

*Queer(ing) Masculinity: Daniel Paul Schreber & The Madness of the Penetrated Male Body*

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I've always preferred to think of queer as a verb rather than a noun, a doing word rather than a naming one. For me, this allows something to happen, and queer can provide a way of effecting a certain dynamics by which shifts, movements, ruptures – or as William Haver calls them – interruptions. Not adding to epistemology, but rather shaking its very foundations. I'm going to attempt to queer masculinity through a reading of Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1903). Focusing on the representation of the penetrated male body within that text, I will demonstrate how this abject body is often made to register not only as 'female' but also, and as a consequence, 'psychotic'. I will be suggesting that the submission by which 'masculinity' registers within the socio-symbolic order is effected by a process of penetration that remainder the male body, marking it as 'waste' and associating it with a pejorative femininity. Taboos not only against anality and anal intercourse, but, by extension, against so-called passivity and powerlessness, come into play in our traditional understanding of the penetrated male body. Through the cultural associations that link the concept 'body' and the concept 'woman', the name 'feminine' is given to any breach of the taboo against penetrating the male body. As will be shown, the chain of equivalences which binds these two abject bodies significantly includes the notion of 'psychosis' and 'waste'. The modern equivalence of the concept 'body' with that of 'woman', and its subsequent polarisation from 'man', are revealed as both highly rigid and highly unstable.

Schreber's psychosis will be seen to be coterminous with a penetration of the male body which, within late nineteenth century discourse, could only register as female. As such, the reason, or 'mind', that Schreber claims to have lost is recouped within the terms of his psychosis, which reinscribes the cultural associations of corporeal penetrability with femininity. Moreover, the underlying sensation to which Schreber's text bears witness is a deeply troubling eroticism, or what he calls 'voluptuousness'. Whilst this voluptuousness or excess is presented within Schreber's text as the conceptual opposite of reason/rationality, it nevertheless remains as the motor of his discourse, thus undermining the polarity by which these two concepts adhere. Lacan's notion of the *point de capiton*, or quilting point, will be used to demonstrate how the fixing of meaning and the penetrability of the male body are intertwined, and how the psychosis Schreber experiences is but an extreme form of the processes by which the male subject *means* something within the symbolic order. Penetrability will be shown to be necessary for masculine subjectivity to register at all within what I am calling the protocols of representation. By this I mean the discursive or logistic terms by which the penetrated male body registers as somehow 'female'; that is, it appears 'logically' within a feminine paradigm. These chains of equivalence mark 'the body' as inherently penetrable, delineating a discursive field that implies masculine impenetrability at the same time as it problematizes the connection between the concept 'man' and the concept 'body'. As Susan Bordo argues, "the deep associations of masculinity as active, constitutive (and self-constituting) subjectivity and femininity as a passive, 'natural', bodily state underlie the equation of penetrability with femininity" (Bordo 1994, 288).

Daniel Paul Schreber (1842-1911) suffered two serious mental breakdowns during his adult life, for which he was institutionalised. He worked in the German courts and was successful enough to be appointed *Senatpräsident* or presiding judge of the third chamber of the Supreme Court of Appeals at the age of fifty one, the youngest man ever to be appointed that position. His first breakdown in 1884 followed his failure to be elected for the National Liberal Party, and his primary symptom was hypochondria. He spent six months in a clinic run by Dr. Paul Flechsig, the same doctor to whom he turned eight years later when his second breakdown occurred, which was also the outcome of a certain failure of his civic role. A month after taking up his new prestigious post of *Senatpräsident*, Schreber's anxiety over his ability to perform this task was such that hospitalisation was required again, this time for a period of nine years. This time, however, his main symptoms were delusional and paranoid. His delirium was grounded in the belief that, in the words of the medical expert's report:

he is called to redeem the world and to bring back to mankind the lost state of Blessedness. He maintains he has been given this task by direct divine inspiration....The most essential part of his mission of redemption is that it is necessary for him first of all to be transformed into a woman  
(cited Schreber, 1988, 272)

Such transformation was to be achieved by an act of divine penetration, to keep it within what Schreber called the Order of the World. The fact that beyond his own 'mad cosmology' such transformation was *not* within the order of things, but the sign of a radical psychosis, tells us as much about that order - its limits, its laws and strictures - as it does about Schreber's 'madness'.

Upon his release in 1902, Schreber began writing *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, based on the notes he had been keeping since 1897. It was published in 1903, and Carl Jung gave a copy to Freud in the summer of 1910. Freud published his own interpretation of the case in 1911, the year Schreber died.

As both high court judge *and* certified lunatic, Schreber embodies - and his text mirrors - a profound uncertainty about the Law through which his words make sense, and not only or most importantly to himself. It is the Law not as merely a set of codes of punishment based on a classical understanding of what constitutes the Best for society, but the Law as a moral structure grounded in itself. According to Deleuze, this is a distinctly modern notion of The Law, by which "the object of the law is by definition unknowable and elusive" (1991, 83). As such, "the law cannot specify its object without self-contradiction, nor can it define itself with reference to a content without removing the repression on which it rests" (Deleuze 1991, 85). Schreber's text signals, and bridges, the radical demarcation of the private domain and the public domain, and does so through an emphasis on their highly gendered structuration. The text blurs those boundaries. There is no definitive or clear-cut division between 'Schreber the judge' and 'Schreber the madman', for when does one end and the other begin? How much of the latter was latent in the former? In this sense, madness is not simply reason's 'other'. The *Memoirs*, after all, were based on notes presented as evidence of his sanity to a court which subsequently released him from the asylum, a fact that is in no way diminished by its eventual fate as a statement of profound psychosis, but rather broadens the problematic of the text in fascinating and as yet unexplored ways. What is it then that the *Memoirs* can tell

us, not simply about the status of language within modernity, but also its gendered limitations, its connections to the body, its mappings of a space 'outside' reason which, at the same time, casts into relief certain aspects of reason? For how can one and the same text be exemplary of both the reasoning mind and a profound loss of it? Or, in Foucault's words, "which syntax functions *at the same time* on the level of declared meaning *and* on that of interpreted signification?" (Foucault 1998, 8, original emphasis.) Further: in what ways is this epistemological uncertainty associated with or correlated to the vicissitudes of the flesh? The central concern, then, will be how the Schreber case might aid the examination of the epistemological currency of certain concepts – such as 'submission', 'power', 'madness', 'reason' – in the light of their implicit associations with the concepts 'man' and 'woman', and what role the penetrated male body plays in both consolidating and breaking these associations.

Several months before the onslaught of his psychosis, Schreber recalls having the following experience:

One morning while still in bed (whether still half asleep or already awake I cannot remember), I had a feeling which, thinking about it later when fully awake, struck me as highly peculiar. It was the idea that it really must be rather pleasant to be a woman succumbing to intercourse  
(Schreber 1988, 63)

This lazy, hazy, half-dream of sexual submission occurs within and establishes a limit: a border zone between the unconscious state of sleep and the conscious state of wakefulness. Whilst submission is clearly aligned with 'woman', its contemplation provokes ambiguity, instability, forgetfulness ("whether still half asleep or already awake I cannot remember"). An idea considered 'highly peculiar' when revisited in the cold light of day was, within

the relative safety of a dream-like state, thought 'rather pleasant'. This zone, this 'dream', has been isolated by Freud as the cause and origin of the *Senatpräsident's* mental breakdown, and is interpreted by him as a simple homosexual wish-fulfilment, which he derives from Schreber's delusional belief in his becoming a woman.

In Eric L. Santner's study of Schreber, he claims that Schreber's psychosis demonstrates

what may very well be the central paradox of modernity: that the subject is solicited by a will to autonomy in the name of the very community that is thereby undermined, whose very substance thereby passes over into the subject (Santner 1996, 145)

In Santner's account, modernity is a paradox because communality is undermined by autonomy. The subject only appears through an appropriation of the community's "very substance". This substance *enters into* the subject in order that the subject can *be* at all. As such, Immanuel Kant's definition of Enlightenment as a break away from submissive tutelage and the development of self-reflexivity or autonomy (Kant 1959, 85) is incompatible with those symbolic resources by which the social hegemony legitimises itself, such as law, or monarchy, or state. The social requires conformity to those symbolic resources in the manner of a submission to their efficacy, to the exact extent that autonomy, or Kantian Enlightenment, if achieved at all, would paradoxically undermine the social by bringing those very resources under scrutiny.

It has been well-documented how the rise of a 'private self' at the start of the nineteenth century threw into disarray the coherence of a 'public self'. As Peter Gay points out in his study of what he calls that century's "effort to map

inner space”(Gay 1998, 4), the production of the modern self led to a situation in which “the individual’s imperious desires and the needs of civilisation are usually at odds”(Gay 1998, 9). There is thus a radical conflict - perhaps an impossibility, or *differend* - between the impulse to be one’s own person and one’s duty to the societal whole, one’s submission to a leader/Law. Heteronomy versus autonomy. For Santner, modernity *is* this conflict.

Given the highly gendered character of this public/private division, and given the tropes of submission to male rule implicit in this paradox, it is clear that for men becoming a subject inevitably involves an inescapable, though unarticulated, moment of homosexual panic<sup>1</sup>: can one submit to another man without losing one’s manhood? The paradox of submitting to another male (God, King, *Führer*, Father, et cetera) versus ‘being a man’, i.e., autonomous, self-sufficient. How to submit whilst remaining dominant? How to negotiate the symbolic order without conforming to it through a submission it demands or necessitates? The gender implications of this conflict inevitably raise the question of masculine submission, as it functions at/as the very foundation of modern male subjectivity.

Since at least the end of the eighteenth century, the concept of submission has been gendered more or less explicitly within terms by which women submit and men dominate. The reversal of this model within *fin-de-siècle* male masochism, whilst undoubtedly challenging the naturalisation of these terms,

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase ‘homosexual panic’ is from Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), where it refers to that equivocal moment where the socially drawn line between being a man’s man and being interested in men becomes dangerously blurred (89). In Santner’s analysis of Schreber, he uses the term to describe Freud’s interpretation of Schreber’s breakdown. See Eric L. Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber’s Secret History of Modernity*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996, 17).

nevertheless retains the symmetry of its gendered structuration: the *belle dame sans merci* takes on the 'male' role of domination, the man the 'female' role of submission, the latter occasioning both a fascinating *jouissance* and an abject terror. In short, submission is always conceptualised as 'feminine', domination as 'masculine'. Moreover, submission is always conflated with passivity, whilst domination is conflated with activity. For a man to submit to patriarchy - to the father/leader - is to make himself passive, and that concept in turn, as we know, is often coded as feminine. Therefore, paradoxically, for a man to submit to masculinist discourse is to render himself in some sense 'female' within the terms of the symbolic order that equate femininity with submission. A dilemma in the form of a paradox lies at the heart of that which is all too often considered most comprehensively stable.

Between the disciplinary command to have a body and the actual sensations of that body lies a space which, for men at least, has been the cause of great anxiety. That command is a highly disciplinary silencing, a denial of those sensations and a blanket refusal to concede that they play any role in our experience of knowledge: as a man, one must not 'know' one's own body. It is thus a space in which the male body vanishes if the command is to be obeyed; that is, if the body is to signify as male at all. Social bodies of men - those institutions that have tended to uphold a belief in objectivity and reason as the only reliable forms of knowledge - therefore retain and perpetrate that very domination which must be abdicated on the individual level by submission to the laws of the group upon entry to it. These laws allow that individual to exist, to signify, only so long as they are strictly followed. To be a man is to discipline and dominate the culturally coded 'private' domain of the body and its sensations.



'Manhood' is the prize bestowed upon successful completion of this task. For the sake of self-preservation, masculinity is performed, and such performativity, as Judith Butler argues, constitutes its claim to essence (Butler 1990).

Such mimicry for the sake of self-preservation, however, is highly unstable, for the Law contains within its performativity a necessary repetition in constant danger of mutating and producing an alternative that, through a form of symbolic excommunication, constitutes the greatest challenge to its unquestioned immutability. In this respect, Schreber provides a unique focal point for this discursive instability, being at once both judge and madman, both within the law and out of it. Because Schreber's words were generated in a lunatic asylum, and not a court of law, the location of his discourse serves to highlight the limits of a knowledge co-opted for the justification of patriarchy and social domination. As Schreber himself remarks, "what can be more definite for a human being than what he has lived through and felt on his own body?" (Schreber 1988, 99n).

Modern male subjectivity is only intelligible – paradoxically - through a penetrability it cannot subsequently concede, but must actively avoid if it is to retain its masculine status. As such, the body's inherent penetrability is overcome by a performative disembodiment promoted through the will to knowledge and achieved through the domination of, and distancing from, nature (as Other/woman/body). The skin thus functions as an epistemological limit, even in the most phantasmatic journeyings beyond it. The body is tamed and contained by a logic of the skin that embeds sexual difference within the very mappings of its surface.

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud attempts to trace the formation of the ego as “first and foremost a bodily ego” (Freud 1986, 451); that is, “not merely a surface entity, but...itself the projection of a surface”. In a footnote added in 1927, he further explains that

the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides...representing the superficies of the mental apparatus (Freud 1986, 451)

It is worth recalling, here, that, for Freud “the ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions”(Freud 1986, 450). The commonsensical ego battles with the irrational id, coding bodily sensation according to symbolic mandates which gender the conflict. These codes become codes of conduct, permitting or prohibiting what the body can do. For example, Freud characterises Schreber’s psychosis as a conflict between a ‘feminine phantasy’ of passivity and a ‘masculine protest’ against it (Freud 1977). For him, Schreber’s paranoia is a refusal to recognise his homosexual desire to submit to another man. Homosexual desire becomes, in Freud’s reading, coded as a desire to be a woman, placing Freud’s analysis within the tradition of late nineteenth-century sexological theories of homosexuality as a third sex; a female soul trapped in a male body. The gravitational pull of Freud’s analysis is towards a direct correspondence between Schreber’s life and the work of his *Memoirs*, a correspondence which will shortly be challenged.

The French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu develops Freud’s insights into ego-formation as bodily projection into what he calls a ‘skin ego’. The skin ego, Anzieu argues, is

a reality of the order of phantasy: it figures in phantasies, dreams, everyday speech, posture and disturbances of thought; and it provides the imaginary space on which phantasies, dreams, thinking and every form of psychopathological organization are constituted...The Skin Ego is an intermediate structure of the psychical apparatus(Anzieu 1989, 4)

The skin ego is an interface between the body as object and the mind as subject, a psychic map of sensations, of one's experience of one's own body and its place in the world, its relation to itself and things external to it, out of which a self is generated. If it becomes a space of psychopathology, as it did for Schreber, a rupture occurs between the world 'out there' and the inner organisation of the subject.

According to psychoanalysis, the ego has no prior status, but emerges, is constructed, from experience, sensation, or consciousness. Yet the ego must make sense of these sensations within the rubric of a symbolic mandate which insists on sexual differentiation as a decisive factor in the interpretation and articulation of bodily cognition. The ego must answer the question - and not only once - of whether the 'I' through which it expresses itself is male or female, for, as Lacan states, the question of gender is the basis of all meaningful expression within the symbolic order. As such, the answer to the question *Am I a man, or am I a woman?* functions as the ground for all meaning, making it function also as a limit - a limit which is also a rupture. For, finding an adequate answer to that question presupposes the concepts 'man' and 'woman' are mutually exclusive absolutes and that locating oneself at one of those poles immediately and necessarily cancels out the possibility of being at the other: If I am a man, it is because I am not a woman, and *vice versa*.

Significantly, answering this question only serves the purposes of the symbolic order, for “[i]n the psyche there is nothing by which the subject may situate himself [*sic*] as a male or female being”(Lacan 1986, 204). The psyche, for Lacan, is radically inept when it comes to categorising itself, be it within the rubric of gender dimorphism or otherwise. It is only in the symbolic order, only in relation to its Other - that is, only in language - that the subject emerges as an ‘I’ and simultaneously genders that ‘I’ as ‘male’ or ‘female’ - positions which, it will be recalled, do not, Lacan maintains, naturally or necessarily correspond to the biological categories which go by those same names. Nevertheless, they do name for him a relation to sexual reproduction which equates the polarity of the ‘male’ with that of activity and the polarity of the ‘female’ with that of passivity (Lacan 1986, 204). For Lacan anything passive is symbolically meaningful only as ‘female’, however disassociated from ‘woman’ that concept may be in his libidinal economy. So, whilst he breaks the biological or anatomical link between ‘female’ and ‘woman’, he nevertheless remains bound by the cultural associations that form a chain of equivalence linking the concept of ‘female’ with the concept of ‘passivity’.

The limit imposed by such seemingly necessary absolutism also implies a ‘beyond’ (or behind) for which no answers can as yet be found, a ‘something’ in excess of the answer itself, something in excess, that is, of being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’. For to answer that question is only ever to locate a limit to the event of masculinity or femininity, and therefore to reinscribe the very logic by which such an answer is provided.

As Anzieu argues, the skin is “the interface which marks the boundary with the outside and keeps that outside out; it is the barrier which *protects*

*against penetration*”(Anzieu 1989, 40, emphasis added). But what happens when the transgression of that boundary is experienced as pleasurable? What happens when such penetration, far from being guarded against, is instead desired?

There is in Schreber's *Memoirs* a clear and vital ambiguity around penetration, a kind of masochistic thrill at overcoming its threat or enduring its pleasures. Through what Santner calls 'corporeal mnemotechnics' the body becomes invested with a performative duty to stay on the right side of the Law by always and repeatedly remembering to do the right thing. That the 'right thing' for the male body to do is remain paranoically impenetrable is apparent not only in the Schreber case, where recognition of the body as a site of penetrability functions to erase its masculinity and reason and construct instead a female, irrational body. The penetrated *male* body becomes something unrepresentable, in excess of a logic within which it cannot register.

For Schreber, the body was a source of pleasurable and disturbing sensations, a site of penetrability, that had to be forgotten in order to be represented - and it was represented, within his text as within discourse more generally, as both female and psychotic. He could not 'picture' his body - could not describe it - other than as a body being transformed into its apparent opposite. The skin as a surface open to both pleasure and rupture could not register as male for Schreber, nor for the culture in which his text 'makes sense', except as a moment of psychosis. If his body can only register as the 'other' of itself (i.e., female), then his language can only register as the 'other' of reason (i.e., madness). This registration or representation is a process of what Kristeva calls abjection, "a vortex of summons and repulsion" that "places the one

haunted by it literally beside himself” (Kristeva 1982, 1). The abject is not an object, but a process, a movement by which fascination and terror become satellites of desire; it “simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject” (Kristeva 1982, 5). Someone undergoing such a procedure, Kristeva argues, “presents himself with his own body and ego as the most precious non-objects; they are no longer seen in their own right but forfeited, abject” (Kristeva 1982, 5). Through this abjection, Schreber’s body is “ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable” (Kristeva 1982, 1), and drawn “toward a place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva 1982, 2). The protocols of representation no longer hold true, co-ordinates become scrambled, and binary logic breaks down.

That Schreber’s manhood was part and parcel of his reason, so that losing one meant losing the other, suggests that the gendered structurings of language are so inbuilt within the Western discourse of subjectivity that to refuse them or question them is to cease to be in any traditional sense ‘rational’ or ‘reasonable’, i.e., to be no longer fully sane.

Schreber’s ‘rather pleasant’ dream of passivity so poignantly figures for him the collapse of sexual difference that at the height of his psychosis, when he is assailed by talking rays from the sun, he is taunted with the phrase: “Fancy a person who was a *Senatspräsident* allowing himself to be f....d” (Schreber 1988, 148). This foregrounds, as Kaja Silverman points out, “the opposition between his sexuality and his professional position” (Silverman 1993, 351). To Schreber’s mind a passive sexuality does not accord with an active public life. To be passive is not only to be powerless, but also to be unworthy of power. As suggested above, Schreber’s body/text is the site of a radical conflict between the public

and the private as they are embodied in specific gender categories. On another occasion the rays call him "Miss Schreber" (1988, 119) - which appears in English in the original, suggesting to Marjorie Garber the absent phallus, what is soon to be *missing* (Garber 1992, 207). It is also suggestive, however, of the fact that in allowing himself to be "f....d" Schreber himself has gone missing, made himself absent. In addition, the unmarried status of *Miss Schreber* renders him/her even more invisible within a culture where a woman's status is contingent upon her legal attachment to a man. The sexual politics are clear enough: a position of public authority requires somebody (some 'body') incapable of penetrative submission, incapable even of contemplating it. To allow oneself to be "f....d" is to lose control, is to become 'Miss'-ing (unmarried, dispossessed, unregistered, unseen). Losing the job title loses him the phallus, that is, his reason. Being a man means having things (phallus, title, authority, knowledge, reason), not missing them.

It comes as no surprise, then, to find Schreber vehemently distancing himself from such a position as that of the penetrated woman. After describing the above mentioned daydream, Schreber insists that the idea of playing the receptive role in sexual intercourse "was so *foreign* to my whole nature that I may say I would have rejected it with indignation if fully awake" (Schreber 1988, 63, emphasis added). Instead, he attributes its occurrence upon "some external influences" which must have planted the idea in him (Schreber 1988, 63), not recognising that such a move is equally contingent upon his penetration from without. Elsewhere in the *Memoirs* he apologises for having to touch on "issues of which as a man *I have to be ashamed*" (Schreber 1988, 206, emphasis added). By way of exoneration, he explains that the process of transformation into a

woman - what he calls “unmanning” (*Entmannung*) - is God’s will (Schreber 1988, 148).

This process of unmanning, Schreber explains,

consisted in the (external) male genitals (penis and scrotum) being retracted into the body and the internal sexual organs being at the same time transformed into the corresponding female sexual organs (Schreber 1988, 73)

It is a process he claims to have experienced himself. He writes: “several times (particularly in bed) there were marked indications of an actual retraction of the male organ” (Schreber 1988, 132). As the signifier of his social status recedes, his penetrability increases. It is also a process Schreber was clearly unhappy not only with experiencing but with recounting. “In order not to lose through such a confession the respect of other people whose opinion I value”, writes Schreber, he must endeavour to *justify* the importance of talking about such things. He must *make sense* of his exposure to and experience of penetration. To this end he explains:

Few people have been brought up according to such strict moral principles as I, and have throughout life practised such moderation especially in matters of sex, as I venture to claim for myself. Mere low sensuousness can therefore not be considered a motive in my case; were satisfaction of my manly pride still possible, I would naturally much prefer it; nor would I ever betray any sexual lust in contact with other people. But as soon as I am alone with God, if I may so express myself, I must continually or at least at certain times, strive to give divine rays the impression of a woman in the height of sexual delight, to achieve this I have to employ all possible means, and have to strain all my intellectual powers and foremost my imagination (Schreber 1988, 208)



It thus becomes Schreber's moral duty to "imagine myself as man and woman in one person having intercourse with myself, or somehow have to achieve with myself a certain sexual excitement etc. - which perhaps under other circumstances might be considered immoral" (Schreber 1988, 208). To conform to God's wishes, he strives to make "absolute passivity [his] duty" (Schreber 1988, 145). There is thus not simply a reversal of gender in Schreber's new world, but a reversal of morality - indeed, gender and morality become almost interchangeable terms, such that gender itself becomes a form of morality: there are 'good' genders and 'bad' genders. With this reversal, what Schreber knows to be unacceptable or immoral behaviour according to his strict moral upbringing - i.e., "mere low sensuousness" - becomes not simply acceptable but obligatory. What had hitherto been the sign of "moral decay ('voluptuous excesses')" (Schreber 1988, 72) becomes instead the sign of moral duty. As Santner argues, "Schreber discovers that power not only prohibits, moderates, says 'no', but may also work to intensify and amplify the body and its sensations" (Santner 1996, 32). But in order to do so, Schreber must become a woman.

Schreber's acceptance of his role as 'God's whore', then, is by no means immediate. His initial response is one of resistance; he battles against this unmanning by which he is to be robbed not only of his masculinity but of his reason: "my whole sense of manliness and manly honour, my entire moral being, rose up against it", he writes (Schreber 1988, 76). For Schreber, to become unmanned - to become a woman - is coterminous with losing one's Reason (Schreber 1988, 78-79, 99).

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari develop a radical theory of subjectivity which posits the subject as a residue of the processes of coding and

overcoding by which the flows and multiplicities of the social body are mapped and restrained. The chaotic unravelling of these restraints – as in cases of psychosis, such as Schreber's – they call decoding. They argue that in advanced societies such as ours decoding and coding are almost indistinguishable processes. That is, the high levels of complexity found in modern life necessitate an understanding of the subject as always already fractured, or 'schizzo'. In short, fragmentation at the level of the ego is the inevitable outcome of modern overcoding. Because of this, their form of 'schizo-analysis' regards the psychotic as having something fundamentally profound to say about the nature of the processes of overcoding by which the body is repressed. Furthermore, they link these processes to the original privatisation of the anus – the first erogenous zone that the infant learns to repudiate, repressing its possibilities for pleasure. They adopt the Freudian notion of the anus as "the symbol of everything that is to be repudiated and excluded from life" (Freud 1977, 104n). It is a process, however, that, due to the close proximity of the anus with the genitals, remains profoundly contradictory and unstable. For Freud, anal eroticism is never fully repressed.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the anus was "the first organ to suffer privatization, removal from the social field" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 143); as a consequence "the entire history of primitive coding, of despotic overcoding, and of the decoding of private man" is founded on "the model and memory of the disgraced anus" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 211). They argue that the process of language acquisition is not only governed by the primacy of the phallus as the master signifier, as Lacan proposes, but also, that the acts of separation and rejection characteristic of defecation prefigure the differentiation techniques of

signification. In other words, language is not only acquired through the removal of the anus from any social function, but also through the displacement of the processes of shitting onto the systematic use and application of language structures. (Significantly, Schreber's writing-down-system is activated by the *posterior* or lower god, Ariman, linking, once again, anality and language<sup>2</sup>.)

Julia Kristeva makes a similar claim in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, when she writes that

Language acquisition implies the suppression of anality; in other words, it represents the acquisition of a capacity for symbolization through the definitive detachment of the rejected object, through its repression under the sign (Kristeva 1984, 152)

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the privatization or overcoding by which the public self is consolidated and its desires held in check takes as its model the sublimation of anality. According to this, learning when to shit and when not to shit are coterminous with learning what to say and what not to say. Both are a form of discipline. Bodily regulation of flows and discursive decorum go hand in hand. It has already been shown how difficult Schreber considered it to speak of that which he speaks, and how this finds a parallel in the professional unease with which doctors first approached the issue of human sexuality. Entry into the symbolic order would seem to foreclose the possibility of certain, more open (and therefore dangerous) experiences of desire, except perhaps in the realm of the imaginary, a realm whose co-ordinates become structured by the very

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<sup>2</sup> For other accounts of anality's link to language, see Lee Edelman, *Homographesis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 173-191; Avital Ronell, 'The Sujet Suppositaire: Freud, And/Or, the Obsessional Neurotic Style (Maybe)', in *Finitude's Score*, (op cit), 105-128. Both writers link the anality of language to ambiguity or reversal of meaning: that is, to the instability of discourse.

unspeakability in which desire is held. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari insist that desire in its least restrained and most chaotic form is inherently revolutionary. Through the experience and articulation of what is in excess of the overcoding's strictures, the inherent fallability of those strictures is exposed.

This idea can be further clarified through a consideration of what Lacan terms the *point de capiton*, or quilting point.

In his seminar on the psychoses, Lacan suggests that meaning is established by the fixing, the pinning down, of a signifier to the flow of signifieds. Such stasis gives a false sense of uniformity or universality to any signifier when in reality "the relationship between the signified and the signifier always appears fluid, always ready to come undone" (Lacan 1993, 261). Meaning thus constitutes a nodal point that attempts to isolate what is essentially non-isolatable: the signifier. Lacan calls this nodal point a *point de capiton*, a quilting point, a stitching together of signifier and signified resembling the buttons which pin down the upholstering fabric on furniture to the stuffing within. This quilting point compresses the field of signification to a single location and thereby "polarizes it, structures it, and brings it into existence" (Lacan 1993, 260). In doing so, this quilting point creates creases which fan out from its centre, like the folds of fabric encircling an upholstery button, and, like an upholstery button, it is always in danger of being undone, becoming unfixed, resulting in the chaos of psychosis. Psychosis is, then, a hole in the symbolic order through which meaning vanishes, becoming unanchored and floating off on a sea of nonsense. Lecercle calls it a hiatus (Lecercle 1985, 136) - a word one meaning of which is 'a natural opening or aperture'. It is also a now obscure term for 'vulva'.

Is it no more than coincidence, however, given what is here being addressed, namely, the loss of reason associated with the penetration of the male body, that this quilting point, with its aureole of folds and its central cavity, resembles the privatised anus, that hidden hole the penetration of which dislodges meaning from its moorings and produces madness, that portal through which Reason's other passes? "But who", as Guy Hocquenghem asks, "would think of interpreting Schreber's sun, not as the father-phallus, but as a cosmic anus?" (Hocquenghem 1993, 100). Who indeed, but Deleuze and Guattari, via Bataille<sup>3</sup>. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they write

Judge Schreber has sunbeams in his ass. *A solar anus*. And rest assured that it works: Judge Schreber feels something, produces something, and is capable of explaining the process theoretically (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 2)

Like Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari want to know what Schreber can teach us, rather than seeing him simply as 'mad', his position outside of 'normality' lending his story critical weight; heuristics rather than hermeneutics. Unlike Lacan, however, they refuse to locate Schreber's breakdown within the framework of the triadic Oedipal unit, even in the broader form of Freud's formulation offered by Lacan in the shape of the symbolic order. Deleuze and Guattari prefer to locate Schreber's psychosis within a politico-cultural context which interprets his witnessing as a reaction to, and movement against, the totalising forces of capitalist and psychoanalytic normativity. And they associate

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<sup>3</sup> Bataille, 'Solar Anus' in *Visions of Excess (op cit)*, 5-9. For Bataille, too, this opening is intimately associated with language. "Ever since sentences started to *circulate* in brains devoted to reflection, an effort at total identification has been made, because with the aid of a *copula* each sentence ties one thing to another" (5, original emphasis). This copula, states Bataille, "is no less irritating than the *copulation* of bodies...because the verb *to be* is the vehicle of amorous frenzy" (*ibid*). On Bataille's 'excremental philosophy' see Sue Golding, 'Solar Clitoris' (1997b).

his experiences with the privatisation of the body by discourse, its colonisation by language. Furthermore, they place Schreber's anus at the centre of his psychosis, as the primary point of his miraculous body<sup>4</sup>, a zone of intensity as productive as it is destructive (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 11). They isolate the anus and its status as the original taboo in order to propose a less structured theory of desire which may account for the bodily flows so feared by fascist thinking in general<sup>5</sup>.

Schreber's backside is certainly the source of both great anxiety and great pleasure throughout the *Memoirs*. He refers to a process of "picturing...female buttocks on my body...whenever I bend down" (Schreber 1988, 181) - as if his body were a *tabula rasa* - anticipating God's penetration, anticipating, even inviting, an "intimacy with the gods without seeing their faces" (Lyotard 1988, 15). He demonstrates an enthusiastic preoccupation with the scatological (a word which, surely, literally, means the science, the logic, of shit). "Like everything else in my body", writes Schreber, "the need to empty myself is also called forth by miracles" (Schreber 1988, 177). Therefore, his struggle to hold onto his shit is a struggle for supremacy against Divine omnipotence, a classic Freudian characteristic of the infant's anal phase (Freud 1977, 205-15). However, this act of rebellion is used against him, and he is made to feel too stupid to shit, making the act itself a defiant one (Schreber, 1988, 178). Stupidity leads to God's withdrawal, and God's withdrawal results in pain being inflicted on Schreber. Therefore, he is caught between holding onto his faeces in order to

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<sup>4</sup> Miraculous (*miraculeux*) because within the phonetics of the word itself lurks the *cul* (French slang for 'arse'). This point is developed further in Chapter Three in relation to Genet's work.

<sup>5</sup> In his preface, Foucault calls *Anti-Oedipus* "an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*" (Foucault 1983 xiii).

retain his sense of reason, and the urge to empty his bowels because doing so always results in "a very strong development of soul-voluptuousness" (Schreber, 1988, 178) and soul-voluptuousness attracts God, who then re-enters him. In short, like Freud's infant, Schreber enjoys defecating. The fact that the divine miracle rays induce in Schreber the need to defecate "every day at least several dozen times" (Schreber 1988, 177) indicates a highly charged - indeed, vertiginous - anal eroticism. "The President's arse will pass into solar incandescence", as Lyotard comments (Lyotard 1993, 59).

Deleuze, Guattari and Lyotard choose to focus their readings of the *Memoirs* on the anal, linking this with their respective projects of opening up the body. Schreber himself never indicates that the penetration he undergoes is an anal one - indeed, it is not focused on any one part of the body but occurs all over. Why, then, this attention on the anus as the site of bodily disintegration, and what is the relevance of their insights for the production of meaning? How can the site of rupture/lack/castration - i.e., the anus - also constitute the site of (or seat of) identity, and the form of reasoning identity implies? In the following section, certain parallels between Lacan's notion of lack and Foucault's notion of rupture are explored that make clearer this duality and its significance for this book.

For Lacan, the body takes place - registers, carries (sexual) meaning - only within the symbolic order, that is, within language. As Bruce Fink remarks, the Lacanian body is "written with signifiers", a process that renders it "at the mercy of the symbolic order" (Fink 1995, 12, 11). Because of this, recognition of one's body is always *misrecognition* (*meconnaissance*), always giving a false impression of unity to something that is essentially fragmented or disunified.

The unified structure of the body is implanted within the subject by its entry into the symbolic order. This symbolic order is the structure of the Other, making the symbolic body the property of the Other. This Other, however, is not an actual person, but the very structure in which one appropriates one's body. And one appropriates it as always already male or female. One bodies within a field of signification which marinates the flesh in an inescapable language: "the body is overwritten/overridden by language" (Fink 1995, 12). This is not unlike Deleuze and Guattari's notion of overcoding.

The language in which the body takes place is inherently heterosexist in its assumptions of meaning, its structuring of reason and its construction of the body. That language seeks to restrict the male body and its pleasures within syntactical, logical and conceptual formations which constitute a discourse of prohibition<sup>6</sup>. The violence of this restriction presses against, leaves an impression upon, the bodies that do not 'fit in', that 'fail' or breakdown. The value of Lacan's work is that such breakdown - as it is for Deleuze and Guattari, too - is fundamentally what grounds *all* subjectivity. In short, there is no distinction, for Lacan, between psychotic and non-psychotic states of mind, only degrees to which one succumbs to breakdown.

Within the Lacanian economy of sexual differentiation, of course, the role of master signifier is filled by the phallus, that absent leader to which we all defer in order to make sense of and within the symbolic order. For a man, therefore, to rebel against the master signifier is to lose the privileges obtained through being

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<sup>6</sup> For Schreber physical pleasure and pain are intimately connected to the correct use of language: "whenever expressed in a grammatically complete sentence, the rays would be led straight to me, and entering my body (though capable of withdrawing) temporarily increase its soul-voluptuous-ness"(Schreber 1988, 173).



a 'member' of the group marked 'male', a membership contingent upon having the phallus. To abdicate the phallus is thus to submit to a masochism marked by a loss of masculinity, through castration; to have one's membership rescinded: one becomes a symbolic 'woman'. To submit to that leader, however, is no less masochistic, for it places the male subject in a threateningly homosexual and, within such an economy, feminizing subject position. The male body must submit to the Phallus in order to become male. Paradoxically, that is, the male body must be penetrable in order to enter a symbolic order which will subsequently disavow such penetrability, providing that body with a phallus that acts as a guarantee against it, for within the symbolic order only those without the phallus (i.e., 'women') can be penetrated.

For Lacan, this dilemma is made more troublesome still by the fact that the ego, as such, does not exist, except as an alter ego, as the Other, through which the 'I' emerges within a linguistic command directed at the Other. For this reason, "reality is *at the outset* marked by symbolic nihilation" (Lacan 1993, 148), making the body, and the skin ego, inherently fragmented. The ego sabotages unity rather than supplying it. And if the ego, as we have seen, is the source – or mediator – of all knowledge of the body, the psychic map of an essentially psychotic flesh, then the body is always already ripped, dismembered, a site of rupture. Indeed, Schreber informs his readers that his body has "become increasingly grotesque" (Schreber 1988, 78-9).

According to Lacan, the ego and the superego are mediated by speech, the 'I' making sense only as a source of the 'you' which is a signifier for the superego, the Law. This 'you', then, which makes possible an 'I', is, Lacan emphasises, a foreign body (Lacan 1993, 276). The body is elsewhere.

Schreber turned the pain of God's penetration into a pleasure to which he willingly submitted: "If I can get a little sensuous pleasure in this process, I feel I am entitled to it as a small compensation for the excess of suffering and privation that has been mine for many years past" (Schreber 1988, 209).

For Schreber the pain of submission becomes a pleasure, and in this way "the internal map of space, the body and the mind, and external map of space, the body and the social order are resolved one in the other" (Pile 1996, 205). This solution, however, as already stated, itself produces an excess which remains irresolvable, indissoluble. If the bodily ego/Skin Ego can be likened to Deleuze and Guattari's 'body without organs', then Schreber is the *Ur*-body without organs. Consider this extract from the medical officer's report:

He maintains that in the earlier years of his illness he suffered destruction of individual organs of his body, of a kind which would have brought death to every other human being, that he lived for a long time without stomach, without intestines, bladder, almost without lungs, with smashed ribs, torn gullet, that he had at times eaten part of his own larynx with his food, etc. (Schreber 1988, 272)

This body, ripped and open, empty and fragmented, figures as a site of rupture, the rupture between discourse and the flesh. I have already said that the hole in signification which constitutes psychosis is a 'hiatus', that almost vulval aperture already mentioned. In "The Father's "No"", Foucault charges this hiatus with "the vitality of a rupture" (Foucault 1998, 5), claiming that "the dissolution of a work in madness, this void to which poetic speech is drawn as to its self-destruction, is what authorizes the text of a language common to both" (Foucault 2000b, 18).

The Foucauldian body, often misunderstood as a discursive body constructed through language, is being understood here as a ruptured body, a hole or hiatus within language - a language that is common to both lyricism and madness, both meaning and dissolution of meaning. The text/body, for Foucault, is authorized by a rupture. The body is held – albeit in the most fractured state - within a multiplicity of discourses like a fish in water, but these discourses are also in the body like water passing through the fish: discourse sustains the body even as it dissolves it. The ambiguous status of Schreber's text frames and focuses this ambiguous status of representative language *per se*, and attaches that rupture to the particular hiatus of the penetrated male body.

While it's certainly not unproblematic to link Lacan with Foucault in this way, given Lacan's status as errant psychoanalyst and Foucault's critical engagement with psychoanalysis, it is nevertheless clear that both writers open a space for thinking the 'outside' as that which doesn't – and cannot – register within language. Lacan's concept of lack is identifying something which Foucault, in his turn, has termed an excess. How can Lacan's lack be equated with Foucault's excess? It is important to keep in mind that for Lacan the lack is on the side of the symbolic order, it is something the symbolic order lacks, not something lacking in the subject him/herself. Lacan calls it the Real, something in excess of the symbolic order, something unreachable, impenetrable, unknowable. It exceeds the symbolic order's ability to grasp it. In this sense, it is like Foucault's excess, or what in "The Father's "No"" he calls a "fundamental gap in the signifier, that transforms...lyricism into delirium...work into the absence of work" (Foucault 2000b, 17). It is, then, a rupture in the fundament, bringing us back to the question of Schreber's solar anus and its importance here. The

Foucauldian body is closer to Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs – a patchwork of fragments, a multiplicity that is residual within discourse and characteristic of everything that discourse articulates. In his study of Foucault, Deleuze usefully identifies the process of “visual assemblage” by which ‘Panopticism’ operates, highlighting not only the role played by surveillance and discipline in the registering of the body, but also the fragmented and multiple nature of the body that results from this registration: its status as an assemblage (Deleuze 1986, 32).

For Deleuze, the assemblage is “the minimum real unit” (Deleuze 1987, 51). As such, it renders all meaning inherently and immediately multiple. Through what Deleuze terms a ‘sympathy’ or symbiosis, the assemblage allows for “the penetration of bodies” (Deleuze 1987, 52) within fields of force that generate representation. Within an assemblage “bodies interpenetrate, mix together, transmit affects to one another” (Deleuze 1987, 70). This fundamental gap, then, which Foucault and Deleuze have identified as the thing which makes possible the multiplicity and fragmentation of bodies and texts, is that through which such (inter)penetration occurs. The gap/hole/lack – what I am calling the behind - is therefore primary in that it contours the field of representation whilst remaining stubbornly resistant to representation.

So far, through noting the productive anxiety surrounding penetration as a cause of madness, or loss of reason/phallus/manhood, the ruptures of discourse have been rendered coterminous with the anus as a hole or route into the male body. Penetration and madness are somehow considered mutually destructive. At the same time, however, it has been seen how the notion of a rupture or gap functions in the thinking of Lacan, Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari, as that

which exceeds representation whilst nevertheless contributing greatly to its structure. It has been stressed that the quilting point by which meaning is stitched down constitutes such a rupture – and one which, in its conglomeration of folds outlining a central hollow, more closely approximates the anus as the primary signifier than the phallus. It is, perhaps somewhat ironically, then, that it is Lacan's text on Schreber - a text which tries to show how psychosis replaces the lost father, that is, the lost phallus - which provides the tools necessary to reinforce the link between the *point de capiton* and the (a)signifying anus. There Lacan writes:

If something in nature is designed to suggest certain of the properties of a ring (*anneau*) to us, it is restricted to what language has dedicated the term *anus* to, which in Latin is spelt with one *n*, and which in their modesty ancient dictionaries designated as the ring that can be found behind (Lacan 1993, 316)

For Lacan, the property of the ring is to bind or hold together (Lacan 1993, 319) - that is, to give meaning. Its role, then, is not dissimilar to that of the quilting point. "A ring isn't a hole with something around it...A ring above all has a signifying value" (Lacan 1993, 317). As *the ring that can be found behind*, the anus is occluded, out of sight (privatised), and must be actively sought out, and perhaps here can be found the penumbrated etymological origins of the term *analysis*, that project of sniffing out hidden things that lurk behind. Lacan himself makes no direct link between the ring and the quilting point, but their functions are clearly of a similar nature - to secure, bind, and fix meaning to a specific referent. Meaning is always concentrated around a rupture.

Schreber's text demonstrates the relationship between the body and language, the origin of language in the sexual body. While one end of the alimentary canal talks, the other shits, or receives God's rays. Just as Schreber's language turns meaning on its head, so the nerves of voluptuousness spin his body upside down, till it is waste (nonsense) that spills from his mouth, and his anus becomes the seat of identity. One orifice takes the place of the other. Schreber is a latterday Oedipus condemned to solve the riddle not of the Sphinx, but of the Sphincter, that orifice which, as Avital Ronell notes, is "determinable neither as masculine nor strictly speaking as feminine", but which "nonetheless constitutes a sexuality, a shared space that is often vaginized" (Ronell 1994, 108). I would suggest that it is the fact of this vaginization of the anus that renders its use so problematic when it comes to conceptualizing the male body. As such, it is never a "shared space". For within the terms of the symbolic order, the male body is not entered, it enters. Pleasurable use of this sphincter on the male body therefore maps a hermaphroditic pairing of oxymoronic flesh (Rabain 1988, 63), which threatens to corrode or disrupt the boundary of sexual difference. That it doesn't fulfil the promise of this threat is due in no small part to the fact that it is "often vaginized". Such vaginization is the inevitable outcome of the gendered chain of equivalences whereby body=penetrability=female. Schreber's jouissance was thus recuperated for a logic that disavowed it, or avowed it as psychosis. The axiom of male=mind/female=body is reinscribed upon his very flesh even as he succumbs to God's penetration, thereby reinstalling the "harmony" (Schreber 1988, 252) its initial occurrence destroyed. The male body is lost in the war against it, and breaking the code of masculinity leaves one at sea, exiled from reason: psychotic. To break the code is to break

the law, and in that rupture the male body appears penetrated, open, and radically exposed as its other, as female, and thus *disappearing* at the same time. The hiatus/rupture/hole/gap that this movement or oscillation constitutes is linked to the hole in the symbolic that creates psychosis, and that hole in turn has been linked to the male anus.

Masculinity is thus queered from its very inception, in the paradox that requires a penetration or penetrability subsequently denied and/or demonized. The male body registers as impenetrable only once it has been penetrated, and any subsequent penetration threatens to queer that masculinity, perhaps, because it is a reminder or remainder of an inaugural penetration that takes on the role of a rupture or excess. Any return to this penetrable state destabilizes the reason or logic by which masculinity makes sense, triggering a psychosis which scrambles the codes of gender, revealing their unstable status, and – perhaps most importantly of all – offering new ways of thinking about the body and the intelligibilities that allow it to take place. As such, queering masculinity isn't so much a process or methodology, but a recognition of what is always already there: the frame and focus of representation as the embodiment of erotic thought.