary history of the soul:

In the lowest Metazoa, the invertebrate sponges and polyps, there are, just as in plants, no special soul-organs developed, and all the cells of the body participate more or less in the ‘soul-life.’ It is only in the higher animals that the soul-life is found to be localised and

connected with special organs. As a consequence of division of labour, there have here been developed various sense-organs as organs of specific sensibility, muscles as organs of motion and volition, nerve-centres or ganglia as central co-ordinating and regulating organs. In the most highly developed families of the animal kingdom, these last come more and more into the foreground as independent soul-organs. In correspondence with the extraordinarily complicated structure of their central nervous system (the brain with its wonderful complex of ganglion-cells and nerve-fibres), the many-sided activity of such animals attains a wonderful degree of development.
(Haeckel 1892, p.44)

What immediately stands out is the similarity that Haeckel's conception of the physical derivation and operation of the soul shares with Schreber's, both being centred on the nerves and particularly the structure of the nervous system. Both texts also share the same mode of address: the expert summarising their knowledge for the layman in the manner of a lecture, or a book of popular science.

Schreber opens his first chapter proper with:

The human soul is contained in the nerves of the body [...] the total mental life of a human being rests on their excitability by external impressions [...] From the most tender beginnings (as the fruit of the womb—as a child's soul) they develop to a complex system which embraces the most widespread regions of human knowledge (the soul of mature man.) (Schreber 2000, p.19)

Haeckel has, later:

The cosmos as a whole is immortal. It is just as inconceivable that any of the atoms of our brain or of the energies of our spirit should vanish out of the world, as that any other particle of matter or energy could do so. At our death there disappears only the individual form in which the nerve-substance was fashioned, and the personal 'soul' which represented the work performed by this.
(Haeckel 1892, p.51)

And Schreber has:

Should the body lose its vitality then the state of unconsciousness, which we call *death* and which is presaged in sleep, supervenes for the nerves. This, however, does not imply that the soul is really extinguished; rather the impressions received remain attached to the nerves. The soul, as it were, only goes into hibernation as some lower animals do and can be re-awakened to a new life...
(Schreber 2000, pp.54-55)

While Schreber diverges from Haeckel on the fate of the soul, he does so in the same mode of address and using the same conceptual framework, as if his text is intended as a development, or correction, of the ideas contained in Haeckel's.

Haeckel goes on to state that the location of the soul in particular cells and structures is a proven scientific certainty before moving on to discuss how the various forms of human behaviour, particularly the tendency to religion, can be accounted for by Monist theory. What is interesting here is how much of the teleology is shared between the two texts: both Haeckel and Schreber want to make clear that they have a new (and similar) understanding of religion that all thinking men should wish to understand. Haeckel, having undermined the monotheism of the Judaeo-Christian religions for its inability to account for the presence of evil in the order of the world, praises the amphitheistic religions as having a much more rational approach to the problem. While one might pause here and consider how attractive a religious structure that included a rational understanding of evil might be to Schreber (who may have, as Niederland, Schatzman et al. have suggested, struggled with his own suffering at the hands of his monotheistic father) what is most interesting is Haeckel's choice of amphitheistic mythology:

Let it be noted, however, in passing, that the amphitheism which believes in God and devil alike is much more compatible with a rational explanation of the world than pure monotheism. The purest form of this is perhaps the amphitheism of the Zend religion of Persia, which Zoroaster (or Zarathustra, the 'Golden Star') founded two thousand years before Christ. Here Ormuzd, the god of light and goodness, stands everywhere in conflict with Ahriman, the god of darkness and evil.

(Schreber 2000, pp.71-72)

Schreber's cosmology borrows Haeckel's choice specifically:

The posterior realms of God were (and still are) subject to a peculiar division, a lower God (Ariman) and upper God (Ormuzd) being distinguished [...] the lower God (Ariman) seems to have felt attracted to nations of originally brunette race (the Semites) and the upper God to nations of originally blond race (the Aryan peoples). [emphasis in the original] (Schreber 2000, pp.27-30)

Not only do we see the use of the same mode of address in Haeckel as we see in Schreber, the same teleology, and the same scientific foundations, we also see precisely the same religious figures that dominate Schreber's cosmology and, in this, the same rational suppositions when dealing with them.

There seems to be a clear attempt in the *Memoirs* to undercut the notion that the text is a groundless description of delusions, or that it exists solely to explain his behaviour, and to characterise it as an intervention into the history of man's

understanding of the universal mysteries consonant with other such interventions current in the popular intellectual environment. Schreber inserts his own delusions into a pre-existent and, from a legal standpoint, demonstrably *sane* set of discourses, a strategy he continues in working to have the manuscript published by a reputable house, known to publish popular works on similar subjects (rather than having the book published himself).

§

Muller having received a considerable bribe, Schreber finds himself visiting the women's section of the asylum. There he meets the sorceress Lucia and is offered false hope.

8

Her room, in its construction was an exact mirror of his. Indeed, if Schreber had taken a plan to the asylum complex and folded it in half down the middle—along the road which ran up to the administration building—the outline of her room would have overlapped exactly with his. They were identical, even in the slight alcove that seemed to serve no purpose in either room. The door was the same too, constructed from the same wood, banded with iron strips. Schreber waited outside while Muller, tense as a greyhound in a trap, looked up the stairs. He watched for a sign from the woman orderly—Muller's counterpart—and it was several seconds, perhaps a minute, before he signed to Schreber that he should go in. He hesitated and, seeing it, Muller urged him on with flick of his wrist. Schreber put the key in the lock and turned it.

The door swung open.

Unlike his room, hers was decorated. The walls were draped with an oxblood linen phoenix damask, spotted where the damp had come through from the walls, heavy and musty, on which had been hung portraits in flaking gold frames. There was a chair and a table on one side of the room and an iron bed on the other. She was on the bed. Schreber could see her breathing, turned away from him, covered with a patchwork quilt. On the table there were piles of paper and in the middle of them, dwarfed, a blown glass pen and a bottle of ink. Clothes draped over the back of her chair.

There was a noise behind the door. In opening, the door blocked his view down to where Muller stood. Footsteps, and then the door, pushing on his back, forcing him into the room.

Schreber stood in silence, watching the bed.

There was another smell beneath the damp and the paraffin from her lamp. Of incense.

He was reluctant to wake her. He watched the rise and fall of her outline under the quilt and listened to her breathing.

There were books on the table: two, laid open side by side with paper and the

glass pen beside them. He stepped forward, silently, to take a closer look. The lamp was wicked low and it was not until he was over the table that he could make much out. The first book was a professionally published manuscript bound in leather, while the second was sewn by hand from coarse paper. The words were identical on both pages, except that the second stopped in mid sentence two thirds of the way through. Though the hand in the second was clearly done in pen, it mimicked almost perfectly the typeset of the first, down to the serifs, and the layout, and the numbering of the pages. Schreber had to lean closer and closer to make out any imperfection in the copying—perhaps the occasional blurring of a stroke, caused by the coarseness of the pulp in the paper of the copy. Here and there were places where the paper had failed to absorb the ink, a piece of wood having been left unfiltered in the stock, and here she had scratched the line of the letter with the sharp nib of an unlinked pen.

He read the words but did not understand them.

‘Do you like books?’

Her hand was on his shoulder, her long fingers, stained around the nails, pressing into his jacket. Her breath was on the skin behind his ear. The closeness of her voice—the way she whispered—it made his jaw clench.

‘I should introduce myself...’ Schreber said, and he tried to turn. She went with him, so that she was still behind.

‘Do you write, old man?’

She put her other hand on his shoulder.

Schreber turned more quickly, but, regardless of which way he went she stayed behind him. She stepped closer. Schreber tried to move away.

‘I have written, certainly. You sent for me? In your note you made mention of a solution. A solution to what?’ Schreber stepped forward and put the woman’s chair between them. She turned away when he looked at her. She was very beautiful, except that she had a squint, one eye looking constantly off into the distance, while the other flicked around, apparently attempting to make up for the idleness of its companion. She put on a loose silk cap and slanted it so that her eye was covered and she came forward again.

‘My father was a writer. A great writer. I am a writer too. I write what he wrote. This, I think, makes me a great writer, too. Doesn’t it?’

As she came nearer Schreber backed away.

‘Do not touch my desk!’

In a flash she was behind him again, but this time she paid him no attention. She bent over her desk with her hands hovering over the books—they moved as if she was rearranging everything, but her fingertips were always a few inches from the objects themselves.

‘Would you like to see my writing, old man?’

‘I am Herr Schreber.’

‘I know who you are. Would you like to see my writing, old man?’

What was her purpose. She had nothing to offer. Schreber moved over to the door.

‘Would you like to see my writing? I have it here.’

She indicated the desk with a graceful swing of her arm and smiled. She was young, perhaps not even twenty.

‘Fraulein, if there is nothing you have to say to me...’

‘Don’t go. I know how to save you.’

Schreber turned and went to leave.

‘God may be fooled into thinking that you are a woman.’

Schreber stopped.

‘The parasite... even when it is black, can produce the white excreta. I can make it wither. Look at me.’

He did as he was told.

‘What do you see?’

Rössler was the same. What do you see? *Excite yourself sexually.*

‘*If only the cursed cries of help would stop?*’ Lucia smiled. ‘You are not the only one who hears it. *If only I had not put you among the fleeting-improvised-men?* All the nerve speech. We all hear it. All of us.’

‘I don’t understand...’

‘Would you like to see my writing? I have it here.’

She held out her hand and Schreber took it. She pulled him gently toward the table and when he was close enough she ran her hand over the back of his head and directed his vision, very gently, toward the page.

‘Words have power,’ she said, ‘not what they mean, that’s not it. It’s in their shape, in their line, their shapes as they rest on the page. It’s in the hand and in how they are written. Even the worst writing has it. Does this make sense to you old man?’

‘My name is Daniel Paul Schreber.’

‘Does this make sense to you? Do you feel it too? When you look at it, from a distance? When you are lying in your bed, undressed, just before you sleep? When you can see the pile of papers on the desk where you left it and you sit up in the before you snuff out the light? Though you can’t see the words, can you feel them there? Can you sense their power? Can you see it, leaking up into the air from the page?’

Schreber stepped away and she let him go. He followed the curve of the girl’s neck, a shallow ‘j’ and from where the jaw joined it, he traced the outline of her face until he reached the crown of her head. There was nothing. No thread, white or black.

‘You say nothing?’

No ray, no nerve.

‘You are a clever man, though? They said you were a judge. They said you were a writer. You can’t have missed it, can you?’

The leading idea is missing.

‘I will show you. The shape and colour and the way they interweave with the letters and the meanings—this is what I use for my work. I write about losing. Have you lost?’

When was the reign of Gustav Adolf?

‘I see it written in your face. In the way you hold your hands. They are empty where they wish to be full. You hold them as if something is about to be delivered. Or

has recently been taken away. It's as clear as if you were holding up a sign.'

She took the pages from her desk and placed them on the bed, face down so that Schreber could see nothing except, perhaps faintly, the traces of ink, reversed on the backs of the page—nothing he could read.

'I have one wish, Fraulein, and that is that I should return home before the end. Can you help me?'

'Do not forget that you are bound to the soul-conception.'

'You can help me?'

'Your parasite, the breach—I can fix it all. But you must do something for me?'

Schreber looked away.

'I am not in a position to do anything.'

She laughed.

'Lock the door. They will not return until the morning. They are in the guard's quarters, fucking. He goes and does what he pleases. He goes into the maid as he pleases. I give him money and he brings you here. What does he take from you? Spite? His brother was hanged. Did he tell you that? He hates you. He spits in your porridge. And worse. That is the way things are, below. Will you look at my work?'

She sat and patted the bed by her side. Schreber sat and in front of him she placed a single page of roughly cut paper.

'Paper is like the landscape where something happens: a hillside, snow, a forest, a battleground. It has an effect. To say that it is only there to show the ink is wrong. The paper is like the land and changes what is written on it. When the nib touches the paper for the first time, it is the most difficult thing to take my pen round a single letter. I have to learn the paper as I work and I only start to understand it when the first word is finished and it doesn't stop there. The paper comes to life as I work. Do you understand?'

Before he could answer she took another page, this one written on and she put her stained finger tip at the beginning of the first word, hovering over the page so that she did not touch it and she traced it in its entirety, speaking it silently on her lips.

'You see the curve of the "a"? Lower case because this is the middle of a sentence. The sentence is in the middle of a paragraph and the paragraph is in the middle chapter of the book—so, I make the semicircle more perfect than it should be, because it is in the middle, and I press the nib harder than I sometimes do, so that it bites the page. I want to show how important the letter is in the fabric of the writing. The rising shaft of the 'a'—the thickness of the line—do you see how it is not quite even? The paper. An accident, but a good one. It clashes with the curve, makes it look fuller. Pregnant. When my father wrote this scene he wanted it to be the pivot, that was what he said, 'the central moment' where the threads and the metaphors he uses come together. He wanted it to hint at the events to come. So, on this page, you can see many of the vowels on the page are very round, the vowels being the internal life of the book, what it says, and the consonants being more active, more superficial and obvious, the vowels contained and expressed by them. Do you see? How much is written in a single letter! And all because the paper was uneven.'

She waited for him to say something.

‘You use red ink?’

‘This page is fresh. The ink gets darker. Brown, eventually, and then black. I don’t usually let people see my pages so soon. The next word, four letters this time, and each letter is altered a little from the normal, the first is wider, the third narrower, taller in the second and shorter in the fourth. That way, each letter gets the same space, to be fair and to fit the meaning of the word and the things it does in the sentence. It sticks things together. The ink is even and I keep the pressure constant. The next word is the fifth in the sentence, an adjective. It alters the mood, pinching something inside the eye, giving a shock. At first it looks as if I have written it that way, it looks like my hand has wobbled and I’ve put down the nib with too much ink on it. Do you see, the way it wells up and rises off the page? Here, if I hold the page at an angle you can see it. A hemisphere... do you see? It looks as if I lost control of the pen, but only to begin with. Faith, I hope, is restored by the end of the stroke. Or I hint at it. I allow the letters to join up. Usually I write them apart, but not here. Here I let them flow together. At the end of the second letter, there is another hemisphere, matching the first perfectly, even under the eye glass, do you see? Do not let the glass touch the page! It might be wet. The ink is not quite congealed. When we are finished we will attend to your business and I will put this page on the window sill. The breeze that comes through the cracks in the glass will harden the ink and then, if you wish, I will let you run your fingertip over them and you will feel what you can only now see, the perfect smoothness of them and their glassiness and, if you have—let me see... yes, delicate fingertips—you will understand what I mean.’

She held Schreber’s hand and looked into his eyes.

‘I am forgetting myself. The word is half finished. So, you see that first the letters presume to agree with the use of the word and then, so that the reader understands control has not been lost, the effect is reduced and faith is returned and by that point it is possible for me to do what you see next, to overturn everything, do you see it? You must see it!’

Schreber looked at the word and there was nothing in it that meant anything to him beyond that which a child might understand from reading the dictionary.

‘The substitution? The near substitution? The pulling down of the curve of the centre letter, transforming it? The effect is so obvious, so daring, that it can only be used once the ground has been prepared for it, the relationship of trust established from its first having been put in jeopardy. Do you see? This is what I have done.’

‘What you have done is very beautiful.’

Her face fell and the room darkened. She took her pages and returned them to her desk. When she returned to the bed she was

‘It is more than that. I have created something entirely new. What is a word, after all, but a replica of another word, heard or seen before, pulled down from the shelf and eaten, like a pie, or a piece of bread. With no effort gone into its making, it is just taken from the stove and laid out on the plate to be read and eaten and for my father to assume any different, is ridiculous, to lord it about the house, why? Because he can put one word in front of another? Put a pie down with a piece of bread on a plate and call it wonderful. Genius? If he was a cook, perhaps, but he is not. To eat something,

no matter how complicated, is not to create. Not as I create. And he is a great writer and I am what? Locked up in a hole servicing all comers so that I can at least work. And he talks of sacrifice? He knows nothing. It is time. Undress.'

Schreber did not move.

She let her gown fall to the ground.

'What are you waiting for? Do you not want to be released? You think that I am not willing to do this? You feel embarrassment? Ridiculous. This will be an exchange, nothing more. You have something I need and to get it I will give you my body. I have no attachment to it. You, on the other hand, like all men—like him—you have a fetish for the flesh, for my flesh, even him, the great intellect. You are pathetic all of you. You think it embarrasses me, to stand here undressed? You think I have an investment in this skin. It is nothing. It allows me to work, that is its function. Take it. I insist. No? Perhaps I have misread you? You wish to be taken then? It is all the same. You wish to play the woman's part and I the man's. It is all the same.

She came over to him, flowing more than walking, emerging from the shadow an inch at a time her eyes wide.

'You would have me be the father. Is that it? Come my child,' she said and wrapped her hands behind his neck.

'Please. I want nothing of this.'

'You do not wish to be released? Do you think God is fooled when you try to be a woman? Soul voluptuousness? Your wife's dresses? You are laughed at. Do you know that they mock you? In Heaven. On earth. You are a laughing stock.'

'I want only to return to my wife.'

Lucia drew him closer.

'Then submit to me. Then God will see you for real, without the need for disguise. The parasite will understand it has made a mistake. It will shrivel and die—they cannot thrive on women. The nerve connection will be undone.'

'Where is your thread?'

She put her lips so that they were almost touching his.

'My flesh is nothing. These breasts might as well be hard and flat. Yours might as well be round. That is the way it is now. Do you believe me? Could you believe anything else now the candle is blown out and this thing between your legs, it is nothing and my hand it feels inside you. Are you not a woman, old man?'

'Please!'

'You see, it is easier than you thought. It is perfectly easy. And now you have your wish, do you not? To submit to me.'

'What do you want from me?'

'That comes next. There is no need to disrupt the order, all will come in good time. You feel that hardening? That is me and that softness? The wetness? That is you. It is all the same. You have no choice but to succumb to me, to my desire. Can you feel me becoming stiffer? You should understand, my girl, that your existence, your body is nothing but an adjunct of my desire. You exist only for me. That realisation thrills you, doesn't it? It pricks against your insides, burns there, you can feel it. My pleasure moves you. Can you hear it, child? Can you hear your womb singing out to

me? As I push myself inside you, can you hear it? I can feel that you can. That is the slave's song. It is the love song of debasement.'

She bit him hard on the cheek. He pulled away but she was stronger, so much younger and unbowed by this place where he was withering. She held him even closer so that he was not sure which part of himself was her and which was him and who was where and she bit him again and pushed so that she was hard inside him. He felt everything that she had told him he would, and now it lived a life of its own, inside his body and though the higher part of him was outraged, mortified to the heart of his masculine pride, this was only fuel to the fire that he felt in his belly, in his bowel, wherever that place was that women gave themselves over to, and that heat rose up to his face so that his skin flushed, across his chest too, his breasts swelling and heaving like a hyperborean girl taken on the snow. He struggled, but there was no escape and she held him like a snake does, wrapping herself around his limbs and preventing his movement, barely restraining from suffocating him. His futile efforts were like water splashed on hot metal, having no effect other than to add sound and splatter and steam and when his struggling ceased in its place came a higher pitch of pleasure, piqued by the knowledge that he had tried, but that he was trapped in spite of it all. She was harder and harder inside him and she bit, deeper and deeper and there was a moment when her teeth punctured his skin, it giving suddenly and she went hard up inside him and the pain was like pleasure to him, and he was like a girl, taken for the pleasure of someone she hardly knows, against her will, and it ground inside him until he could hardly bear it and he whispered.

'God save me!'

And she replied in a quieter whisper still,

'You are in God's house, my son,' and with that he was overtaken entirely with pleasure.

When he recovered himself he was alone, on her bed, and she was at her desk, her back arched away from him her face inches from the writing surface, pen in hand, fingers bent like a crab's legs, pressing down on the page in front of her, the other hand dipping her pen into an inkwell filled with black ink.

'It is your excreta.'

'What is?'

'I usually take blood, but this is much better.'

'Am I cured?'

'There is no cure for you. It has gone too far.'

§

Schreber and Mutze

Prior to 1902, Schreber made a preliminary agreement with Nauhardt Verlag, a publishing house with over three centuries of experience, previously in the hands of the Fleischer family, and with a history of publishing scientific and technical texts.

For reasons that are not recorded, this preliminary arrangement never resulted in the *Memoirs*' publication and instead it was published by Oswald Mutze Verlag. Zvi Lothane, without giving sources, suggests that Nauhardt offered to publish the book on commission and that Mutze bought the book and published it at their own expense, along with advertising it (Lothane 1992, p.318), but he offers no evidence for why he chooses to contradict Israel's earlier assertion that the book was published at Schreber's own expense. As the publishing contract for the book has not as yet surfaced, it is impossible to be sure either way, but it is clear that Schreber wanted the legitimacy that publication by an established house brings to a text.

Mutze was a popular commercial publisher serving an established market since the mid-nineteenth century, publishing more of the uncomfortable mix of science, spiritualism and proto-fascism that we see in Haeckel and Schreber, and continued to do so up until the dissolution of the publisher under the Nazi regime. Later works like Gustave Geley's *Die sog. supranormale Physiologie und die Phänomene der Ideoplastie. In deutscher Übersetzung von Dr. Freiherrn von Schrenck-Notzing. Mit 10 Materialisationsphotographien aus dem Laboratorium des Dr. Geley*, (1920) (*So-called Super-natural Physiology and the Phenomenon of Ideoplasty. In German Translation of Dr Freiherrn von Schrenck-Notzing. With 10 Materialisation Photographs from the Laboratory of Dr Geley*) and William Danmar's *Geist-Erkenntnis, empirisch-wissenschaftliche Erklärung der Geisterwelt*, (1925) (*Spirit-Knowledge, Empirically Scientific Explanation of the After-Life*) suggest the extent to which this history of scientific and pseudo-scientific investigation into spiritual life was present in Wilhelmine culture and later.

At the time Schreber was reading Haeckel, Mutze published Carl du Prel's (who Schreber mentions in his footnote) *Hartmann contra Aksakow* (1886) (*Hartmann versus Aksakow*), a comparison between Eduard von Hartmann's ideas and those of Alexander N. Aksakof, the founder of Russian spiritualism and translator of Emanuel Swedenborg. In *Founders of Modern Psychology* (1912) by Granville Stanley Hall, Professor of Psychology and Pedagogy and President Of Clark University, Hartmann (another of Schreber's stated influences) is cited as one of the six foundational thinkers in the field. The book is a collection of lectures given by Hall at Columbia University in New York, and is informed by extended periods spent in Germany over his career, where he also "attended full courses each in chemistry by Kolbe, biology by Leuekhardt, physiology by Du Bois-Reymond at Berlin, and Ludwig at Leipzig, anatomy by His, neurology by Flechsig..." (Hall 1912, p.vii). Flechsig was Schreber's original psychiatrist and the fantasised originator of his psychotic persecution, to whom the *Memoirs* is addressed in a prefatory letter. Du Prel, Hartmann and Haeckel are spoken of with reverence side-by-side in this textbook of psychology, published only a year after Schreber's death. The proximity of the authority that Schreber called into question (Flechsig) and the means he used to defend himself against it (Hartmann, Du Prel, et al.) is typical of the interactions we notice between Schreber's text and the wider cultural field.

Aleksander Aksakof, against whom Hartmann was rhetorically pitted by Du Prel, was also published by Mutze, (Aksakof 1880) and the subject of his translations–

Swedenborg—was an influence on Kant. Along with editing editions of Kant's lectures on psychology and metaphysics, Du Prel wrote on occultism and also Monism (in *Die monistische Seelenlehre. Ein Beitrag zur Lösung des Menschenrätsels* (1888) (*The Monistic Soul Teaching. A Contribution to the Solution of the Human Riddle*), for example) and, again in that characteristic mode in which both Schreber and Haeckel wrote, mystic Darwinist astronomy (*Der Kampf ums Dasein am Himmel. Die Darwin'sche Formel nachgewiesen in der Mechanik der Sternennel* (1874) (*The Struggle for Existence in the Sky. The Darwinian formula demonstrated in the Mechanics of Astronomy*)—another non-pathological precedent for seemingly hallucinated episodes of the *Memoirs* (the *tying-to-celestial-bodies*, for example).

Du Prel, at the time Schreber was writing the *Memoirs*, was editing a new edition of Kant's *Träume eines Geistersehers* (1766) (*Dreams of a Spirit Seer*) 'Geisterseher' was a title Schreber claimed was given to him in the soul-language (Schreber 2000, p.81) and it is worth noting the very close similarity one finds between the style and content of parts of *Träume eines Geistersehers* and that of the *Memoirs*.

Kant, like Schreber, deals with the spiritual causes of mental illness, as we can see in the following:

It will further be admitted that the power to thus develop the impressions of the spirit-world into the clear perception of this world can hardly be of any use, because in such a process the spiritual sensation becomes necessarily so closely interwoven with the fancies of the imagination that it cannot be possible to distinguish the truth from the gross surrounding delusions. Such a state would likewise indicate a disease, because it presupposes an altered balance of the nerves, which are put into unnatural motion merely by the activity of purely spiritual sensations of the soul. Finally, it would not be at all strange to find the spirit-seer to be at the same time a dreamer, at least in regard to the mental pictures which he makes of his visions; because ideas, unknown to him by their very nature and incompatible with those of his bodily state, crowd in and drag into external sensation badly adjusted pictures, creating thereby wild chimeras and curiously distorted figures, which float in trailing garments before the senses, deceiving them in spite of the fact that such chimeras may be based upon a true spiritual influence.

(Kant 1900, po.56-7)

This extract is taken from the unreliable 1900 Goerwitz translation for Macmillan, but the key German terms—impressions, sensations, unnatural motion—are used by both Kant and Schreber, again forcing us to draw two conclusions: firstly, that Schreber was using these terms into a context in which they would have been familiar and; secondly, in which they would not have been dismissed as uniquely pathological, despite their spiritual content, and would rather have invoked comparison with

established intellectual orthodoxy.¹

Mutze also had a role in the history of psychoanalysis. It was the publisher of Carl Jung's doctoral thesis, *Zur Psychologie und Pathologie sogenannter occulter Phänomene. Eine psychiatrische Studie* (1902) (*On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena. A Psychiatric Study*) and E.J.B. Stumpf's *Der Traum und seine Deutung nebst erklärten Traumbespielen* (1899) (*The Dream and its Interpretation, with Dream Examples Explained*) one of the books used by Freud for his *Traumdeutung*. Where psychoanalysis later developed into a discipline obliged to defend its legitimacy against discredited occultist literature, at the point at which Schreber was writing this distancing was neither practically demonstrable, nor rhetorically enforced, and Schreber could well have expected his experience of mental illness and the spirit world to be taken as legitimately valuable research. Indeed, the press adverts which accompanied Mutze's release of the *Memoirs* stress its possible interest to "theologians, philosophers, physicians, jurists, particularly psychiatrists, and in general all educated persons interested in questions related to the hereafter"[emphasis in the original] (Lothane 1992, p.317).

Schreber inserts his memoir into the field Mutze published in, and the popular intellectual culture that, as a man imprisoned against his will in an asylum, he found himself reluctantly excluded from. To have his work published at all was to risk embarrassing his family and bringing shame on the Schreber name (indeed, members of the family attempted unsuccessfully to buy up and destroy the entire print run) so it could not have been something that was done lightly. If it was necessary at all, it was necessary because it validated and legitimised the claims in it by association with pre-existing legitimate and sane writing of a similar type, allowing Schreber to argue, as he did repeatedly to the medical authorities, that he could not be considered legally incompetent by virtue of his beliefs alone, given that they were not unique and could not be demonstrated to be false. In publishing them into this complex field, Schreber was undermining any argument that he was mistaken in taking his own experiences seriously because he was in the company of people who could not similarly be mistaken. If Kant could believe in spirit sensations, why couldn't Schreber?

§

Schreber was visited by a devil, red faced and smelling strongly of sulphur. If Schreber had meant to question his wits he could have wondered how it was that he saw this fiend in the complete darkness of his cell, but there is a time in the dead of night when even a sane man is unlikely question the evidence of his own gullible senses, and Schreber was far from well, being so long out of the sunlight.

This devil said nothing. It stood still in the corner of the room and it looked but said nothing. Schreber watched it, and it watched him, and understanding passed

¹Like Kant, Schreber uses the word "Bewungen" [motion], with which he specifies the effect of the external influence of the rays in feminising his nerves (Schreber 2003, p.94) and later "Umgebungsbewungen" to describe an aggressive tactic of the rays (Schreber 2003, p.140). He uses "Augeneindrücke" to specify visual impressions, visions and "picturing" (Schreber 2003, p.115, p.140, p.153). The key Schreber term "Wollustempfindung"—the sensation of soul-voluptuousness—is close to Kant's "die geistige Empfindung": soul or spirit sensation.

between the two—Schreber knew it—but what matters it was relating to were a mystery to the old man. He could feel the constituent parts of comprehension operating in the room, even though the red-faced man did not move, or so much as twitch or snarl, but he could sense the transmission of information and that information had a particular quality, a vibration, a pitch that was the equivalent to a form. Schreber knew himself to be at a disadvantage, knew that the devil understood what he was hearing or feeling, he was communicating his desires and requirements directly into Schreber through the medium of his nerves, bypassing completely his rational mind and though neither of them moved, nor even breathed.

Every second that fiend stayed in the room there was a leaching of will out from Schreber to him, and in its place were applied the wills and desires of someone else—a dead soul, gleaned from the blackened nerves this devil would naturally come into contact with, the parts of the soul that were stripped in the process of purification—and Schreber saw at once, without a word or a gesture passing between them, that a plan was afoot to supplant Schreber's soul with another, more pliable entity: an evil man, and by transmitting it through his nerves Schreber would become accountable for the desires of this reprobate, this degenerate whose filth and perversions Schreber could feel inching into the fabric of his being as slow as the progress of lichen on a rock, but also as steady.

When he tried to move, to address himself to the devil, his own progress through the air was infinitely slow, as if the medium through which he travelled was very near solid, and all the time the nude white purity of his nerves was turned to black. This devil regarded him without expression, a proxy for another entity, for God, and in the back of his mind, at that exact spot where the thread was pulled, Schreber felt the taint of another man's desire, smelt it, like tar, and saw in his mind's eye the vile images of this creature's debased lusts playing out as if the source of them was his own person, that will which he had worked hard to keep chaste, and now there was no other course but to allow those desires free reign.

The devil, seeing his success, moved. It took a step toward Schreber's painting, sliding forward as if on skates, and Schreber could see as it moved closer that the thing's eyes were rolled back as if in an ecstatic trance—such as that entered into by the equatorial mystics—and on its lips were muttered silent words, and it took another step and Schreber shrank away from it, his hands moving protectively up to his throat, but at the last moment it turned away and addressed the painting, seeming to see it despite its blindness, and it raised its hand and stretched out the fingers and reached for the surface of the canvas. Schreber thought to read on its lips a command, spoken into it from Heaven, that the devil destroy his painting, his communiqué, the umbilicus that nourished him with hope, and he bit his lip and got to his feet.

'Stop!' he demanded, but the devil paid no attention, not even flinching at the sound, or turning its impotent gaze from the painting, so he reached for it, tentatively, as if the red skin might burn his fingertips, chiding himself for his cowardice. It was only when the Devil lurched forward, biting at the image, that Schreber found he could touch it and he gripped it by the ears and pulled it hard back. The creature came easily, lightly, and the flesh beneath his fingers was brittle as fine porcelain

slaked with bone so that when he pulled it cracked beneath his fingers, and though the devil thrashed at the canvas, Schreber, despite his weakness, was more than a match for the thing. Indeed, the discrepancy in their relative strengths was so great that when it came to crushing the devil Schreber stayed his hand though he could have done it as easily as a man might crush a baby rat beneath the heel of his boot. He felt revulsion in equal measure with a certain queasy giddiness, and though the thing was evil and Heaven sent, and deserving of whatever punishment a man was capable of, to see it rolling and thrashing to no effect, held down now by a single hand—and that with little strain—Schreber could not end the matter, no more than he had ever been able to do, and to his mind came the time when he had cracked an egg only to find an unborn chick within it, huge eyes, pale-skinned and streaked with black-blue feathers, glistening on the plate before him, turning his stomach with that same smell that filled the cell now, half fowl, half decay, and though the maid had no trouble sweeping the corpse off to the kitchens he could never have disturbed it, it being both too delicate and too nauseating to lay hands on. He let the devil go, expecting the thing to run to the other side of the cell, but instead it slumped to the floor like a broken kite, or a popped balloon, and Schreber realised he had killed it, snapped its neck, and before his eyes it decayed away to dust.

§

Then another devil came, this time dappled blue like ink and water mixed in a bowl on the surface of which white paper is lain, and Schreber got up immediately this time, fearful to see it and forgetting his previous repulsion. Schreber reached for its throat, but with a gesture it repelled him, not so much as touching him, merely indicating a spot where Schreber should take himself, and Schreber finding himself obeying.

‘You killed my brother, but his work was done. You will find yourself a more willing tool than you might at first believe.’

‘The nerves?’

‘Exactly. The black nerves—the man who blackened them has long joined God, but those nerves serve us still, obeying like a dog, and you will obey too, won’t you, Little Bitch?’

‘You will not speak to me in this way. I am a judge...’

‘Were. And besides, little bitches such as you require no deference from Heaven. You think God cares for your titles? He does not. All He requires is that you submit to Him with your arse in the air like the dog you are. You are required to be on heat. Do you understand what I mean by this?’

‘You must not...’

‘In oestrus. Receptive. Raise your hind quarters up and wait for God to come to you.’

‘I will not,’ Schreber cried, but he found that he would, and that he had, and now he was on his hands and knees, his arse in the air and the blue devil bent down beside him with its hands on its knees, looking like a demonic child, smiling.

‘You see that you are a good girl? Obedient. And for that you will receive a treat.’
And the devil passed him a cube of sugar.

‘I cannot eat,’ Schreber said as the sugar crumbled between his teeth. Sweetened spittle seeped up, against the flow of gravity, to the back of his throat and he pressed his face against the mattress and screwed shut his eyes and the Blue Devil stroked the back of his head as the master attends to his pet.

‘I will have the painting now.’

Schreber swallowed the last of the sugar, but there was a change somewhere. The devil’s voice seemed less assured, less solid even, more phantasmal, and when Schreber turned to look it was more mottled, the blue strengthening in places but weakening to white in others and it wore an expression too assured, defensive, fear showing in an overplaying of its hand and it moved toward the painting, but as it did it dragged a leg and Schreber knew that it could not take the painting, not without his permission.

‘No,’ Schreber told it.

‘Raise your arse, as you have been told!’ the devil said, and Schreber did, but now he was sure that this thing’s power was not absolute, and when it drew near to the painting and said again, I will have the painting now, this time its voice became tremulous and wavered, creaking like a boy’s voice does, when he is coming into manhood, like the bow drawn across a cello’s strings too roughly, uncontrolled, speaking the thing’s lack of assurance. Schreber shook his head and the devil took another tack, smiling now, indicating with a gesture that Schreber might take a more dignified posture and it said to him:

‘We are reasonable, you and I. Despite your low circumstances I know you to be a man of sense and decency. You may be presented an argument and see the merit of it. Is this a fair assumption?’

Schreber said and did nothing but on his lips a suspicion of a smile grew. The devil went on.

‘God is not a person with whom to trifle. Though I say it and shouldn’t, His ways are, how to put it... not mysterious, that is a misrepresentation... let’s say instead that His first concern is not the comfort or wellbeing of man. He has higher concerns, and while it might seem to a man, such as yourself, that God is ignorant of your suffering, this is not the case at all. Quite the opposite, for in His infinite comprehension of all things, you in particular, He suffers with you, and His capacity for suffering is magnified. Just as all His attributes are immeasurable greater than those of man, His capability for suffering is more than you can conceive, so that every pang and torture you imagine yourself to suffer, to Him are magnified by the same degree that the length of a man’s finger must be multiplied in order for it to extend to the surface of the sun. A million million times. More. So you see that every miracle performed on you which causes you to whimper in the night, causes Him so much more suffering. And equally His comprehension is so much the greater, and He knows that this suffering is in a just cause, as are all those things ordained by Him and that come to pass in the world, because how else could it be? He is all powerful. You might imagine His ignorance, but it is a fault of your own limited cognisance of the Order of the

World that leads you to misjudge. Who, after all, are you to question Him, He who stands above us all and knows all things? You must, rather, have faith, as you had faith in your father and bow before God and accept your punishment as you bowed before him, knowing that he loved you as God Himself loves you. And to conspire against Him is to commit a crime for which you will be held accountable, and to abet the Monist Confederacy, as they pretentiously name themselves, is to stand with Satan against the righteous rule of God. And so when He asks you to give up this practice, to hand over this painting, then what right have you to refuse, you who knows the value of the law, knowing that it is the lawmaker's wish that you obey?'

'I am nothing,' Schreber replied. 'You do not require my permission. If my actions are against the Order of the World then simply take the painting and return matters to their proper state... you cannot? Then perhaps God is not infallible, not all powerful, and as much is proved by your very presence here, because if this matter was of such importance, and God had it in his power to take the picture, then surely He would have gifted His servant the ability to take it without question, and yet you argue with me and bargain like a common pickpocket caught and tried and decrying his sentence. And like him, you will receive no clemency from me. You may not have the painting, and I will not renege on my vow to the Confederacy, though they might forsake me, because I know that conditions contrary to the Order of the World have been bought to pass, and either your God was the prime mover in the conspiracy that overturned the Order, or He was too ignorant of the consequences of the actions of others, or still further that He was incapable of preventing them. Whatever the case, He is not the person you describe.'

'Are you so sure? I must counsel you against arrogance. A man, even a judge, is capable of miscomprehension. I offer you a means of ending this farce: give up the painting, give up the Confederacy, and give yourself in full measure to the will of God. He will bless you with His precious nerves, and this corrupt and degenerate world, at the hands of which you suffer daily, will be scoured away and you will stand proud as the mother of the new race of men. Is this not your true desire?'

And when Schreber's eye turned in there was something in what this blue thing said, something that kicked inside him, excited him, weighed against all the rest and still there, a little part that edged out and wanted to be taken up, and made fruitful, and to fill his arms, so often left empty, so ready to take a child in them, like little Klara and clutch her to his breast, whatever the consequence, and part that was conditioned by the world to expect now only cold flesh, and closed eyes, and beauty unfulfilled. The blue devil could sense this in him and it became solicitous, doe eyed, and knelt now beside him and said:

'I can give you what you want, you need only show your willingness to be a good subject, to offer what you can to God, freely.'

But now Schreber could not hear, and instead he was somewhere else, listening at the door behind which his wife was confined, listening for the cry of his child, for hours, and hearing only the exhausted sobbing of his wife and the slow sad consolation of the nurse.

Schreber and Kraepelin

We can see from the output of Schreber's publisher, and from the interactions between discourses which we might now immediately assume are irrational and those which we might consider rational, that the *Memoirs* was written into some very complex contexts. Moreover, when read as a body of thought, the Wilhelmine popular intellectual culture is very much more akin to the paranoid and delusional framework of the *Memoirs* than a simple pathologising of that text's content would suggest. Indeed, when we return to Schreber's text with this in mind, we cannot comfortably differentiate between material with a hallucinated origin and material referenced in his literary influences, but where we can find evidence of Schreber's illness in the text we find it implicated in a very specific textual genre, one which Schreber took great pains to distance himself from.

Schreber had access to the 5th edition of Kraepelin's *Lehrbuch der Psychiatrie* (1896) (*Textbook of Psychiatry*) in the compilation of the manuscript of the *Memoirs* and quotes from it on p.82 and in note 42 (and variously in the addenda).¹ He places his own disease in the category "Nervenkrankheiten" under which heading Kraepelin includes physically derived maladies such as peripheral nerve disease, epilepsy, migraine and tetanus. This is consistent with Schreber's understanding of the roots of his illness—as a problem with his nerves. However, consistent with his psychiatrists' diagnoses, a later chapter from Kraepelin suggests that many of the symptoms Schreber suffered were typical of paranoia—in a very different category of illnesses—and also suggests the causes and progression of the illness in a way that would have been suggestive to anyone who was open to the use of that possible diagnosis. Schreber does not mention this chapter; instead he scrupulously ignores it, despite its clear and obvious applicability to his case, preferring to concentrate on refuting minor claims from other parts of the book.

Kraepelin asserts that hallucinations have no basis in fact in a section of the textbook dealing with generic hallucinations not exclusive to paranoia. Against this Schreber writes:

In my opinion science would go very wrong to designate as 'hallucinations' *all* such phenomena that lack objective reality and throw them into the lumber room of things that do not exist; this may possibly be justified in those hallucinations quoted by Kraepelin on page 108 ff., which are *not* connected with supernatural matters [...] It seems psychologically impossible that *I* suffer only from hallucinations. After all, the hallucination of being in communication with God or departed souls can logically only develop in people who bring with them into their morbidly excited state an already secure faith in God and the immortality of the soul. *This, however, was not so in my case, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.* (Schreber 2000, p.83) [emphasis in the original]

¹ "...Kraepelin's TEXTBOOK OF PSYCHIATRY...which had been lent to me (while I was occupied with this manuscript)..."

The section Schreber refers to—“page 108 ff.”—deals with “Sinnestäuschungen: Elementare Trugwahrnehmungen, Wahrnehmungstäuschungen (Hallucination und Illusion), Reperception, Einbildungstäuschungen (Doppeldenken), Auffassungstäuschungen, Reflexhallucinationen, Gesichts-, Gehörs-, Geruchs-, Geschmacks-, Gefühlstäuschungen” (Kraepelin 1899, p.ix) (which is given in the English translation as: “Disturbances of the Process of Perception Hallucinations and illusions, perception phantasms, reperception, double thought, apperceptive illusions, reflex hallucinations, hallucinations and illusions of hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch”) and takes a physical understanding of hallucinations as originating in the body, centring particularly in the disjunction between hallucinations and empirically verifiable stimulate, an area which Schreber felt comfortable challenging directly with the general argument that empirical evidence cannot account for all possible phenomena, that his experiences were of a type that could not be accounted for, and that they were therefore not dismissible as hallucinations (Diefendorf 1912, p.ix).¹ Uncomfortably for Schreber though, the ignored Chapter X on paranoia (the diagnosis he was given by Weber early in his treatment) was not as easy to argue against.² Regardless of the fact that the diagnosis “paranoia” (and its applicability to Schreber’s case) is very much in question in the modern psychiatric community, for Schreber it is extremely unlikely that having closely read the section on hallucinations, he would not have taken the time to read the authoritative opinion on the disease from which he was thought to have been suffering.

The section on paranoia gives symptoms Schreber suffered as examples of typical paranoid delusions:

They are morbidly sensitive, considering that such trifles as harmless jokes, smiles, or accidental nods of the head have special reference to themselves
(Diefendorf 1912, p.424)

This is very reminiscent, for example, of the heightened significance Schreber gives to Flechsig’s expressions:

I also gained the impression that that Professor Flechsig had secret designs against me; this seemed confirmed when I once asked him during a personal visit whether he really honestly believed that I could be cured, and he held out certain hopes, *but could no longer*—at least so it seemed to me—*look me straight in the eye*. [emphasis in the original]
(Schreber 2000, p.53)

¹Allen R. Diefendorf, *Clinical Psychiatry for Students and Physicians abstracted and adapted from the seventh German edition Of Kraepelin’s “Lehrbuch Der Psychiatrie”* (London: Macmillan, 1912), p.ix. To provide the reader with a contemporary translation of Kraepelin, I have used Diefendorf’s 1912 English version of the seventh edition. While Diefendorf “abstracted and adapted” Kraepelin’s text book in his translation, as his title makes clear, the primary alterations he makes to the quoted sections are abridgements and these are less noticeable than in earlier editions where Diefendorf was given limited space to work with (as he explains in the preface to the 1912 edition).

²Paranoia was a contested diagnosis and one that was complicated by a number of other diagnoses—see Lothane 1992, pp.280-8.

In another part of the chapter it is stated that for paranoids that:

...the birds chirp when they are near. The appearance of the sun from under a cloud, casting its rays upon them, indicates that they are under the special guidance of God.

All delusions, both persecutory and expansive, are held with great persistency, and built out into a coherent system, which is an essential characteristic of the disease. [emphasis in the original]

(Diefendorf 1912, pp.426-7)

Schreber was persecuted by twittering birds, had appearances of the sun directed solely at him, and was constantly under the direct influence of God (Schreber 2000, pp.190-6, p.132, p.233). His delusions are perfectly characterised by all of the adjectives used in the last sentence, the persistency, coherence and expansiveness of his persecutory framework being precisely what has caused the *Memoirs* to come under such persistent scrutiny over the last century. The text continues later:

An erotic element often appears in the delusions, which in some cases has been pronounced enough to lead to the recognition of an erotic paranoia. Likewise, the religious colouring is sometimes strong enough to establish a religious paranoia.

(Diefendorf 1912, pp.427-8)

Schreber's delusions, as Freud makes clear, were specifically both erotic and religious in character—to such an extent that even a cursory reading of his case could not fail to recognise the fact. And later:

Hallucinations of hearing are apt to be the most prominent. At first very indefinite noises annoy them. Later they hear their names mentioned, or derisive laughter from a crowd; nick-names are called out, someone curses below the window, and bits of conversation from adjoining rooms excite them. The remarks are more often of a depreciatory nature. Hallucinations of sight are rare, but those of general sensibility are quite frequent, the hair is plucked at night, the skin irritated by poisonous powder, the flesh pierced by bullets, or the countenance transformed by the nightly application of an iron mask.

(Diefendorf 1912, pp.428-9)

Schreber was plagued by the constant nonsensical and insulting chatter of rays, and suffered miracles, especially at night, of various forms of bodily mortification, both internal and external (Schreber 2000, pp.141-151, pp.152-162). On the practical consequences for paranoiacs:

They become unstable in their behaviour and mode of living, are unable

to conduct a successful business, and fail to support their families. In reaction to the delusions they attempt to call public attention to their persecution by writing newspaper articles and issuing pamphlets. (Diefendorf 1912, pp.429-30)

There is a very obvious applicability of these observations to Schreber's illness, and the documented possession of the book from which they are derived; his history of refuting ideas within that book against which he believed he had an argument; the use of one of Kraepelin's physically derived categories of illness as a self-diagnosis; the failure to mention the section of the book within which his doctor's diagnosis of his illness is described, having done so on other sections; and the proliferation of anxious declarations of the objective reality of episodes in the *Memoirs* suggest three things. First, that Schreber had read Kraepelin's section on paranoia; second, that he was not convinced he had the grounds to refute it explicitly; and third, that he was aware that it was vital that the *Memoirs* avoid accusations of it being the product of a paranoid.

It is the last of these suppositions that can be used to inform our understanding of the Schreber's *Memoirs*, because there was a genre of textual production into which the *Memoirs* could potentially have been classified to the detriment of Schreber's attempt to secure his release from his tutelage, and, probably not co-incidentally, Kraepelin's chapter on paranoia dealt with this too.

There are a few cases of paranoia which have been designated by Hitzig as querulant insanity (Querulantenwahn) which deserve a brief description here. The psychosis is of gradual onset, and usually arises as the result of some legal injustice, a defeat in court, an unjust award of damages, loss of property, or an unfair adjustment of claims, in which the patient has been the sufferer. He refuses to settle, carries the case from one court to another, and finally develops an insatiable desire to fight to the bitter end. He reaches a point where he is unable to view the standpoint of any one else with any sense of justice, and his personal belief and desire completely obscure his better judgment. The statutes appear inadequate, and even the fundamental principles of the law fail of comprehension. He sets aside all business in order to carry on the struggle, solicits sympathisers, and denounces those who do not side with him. Hearsay and bits of knowledge gathered at random are cited as evidence in his behalf, and money is squandered in the pursuit of justice to the most extreme limits. He cannot abide by the ultimate decision after all the usual means of justice have been exhausted. Failing to appreciate the needlessness of further struggle, he writes to magistrates, legislators, consuls, ambassadors, and finally to the President or foreign rulers. Answers to these letters only create greater embitterment. His letters are long and carefully written, usually upon a particular kind of paper, and sometimes written with coloured ink.

(Diefendorf 1912, p.433)

Schreber would certainly have been well acquainted with sufferers of this aspect of paranoia through his work as a judge, and would have also been familiar with the body of literature surrounding them—the most blatant symptom of the disease being the publication of self-produced pamphlets defending their positions and denouncing their persecutors. Taking into account that this was precisely how the *Memoirs* might appear (it begins by denouncing his psychiatrist and continues by bemoaning the legal decision to incarcerate him), and given the public notoriety of a number of other litigious pamphleteers, it would have been important for Schreber to avoid being associated with either the disease or those other sufferers, particularly as these men and women had been largely unsuccessful in achieving their legal aims. Schreber, by virtue of his former high judicial position, his mastery of the forms and precedents of the German legal system and, most importantly for an accurate diagnosis of querulous paranoia, his eventual success in the courts at having his tutelage rescinded, cannot be considered a querulous paranoid under the definition Kraepelin gives, but the *Memoirs* could certainly be considered, at least during the stage at which it was being drafted, as a species of querulous paranoid, or vexatiously litigious pamphlet (albeit very lengthy).

As Paul Mullen and Grant Lester point out, the diagnosis of querulous paranoia has almost disappeared from modern psychiatry, in the same way that spiritualism and social Darwinism have almost disappeared from modern academic thought (Mullen and Lester 2006, pp.333-49). While the diagnosis, and the illness itself, might seem bizarre to us now, in Wilhelmine Germany querulous paranoia, and its associated literature, was a prominent and widely discussed phenomenon. What is equally important in the understanding of the contexts of the *Memoirs* is that the grounds on which the majority of these litigants published was on their rights as psychiatric patients, particularly, as in Schreber's case, on involuntary incarceration in lunatic asylums. It should not be forgotten that the full title of Schreber's text is *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken, nebst Nachträgen und einem Anhang über die Frage: 'Unter welchen Voraussetzungen darf eine für geisteskrank erachtete Person gegen ihren erklärten Willen in einer Heilanstalt festgehalten werden?'* (which Lothane translates as *Great Thoughts of a Nervous Patient with Postscripts and an Addendum Concerning the Question: 'Under what Premises Can a Person Considered Insane be Detained in an Asylum Against His Own Will?'*) (Lothane 1992, p.7) which places it thematically directly into an emerging history of similar writing which, at the turn of the century, held widespread popular interest.

The historian Ann Goldberg has done pioneering work in this area, and she cites more than a dozen sittings of the Reichstag dealing with the question of lunatics rights around the time of the writing and publication of the *Memoirs* (Goldberg 2003), and also outlines the extent to which the issue was taken up by the popular press (Goldberg 2002). Importantly, the height of interest in one of the most widely discussed cases, the Mellage trial, was in 1894, the year of Schreber's incarceration in Sonnenstein, and was the beginning of what was later to become the anti-psychiatric

Irrenrechtsreformbewegung (lunatic rights reform movement) keying into a popular anxiety over the enormous expansion in the number of people being treated in German asylums¹ which coincided with the genesis of a popular mass media and the development of asylum pamphleteering and a wider culture of self-published legal defences and exposures of official corruption (Goldberg 2002, p.166).

The *Memoirs* could have been interpreted as a vexatious litigious pamphlet, something that would have undermined Schreber's legal arguments aimed at securing his release. Indeed, to publicly acknowledge the existence of other anti-psychiatric writing, even to denounce it, would have been to put the *Memoirs* into an inescapable bind. The struggle to distance itself from its illegitimacy was, unfortunately for Schreber, a key condition of the vexatiously litigious pamphlet, in that all writers of such texts were obliged to efface any similarities with other similar works and stress the unique truth of their stories against the "muddy tide" of deluded madmen. It is perhaps for this reason that Schreber took such pains to ensure his memoirs had popular intellectual currency in their similarity with Haeckel's work—something the ill-educated and often simply *ill* writers in his field could not replicate. It may also be the reason that Schreber chose first Nauhart and then, when that came to nothing, Mutze, to publish his work despite the embarrassment it would have caused his family—other vexatiously litigious pamphlets were only fit for self-publishing, and then usually anonymously.

Regardless of motives, the *Memoirs* provides evidence that Schreber, understanding that his own legitimacy was compromised by his illness, made borrowings from the messianic popular science of Haeckel, and the mystic spiritualism of the popular intellectual culture to efface his own compromised sanity. He then arranged for (and perhaps even paid for) Mutze, the publisher of the authors of many of the books he 'repeatedly read' and whose authority he called upon in his writing, to publish his own book, hoping to validate his ideas by association and distance himself from the self-published vexatious litigants.

The *Memoirs* is not simply, as has often been suggested, expressive. It is not only the product of an illness, or of a culture, it is also the means by which Schreber argued for his acceptance back into the society he recreated on the page. This was an argument that was ultimately successful because, despite the obvious symptoms of his illness, he was capable of replicating enough of the popular intellectual culture to legitimise his claim to rationality. It was Schreber's exclusion from his home life that the *Memoirs* was meant to correct, and no matter how bizarre and portentous his mixture of science, spiritualism and social Darwinism appears to us now, he was successful in his bid to be released. On his return home from Sonnenstein, Schreber never spoke of the *Memoirs* to his wife or family, and never mentioned his delusions, disavowing them entirely once their purpose was fulfilled.²

¹Between 1877 and 1901, the number of patients in German insane asylums almost tripled, rising from 40,375 to 120,872. In Prussia, between 1880 and 1910, asylum admissions increased 429 percent, while the population as a whole grew at a rate of 48 percent. *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 35 (Berlin, 1914).² (Goldberg 2002, note 42).

²In Schreber's medical notes from Dösen, his sister Anna is reported as saying: "The voices never completely

The failure of Haeckel's social Darwinism and its implication in the development of twentieth-century fascism has undermined our understanding of the extent to which it was considered reasonable in the Wilhelmine intellectual culture. The distancing of modern academic disciplines from the occultism and spiritualism of the same period, and the extent to which these modes of enquiry have been both marginalised and rendered pathological in their own right has caused us to misread them as specifically symptomatic of Schreber's illness where they are more properly located (pathologically or not) in the wider culture. Given the extent to which readings of Schreber's *Memoirs* are invoked in modern scholarship, it becomes necessary to take these contexts (and others which might come to light) into account and adjust our readings, a process which might continue to allow the *Memoirs* to be read as evidence for wider concerns than the (albeit important) state of one man's mind.

§

Schreber jumped. Rössler was in the middle of the cell, checking his pocket watch—tapping the glass and holding it to his ear. He wound the spring, making it click. He coughed.

'Are you awake now?'

Schreber nodded.

'Very good. Come with me, Herr Schreber, if you will.'

'Where are we going?'

Rössler put his watch in his breast pocket and turned away. The door in front of him was locked from the other side and when the doctor reached for the handle he found there was none.

'Of course. Can't have you hanging yourself on the back of the door can we?' He put his hands on his hips and addressed the lock. Under his breath he muttered something and the door sprang open.

Outside, the lamp cast a dim glow on the doors of the corridor.

'Chop, chop, old man! It's almost midnight.'

Schreber found that he was licking his lips. He rose from the floor, his eyes fixed on the exit to the cell. Rössler stood beside the open door and gestured that he should go through. Why shouldn't he? Is it so strange that his doctor should call for him? A man who had previously ordered his patient to jump and stretch by the gazebo? Schreber came forward, his gown gaping at the chest, unattended.

'Down the corridor, please.'

Schreber stalked forward, eyes straining, the fingers of one hand dragging on the wall. There were other cells, as he had assumed. If he stood up straight he could see through the observation holes. Darkness.

'You won't see anything, not without going in.'

disappeared. But he did not speak at all about the illness. When questioned, he said there was a spot at the back of his head where he experienced a constant buzzing noise, as if a thread were pulled. The voices were now only an unintelligible noise. He said nothing about his delusions, did not even mention them once to his wife'(Lothane 1992, p.85, p.477).

‘I don’t want to see anything.’

‘Of course not. Who would?’

Rössler took his watch from his pocket again and rapped it hard on his knee.

‘Damned thing...’

Back down the corridor, the door to his cell was closed again, and the bolt was drawn across.

‘Keep going, Herr Schreber. We don’t have much time.’

Schreber nodded.

On each of the doors there was a rectangle of slate hung from a nail by a piece of string on which instructions were written in chalk: ‘slake with bromides,’ ‘cold bath, no meat, enema,’ ‘tested and returned.’ Schreber turned again, to see what was written on his door, but Rössler was behind him.

‘Your slate says “soul murder”, Herr Schreber.’

‘I don’t understand.’

‘No. That will come later. Now hurry on, past the cells and up the stairs.’

Schreber swallowed and walked on. Where was Muller?

As they passed the last cell there was a loud clattering and a thud on the door and screaming. Rössler put his hand on Schreber’s shoulder and indicated that he should wait. The doctor went over to the observation hole and put his eye to it. The door thudded again, causing the doctor to step back.

‘Would you like to see something interesting?’

Schreber did not nod or shake his head. He made no movement whatsoever, except, perhaps, to shuffle a little back toward his cell. The doctor took this for assent.

‘This man... I’m not sure he deserves the title... this patient, he... it?... spends his life as a dog, a particularly vicious fighting dog. Bares his teeth and growls. He’ll savage you, if you let him. Shall I open the door?’

‘It would not seem sensible.’

‘In case he tried to go for you? You feel fear at least, then? You have the sense to avoid danger?’

‘Of course.’

‘There is no “of course” about it, sir! Still, let’s open the door, shall we?’

Rössler snapped his fingers and the bolts slid across. He turned to watch Schreber over his shoulder, smiled at his frown, and pushed his glasses up his nose. Without turning back he beckoned to the door with the index finger of his right hand, and the door opened.

In the frame, crouched down, was a man: broad cheeked and bald, with small black eyes and thick muscular arms. He was quite naked, and supported himself on his knees and clenched fists, elbows bent and teeth bared. His back was arched and he was trembling—with anger, not fear. He was growling. He was staring at Schreber and growling.

‘What do you think of that? Quite a curiosity, isn’t he? I forget his name. Muller calls him Rudolph—wolf—throws him his sausages raw, and charges the orderlies from the other blocks to watch him eat them. He thinks I don’t know, but I know everything. Everything, Herr Schreber.’

Rudolph came forward, across the threshold of the cell, one fist then the other, his head stretched down below the line of his shoulders, sniffing the ground, all the time glaring at Schreber and rumbling past clenched teeth.

Schreber stepped back.

‘Return him to his cell.’

Rössler smiled.

‘Why? Isn’t he an illusion? A fleeting-improvised-man? Aren’t you immortal? Sustained by God’s nerves? The chosen mother of a new race?’

The dog came forward quickly, until only his hind legs were still within the cell. It sniffed the air.

‘Lock it up!’

‘I will. I will. But not until I’ve shown you something.’

Rössler stepped behind Rudolph and grabbed the man by the scruff of his neck. He picked him up like a bitch carries her puppies, and held him so he dangled limp in front of Schreber. With his other hand he pushed his glasses back up his nose. The dog stopped growling, its mouth gaped, and its eyes filmed over.

‘Come closer. It can’t hurt you, I promise. Come behind it and stand by me. Now, look, at the base of its spine, what do you see?’

There was nothing. A fuzz of black hair.

‘Look closer.’

Something. It resolved itself out of nothing, poking from beneath the skin—a tangle of wires. A tangle of nerves, like a thorn bush in miniature, or a tuft of wire wool.

‘A parasite. Do you see it?’

‘I see something.’

‘It is a parasite. It feeds on his nervous energy. Do you notice anything about it?’

It was tiny—nothing—but when Schreber looked closer he saw that it was moving. Each strand of the thing was alive, moving like the jointed leg of a crustacean, flicking from one position to another.

‘What colour is it?’

‘Dead black.’

‘Remember that, Herr Schreber, if you will.’

Rössler tossed the dog back in his cell and shut the door without moving an inch.

‘Follow me!’

The doctor trotted off down the corridor and round the corner at the end. Schreber was alone. He stared at the door to Rudolph’s cell and then back at his own. He even took a few steps back to it.

‘Herr Schreber!’

Rössler was directly behind him. The doctor took his hand.

‘We are very near to the end. A week, perhaps a month.’

He led Schreber past the cells and up the stairs.

The asylum was quiet and cool. They passed the dining hall and Schreber’s old rooms. They passed Rössler’s office. They passed the plinths and busts and went on, into the

entrance hall.

‘We will go to the roof.’

‘Why?’

‘You will see... You loved him then, your father?’ Rössler asked.

‘If we are to go to the roof, might I have a coat?’

Rössler held one out—it was a great coat, just like Schreber’s own.

‘Would you like a hat? Gloves?’

Rössler held them out. They were Schreber’s. Kid gloves Sabine had her seamstress run off for him, the Russian sable. Rössler led him up the stairs.

‘So you loved your father, despite everything.’

‘Don’t all sons love their fathers?’

Rössler sniffed.

‘A question that only those who have known a particular type of family can ask. Next time you are in the garden, if there is to be a next time, look around you. I guarantee that for every two men you see, at least one of them will not have loved his father, even if he imagines he did. I will go further, I will guarantee that at least one of them will have hated his father and that he will probably have had good reason to. We will see it, in a little while. Look to your left.’

A pair of double doors opened on to a room the walls of which were lined with shelves of bottles and instruments.

‘What do you see?’

‘A surgery?’

‘And in the centre of the room.’

There was a man in a white gown, strapped to a table. Quite how Schreber had not noticed him in the first place was a mystery. He was straining against thick, brown studded leather belts which were looped through slots in the table. One held his forehead tight and the top of his head was shaved.

‘Tomorrow, this man will have part of his soul removed.’

‘To what end?’

‘To cure him, of course. He believes he is persecuted.’

‘By whom?’

When the man’s eyes found Rössler he bucked on the table, straining against the belts and screaming beneath the gag.

‘Does that answer your question? His parasite is large and well developed. It has spread up his spine and into his mind. The parasite fears me, as it should, and it seeds the idea that I am responsible for the various injustices and dissatisfactions he has suffered. Consequently, the man takes me as his enemy. Tomorrow, I will enter his skull and cut out that part of the parasite that is responsible for the transmission of the lies about me, and the man will be cured. What do you think of that?’

Rössler addressed this last remark to the man himself. He became furious, even more than he had been, frothing and spitting past the gag. Rössler smiled and stroked the man’s head.

‘Your brother, Herr Schreber. He killed himself, I believe, with a rifle? Shot himself in the temple. Why?’

‘I do not know.’

‘Would you like me to tell you?’

‘How could you possibly know?’

‘The parasites—they infect all men. They are the source of all trouble and anxiety in the world. They must be removed. Your line is particularly prone to them. There was something dangerous done in the past, long before you were born. A pact. A bargain was made and reneged on. Punishment was ordered. Your father, his father, his father’s father, your brother—all of them very deeply infected.’

‘And me?’

‘You are the worst case. But we will see this. Come, let’s leave our friend here to his thrashing. Tomorrow will see him transformed, but we have business tonight. In a week, perhaps a month, we can bring an end to all of this.’

Past the surgery there was a narrow door, perhaps half the normal width, behind which was an equally narrow room. On the wall was a ladder.

‘You go first, I’ll follow behind. The climb is tiring, I wouldn’t want you to fall—it would just exacerbate matters.’

The night was clear and the moon was high. Schreber could see for as far as he wished in all directions. Off to one side, the open fields and the new farm house, to the other, Dösen, a few houses and a road, and to the north, Leipzig—the distant streetlights crackling blue white—a harsh glare that was once a gentle gaslit yellow. Schreber put on his hat and pulled up his gloves while Rössler shook his watch, opened the glass front, and felt the time with his fingertips.

‘It is almost time. Perhaps an explanation is in order. Of my behaviour this evening.’

‘It is certainly not what I have been accustomed to. I believed you have forgotten me.’

Rössler took himself off to the corner of the roof, nearest the chimney pots and returned moments later with a pane of glass in a frame. Schreber stared blankly at it.

‘All will be explained shortly.’

Rössler took his handkerchief and polished a smudge from the edge of the glass. Through it Schreber could see Leipzig, the same as it was before.

‘Do you believe in sorcery, Herr Schreber?’

‘I have had some experience of it, before...’

‘Professor Flechsig? An amateur, I assure you. Most of the work was done by you. He can take no credit for it.’

‘Credit?’

‘It is time. Look through the glass.’

Schreber did as he was told. There was Leipzig away in the distance. Points of light still and constant in the cold clear air.

‘I see nothing unusual.’

Rössler came round behind Schreber and looked over his shoulder. He tutted and took out his watch again. He whacked it against the palm of his hand and put it up to his ear.

Through the glass, changes were taking place.

‘I see something. Spider’s web, coming down from the sky, reflected in the moonlight.’

‘Good. Keep watching.’

Rössler tightened cogs at the corners of the frame so that the glass flexed and became concave. Leipzig span into closer focus.

‘Now what do you see?’

‘The sky is filled with threads, thousands of them, all leading up into the night sky. They are like rays of light made solid.’

‘Where do they lead?’

‘Into the sky.’

‘Try again.’

‘Down. Down to the earth.’

‘Better. But where exactly?’

‘Into houses?’

‘Into houses. Let us go closer.’

Rössler tightened the bolts again and now an individual house filled the frame—a three story town house such as that a professional man might rent while in the city on business for an extended stay in which it was not practical to leave his family in the main house.

‘Now where do the threads lead?’

‘I cannot see.’

‘Bear with me for a moment.’

Rössler took a bottle from one pocket for his coat and an eye-dropper from the other. He removed the glass stopper from the bottle, taking great pains to keep it steady and level. He filled the dropper and the moment it was full he inverted it so that nothing dripped out, and returned the stopper. When the bottle was back in his pocket he crept forward, eye-dropper held before him like a holy relic. When he came to the glass he let the dropper touch it, and he squeezed the bladder. In an instant the liquid spread across the glass, tinting it green. Schreiber gasped. It was as if the walls had been peeled away and the house now appeared in the manner of a doll’s house, each floor laid out before the eye.

‘How?’

‘Nothing. Very simple. Time consuming, but simple. Should such things be beyond the power of God? I assure you that they are not! Where do the threads lead?’

The threads moved through walls and ceilings as if they were not there. The wife of the house had retired early and was in her bed, curled on her side. One thread went directly through her bedclothes and attached itself to her. The husband was still about the house—in the pantry, taking a slice of pie—a thread entered him toward the base of the spine and as he walked back into the kitchen and stood where the cook would normally stand and ate the pie without the aid of a fork. The thread followed him about.

‘The threads lead into people.’

‘Let us look closer. Here, do you see the thread joins him below the waist of his

trouser band? Another drop of the liquid...'

When the drop was applied the man's clothes were stripped away.

'Do you see?'

'It is the same. The parasite. It clings to his back and is attached to the base of the spine—the coccyx.'

'Not quite the same.'

'No, this one is white.'

'Excellent!'

Rössler turned the cogs and Leipzig returned at a distance. He added a drop from another dropper.

'Turpentine, nothing special. How many threads can you count now?'

'I couldn't.'

'Approximately?'

'There are too many. Many thousands.'

'Many thousands... There is one for every man, woman and child in that city. There is one for every man woman and child in God's creation. And at one end of every thread there is a parasite—men's are the largest, then those of male children. The parasites of women tend to wither, though they never disappear. And at the other end of the threads?'

'At the other end there is God.'

'Very good. You, of course, would know that better than anyone. These parasites—they feed on the excitation of your nerves. What excess they excrete is drained back to God. If the parasite receives healthy nervousness it is white and returns white excreta to God. If it receives unhealthy nervousness it becomes black and excretes black excreta back up the threads to God. God takes it all. He has an appetite for all of it, black and white—like the keys of a piano, he finds harmony in their combination. On death, the thread is severed and the parasite returns to heaven where it is purified and consumed by God. Unless something goes wrong.'

Rössler bit his lip and seemed to think for a while. He fiddled with his glasses and paced toward the chimney breast and returned back again. Schreber took the glass and directed it to where he imagined Sabine might be and tightened the cogs.

'You will not find her. She is in Dresden and not even my skills can see that far. Not yet.'

Rössler took a deep breath and went, at last, as far as the chimney. When he returned he had with him a mirror about the size that one might see on a woman's dresser.

'Would you like to see your own parasite, Herr Schreber?'

Schreber stepped away from the glass and it began to fall.

Rössler leapt like a startled cat toward the frame.

'Do not let it break!'

The frame clattered on the tiles and began to slide down the rooftop. Rössler composed himself and uttered a few words below his breath. The frame returned to its position near his hand. He inspected it frantically for cracks to the glass.

'Do you know how much black excreta I had to siphon from this terrible place to

make that glass? If you did you would be more careful. Step behind the frame.'

'I don't want to.'

Rössler clicked his fingers and Schreber was behind the frame.

'Look in the mirror, Herr Schreber.'

'No.'

Schreber's eyes opened and his attention was directed toward the mirror. Schreber attempted to shut his eyes but he couldn't. He wanted to look away but he couldn't. Rössler made him see it all—first the bulge at the back of his coat and then the tangle like black birch twigs that emerged from the vent, moving like the legs of innumerable giant spiders, the outermost limbs flicking here and there, feeling the air, searching for something. Rössler angled the mirror and Schreber's eyes followed the thing up, into the air, the part meeting his body being only the tip of a huge inverted mass of black matter that blotted out the stars and went on, up and up until it was impossible to make out the individual limbs and the movement was a sickening blur, such as that experienced on a merry-go-round spun too quickly. Rössler continued to angle the mirror and Schreber saw, at last, that the mass covered fully two thirds of the sky and at its centre was a conglomeration of other things—bubbles—a mess of white, far away, like cuckoo spit, high in the sky.

'That, Herr Schreber, is God.'

'Enough!'

'You see now why we take such an interest in you, we nerve specialists? We sorcerers? Something has gone wrong. There is a breach in the Order of the World and God, rather than drawing excreta up to Him, is drawn down to you. Wonderful isn't it? To His own eventual demise.'

'Please! I wish to return to my cell. I wish to return to my wife. This is nothing—a delusion. Silly thoughts.'

'I know the source of this problem. Crimes against God. It is possible, you see, to gather the excreta before it returns to God and, being God stuff, it can be made to do very helpful things—to create great wealth, or respect in other men, or wonderful ideas—the white excreta. And the black? That can do anything. It is not bound by the will of God—it is a perversion of it, a fermentation, perhaps. It can be made to create whatever one wishes—whatever is inside it can be made to come out, into the real world. What more could a man want? And with God dead... All our desires, brought to life. Think of it! Once a Schreber thought to harvest this black excreta for his own purposes: Gotthilt? Gottfried? One of them—it is impossible to be sure. He failed, but God sought to punish him anyway, blackening his soul. But He went too far, in carrying the curse on to his sons—weakening the boundaries that separate the divine and the profane—concerning Himself too much with the world of men. Under the influence of the excreta? It is possible. When your father was born it became clear to God that a rent had been made in the fabric of heaven, so a soul murder was attempted. But it was only partially successful and the rent worsened. First your brother. A soul murder was attempted on him and again, such is the Order of the World—so powerful that even God is not able to overturn it—the attempt failed although it cost Gustav his life. God changed in His policy and withdrew

from the world to a very great distance, but when Flechsig came into contact with you it became clear that there was a breach. He drained the excreta for his own use, provoking God to draw ever more heavily through your thread, exciting your nerves to ever greater production, and when Flechsig attempted to take it all, he tore heaven and now the black excreta pours everywhere and God is drawn ever closer. He has torn Flechsig's soul to pieces, but I am twice the doctor he was. Do you see why you are of such interest to me? Through you I will kill God. Do you see Him? Spittle! Nothing but spittle!

'I want to see Sabine!'

Rössler put down the mirror.

'Why not? I will send for her.'

§

Schreber: Churchill, Burgess and Schatzman

Burgess's unproduced screenplay of 1974¹ belongs to that brief flurry of creative activity surrounding Schreber's biography that included Caryl Churchill's *Schreber's Nervous Illness* and Roberto Calasso's *L'Impuro Folle*. Contemporaneously with the writing of these pieces was the publication of Morton Schatzman's works on Schreber, the first being 'Paranoia or persecution: the case of Schreber,' in *Family Process* in 1971² which was followed by the best selling monograph *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family* in 1973.³ Churchill's radio play, first broadcast in 1972, is very unlikely to have been influenced by Schatzman's work. The first presentation of Schatzman's ideas, while very similar to how they would appear in the later monograph, would have been read by only a very limited and academically interested audience and would, moreover, been only one of hundreds of articles that Churchill could have used for research. Moreover, the central theme that Schatzman introduces in that paper—a transactional analysis of Schreber's relationship with his father—is not to be found in Churchill's script. So, while the central ideas of Schatzman's thesis on Schreber were extant during the writing of the radio play in 1971/2, it doesn't seem that she was aware of his work or,

¹The screenplay is undated, but was probably written in 1974. The only mention made of Schreber in the literature on Burgess is in a note in Roger Lewis' biography (Anthony Burgess, Faber, London, 2002, p.50) where he states that Burt Lancaster wanted Burgess to write a script on "the life of Schroeder, the schizophrenic who had interested Freud," speculating that this might have meant Schreber. Having dismissed the psychoanalytic literature on Schreber as "balls", Lewis goes on to outline a meeting that was scheduled between the director Gianfranco De Bosio (who was working with Burgess and Lancaster on the film *Moses the Lawgiver* for ITV), Lancaster, and Burgess in Iowa City where Burgess had a temporary teaching job in 1974. Lewis also states that Lew Grade (founder of ITC, the production company that made *Moses the Lawgiver* for ITV) was prepared to finance the film, but that the promised script never surfaced. It seems sensible to conclude that the script of *Schreber* in the Burgess Collection at the Harry Ransom Centre is, in fact, the missing script, particularly as it has marginalia in Italian—directorial notes on accompanying music amongst other things—presumably by Gianfranco DeBosio. The contention that Lancaster initiated the project also finds some support in the existence of a copy of the first edition of the English translation, *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness*, from the library of Sir John Mills and Mary Mills—currently for sale by Lazarus Books in Blackpool, UK—which was a gift inscribed "from Burt Lancaster" given to Mary Hayley Bell (the actress Mary Mills) who also signed it. Given that the financing was arranged, by Lewis's account, and that work on the production progressed as far as reaching a sympathetic director, we are left to wonder why the project was never filmed.

²Schatzman, M. (1971). "Paranoia or persecution: the case of Schreber." *Family Process* 10(2): 177-207.

³Schatzman, M. (1973). *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family*. London, Allen Lane.

if she was aware of it, did not use it in her research for the play. Burgess's screenplay, however, written after the success of *Soul Murder*, shows the signs of Schatzman's (and, to a lesser extent Niederland's) influence in very specific ways.

In an author's note preceding *Schreber's Nervous Illness*, Churchill states:

Schreber's Nervous Illness was based on *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* by Daniel Paul Schreber, translated by Ida Macapline and Richard A. Hunter and published by William Dawson & Sons Ltd in 1955 as Volume 1 of a Psychiatric Monograph Series.

Daniel Paul Schreber, a judge, spent ten years in asylums as a schizophrenic and wrote his memoirs there. What happened to Schreber after he left Sonnenstein is not certain. It is said that his family bought up most of the copies of his memoirs and destroyed them. There is some evidence that when his wife died, four years after his discharge, he was again admitted to an asylum and died there five years later.

As a statement of influence it is both specific and vague. Churchill is scrupulous in her avowal of the source of her inspiration—the English 1955 translation of the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, going to far as to outline its status as the first in a series of monographs and then oddly unspecific about the source of her information on Schreber's biography, choosing only to write “it is said...” and omit by whom. Whoever said it, the information is only partially correct at best. It is true that Paul's sister Anna's husband, Carl Jung (not the famous psychologist, but a soap maker and perfumier) attempted to buy up the copies of the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, but it was Schreber's mother who died in 1906, four years after his release, and it was a stroke suffered by Sabine, Schreber's wife, in late 1907, that precipitated his return to an asylum, where he died four, years later.¹ The intention here is not to criticise Churchill for any inaccuracy, but to situate her influences very specifically in the 1955 text, and not in any other reliable source, something that would be relatively simple without the author's note given a number of other understandable factual inaccuracies—she wrongly assumes that Schreber would have been addressed as “Daniel”, for example, where that was a family name, the name he used being “Paul”—and which, in any case, is very obvious from the structure and the content of Churchill's play.

A précis of the play is almost redundant, as it stays so faithfully close to *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* that a précis of that work would be almost identical. Indeed, if one were looking for a clear and precise précis of Schreber's delusional framework then this play would be an excellent place to start—the majority of the dialogue is Schreber expanding on his own illness, interrupted by explanatory remarks from his psychiatrist, Weber, and undercut by the insane chatter of rays. Schreber's dialogue is

¹This misunderstanding of the events - particularly that it was Schreber's wife that died and not his mother - that led to Schreber's final incarceration is not limited to Churchill and is a common mistake—even Colin MacCabe, in his 2001 introduction to Freud's *The Schreber Case* makes it, referencing Santner's *My Own Private Germany* as the source, although no such error is present in that work. Given the history of the effacement of Schreber's mother from the etiology of Schreber's illness it is, at the very least, typical that she should suffer this final indignity and is perhaps an indication of the extent to which the literature has failed to figure her in her son's history.

taken from the main text of the *Memoirs*, almost without alteration, Weber's remarks are taken from Weber's expert reports included in the appendices, again nearly verbatim, and the chatter of the rays is either direct ray speech or representations of the content of that ray speech as outlined in the *Memoirs*.

Where the play diverges from the *Memoirs* it usually does so for reasons of clarity and dramatic consistency and one short example will suffice to outline the extent that the text conforms to the *Memoirs* and the ways in which it occasionally diverges from it. At the beginning of Part Three of the play, Churchill describes Schreber's transfer to the private asylum at Lindenhof run by Dr Pierson. I have given the source text from the *Memoirs* in bold.

SCHREBER:

Early one morning, perhaps in June, three attendants appeared in my cell with a suitcase and told me I was leaving the asylum. Since they were only fleeting-improvised-men I did not think it worth asking where the journey was to lead and in any case I could not fare worse than I had in Flechsig's asylum. **[Therefore, when early one morning (perhaps mid-June 1894) three attendants appeared in my cell with a suitcase in which were packed my few belongings, and told me that I was to get ready to leave the Asylum, my only reaction at first was a feeling of liberation from a place in which an infinite number of perils threatened me. I had no idea where the journey was to lead, nor did I think it worth inquiring, because I did not think these attendants were human beings at all, but only "fleeting-improvised-men." The journey's goal left me indifferent; I felt *only* that I could not fare worse anywhere in the world than I had fared in Flechsig's Asylum... p.99-100) I never saw him again. [I left in a cab for Dresden station, without seeing professor Flechsig again. p.100]**

As soon as I arrived at the Devil's Kitchen I was surrounded by fleeting-improvised-men.

Everyone in the asylum looked like someone I knew. **[...almost all the patients in the Asylum, that is to say at least several dozen human beings, looked like persons who had been more or less close to me in my life. p.104] My special attendant was an attendant of the Court of Appeal in Dresden. [In an attendant apparently employed for my special supervision I thought I recognised, perhaps because of an accidental likeness, the attendant of the Country Court who used to bring the files to my home during my six weeks of professional activity in Dresden. p.103] The chief attendant was a young man called Mr von W whom I had met at an east-coast resort. [...I saw Mr. v. W. and a Mr. von. O., whom we had met in the East Coast resort**

Warnemünde... p.26]

RAY:

He has already led another life as the insurance agent Marx on another planet. [**He was said to have already led a second life as the “Insurance Agent Marx” on some other planet... p.28]**

SCHREBER:

When I left Flechsig's asylum he drew up to heaven some of von W's nerves [**This seems to have caused Flechsig's soul to draw up to heaven... some of the nerves taken from the senior attendant... p.111]** so that he still influenced me by influencing my attendant. [**actual power over my body then fell to... the senior attendant. p.111]** I was amused to see that although they were allied against God they disliked each other. Von W was so proud of his noble family that he would hear no good of Flechsig, while Flechsig's pride in his intellectual superiority made him regard von W with contempt. [**At times it was highly amusing to observe how both souls - Flechsig's and von W's - in spite of their alliance against God's omnipotence, mutually repelled one another, because of the professional arrogance of the one and the pride of nobility of the other. p.112]** Impure souls were graded as Satans, Devils, Senior Devils and Basic Devils, and when they appeared as fleeting-improvised men they were carrot red with a peculiar offensive odour. [**The souls still undergoing the process of purification were variously grade as “Satans,” “Devils,” “Assistant Devils,” “Senior Devils,” and “Basic Devils,” etc., when set down as “fleeting-improvised-men,” had a peculiar colour (perhaps carrot-red) and a peculiar offensive odour... p.26]** Von W had a red face and hands. [**...with peculiar red faces and hands...p.26]**

Here the only substantive change from the text and intent of the *Memoirs* is that Churchill changes the order in which the *Memoirs* presents the material—there is a repetition in Schreber's text and he details his experiences with the attendant von W. at two separate points. Churchill has pieced them back together—and has made slight editorial changes and simplified the language in places. Again, the intention is not to make any comment on the derivation of the text of the play, but merely to re-iterate the debt it owes to the *Memoirs* and the extent to which its own intentions are contained by the limits of that text.

Churchill is seemingly content to adapt the material of the *Memoirs* into a format that could be broadcast, and makes almost no attempt to fashion that material into a generic storytelling framework, or extract any kind of moral from the tale. The material is so faithful to the original text that there is very little critical impingement

in any way, even the Freudian interpretation being entirely absent from a script which takes Schreber at face value and, perhaps in character for Churchill, seeks only to give voice to Schreber's words. In doing so, she replays precisely those textual devices that are operating in the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, at least as it was translated by Macalpine and Hunter. There is no mention whatever of Schreber's father, Schreber's sexuality, or the aetiology of Schreber's illness, precisely as there is no mention of these things in Schreber's text.

Churchill, in remaining so close to Schreber's text and not introducing any of the biographical material, or the expanded consideration of Schreber's biography that would render the works of his father relevant, predisposes her play to the kind of readings we have identified as belonging to the Freudian psychoanalytic group of analyses (which were predominant pre-Niederland/Lacan, etc.) and effectively rules out any of the later approaches which take Schreber's relationship with his father's textual production as a central concern. We can use *Schreber's Nervous Illness* in the same way that Freud used the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, as evidence for the inversion that characterises Freud's paranoid dynamic—that of delusions as a defence against homosexuality—but we could not use it as evidence for the later conviction that Schreber was reformulating memories of an abusive childhood, at least not without introducing secondary material.

So, while Churchill's play, performed in the year preceding Schatzman's publication of *Soul Murder* is textually limited to the *Memoirs*, and can only be read in isolation as supportive of the pre-existent Freudian readings, what can we say of Burgess's screenplay produced the year after?

Burgess's screenplay is a much more complex piece of work than Churchill's and has a much less rigid adherence to Schreber's writing, if it can be said to pay it much attention at all. There are few, if any, direct quotations from the text. His treatment of the biographical material is much more rigorous—he has the personae of Schreber's life largely correct (although there are misspellings in some of the names and confusions as to ages and dates) and many of the events are present and in the correct order, but while the work opens with the declaration "THIS IS A TRUE STORY"—a claim that the opening text anxiously repeats as it closes—there are so many deviations from Schreber's delusional framework and the established biography as to make this claim very tenuous indeed. Burgess's structure requires an extensive cast of invented characters and events that take place synchronically across a wide range of times and places.

Having established some key themes—opera, anti-semitism, Schreber's occupation as a judge and Sabina's (Burgess uses the anglicised form of Sabine) miscarriages—Burgess brings in Schreber's father's funeral (an event he accompanies with music from Wagner's *Siegfried*, despite that the fact that it would not be written until fifteen years later) and from here, interspersed with cuts to Schreber playing the piano while he defecates into a bucket. Burgess foregrounds Schreber's father, painting him as a diminutive martinet, tortured by migraines, who beats his sons and intimidates his daughters into the obedience of a singularly sadistic form of authoritarian nationalism.

We see this quite clearly in scene 11:

11. INT DAY THE NURSERY

The father is beating Gustav with his stick while the children stand around, shrinking to the corners, terrified. Gustav cries and screams.

FATHER:

Obedience, sir, obedience. You must love the law, which in your case is the word of your father. You must love to obey. You must glory in the pain of the punishment which makes you obey.

He stops beating the wretched whimpering boy and points his stick at the young Schreber.

FATHER:

You, sir, why do I do this to your brother Gustav?

YOUNG SCHREBER:

To make him obey, Father.

FATHER:

(pointing to one of the girls)

You, girl, what is my deeper aim?

GIRL 1:

I don't understand, sir, father—

FATHER:

(pointing to the eldest girl)

You, miss. To what must we dedicate our lives?

GIRL 2:

To being a model for the youth of Germany. Father.

Schreber's father goes on, in quick succession, to exercise a feverish Gustav into collapse, to bully his wife into withdrawing solace from her son, to burn the young Schreber's penis with a candle flame for ejaculating in his bed, to deliver a number of speeches equating Jewishness with effeminacy and uncleanness, to tie his daughters to their beds with lengths of cord, and, at the end of this series of scenes which leave us in no doubt whatever about the failings of Moritz Schreber's character, he asks that the young Schreber thank him for these actions, something that Schreber willingly does.

This segment of the screenplay establishes the engine of Schreber's illness—the

substitution of parental affection with fascism—and is held to account for it entirely. Flechsig, when he arrives, is a cipher for the authority of Schreber's father, Schreber's mother re-iterates her husband's opinions where she is called upon to offer sympathy either to Schreber or to Sabina, Schreber's legal struggle to rescind his tutelage is framed in the same terms his father used—as a struggle of the individual against an oppressive and nationalist institution—and Schreber's eventual victory—as he kneels in a wedding dress and offers himself up to God as His bride—is given as a triumph of individuality (albeit pathological and solipsistic) in the face of a homogenising totalitarianism.

Burgess, under no obligation to biographical accuracy, does however exaggerate and distort what facts there are in the screenplay in characteristic ways—he strongly overstates Moritz Schreber's prominence as a writer and thinker (“He is a living force, loved, known, at work all over Germany. His ideals grow daily in strength. His greatness is everywhere acknowledged,” p. 24; “That great doctor? That magnificent patriotic German?” p.33), turns his disciplinarian pronouncements on child-rearing (which were considered, at the time of publication, to be comparatively liberal) into child abuse, and characterises Schreber's struggle with the authorities and his own delusions as a desire for self-expression.

Up until the publication of *Niederland*, the role of Schreber's father had been virtually irrelevant in Schreber studies and informed by commentators' understanding of Schreber senior's very minor fame.¹ Similarly, Moritz's long forgotten works on child rearing—the *Kallipaedie* for example—are taken out of context, transposed from Wilhelmine Germany, where they were very liberal, to 1970s California (Burgess was at this time in New York teaching at City College, and later at Columbia teaching Creative Writing), where they were seen as abusive in the extreme, particularly to a student of transactional analysis as Schatzman was. Schreber's largely legal and theologico-scientific intentions for the *Denkwürdigkeiten* are moulded into a self-expressive liberalism that would have been very surprising to one of Schreber's conservative political leanings and again very characteristic of Schatzman's reading of the case.

Moreover, from a piece of writing that could support a Freudian reading, as Churchill's could, we have a screenplay that could never support this reading, the transposition of Moritz from a loved father, the sublimated sexual desire for whom Schreber repressed into paranoia, into a figure Schreber could genuinely and reasonably expect to feel persecuted by, inverts the famous formula Freud uses, and renders it redundant.

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¹Something that was only partially altered by the activities of the Schreber Associations, and the use of the Schreber name for a campaign of allotment building and a society of allotment holders numbering several million in the 1970s, which was mistaken, particularly by Schatzman, for a neo-fascist organisation taking Moritz's work as doctrine—which they certainly did not, the Schreber name being purely nominal, and a Schreber Garten having no political or ideological baggage beyond a tendency to favour open air activity and a certain self-sufficiency in food production

And in the darkness Schreber received the call, much fainter than it had been in his rooms in the daylight, but audible nonetheless, spoken into the heart of his soul but strained, drowned in deep water and echoing, so that each word ran into the other and it was only after several minutes, possibly an hour, that Schreber knew it for what it was, could separate it from the other sounds: the beating of his heart, the whispering of the thread in the back of his skull, the rustling of his legs kicking against the sheets. The voice was identical in tone and timbre and contained that same exhausting urgency he had heard in it before, but now there was also anger such as is heard from a scolding father, and the voice said:

‘Where is it?’

Schreber stopped absolutely still in his bed, as if he had died on the spot and stopped breathing, and listened again, to make sure what he heard was heard in truth, and though the words were overlaid one over the other he lay there long enough for the slight delay in the echo to correct itself, imagining the words repeated three times: once, the true form, then an inferior copy, shortened by a fraction, and then another copy, equally compromised but in the other direction, longer, so that each iteration was spoken at slightly different speeds and their overlapping was not constant but drifted into and out of sensibility. He waited, hearing the words both more and less comprehensible until, for one speaking only, perhaps repeated only once over the span of an hour, the copies began at the same time and the words shouted out.

‘Where is it?’

Schreber found it was sufficient to merely think the answer, the mechanism by which the message arrived being capable of relaying his thoughts as much as it was possible to implant the words within him, and he knelt down by his bed in the manner of a supplicant before the altar, and requested what it was that was requested of him, and, as if in the thinking the communication was strengthened, as if his thought were hooked on a line trawled in the water and that now, snagged, what vibrations were required to pass between speaker and ear did so with great efficiency. The words came ringing in like a small shrill bell, and they said:

‘The communiqué. Where is your representation of it? Where is the proof?’

‘The painting?’

‘We require it, and that you follow the instructions given to you.

‘I cannot.’

‘We are disappointed, Paul. I am very disappointed. We took you for an obedient boy, for a good son, and now you defy us in this way.’

‘I have been moved below ground.’

‘We are greatly saddened. You fail us. Is this how we are to be repaid?’

‘Please!’

‘I weep. I fall on the ground and weep. We are violated, our trust is soiled.’

‘No, you must understand.’

And then the voices departed, the line snapped off at the rod, Schreber’s mind drifting away, and though he struggled to find the thread again, it was severed, and he got to feet and grasped in the darkness for it but could find nothing but the hard wood of the door, and onto this he beat his fists and cried to be released.

Souls know that there is a separation between a soul and the man. Men do not. Men are of the opinion that the soul and a man's personality are one and the same entity. They imagine heaven to exist as their worldly domain exists only elevated, perfected, sensory, but transformed. We should not chide them too much for this. It is a simple mistake to make and is a function of their limited scope of sensation. They are separate from us where we are not separate from them. They have no reason to assume other than they do.

We have no such excuse. They are not just separated from us in the medium of their dwelling, even though that separation is first and foremost, but they are also limited by the range and quality of their experiences. We know what they can never know and if we make simple ontological errors then to where can we turn for mitigation? Where does the litigator turn, when he suggests that I, a soul, be held accountable for the crimes of a man?

We originate from the same germ, but from there they diverge, even whilst remaining tied by the structure of the nerve law and where we see them, if we lower our eyes to look, they do not see us. And, although the germination of the soul is timeless, as are all those things pertaining to it, when a man is born there is an anchoring into the stream of cause and effect that is physical and from this anchoring the man may not escape.

While the soul, albeit tethered by the centre of the circle, may travel in all directions or none the man is obliged to move always at the one speed and in the one direction. I am obliged to feel the sensation of this, even while I retain the freedom proper to the soul, but the sensation itself has an effect. When the body awakes in the night and screams, I stay with it for as long as that scream lasts and it is only by enormous effort that I do not feel it as the body does, as vibration in the strings of the throat, the passage of warm air up from the lungs, the sinking in the chest as the bellows empty and the ringing of it, at last, in the filigree of the ears.

When I am asked why I do not simply undo what has been done, I must ask for your sympathy when I say that, under the present circumstances, I cannot.

The door shut again, and from that moment on there was nothing from the world except a gradual decrease in the already meagre light. Schreber waited for some change, some external influence, some action or event from the world of his senses less subtle than the blurring of the lines of the room, or the change in the thickness of the air, but none came. He made a clicking sound with his tongue, by accident, nothing that in the general course of a day would be noticed, masked by other sounds of more interest and import, a body sound, like the creaking of bones or rustle of flesh on flesh when dry finger tips are rubbed together, but in the absence of anything else this clicking of his tongue boomed and, moreover, seemed to carry the impression of meaning—not meaning itself, but the sensation that meaning was present, as in the

experience of *déjà vu* before it is realised as such, before its hollowness is remembered and taken for what it is—nothing, superseded by the daily concerns of life.

The eyes acquired a graininess that filtered all vision through it, in this situation the meaninglessness of the clicking of his tongue, a vacuum accidentally caused between that organ and the palate as he swallowed with a dry mouth, that lack of import was not revealed, being, as it was, by far the most noticeable thing around him, and it echoed and when he repeated the movements in his mouth that called it up, the sensation of meaning was re-enforced and matched by an itching in his belly, a pang of something that after several repetitions was met with an ache in the bowel, and Schreber made the clicking sound again and again, and if there had been anyone there to hear him they would have been struck by the impression that the man was imitating a beetle, a cricket, or a scarab, and he crouched down on the ground and his arched back curved in the air, the lumps of his spine nothing more than the ridges seen on a the carapace of some highly coloured reptile of the equatorial regions, and though the sensation was not one which Schreber admitted, he did feel terribly small in that room.

§

An hour after the door had shut Schreber was still there, clicking to himself, and if there was a change in his state of mind it was not visible externally. Schreber was filled with the contention that something of great importance was in the process of being communicated to him, and it seemed almost that the removal of those external stimulæ that a man comes to call his life—the words and speech of other men and the visual impressions of animals and objects, the intentions and schemes with which he occupies himself, even if they are nothing more solid than the satisfaction of the requirement of the flesh—the absence of these was a necessary precondition for the presence of this much more vital sensation of universal pregnancy, and though to the outsider it would appear that Schreber had fallen into utter abjection, he was, in fact, raised up to the level of the hermetic mystics of the scriptures, or the shamanic priests of the primitive tribes of Africa and South America, and was, rather, in tune with a greater reality, one that could only be reached by the denial of bodily things. Was this not what he had desired all along? Was his hope that he be returned to his home and wife not a distraction, a sin almost, a desire for personal comfort that was not worthy of a man who considered himself to be something more than a beast? Would his father have allowed himself respite in this way? Did he? The answer was that he did not, and rather than that he drove himself beyond his own endurance in pursuance of those things which he considered to be of utmost importance, and whether this angered God, or whether the actions of his ancestor were the sufficient cause of the vendetta against Schreber, the matter was irrelevant, because was not Schreber his father's son? More so than Gustav—the boy having a weakness that was visible even then in his delight in the abuse of insects and small creatures, a delight that was immoral and repugnant in his father's eyes, and in Paul's too, and, though it was never mentioned, wasn't there a transfer of paternal love to the second son, a shift in

the proportionality of affection from the proper ratio, a diminution of Gustav's share and a swelling of Paul's despite his effeminacy, that trait being more malleable than cruelty, manliness being a matter of attitude, and cruelty an accident of breeding?

Schreber began to understand that the mortification of the flesh and the mind was the beginning of true understanding, and though he was unable to receive instruction from Heaven and he could feel the creeping approach of God's nerves through the tips of his fingers, and in through the lenses of his pupils, was that obligation to understand relieved? It was not, at least while he was relatively free from the requirement to cultivate soul-voluptuousness, and he clicked with his tongue, the sensation that there was something to be understood from the sound being ever so close to the surface, and he bounced a little in his crouching position on the floor, as if slight agitation of the body might jar comprehension back into place from wherever it had slipped to, as a man might gesture with his hands in order to provoke the remembrance of the name of an acquaintance as he tries to communicate that information to a colleague.

After an hour there was no revelation, and Schreber sank to the ground, suddenly exhausted, and rested there with his cheek on the cold grit, and he began to weep.

When Schreber was a boy he had wept, just like this, and in it there was a strange pleasure, perhaps in the expectation that if his sadness became obvious enough it would come to the attention of someone who had the power to overturn it, to take him into the larder and, while his parents were otherwise occupied, spoon-feed him jam from the jar, and whistle a little peasant song to him, while she bounced him on her hip—the maid this is—a girl who was forbidden from giving him a single bite of a pear, a girl who was made to eat in front of the boy, to teach him forbearance and the understanding of those things that were properly in his realm and those things that were not. But if he wept just loudly enough to be heard while his mother and father were not present, she might, if she had been scolded by her mistress for a speck on a shirt, take him up and take him to the larder and break off a piece of sweet cake and feed it to him, and put her arms around him, and whisper a song taught to her by her father, and now Schreber cried and though he knew that girl would not come for him, his tears were for her. God knows, the girl was probably dead by now. God knows, Paul had done for her anyway, one day, when his father had been in a very happy mood, his plans delivered to the Kaiser's office, and he had seemed so pleased to see them all and had sat back on his heels in the hallway and gestured for them all to come to him, and he gave them a hard ball to take to the garden, and he put his hand to Paul's cheek, hadn't he then—determined to be good—let slip that he had been given bread and butter, so that the girl was dismissed and never again seen in the house?

But this was not on his mind, and he wept, and if only she could have come to him and picked him up then all thought of anything would have dissolved, and the pregnancy of the air would have disappeared, and the fire that picked at the ends of his nerves in the darkness, now half black, and the movement of God toward him, and the failure of his communication with the Confederacy, all these things would have washed away, and the spoon, hard and cold and too big for his little

mouth, clicking on his teeth, could have twisted in that place where now he felt the compulsive need to click his tongue, and that tongue could have licked at the bowl for that coating of sugar syrup that was so smooth, that filled the tiny pits in the surface of the old silver, and the sound would have been nothing, a counterpoint to the hymn that pretty young girl hummed to him, his arms clasped hard around her neck, *‘Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, Ein gute Wehr und Waffen,’* and with her arms crossed below his buttocks she could carry him back to the nursery and sit him down there with his dolls.

But Schreber wept and wept, and soon the thought of relief, even if it was only a fleeting dream beneath his thoughts and intentions, soon fell away, and he clicked and he wept, and the darkness became ever more solid.

§

It happened again, and now no attempt at ignoring it was possible—the sound was piercing like the grinding of gears in a factory, or the application of a tram brake on the Kaiserstrasse on a hot dry day in the middle of summer when everyone is travelling somewhere and the car is laden down, high-pitched screaming, and with that there was a flurry of dust in the slit of light that bisected the middle of the room. Schreber shuffled until his back was against the far wall and under his breath he muttered the prayer, trying to look away and concentrate on his effort to hear the commands, but the screaming was too much, like the torture of rats.

The dust was thick in the room, so he could not only taste it, but could feel it coating his tongue when he breathed, and his skin when he ran a damp fingertip over it, covered in a fine grey powder like ash, such as is produced by a fakir, or from the breath of a medium in a trance, and suddenly without any announcement the room was filled with sunlight, so much that Schreber did not think his body would be able to stand it all at once where it had been deprived for so long. As a man who is lost in the desert must not be allowed to drink from the flask, but must be drip-fed over hours, so Schreber did not allow himself to bask in the light, but rather shrank further away, and suddenly in the room was Ehrlich, the man he had seen in Rössler’s office, and with him was another man in a uniform Schreber had never seen, like his father’s—blue straight and brass buttoned—and his hat was peaked although he wore in it a feather, and Ehrlich bent forward, as if he could not understand what he was seeing and had expected something else, and then Schreber was picked up, without a word spoken, under his knees and across the shoulders by a man who was as broad across the shoulder as the gap he had made with the hacksaw blade in the barred and shuttered window he now pushed Schreber through, and when he was out sprawling on the grass, Schreber was taken away immediately, with no speaking, down the path that led to the gate, and all around were men watching—madmen—and amongst them was Alexander.

Although his head was unadorned, he made to tip the peak of his hat, and he bowed his head and smiled, and Schreber had no understanding of anything, and it was increasingly hard to hear the commands, and if it hadn’t been for the weakness

of his muscles, so long cooped up in his box he would have struggled. But now there were two men holding him, one across the shoulder and another by the legs, and they ran at a trot, down the treelined pathway and Alexander shrank smaller and smaller and so did the house, no sign of Muller or Rössler or any other staff, and as they ran the hats of the men who had him shook up and down on their heads and, with no hands free to adjust them, one of the men's hats fell onto the ground and the first word was spoken, by Ehrlich, who was running alongside of them.

'Leave it man! Get him into the carriage.'

At his word the men sped up as if they had been whipped and he was in the back of the carriage, the blinds on the windows drawn, and then away in no time, it seemed like less than no time, as if Schreber had been transported by some miracle directly from his cell to this place, the prayer on his lips, and it was clear to him that this was nothing more than a dream, a thing like the vision of Anna, another test, and he straightened himself in his chair and arranged the nightshirt across his knees, wiping away dirt so that the fabric greyed beneath his fingers and he cleared his throat and waited to see what manner of test this was, in what way he would be called upon to prove his good faith, understanding the necessity of it, the method of purification it represented, and in his heart feeling excitement in it, knowing he could do nothing but succeed, but be praised, but be heaped with more glory than he had received before, because he was faithful, he was true, and his fate was accepted, and if they had called on him to slit his own throat—or his belly—and to pull out those base human machines that lay beneath his skin, and dance among them then he would have taken the knife from the outstretched hand and done it, knowing it to be the true path, the one way, and now he waited eagerly, keen to hear what they had to say, and when Ehrlich opened his mouth to utter nothing—banalities—he was still not perturbed because this too was a form of test, and there was nothing that he could not endure.

'Apologies for the roughness, old man, we had to get you out of there, you know, in quick time. We had a man distract old Rössler there, and Muller, and it would have gone easier if we could have taken our time, but with these things there's never much good in dawdling. You understand I hope?'

Schreber smiled and nodded.

'Good. Good. Terrible to see a man in that state. Like a dog in a cage. Can't believe it of an old friend, to be quite honest. But then again he always was something of a cold fish. All very good with books and ideas, but when it comes to people he is... I don't know. Used to cut up things—animals, I mean—frogs and dogs and the like that he came on, not usually living—he wasn't that bad!—but when one of the neighbourhood boys found something, or had one die on him—a pet—then he was in there like lightning with his knife! Hair raising stuff! Not to my taste at all. No need for it. Unless there is, if you get me. I'm no shirker when it comes to the use of force, and there's a good few who I think would benefit from the sharp edge of the knife, as I'm sure you'd agree, as your father did, if I'm right in what I read. But the innocents? No need for it, and I can only imagine he's got worse. Keeping a man like that, all that was missing was the chain round the neck and the iron bowl and there's a dog kennel! Disgraceful. I apologise for him, sir.'

‘I am to be kept from distracting influences and think only on those things of the utmost importance.’

‘Really? I’m surprised the lack of a bed isn’t considered a distraction. Or a chair. Or a decent meal, by the look of you, if you’ll apologise for the observation. Or warm clothes. You look like you could do with a warm bath, a jug of beer, and a steak.’

‘The mortification of the flesh is the first step in the purification of the soul.’

‘Well put. I remember reading something of the sort—not sure where—but I think the thing can be overdone, don’t you?’

Schreber said nothing. Ehrlich leaned out of the window and called something to the driver. When he came back in he had a coat.

‘You’re shivering, sit,’ he said, and he put the coat over his shoulders. ‘Well, I’ll see to you now. I should say we. The boys and I, of the Army League. You’ve got your man Alexander to thank for this, you know. Good man. Slightly spooky, as I suppose must be expected really, but a strong character, nonetheless. Full of inside information. Collared me on the way out a while back and let me know of your plight. I walked along the side of the place after, on the pretence of an after lunch stroll—too much bread with it, or so I made out—and I saw your window, just behind the shrubs and I thought immediately that there was no way I was going to let a man of your stature fester away like the Man in the Iron Mask. Have you read it? Pure rubbish, clearly, but exciting stuff and—though it will make me seem a bit of an idiot, I suppose—I couldn’t help but feel a little heroic as I was gathering the men, though that soon passed as I waited for the buggers to saw through those bars. Heart in the mouth. Hands shaking. Still are.’ He held them out and even despite the movement of the carriage it was obvious that he was trembling. ‘Still, worth it all now. Taking you out to the country. Little place we keep, for training and the like. The League. Deliver the odd stirring lecture there, you know, on the protection of the homeland. We’ll get you fixed up, and when you are feeling like it—no hurry of course—perhaps you would like to address the men. We’re all inspired by your words! Well, they’ve heard a bit of them, with the odd piece removed, and I might have beefed up some of the stuff regarding the Catholics and the Slavs, but it’s just that it seems to me that the message, underlying it all—if I might be so bold—is one that the people should hear. Like the message of your father, about the health and strength of the people. There are some that disagree with me. Call you all sorts of things. I won’t worry you. There’s nothing to worry about. No one takes any notice of these people: students, and radicals, and Jew doctors—all nonsense—calling you a sodomite. I won’t go on. There is nothing sodomitic about it, once you take out the sickness, strip it down to the basics, the core, as it were, without the lunatic parts—excuse me, but I know you realise you’re not well—once those parts are taken away its stirring anti-Catholic stuff, good Saxon theology with a strong dose of what’s needed! It’s all an allegory, you see. I’ve heard Rössler say so too, though he misses the point, a man caught up in an unfeeling and nonsensical universe, and that part is true for all of us who hate to see the way this country is going. Anyway, this is all too much? I can see you are tired. Perhaps you would like to doze for a little? It’s not a long ride, but it’s not so short that you can bear to listen to my prattle for that long. I am not an educated

man, sir, not in the usual sense. I have learned what I know with my hands, so to speak, by getting in deep with the way that the world is, not by reading about it, and if money is any measure of how much it does for a man that I can say I have bested the men of my experience who have spent their time with their faces in books and their elbows on the table tops, sniffing the must off the library stacks, and not the one of them a shilling more than they need coming in each month. Whereas I can buy anything. You will see, when we get to the place: decked out beautifully, and the men too, not a one of them contributed a penny to the place and yet it makes the bigger district offices look very shabby, and, let me tell you quietly, I barely noticed the expense! Wood. That was the key. While the rest of them were reading the books and writing the books, I was cutting down the trees and grinding them out so the buggers would have something to write on! What do you say to that? And all from a standing start! Father was a reprobate, you see: a drunk and a womaniser. I have no shame, not like your old dad, sir, who was a fine man. My old man, if you'll excuse the phrase, wouldn't lift a hand to anything except the handle of his beer glass, or the bare tit of some whore in a beer cellar. I'm sorry. You won't want to hear this, and I dare say for a man of your experience behind the gavel you will have heard it all a thousand times and won't think better of me for hearing it now, but I believe a man should be rewarded for his efforts, and if things were made hard for him, why shouldn't he be given more credit, not less? Not having had the benefit of, you know, the silver spoon and the five hundred a year that some men had—your own doctor being one of them—and God knows has he not made enough mention of it? His bloody family! You never hear the end of it. With mine dead, or useless, and I don't recall him ever stopping to wonder if I had heard enough of his bloody privilege. You will excuse me for losing my temper, the excitement has quite got to me. Are you warm enough. Would you like a drink of something? I'm sure one of the boys will have a flask about him, and I don't mind asking in the circumstance, although usually I turn a blind eye, the policy on the matter being to forbid them spirits out of a need for respectability, particularly in the eyes of the police, who might otherwise take use for a bunch of brigands. Ha! You see my point? We don't make a habit of it, this kind of thing. Technically breaking the law, I suppose, but when the law—or the natural law—has been broke, what alternative is there? A man cannot be kept like an animal, and if he is, wouldn't it be against the law to allow the situation to continue when one has the means to correct it? The technicalities I leave to my lawyer, and I pay him well enough. If there is a means by which this act can become legal he will find it, and first they would have to prove it, and as you are the only sensible witness if they would take your word at all—if you excuse me, taking you for a lunatic as they do—and I'm sure you would have no reason to testify against me, not when you see what we have done in the cause of justice, and you the central part of it, at least for me. My inspiration as it were! Ever since I read your great words and never was a truer title given, in my opinion and while I am not a great reader I have read other pieces with the title and it is my opinion that *Denkwürdigkeiten* has never been more properly used, than in this case. Inspiring!

The dual nature of the asylum. Schreber imagines the failure of the Monist confederacy. Muller surprises Schreber. Schreber obeys the commands of the voices. Rössler is angered by the disobedience with which he is met.

11

There were two sides to this asylum—the male and the female. I mean this as a base fact. It is not to say that there are aspects of the building, or of the mood, or of the functioning of the institution which could be categorised as masculine or feminine. The soul must deny its natural desire to tend toward abstracts. I intend no discussion of the higher existence of the place. It was divided, down the middle, so that one side of the structure, the left as one physically enters through the doors, was given over to men, and the other to women. Schreber, although he might have strenuously resisted, was taken and placed in the male section of the asylum, due to his possession, from birth, of a simple tube of flesh not present on the bodies of those placed to the right of the building. While a soul will rightly have long forgotten the distinction that divided this place, or will not yet have come across it, in Schreber's life and in the life of that place, the division was utterly central. There was no passing between the two sides, and no exceptions were ever made. As no such division is allowed to exist in Heaven, it is understandable that this matter is perhaps the most puzzling aspect of Schreber's life. That makes it no less important in the understanding of Schreber's case, and while the division was enforced without cessation that is not to say that there was no intermingling between the two sides, though it should be said that it was almost entirely illicit.

Muller, for example, kept up relations with a female orderly charged with the care of hysterics, and there were many occasions when—particularly after the day's work was finished and the patients were locked in their rooms—intercourse of all kinds took place between the two sides of the asylum, and information flowed freely. It came to the attention of one of the patients on the female side of the building that Schreber had arrived, and there was considerable interest, particularly in Muller's companion's patient Lucia. A compact was made that would see that Muller made efforts to ensure Schreber and Lucia would meet and, that afternoon, when Muller came to tell Schreber he could have no paints, not at least from Rössler, and that the Judge had better get down to playing the piano before Rössler arrived for their meeting, Schreber was unaware that Muller was determined to plant the idea in the old man's head that it was in his interests to go over to the women's side of the asylum, the later intention being to further convince him that he might meet with Lucia.

Her motives for this meeting were largely hidden, but the provision of small sums of money to both orderlies was enough to oil the mechanism, and it was with

this money that Muller, in anticipation of larger sums to be given in the future, had taken a stroll into the town and bought a square of oil paint and a brush from a tinker who ran a stall selling everything that exists.

Now Muller stood, thick black hairs poking from beneath his cuffs and collars, with the paint and brush in one hand and his other made into a fist, and he drew his lips back over his teeth and then pouted, both movements made in less than a second, three or four times at the same time as he cleared his throat.

He knocked on the door.

The door opened before he could open his fist and grip the door handle, preparatory to opening the door himself. Schreber was there on the other side, his shirt off, and, Muller quickly recognised, he had been pinching at his breast and nipples and there were red welts everywhere.

‘Do I seem to you to be a woman, or a man?’ he asked, and because it was not the first time he had asked the question, nor the first time he had stood before Muller with his chest bared and his nipples sore, and also because he had answered “a man” in the past and knew the consequences, Muller said:

‘You look like a lovely woman, Judge, and if I were ten years older then I... no, I can’t say it.’

Schreber looked at him.

‘Don’t be ridiculous, man,’ he said, after a while. ‘So you see them, then? The swellings of the mammae, under the hairs of my chest, the redness and puffiness where the heat from the nerves of voluptuousness meets under the skin around the nipples?’

‘Yes, Judge, I see it all—the voluptuousness and the nipples and the mammae—it’s all there plain as day, so if you...’

‘Then it is over.’

Muller sighed and, though he knew better than to ask, he said:

‘What is over?’

‘God’s withdrawal. He returns. The power of the Monist Confederacy wanes and God comes closer. His searching rays return, and where they seek the blank and mute consciousness of a woman, they provoke by miracle the creation of womanly feeling in me.’

‘Isn’t that good? I thought that was what you wanted? It was what you wanted last week.’

‘That was before, that was before,’ wailed Schreber, and he ran to his desk and began to write.

‘Well, Judge, I don’t know what to make of you sometimes, I really don’t. One week you want to rub yourself up constantly, and the next it’s the last thing you want. Just like a woman, I suppose,’ he said and chuckled to himself. ‘Anyway, never mind all that, I’ve come to tell you that Rössler wants you to stick at the piano.’

Schreber span in his chair

‘What! But I told you, I must paint. It’s my only hope. I have been told to paint and the Confederacy must have what it requires, before it is too late.’

‘Yes, well, I told Rössler what you said, although not in so many words, and he

said that when a doctor issues a command to his patient it is the patient's duty to obey that command, and that it does not, and must not be assumed that it would, work the other way around, meaning that you should stop telling him what to do and let him tell you what to do, unless you want to stay ill all your life. He was very firm about it.'

'But...'

'Hold on, don't panic!' and he pulled the paint and brush from his pocket.

'And don't say I never give you anything.'

'Where did you get them?'

'Well, I can't say, there's the thing.'

'Do you want money? I have money,' Schreber reached into his drawer and gave him a note.

'Well, I won't say no, but they were a gift, you see, from someone in the ladies' quarters. She told me to keep quiet about it. Now, I know that you are sworn off the womanly articles and what not, but do you think that will last long? Or do you reckon you might be back to fancying the odd trinket and female bit and bob—like a necklace, or a petticoat, or whatever—like I seem to remember was all you could go on about last week?'

Schreber unwrapped the block of oil with clumsy fingers, the jelly-like mass trembling and squeezing between his fingers and out onto the desk, vivid yellow, brighter than anything and leaking a thinner clear fluid so that it seeped into the grain of the desk.

'It's only that,' and Muller turned so he could see whether anyone was likely to overhear him, and lowered his voice to a gruff croak, 'it's only that, with the help of a friend of mine, well, we might be able to help you out, if you know what I mean.'

Schreber looked at the mound of paint on the surface of his desk and it lost its shape almost without him seeing how it happened, the lack of constriction and containment allowing it to ooze away in all directions at once, and what had been nearly a square was becoming nearly a circle, like a yellow yolk with around it the clear albumen, hardly present at all, and by no means in the same proportion as in an egg, but there nonetheless, transparent and gleaming and slickening the surface, and it slowly spread out so that he held his palm against the nearest edge of the table against its eventual escape to the floor.

'It's just, you see, for a price—bribes and whatever of the other orderlies, not me, but the others—we might get you over to the women's side—despite it being strictly forbidden, one might guess so that the rougher types on our side don't try to molest the ladies, though my friend on their side says it'll be the ladies that do the molesting and not in that way either, but its just when the ladies lose it Judge, they do lose it good and proper, and not just in reckoning that God is this and that, and that Heaven is this and that, and that if I can't get my piano, or my paints, God will be cross or whatever—no disrespect to you, Judge—but they go a bit wild on account of the womb, so my friend says, and one of their lot pulled some other girl's eye out, for nothing more than that she reminded her of her mother, or something. It went back in, after a bit of fuss, but its near useless now on account of how it can't point in the

right direction. But not to worry you! Clearly, my friend has taken this into account, and the piece they have lined up for you—to swap dressing up things with and ideas on women's matters—she's very ladylike still. Used to be a dancer, and is a fine looking girl, they say, except with a squint, coincidentally, and a scar, but I don't imagine that will be of much concern for an old gent such as yourself. Anyway, what I'm trying to say is that, if you ever wanted to, or thought it might be helpful to you, then, even though old Rössler is dead against it and I could lose my job, it wouldn't be a terrible expense, or difficulty, to get you over on the odd evening, when the doc's in bed, and you could, very cheaply, get some female chat and the odd trinket, at extra cost of course. What do you think of that, Judge?

The paint was pooling against his right palm and so, without the use of his right hand, he had to take the brush with his weaker left arm and the exact moment the brush was between his fingers he felt a charge in him coming up from his gut and meeting an equivalent force coming down from the top of his head, and the bristles of the brush were attracted as magnets are attracted to each other to the yellow of the paint, and the instant the brush was coated the polarity of the magnetism was reversed and Schreber held the brush in front of his face and it shook with intention, vibrating a tiny distance in all directions so that it appeared to shimmer in front of his eyes.

'Paper!' he cried.

'What about what I was saying?'

'Paper!' he repeated.

'Good God,' Muller sighed, and he took some paper from the desk, not six inches from where Schreber was sitting, and pushed it pointedly in front of him. The paintbrush Schreber held in front of his face performed a perfect arc through the air and continued until the tip and the paper touched, and the yellow paint bled from the paint brush onto the paper, clear oil first and then, with a little pressure, the pigment, and the brush continued to move, drawing behind it a thin perfectly straight line of yellow, and Schreber watched, his face a few inches from the surface of the paper, his mouth open and his breath causing the paint to dry slightly and lose its lustre. After an inch or two, the paint dried on the brush, the excess transferred to the paper, and without conscious thought Schreber brought it back over to the pool on the table which was now spreading beyond the reach of the span of his hand, exceeding his ability to contain it, and it snaked over the edge of the table top and fell in fat drops onto the fabric of his trousers, each one sitting a perfect hemisphere on the thick weave of the tweed, no two in the same place because, amazed at the sight of the paint on the paper, Schreber was fidgeting in his chair, shifting from left to right, from buttock to buttock and trembling across the shoulders.

When the brush returned to the page and set a new line, at right angles to the first, he risked a quick glance at Muller, hoping to see in him some sign of recognition of the miracle that was being performed no more than an inch now in front of his gaping mouth, and Schreber swallowed, tasting the thick astringency of the paint, somehow found on his palate. Muller saw nothing, and, before he could ask again if there was some way Schreber might be convinced to take a paid trip to the women's

quarters, the door opened.

Muller stiffened to see Dr Rössler, a bundle of papers held to his chest with one arm, and the other halfway to his face to push his glasses up his nose to allow him to make a survey of the room. Muller, quicker than could possibly be imagined for a man of his size and mental acuity, turned his back on Schreber and, with his hands behind him, tried to retrieve both the paint and paper.

‘Muller,’ Rössler said, ‘what are you trying to hide?’

‘Nothing, sir.’

‘Really,’ the doctor said, his glasses now firmly on the bridge of his nose and the room, consequently, in near perfect focus.

‘Really, sir.’

Rössler sighed and it was only his very low opinion of the working classes that prevented his from dismissing Muller on the spot. What would be the point, after all, when any replacement he could find would be similarly mendacious?

‘Might I ask then why my patient has a yellow hand?’

Muller looked on the verge of constructing an argument, but the task was obviously too much for him, and instead he simply bowed his head and stepped away from Schreber, the movement designed to provide Rössler with an unimpeded view and hence remove the need for explanation. Simultaneously, he tried to secrete the paintbrush in the waistband of his trousers.

Rössler surveyed the scene, but the look on his face—one of puzzlement and irritation—did not alter in any way.

‘Let me tell you what I can see, Muller, and then, if you will, you might honour me with an outline of how I come to see what I see. Firstly, I see the piano I leased this morning, closed at the keys, unattended by my patient, Schreber, who, rather than at the place I ordered you to put him, the piano stool, is sitting at his desk, upon which there is a stain of yellow, a paper with yellow mess upon it, and a number of yellow handprints. Schreber himself has a yellow hand and yellow paint on his trousers. Schreber is antagonised. His expression, and periodical outbursts, are those of a child who has been deprived of a play object. You stand before me, and, behind your back, your hands—which you are seeking to hide—are a flurry of activity. Now, before I put this sheaf of sheet music down on the piano and begin to take Schreber through his piano playing, I will have an explanation that fits what I have just described, and, I will add, I expect to hear in this explanation some indication of your culpability in bringing the said state of affairs about, and if one is not present, I shall assume you are lying.’

Muller thought for a second and having no recourse to anything other than the truth he said.

‘The patient asked me if I could get him some paints and he gave me a little money to buy him some, so I went into town and picked up a packet of yellow paint and bought it to him. I did try to get him to play the piano but he was determined to paint. He says the sound of the notes hurts his head, and that he won’t play. Despite the fact that I told him he must.’

Rössler nodded.

‘A surprisingly honest response, thank you, Muller. You may leave.’

§

They act against me, my allies. He returns and he is angry. I must be allowed my objects. I must be allowed to open my window. Where is my wife, and why does she refuse to come to me?