

The Feminisation of Senatspräsident Schreber.

(From soul-murder to soul-voluptuousness.)

According to Lacan, when Senatspräsident Schreber was promoted to one of the highest positions in the judiciary it forced him into an encounter with the One-Father (E,1977,577), the third term in the Oedipus complex that intervenes in the dyad and establishes the symbolic register. A psychotic, having foreclosed the-Name-of-the-Father in the Oedipus Complex does not recognise this position and has to create a locus for h/erself in relation to it. This is why Schreber had to create a delusory world in which to accommodate himself. Lacan and Freud had different views on why he was psychotic . Freud attributed it to the repressed homosexual feelings for his father whereas Lacan believed it was the failure of the paternal law that necessitated the feminisation. If in the Oedipus Complex the father tells the son that he cannot have the mother *or* any other woman in the future. The father in effect denies the son a masculine existence and forces him into a feminine position. The Name -of -the- Father is then too terrible to utter and the symbolic is foreclosed.

Schreber came to believe that he was being transformed into a woman by God in order to create a new race, born from the spirit of Schreber. This would be done via the spoken word that emerged from a complicated system of penetrating mind rays and nerve vibrations. It was through these auditory hallucinations that Schreber reached his terminal point . (In Lacanian terms this is the point of stabilisation in the delusional metaphor .)

Schreber's God was divided in two, Ormuzd the upper and Ariman the lower. Each had their own characteristics and each evoked a different response in Schreber. Linking the two were the voices of the birds who spoke in disrupted sentences. All three were catalogued in great detail in his memoirs (2000)(1901) prompting Lacan to call him a

“witness or martyr to the unconscious.” (P1993, 132) In the post script to his Memoirs Schreber says of the previous seven years *“I have never had a single moment when I did not hear voices.”* (2000,271)

In my presentation I looked at the different effects these auditory hallucinations had and I suggested that Schreber’s terminal point occurred when he had accepted the female voice entirely having eliminated meaning from the others. However my research has lead me to revise this slightly as Ariman, the lower God who merges with Schreber during soul-voluptuousness is the bridge between Ormuzd and the birds and not as I previously thought the female aspect of God. Never the less it was through God’s spoken word that Schreber was able to stabilise himself and it is this that I intend to address here.

Schreber’s minute observations of himself were written down in note form during his stay in the asylums from 1893 to 1902 .The writing -down- material as he called it came from God and enabled him to catalogue and name the continuous barrage of voices and the thoughts that came in between. It was helpful in two ways first because it clarified his own position and second because it created a space in the form of the absence of his future audience. This was the only space he was allowed because the voices were his life -line to God and any hiatus had to be filled.

Schreber identifies three separate voices each with their own characteristics . Ormuzd and Ariman were both aspects of God, the former being more powerful than the latter. Ormuzd who was allied to the dark haired races and Ariman was related to the fair haired ones .

Ormuzd is considered to be of supreme intelligence despite the frequent reversals of meaning and his thoughts are delivered as pronouncements such as ***“Don’t forget that all representing is nonsense”***. Words that Ormuzd himself is out of touch with.

Schreber only understands them with hindsight when he mulls them over (2000,286) The meaningless repetition of these thoughts eventually turns them into not-thinking-anything -thoughts. Schreber is in awe of Ormuzd because he is the Creator but he is also contemptuous of him because he has no understanding of men. Schreber has to work hard to control Ormuzd who only understands corpses. At the height of his psychosis he experiences a symbolic death and sees himself as a leprous corpse being lead by another leprous corpse an indication that all libido has been drained from his relationship with Ormuzd.

In November 1895 Schreber notes that Ormuzd made an alliance with Schreber's doctor Prof.Flechsig and together they tried to destroy him. Freud links Schreber's father with Pro.Flechsig because both men were at one time loved by Schreber but came to be hated (PFL9,189). This included a repression of his homosexual phantasies towards them. At the beginning of his incarceration Schreber had anal-sadistic phantasies of being attacked and abused by Flechsig sexually . A terrific battle waged inside him that demanded he remain motionless as he tried to divert the rays towards himself so that God would not be destroyed by Flechsig. (2000,137) i.e. Schreber's own internal world would not be destroyed. Schreber initially divides Flechsig into upper and lower Flechsig but eventually he breaks him up into hundreds of Flechsigs where he is rendered less harmful. At some point he believes him to be dead and ingests his foul tasting soul. (PFL9,) Ormuzd who is also linked to the anal function orders Schreber to shit but, characteristically always at a time when someone else is in the lavatory. This suggests that these compulsive thoughts are anal in character.

The so-called bellowing -miracle that was set in motion by the lower God, Ariman has a three-fold function because not only does it remind the higher God Ormuzd that he is compos mentis but it also "*drowns out the voices that the upper God started in order to withdraw to a greater distance*". (2000,189) When Ariman hears the bellowing he knows

that it is safe to enter Schreber's body as it is suffused with soul-voluptuousness. Ariman the lower God, is less formidable than Ormuzd and recognises the absurdity of some of the pronouncements. It is Ariman who merges with Schreber during soul voluptuousness. His words start as whispers until one day he booms "**luder**" and (2000,58) at Schreber and other abusive phrases. Surprisingly Schreber appreciates the genuine feeling that comes from them because it is a relief from the old learnt -by - rote-school of thought. These phrases are grammatically incomplete as is often the case in soul language and contribute to Schreber's feeling of dehumanisation. Are these refrains, I wonder the remnants of the language that he used before the psychotic break? For Lacan in the absence of the symbolic structure the pre- psychotic phase is one of imitation and repetition. Here in a reversal of the dead body being flooded with jouissance here the flooded body is accosted by the dead refrains of the earlier repressed one.

Both Schreber and Freud were familiar with Byron's play Manfred () and knew that Arimanes conjured up the female in the spectre of Manfred's dead sister. In fact he summons up a female copy of the hero just as Schreber is transformed into female version of himself that is never quite complete. In the play Arimanes' attendants taunt Manfred and abuse him verbally just as Ariman does here:

During the night the lower God (Ariman) appeared. The radiant picture of his rays became visible to my inner eye.....while I was lying in bed not sleeping but awake- that is to say he was reflected in my inner nervous system. Simultaneously I heard a voice; but it was not a soft whisper-as the talk always was before and after that time-it resounded in a mighty bass as if directly in front of my bedroom windows. The impression was intense so that anybody not hardened to terrifying miraculous impressions as I was, would have been shaken to the core. Also what was spoken did not sound friendly by any means; everything seemed calculated to instil fright

and terror into me and the word "wretch" was frequently heard.....Yet everything that was spoken was genuine, not phrases learnt by rote as they later were, but the immediate expression of true feeling. (2000,131)

The inclusion of the romantic poet Byron, who was considered to express true feeling,

gives Schreber a precedent and justification for his own violent emotions. Ariman is the aspect of God that wants to unman Schreber which at first he experiences as soul murder (a sort of vampirism) and later comes to accept as a glorious destiny through which he will be able to redeem the world (2000,61) .

The chirping birds who inhabit the fore courts of heaven (and are therefore interpreted by Freud as maidens) have individual voices that he can distinguish and recognise. Their first task is to unload the poison that they carry from corpses via learnt-by -rote speech. This implies that they bring messages from Ormuzd. Once this is done they are capable of expressing themselves with true feeling and come from Ariman (2000,190) . Their speech is disrupted and contains no chain of signifiers e.g. **“Now I shall”**(2000,201) .**“It will be done..”** **“Lacking now is”**(2000,202). Traditionally known as messengers these ‘miracled’ birds do not fully impart their information. The breaches are usually followed by uncomfortable physical sensations that last for 30-40 seconds as he waits for the point de capiton. To alleviate the pain of waiting he makes a list of the ways he could finish these sentence: “Now I shallresign myself to being stupid” “It will be donenow , the joint of pork” (This refers to himself in relation to his resistance to the rays) “Lacking now is..... only the leading idea, that is-- we, the rays have no thoughts”. However he considers these breaks necessary to dilute the onslaught of soul-voluptuousness (jouissance) that would accompany a whole sentence. (2000,199)It would appear from this statement that the female birds are the embodiment of soul-voluptuousness. As he writes down these frustrations he is able to take the position of an onlooker but it does not change his position because language speaks through him and erupting from outside it cannot be censored . There is no ‘as if’ factor that allows him the possibility of ignoring inessential information, everything is equally important. Outside the imaginary axis of the subject and the little other there is only the gaping hole that is accompanied by psychotic dread. (Symbolic opposition creates a space that cannot be occupied.)

Towards the end of his illness he combats these half phrases by repeating them over and

over again until they too become not-thinking-of-anything-thoughts. However the language disruption that communicated itself to Schreber's body continued to take effect. For Lacan this is the signature of psychosis (P,1993,114). As thoughts, words and objects do not refer to each other in the symbolic structure Schreber cannot differentiate between his body and its representations. There has been a failure at the mirror stage that has left remnants of a fragmented body. Although he can differentiate between his body mind and his thought mind there is no comprehensive body map which causes a disruption in his internal organs. They move or vanish and he eats his larynx, his stomach is removed, he has the ability to eat poison. His ribs are smashed and miraculously reformed. Similarly his bowels are subject to confusion although he finds some resolution by shitting into a bucket whilst he plays the piano.

Later he develops female body parts internally and externally but as there is no phallic signification in psychosis his body could not occupy either place. He can neither be said to be releasing homosexual repression nor changing his gender but is instead attempting to find a locus for his body that refuses to be located in the symbolic. His phantasy was that he could make love to himself as a woman, an undertaking that required two parts but as the process was expected to "*take decades if not centuries for its completion*" (PFL9,147) it remained a phantasy.

At the beginning of his psychosis Schreber's anal erotic phantasies concerning his doctor Prof. Flechsig were repressed but they returned in a delusory form. This immediately brought back the the libido onto Flechsig again (though with a negative sign) and thus annulled the work of repression. The battle of repression eventually became general and the ensuing struggle culminated in Schreber's belief that the world had ended and his self alone existed. The detachment of Schreber's ego causing the whole outside construction to disintegrate. That it is Ormuzd who has the power to restore manliness a yet lives amongst corpses and fleeting-improvised men confirms the idea that masculinity for Schreber is dead.

In Byron's *Manfred*, soul murder is portrayed as a type of vampirism whereby a being uses the energy of another for his own ends. (2001b,4) Similarly Schreber's Ariman performs soul-murder by filling him with soul-voluptuousness which he gradually comes to accept as part of his great destiny to save the world. He experiences this as an eroticisation of his whole body that is wordless. In psychosis "*eros is located where speech is absent.*" (1993,254)

Freud suggests that the fore courts of heaven that are inhabited by birds represent the female realm and that the posterior realms inhabited by Ormuzd and Ariman are masculine. (PFL9,189) However Ariman encourages a feminine attitude in Schreber and tells him to "*excite yourself sexually*" and that "*voluptuousness has become God-fearing*" (2000,252). Schreber tells us in his memoirs that Ormuzd kept himself at a greater distance than Ariman "*even a colossal distance, I still see his picture as a small sun-like disc, so tiny as to be almost a mere point*"(2000,91). Ormuzd in his alliance with Dr. Flechsig and his love of corpses controls Schreber's anal functions.

Ariman on the other hand is identified with the female sun otherwise known as the eye of God. The female sun mediated God's influence with her warmth and acted a sort of caretaker in God's absence. Freud thinks that the sun is male but for the purposes of this argument I have taken Schreber at his word. It is also Ariman who performs the unmanning miracle which involves making him a few centimetres smaller. (2000,142) In November 1985 there is a change in the Order of the World which involves Schreber in a closer relationship to Ariman and a more distant one to Ormuzd who allies himself with Dr. Flechsig against Schreber. Ariman, he says "*Did not object to losing himself with part of his nerves in my body, because he almost always met soul-voluptuousness there.*" (2000,167) Unlike the pronouncements of Ormuzd the words he speaks have some meaning for Schreber e.g. "*Knowledge and capabilities can never be lost*" and "*Don't forget that the end of the world cancels itself out*". However Schreber's record of the manner of this speech varies. Sometimes he says there is no genuine feeling in them but

contradicts this later. On the whole they do not upset him as they seem to coincide with his own ideas, occasionally they frighten him and at other times they are in the learnt-by-rote manner.

It is Schreber's rejection of the anal dimension of God (Ormuzd) and the acceptance of the female genital one that stabilises him. This is done via the auditory hallucinations whose effects are physical. Feelings of soul-voluptuousness are imparted by the birds when they speak with genuine feeling and Ariman enters his body during soul-voluptuousness.

Ormuzd is continually threatening to withdraw unless Schreber offers soul voluptuousness. Once he has been transformed into a woman God will be unable to castrate him. This suggests that compulsive attacking thoughts are anal in character and that once they have been divested of meaning and replaced by the genital experience of soul-voluptuousness Schreber is stable.

When Schreber had completed his work in 1901 he announced that it included all the words in the human language and that he had written down and named every type of thought. This is said with a certainty that would be questioned in the symbolic. And in a sense an illustration of his imprisonment in the imaginary. To write is to overcome the disruption that language usually forces on Schreber. It is somewhere that words can be joined together to form meaning without sliding off an object. (2000,308) As Schreber explains:

As soon as I allow a pause in my thinking without devoting myself to the cultivation of soul-voluptuousness which is of course unavoidable as nobody can either think all the time or always cultivate voluptuousness-the following unpleasant consequences mentioned earlier occur: attacks of bellowing and bodily pain; vulgar noises from the madmen around me, and cries of help from God. Mere common sense therefore commands that as far as humanly possible I fill every pause in my thinking-in other words the periods of rest from intellectual activities-with the cultivation of voluptuousness. (2000,252)

As he reaches the finale, compulsive anal thoughts are gradually replaced with voluptuous genital feelings. Lacan says "The psychotic's eros is located where speech is absent. It is there that he finds his supreme love" (1993 ,254) He also calls it 'dead love'.

If as Lacan suggests in Schema R, (E,197) (1994,210) God displaces Schreber's mother on the Imaginary axis, Schreber becomes the phallus for God . Words would then contain the generative power of God's creation and Schreber would give birth to little thought - men. This would explain Schreber's enormous sense of responsibility that allows him no rest because outside the Imaginary axis of the subject and the other there is only a gaping hole that represents the end of the world. It is only by emptying words of any content into not-thinking-anything -thoughts that Schreber can achieve equilibrium. There is only one command that he obeys, that every space is filled with soul-voluptuousness. He finds a way of surviving the repressed material that constantly forces itself into his mind by annulling the meaning of thought and eroticising its generative power. As Lacan points out "*That which is not symbolised appears in the real*" (1993,86) What erupts from the real here is the feminine. This together with the memory traces of former reality continued to effect Schreber in the form of the primordial mother who was mediated directly through his body via the birds and Ariman. His terminal point was reached when "*the hole that was dug in the field of the symbolic*" (1993,201) and in front of which he teetered was filled by the feminine. When "*Finally signifier and signified are stabilised in the delusional metaphor*" (1977,217)

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