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Traversing Psychosis: Lacan, Topology, and 'The Jet-Propelled Couch'

Reaching back to his 1951 collaboration with Georges Th. Guilbaud, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Émile Benveniste, Jacques Lacan had a life-long fascination with topology.¹ From his invocation of the torus in his 1953 Rome Address, through his turn in the 1960s to the *Möbius* strip, Klein bottle, and cross-cap, Lacan's near obsessive engagement with topology culminated during the next decade in his seminars on the Borromean knot and his reading of *le sinthome* in James Joyce. Increasingly, Lacan relied on topological figures to theorize the relationship of scientific knowledge to psychoanalytic truth. But equally important, topology advanced Lacan's later social observations on material culture, information media, and what Jacques-Alain Miller and Eric Laurent have recently described as the "Ordinary Psychosis" of the contemporary public sphere.² Whether endorsed or declaimed, Lacan's topological speculations—their rigor or lack thereof—have been the subject of heated critical debate.³ Less attention has been paid, however, to the pertinence of Lacanian topology to clinical practice and literary reading. Striking linkages, however, among Lacanian psychoanalysis, science, and the literature of psychosis can be discerned in the clinical settings of Robert Lindner's midcentury-modern memoir *The Fifty-Minute Hour* (1954).

A graduate of Bucknell University, Robert M. Lindner received his M.A. and Ph.D. in Psychology in 1935 at Cornell University where he then taught for two years. Returning to Bucknell, he served as an assistant psychologist and later chief psychologist at the U. S. Penitentiary at Lewisburg. During the 1940s, Lindner entered private practice as a lay analyst in Baltimore, and was associated with the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP), founded by his mentor Theodor Reik. Lindner was not only on the editorial board of

Psychoanalysis—that later merged with the NPAP's *Psychoanalytic Review*—but he also served as editor for the authoritative collection *Explorations in Psychoanalysis: Essays in Honor of Theodor Reik* (1953). Not unlike Reik, Lindner expanded the popular audience for psychoanalysis in the United States in works that presented arresting case studies such as his “hypnoanalysis” of the psychopath “Harold,” the subject of *Rebel Without a Cause* (1944), whose title was adopted in the 1955 film of that name by Nicholas Ray starring James Dean. In Lindner's famous dictum, “the psychopath is a rebel without a cause, an agitator without a slogan, a revolutionary without a program” (p. 2).

In addition to analyzing the American penal system in *Stone Walls and Men* (1946), Lindner made provocative psychoanalytic observations of American society in works such as *Prescription for Rebellion* (1952) and *Must You Conform?* (1956). The latter volume stemmed from a series of talks that Lindner delivered for the 1954 Hacker Foundation Lectures. Lindner's at the time controversial subject matter—reflected in such titles as “The Mutiny of the Young,” “The Instinct of Rebellion,” “Must You Conform?” and “Education for Maturity”—left many in his audience “outraged by the theme of these four pieces, alienated by the thesis around which they were composed, and provoked to bitter comment by the ideas they contain” (1956, p. vii). Lindner's expanded volume of these lectures would include two more incendiary pieces, “Homosexuality and the Contemporary Scene” and “Political Creed and Character.” Lindner refused, according to Martin Duberman (2002), “to conflate homosexuality with pathology (or nonconformity of any kind with mental illness)” (p. 65). Lodged instead against the repressive containment culture of the McCarthy era as well as the normalizing tendencies of American ego psychology, Lindner's critique, in Russell Jacoby's (1986) account “bucked the analytic and cultural trends of the 1950s . . . He stood at the end, perhaps beyond the end of a long and far-reaching tradition of dissenting and political Freudians” (p. x).

Similar to the lay analyst Ernst Kris in his fascinating case studies of psychotic artists such as sculptor F. X. Messerschmidt, Lindner in *The Fifty-Minute Hour* offers highly stylized, literary renderings of what he called “*True Psychoanalytic Tales*.” Not insignificantly, in his case studies of psychosis—and no more so

than in his treatment of the psychotic theoretical physicist “Kirk Allen,” the protagonist of “The Jet-Propelled Couch”—Lindner undergoes something akin to what Israeli analyst Ofra Eshel (2010) has recently described as a kind of “*quantum interconnectedness*” with the psychic life of his patients (p. 152). Eshel characterizes that deep, psychic interconnectedness between analyst and patient as an “ontological (being) dimension of experience rather than the epistemological (interpretive) dimension.” Here, the psychoanalyst is challenged to “yield to the grip of the analytic process with the patient, to work, learn, and think from within the depths of the treatment experience, even when it is harsh, strange, incomprehensible, and threatening” (p. 151). Symptomatically perhaps, Lindner’s unorthodox, close encounters with his patients’ psychotic fantasies engage with “depths of the treatment experience” in terms remarkably similar to what Jacques Lacan represents—in his later seminars on the Borromean knot, the torus, cross-cap, Klein bottle, and the *Möbius* strip—as the wholly reversible positions in the interlocution of the analyst and analysand, the rational and the irrational, everyday realities and extraordinary delusions, all configured according to the strange calculus of the unconscious and its dynamic topology.

I

Although Lacan dwells on the topology of the torus as early as his 1953 Rome address, his fascination with topological representation fully emerges in the 1960s. In his seminar *Identification* (1961–62) and later in “Of Structure as the Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever”—his 1966 address delivered at the Johns Hopkins symposium “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man”—Lacan invokes the “interior eight” topology of the *Möbius* strip to represent language’s structural Otherness as an “essential inscription at the origin, in the knot which constitutes the subject” (1966, p. 192). There, the two-dimensional rectangle of the *Möbius* strip conveys the dichotomous makeup of the speaking subject split by a bi-lateral surface; thus, its two sides represent such binary divisions as the conscious and the unconscious, interior and ex-

terior, life and death, the signifier and the signified, and so on. In conventional accounts of the subject, as this two-sided figure suggests, such oppositions are considered mutually exclusive. However, by twisting the two-dimensional figure of the rectangle and joining its opposite ends, the resulting three-dimensional topology of the *Möbius* strip reconciles such binaries along a continuous topological surface. Not just a three-dimensional figure framing an interior void, the *Möbius* strip—as Lacan's most discerning readers of his topology have observed—denotes the temporal dimension of the speaking subject's traversal of a bilateral circuit.⁴

In this vein, Lacan's topology revises the somewhat static representations of Freud's topographies of the psyche in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) and *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933 [1932]) where conscious and pre-conscious systems of the ego overlay the underlying strata of the id and the unconscious. Parting company with the conventional view of the unconscious as contained by or internal to the conscious ego, Lacan recasts such dichotomies by means of the temporal dimension afforded by the topology of the *Möbius* strip. Here, the divided subject emerges over time as an effect of the *objet a* cause of desire. As a topological figure, the *Möbius* strip gives dynamic representation to Lacan's formula for fantasy $\$ \langle \rangle a$ where the former as desiring subject is constituted by the latter's signifiers for the object loss of the breast, feces, penis, gaze, voice, and the other unary traits and their associated significations. Encountered in the temporal fold or "cut" of the partial drive, the *objet a* as unary trait embodies lack that bears on the Real insofar as the latter hollows the signifier as placeholder for object loss.

Contemporaneously with these essays from the mid-1960s, Lacan also employs the *Möbius* strip in "Science and Truth" (1965–66) to explore the relationship between scientific knowledge and psychoanalytic "truth." In it, his aim is "to formulate," as he has it, "our experienced division as subjects as a division between knowledge and truth, and to accompany it with a topological model, the *Möbius* strip: this strip conveys the fact that the division in which these two terms come together is not to be derived from a difference in origin" (p. 727). Following such mentors as Alexandre Kojève and Alexandre Koyré, Lacan

seeks to link psychoanalysis to the epistemological origins of modern science in the seventeenth century and the cut that the Cartesian cogito effects in “the ancient search of the *episteme*” belonging to the intuitive mythologies of Antiquity (1964, p. 222). In particular, Lacan associates scientific rationality with the rigorous search for clarity and certainty captured in the Cartesian cogito, “I think therefore I am.” Descartes’s passion to “see clearly”, however, is driven by an ethic of skepticism based on alienation, doubt, and the fading of the subject rooted in “the way of desire” (p. 222). In Lacan’s reading, Descartes reconciles doubt with rational certainty by submitting the emergent cogito as the “subject of science” and “the field of this knowledge” to a “vaster subject, the subject who is supposed to know, God” (p. 224). This inaugural appeal to an external guarantor of certainty, for Lacan, grounds the “human sciences” in a circumscribed field of formal procedures whose aim is to exclude and thereby master the contingency, uncertainty, and alienation otherwise linked to the ethical “truth” of the cogito as desiring subject. Thus, the split between the “subject of science” vs. the ethical subject is a divide that, for psychoanalysis, witnesses to the unconscious whose uncertainty modern science would suture. Yet, the insistence on suturing the “truth” of the latter’s contingency, for Lacan, is precisely what marks the limit of the “human sciences” as a symptomatic impossibility. Alluding to Gödel’s final so-called “incompleteness theorem,” Lacan asserts that the “modern logic” of scientific “knowledge” is itself

a consequence of an attempt to suture the subject of science, and Gödel’s last theorem shows that the attempt fails there, meaning that the subject in question remains the correlate of science, but an antinomic correlate since science turns out to be defined by the deadlocked endeavor to suture the subject.

One should descry therein the crucially important mark of structuralism. It ushers into every “human science” it conquers a very particular mode of the subject for which the only index I have found is topological: the generating sign of the *Möbius* strip that I call the “inner eight.”

The subject is, as it were, internally excluded from its object. (1965–66, p. 731)

Thus, the *Möbius* strip gives topological representation to the division that splits the subject of scientific knowledge as the latter “forgets a dimension of truth that psychoanalysis seriously puts to work” (p. 738). Psychoanalysis asserts the subject’s determination by the unconscious and—as the topology of the *Möbius* strip demonstrates—that psychic truth, as an interior void, marks the impasse of science’s “deadlocked endeavor to suture the subject” within the regime of its logic and formal procedures. As Lacan puts it in “On the Subject Who is Finally In Question,” truth effects “its detour [*biais*] in knowledge” (1953a, p. 194) or, in Alexandre Leupin’s blunt translation, “Truth makes a hole in science” (Leupin, 2004, p. 56). Insofar as this “hole” bears on the real, its traumatic detour in knowledge befalls science as a kind of psychotic break. Indeed, “a successful paranoia,” Lacan asserts, “might just as well seem to constitute the closure of science” insofar as the latter “does-not-want-to-know-anything about the truth as cause” (1965–66, p. 742) but instead sustains its regime of knowledge through the foreclosure (*Verwerfung*) of incompleteness.

Science’s divide between reason and epistemological crisis reaches back to its Enlightenment origins in the Cartesian cogito, split as it is between, on the one hand, an insistence on clarity and certainty driven by, on the other hand, a passionate self-doubt. While the latter’s truth as cause is ultimately foreclosed in the modern regime of science’s objectified axiomatics, psychoanalysis holds its own rational methodology in productive tension with the fading of the subject. Thus, psychoanalysis brings a rational, scientific rigor to bear on its analysis of the unconscious structured as a language without, however, suturing the gap between its disciplinary knowledge and the particular psychic disposition of the subject rooted in an unconscious truth as cause. This qualified and paradoxical identification of the subject of science with the psychoanalytic subject turns on the understanding that, as Jean-Claude Milner (1991) has it, “Just because there is an Ideal of science, there is no ideal science” (p. 33). Perhaps, however, the loss of its own status as an “ideal science” is most traumatic for psychoanalysis precisely

in its encounter with the Ideal of science not just as it sutures the subject of science but as it likewise drives the systematic rigor of the psychotic subject.

For Lacan, psychoanalysis' own insistence on scientific certainty—its epistemological drive for “knowledge and authority”—becomes symptomatic in its diasporic migration to the United States during the Second World War and the subsequent rise of American ego psychology. Embracing the modern subject of science, the latter's clinical practice is shaped by a “reactionary principle that covers over the duality of he who suffers and he who heals with the opposition between he who knows and he who does not” (1955a, p. 335). Objectifying the discourse of the analysand, the analyst, like the subject of science, comes to assume a certain administrative role as a “manager of souls in a social context that demands such offices” (p. 336). In this postwar context, the cure of shoring up the patient's ego reflects the underlying social goal “that gives enterprises their style, that of a cultural historicism characteristic of the United States of North America” (p. 335). Increasingly, Lacan reads contemporary psychoanalysis' disciplinary aim of defining and managing psychic reality as itself “delusional” and a symptom of a broader “social psychosis” brought on by modern science and its knowledge regimes (1955b, p. 480).⁵

As early as the Rome Address, Lacan had pointed to the social link between science's foreclosure of psychoanalytic truth and the modern public sphere, the latter increasingly sustained by instrumental thinking, political regulation, and social conformity. “The enormous objectification constituted by this science” and the “profuse culture” industry that it props up lead the modern subject to “forget his own existence and his death, as well as to misrecognize the particular meaning of his life in false communication” (1953b, p. 233). It is this wedding of science and advanced capitalism that Lacan would go on to analyze in the increasingly virtual built environment of postmodernism: what he coined in the neologism *alethosphere* in *Seminar XVII*.⁶ Second, in the epistemological crises defining “theoretical physics and mathematics” Lacan points to “the subjective toll that each of these crises takes on the learned” (1965–66, p. 738). In this vein, Lacan cites the madness triggered by disciplinary crises in such figures as physician and

physicist J. R. Mayer and Georg Cantor, founder of modern set theory. Following Lacan, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari further underscore the bi-polar structure of psychosis shaping the scientific axiomatics of the modern age. One of these poles belongs to instrumental "reason" where science functions to advance "market needs and zones of technical innovation" that are regulated by sovereign state and corporate powers. "But the other pole," they add, "is the schizoid pole, in whose proximity flows of knowledge schizophranize . . . generating deterritorialized signs, figure-schizzes that are no longer either figurative or structured, and reproduce or produce an interplay of phenomena without aim or end: science as experimentation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p. 406).

II

In this vein, the "subjective toll" that Lacan attributes to postmodern science is fully on view in the final and perhaps most exotic case study of Eric Lindner's *The Fifty-Minute Hour: A Collection of True Psychoanalytic Tales* (1954). Specifically, "The Jet-Propelled Couch" recounts the analytic treatment of a research physicist who is referred to Lindner by a colleague working on "X-Reservation," a "government installation in the Southwest" (p. 223). "X-Reservation" in Lindner's account is the thinly disguised locale of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, the site where Kirk Allen, his patient, had suffered a psychotic break. During the course of the analysis, the boundaries between analyst and patient, psychoanalytic truth and scientific knowledge, ordinary reality and psychotic fantasy are increasingly blurred as the analytic frame takes on the florid, post-Newtonian dimensions of a Lacanian topology. Not unlike such famous psychotic mathematicians and physicists as Isaac Newton, J. R. Mayer, Georg Cantor, and John Forbes Nash, Jr., "Kirk Allen" in Lindner's case study is also a highly gifted theoretical physicist working on the cutting edge of America's Manhattan Project. But as a psychotic, he also assumes a most peculiar double life, split like a modern-day super-hero between, on the one hand, his ordinary identity as a mild-mannered research physicist and, on the other, an exotic alter-identity:

“Kirk Allen, Lord of a planet in an interplanetary empire in a distant universe” (p. 250). Possessing the ability to “teleport” across unimaginable stretches of space and time, Kirk Allen shuttles effortlessly between these two lives, one moment “bending over a drawing board in a clapboard B. Q. in the middle of an American desert” and the next galaxies and eons away “garbed in the robes of his exalted office” (p. 250).

In Cyndy Hendershot’s important, cultural reading of Lindner’s “psychoanalytic tale” Kirk’s delusional system conforms to classic accounts of psychotic paranoia recorded in such studies as Victor Tausk’s “On the Origin of the ‘Influencing Machine’ in Schizophrenia” (1919, 1933) and Freud’s reading of Daniel Paul Schreber’s *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1903) in *Psycho-analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (dementia paranoides)* (1911). These canonical case studies of psychoses, as Hendershot observes, are symptomatic of what Tausk described as “the progressive popularization of the sciences” (Tausk, 1933, p. 521, cited in Hendershot, 1999, p. 12) coupled with modern anxieties from the pace of scientific discovery overtaking the humanities as witnessed, say, in Henry Adams’ “A Letter to American Teachers of History” (1910). In Hendershot’s argument, the pseudo-scientific cast of Schreber’s delusions operates as defense against emerging paradigm shifts in post-Newtonian physics coupled with the explosion of modern technological change. Similarly, she links Kirk Allen’s grandiosity to the messianic and mythic discourse that represents the popular meanings of the Manhattan project in the atomic age. Finally, Hendershot (1999) draws an analogy between Lindner’s growing identification with Kirk’s fantasies in treatment and Freud’s own anxieties in addressing Schreber’s theoretical rigor.⁷ This common anxiety over the theoretical status of psychoanalysis, she concludes, “points to the limits of the totalizing classical system as the dream of the classical scientist emerges as delusion” (p. 8). However cogent, Hendershot’s analogy between early twentieth-century paranoia brought on by rapid scientific change and the fantasy-life that preoccupies Kirk Allen at mid-century ultimately breaks down both in its clinical and cultural logic. To begin with, she argues that Schreber’s lapse into the psychotic fantasies of science fiction operate as a totalizing defense: one that would

reclaim, albeit in a delusional scheme, the universal certainties of a Newtonian world outlook. Schreber's professional identity as jurist makes him susceptible to what she describes as "the anxiety and helplessness experienced by those in non-scientific professions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (p. 11). Yet, Hendershot's effort to link scientific paranoia at the *fin de siècle* and popular science fiction anxieties during the Cold War actually forecloses the complexity of Schreber's psychosis. Indeed, in the reception of Schreber's *Memoirs*, the causal trigger is over-determined, and explanatory accounts range among and across cultural, biological, and psychoanalytic understandings of his delusionary system. Biographical readings, for example, focus on such speculative triggering events as Schreber's failed election bid to become a Reichstag representative (*Reichstagsabgeordneter*) followed by his actual promotion to the high office of *Senatspräsident* of the Supreme Court of Justice in Saxony. These two professional watersheds—coupled with Schreber's childlessness, owing to his wife Sabine Behr's six miscarriages—leads Freud to the psychoanalytic conclusion that Schreber's psychosis was the result of a crisis in his paternal role driven by castration anxieties in assuming his father's place as a chief justice to the high court. Moreover, such anxieties are also imbricated with the onset of Schreber's transsexual fantasy "that," as he says, "it really must be rather pleasant to be a woman succumbing to intercourse" (Schreber, 1903, p. 63).

Freud attributes this symptom to a longing for and dependence on the father and his surrogates, most notably in the transference to the judge's attending physician Professor Paul Emil Flechsig, the director of the Psychiatric Hospital of Leipzig University. Summarizing Freud's reading of Schreber, "the fear of castration," Lacan writes, "thus comes to life in him again, with a corresponding homosexual craving" (1955–56, p. 30). William Niederland (1951), however, supplements Freud's reading of Schreber's Oedipal crisis, by foregrounding the figure of the *flüchtig hingemachten Männer* or "Fleetingly-improvised-men" of the *Memoirs*, noting that "the German *hinmachen* means not only to make, to defecate, to kill, but also to draw or to sketch. In the last sense, it may refer to those numerous diagrams, pictures, and drawings of male figures which illustrate

a book, *Ärztliche Zimmergymnastik* (1855), written by Schreber's father who was a major proponent of therapeutic gymnastics in Germany and who prescribed numerous physical exercises which are presented in detail in his book" (p. 588). A cultural icon of health and well-being, Moritz Schreber left a popular legacy in any number of "Schreber associations" and communal "Schreber gardens" (*Schrebergärten*). In Nederland's reading, the various corporeal hallucinations that radically distort Daniel Paul Schreber's imaginary relation to the body are psychotic residues of the traumatic imprint received from the extreme, disciplinary upbringing of his father, what Nederland (1959) describes as the "miracled-up" world of Schreber's youth. Compounding the mechanical regimen of his childhood, Schreber suffers a further mortification at the hands of his psychiatrist Flechsig whose magnum opus *Gehirn und Seele* (*Brain and Soul*, 1896) reduced the mental life of the latter to the material neurobiology of the former's nerve functions.

For Friedrich Kittler (1990), Schreber's fantasy of being penetrated and transformed by the visceral nerve-contact (*Nervenanhang*) of divine rays offers an analogue not just for the new technologies, systems, flows of information exchange and storage (the radio, telegraph, typewriter, telephone, and so on), but also for psychoanalysis' scientific dream of possessing a material understanding and disciplinary mastery of the mind.⁸ Kittler further interprets Freud's psychoanalytic response to Schreber's psychotic plea for an "expert examination of my body and observation of my personal fate" as caught up in a mutually determined "mental apparatus": one whose "highly complex information system" constitutes "as described by the psychotic and psychoanalytic corpus" what Kittler terms a "discourse network" (p. 293). Freud not only had difficulties in reconciling his "libido theory" of Schreber's homoerotic and transsexual fantasies with the expanded mythology of his cosmological delusions, but Freud's insistent drive toward a diagnostic aim, in Kittler's reading, led him to foreclose the implications of his own symbolic participation in Schreber's discourse network. "Freud was much too concerned," as Kittler has it, "with the testimonial value of the received messages to investigate the logic of the channel" (p. 293).

Supplementing Kittler's attention to the cultural logic of Schreber's and Freud's "discourse network," Eric Santner (1997) offers a more sophisticated reading of the crisis of "symbolic investiture" that triggers Schreber's psychosis upon his appointment to *Senatspräsident*.⁹ Like Kittler, Santner parts company with Freud's "libido theory" as well as his nascent focus on Schreber's ego defenses as inadequate accounts of his break with reality. Schreber's psychosis is "best understood," Santner concludes, "not in the context of the ego psychology that was to emerge from these final reflections, but rather in one attuned to the operations and crises of symbolic power and authority" (p. 60). Finally, Santner's analysis of the "symbolic power" underwriting Schreber's delusions turns on the period's "Jewish question" as it bears on the gendered fantasies and anxieties shaping not just Schreber's paranoia but, equally important, the symptomatic foreclosures in Freud's reading of the *Memoirs*.¹⁰ Not insignificantly, such racial anti-Semitism toward the Jew is also inscribed in the contemporaneous psychiatric literature, particularly in the clinic of Charcot and followers such as Henri Meige who characterized Jews as migrants or wandering figures marked by a genetic inheritance of surplus, nervous anxiety. Such gendered and racial stereotypes not only leave their imprint on Schreber's psychotic system but arguably lead Freud, according to Daniel Boyarin, to foreclose "the Jewish question" in his analysis of the judge's *Memoirs* (Boyarin, 1995, p. 131; Santner, 1997, p. 109).

Thus, in Cyndy Hendershot's analogy between Schreber's fin-de-siècle psychosis and Kirk Allen's mid-century delusions, the limits of attributing both cases to the accelerating pace of modern science and technology in everyday life become clear. Hendershot's account necessarily forecloses the biographical, cultural, and political contexts of Schreber's *Memoirs*—fraught as they are with social and personal anxieties over gender, race, and eugenic ideology—and thereby elides the significant differences in the two case studies. Moreover, Lindner's analysis and Kirk Allen bears little resemblance to Schreber, whose paranoia in Hendershot's (1999) reading is driven "by the sense of inferiority experienced by non-scientists saturated with scientific discourse" (p. 10). In contrast, Kirk Allen is not only a professional scientist stationed at Los Alamos, the most advanced

government research site at mid-century, but he is charged with the responsibility as “section chief . . . to evaluate and correlate reports of the research people under him” (Lindner, 1954, p. 224). Parting company with Schreber, Kirk Allen is at home in the post-Newtonian cosmos of special relativity, gravitational time dilation, the curvature of space-time, and so on. In fact, he incorporates the reversible temporal paradoxes of modern-day physics into his fantasy that his alter-ego belongs to a future that he is at liberty to remember and eventually revisit. “It’s hard to explain,” Allen confesses to Lindner, “but I soon developed the notion—now a favorite one with science-fiction writers—of the co-existence of temporal dimensions so that the past and the future are simultaneous with the present. This made it possible to live a current life but, all the same, to *remember the future*” (p. 247). Thus unlike Schreber’s paranoid reaction to modern science, Kirk Allen—as a member of the professional class of postwar scientists—can be read as an extreme case of the scientific drive that, in Lacan’s reading, leads to a psychotic foreclosure of unconscious truth.

Secondly, the onset of Schreber’s psychosis dates well into middle age and, once triggered, his delusion becomes so severe as to require a nine-year hospitalization. Schreber’s paranoid discourse evolves into a particularly florid delusional system involving not just a whole vocabulary of verbal neologisms and possessing voices but a governing mythology where creation is imperiled by an originary act of “soul murder” perpetrated by the judge’s attending physician Professor Paul Emil Flechsig. Schreber’s psychotic theology embraces a cosmic vision of spiritual connection to a “miraculous,” multiple-layered network of corporeal and external nerve pathways, emanating rays and filaments, whole orders of angels, demons, “fleeting-improvised men,” insects, talking birds and other imaginary beings who bestow untold beatitudes and inflict mortifying persecutions. Not least of these blissful torments is Schreber’s corporeal hallucination of becoming a “voluptuous” woman from who God demands “constant enjoyment” (Schreber, 1903, p. 209).

In contrast, the seeds of Kirk Allen’s psychosis are present early on, beginning rather uneventfully in childhood when he comes upon his name in an adventure story and begins to imagine his alternative biography. Over time, that fantasy-

life evolves into the delusion that he leads an extraterrestrial existence in a future time and distant galaxy. Differing from Schreber's "nervous illness," Allen's psychosis is neither debilitating nor all-consuming and, indeed, his referring physician characterizes it as "a perfectly innocuous business." Though increasingly distracted, "Allen," he reports, "appears to be completely unaffected by it most of the time" (Lindner, 1954, p. 226). Moreover, Kirk Allen does not experience the kind of florid corporeal hallucinations that for Schreber culminate in being "prostituted . . . like a female harlot" (Schreber, 1903, p. 96) and ultimately having transsexual intercourse with God. Schreber's break with reality entails a gendered metamorphosis: "unmanned" in his imaginary relation to the body with "the (external) male genitals (scrotum and penis) being retracted into the body and the internal sexual organs being at the same time transformed into the corresponding female sexual organs" (p. 60).

III

For his part, Lindner attributes Kirk Allen's split identity, in part, to his relationships with a series of boyhood nursemaids that culminate in a sexual trauma. Born in Paris, Kirk was raised in Hawaii and later the Polynesian islands where his elderly and distanced father was stationed as Naval Commodore. An alien to island culture, Kirk's mother became depressed, and her moods were marked by "apathy" and "lethargic melancholy" with the result that she eventually "withdrew from all social intercourse" (Lindner, 1954, p. 231). Consequently, Kirk grew completely attached to his primary caregiver, Myna, a Hawaiian nurse who "reared him according to her own tradition" (p. 232). Kirk Allen confronted a developmental as well as cultural divide, split as he was between the intimacy of Myna's mother tongue and the alienated "'white' language" that the American community urged him to speak. Compounding this early childhood dilemma, he encounters profound loss, abandonment, and isolation with the sudden death of his beloved Myna and her replacement by the austere governess from a "far Western state" whom he nicknames "Sterile Sally" owing to her obses-

sive cleanliness and racist attitudes toward Polynesian culture. Kirk Allen's first actual break with reality happens at age eleven shortly after he is submitted to the repeated trauma of sexual harassment, becoming a "sex toy" (p. 240) at the hands of yet another abusive caretaker, Miss Lilian.

Kirk Allen's psychotic break, however, does not involve—as does Schreber's paranoia—a breakdown in his imaginary relation to the body. Unlike Schreber's transsexual hallucinations, the only symptom of Kirk's loss of corporeal boundaries is his fantasy of being able to "teleport" his body over vast distances of space and time between his earthly and extraterrestrial selves. Such fantasies, however bizarre, are nevertheless neither disabling nor out of keeping with the speculative cast of Kirk Allen's advanced training and expertise in theoretical astrophysics.

The clinical difference between Schreber's florid paranoia and Allen's fantasy life can be discerned, arguably, from the distinction Jacques-Alain Miller, Eric Laurent, and others draw between Lacan's initial, structuralist analysis of Schreber's paranoia and the later seminars—or Borromean clinic—that present, in part, the topology of what Lacan characterizes as James Joyce's "ordinary" psychosis as a writer. To begin with, in early works such as *Seminar III: The Psychoses* (1955–56) and "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" (1955b), Lacan interprets psychotic delusion as a defense against a traumatic break with reality, revisiting Freud's key distinctions among repression (*verdrängung*), negation (*verneinung*), and foreclosure (*verwerfung*). In particular, Lacan considers the latter as the distinctive feature for Freud's formula that "what was abolished internally returns from without" (Freud, 1911, p. 71). In revisiting the hallucinations of the Wolf Man, Lacan defines the mechanism of foreclosure as a displacement where, as he has it, "what has been rejected from the symbolic reappears in the real" (1955–56, p. 46). Revising the passage of the Freudian subject beyond the pre-Oedipal realm of object relations into the Oedipal domain of language, culture, and social identity, the early Lacan underscores the symbolic register's structural role insofar as it offers linguistic substitution (*Nom du père* / Name-of-the-Father) as a prohibition of, and supplement for, the imaginary desire of the mother.

Mediated by language's symbolic functioning, the subject typically moves beyond the imaginary's specular identification with the body to assume a social identity within the cultural functioning of the Other: what Lacan defines in *The Psychoses* as "the locus in which speech is constituted" (p. 274). Thus, "persons," as Lacan has it, "must come from somewhere. They come first in a signifying, by which I mean formal, manner. Speech is constituted for by an *I* and a *you*. These are two counterparts. Speech transforms them, by giving them a certain appropriate relationship" (p. 274). While identity, society, and culture are legislated in the Other by means of the paternal symbolic, psychosis marks a foreclosure of the *Nom du père*. "At the point at which the Name-of-the-Father is summoned—and we shall see how—a pure and simple hole may thus answer in the Other; due to the lack of the metaphoric effect, this hole will give rise to a corresponding hole in the place of phallic signification" (Lacan, 1953a, p. 466). The verbal symptoms of psychotic discourse, as in Schreber's *Memoirs*, stem from a break or hole in the symbolic register of linguistic exchange. "Whereas the neurotic inhabits language," Lacan writes, "the psychotic is inhabited or possessed by language" (1955–56, p. 284). In this vein, the psychotic's discourse lacks apparent communicative meaning owing variously to the signifier's loss of a grounding connection—what Lacan describes as the "button tie" or "quilting point" (*point de capiton*)—in signified reference; an inability to make metaphoric substitutions in language use; and the message's subsequent reduction to iterative codes, neologisms, and portmanteau words (p. 258).

"To have a psychosis," Lacan insists in *Seminar III*, "there must be disturbances of language" (1955–56, p. 92), and it is telling that Kirk Allen's initial break with reality manifests as a delusion precisely in the linguistic register of the symbolic. Kirk's delusions, in Lindner's interpretation, are triggered by formative traumas of race, culture, and sexuality, conjoined as they are in Kirk's upbringing on a remote Polynesian island where his father is the American Commodore. As we have seen, Kirk's racial identifications are split between, on the one hand, his Polynesian caregivers and peer group, and, on the other hand, his Caucasian family and the provincial American outpost stationed on the island. Thus, the trauma of Kirk's sexual rela-

tion with his white governess leaves a profound imprint that Lindner likens to a breaching of the Oedipal contract: “[H]is sexual behavior with the white woman, to whom he was related psychologically by common color and origins, was tantamount to incest . . . So, feeling that he had ‘sinned,’ Kirk, like any islander, was covered with guilt, which he chose to expiate by separation from society in the same manner as a native might by disappearing into the jungle” (1954, p. 242). In Lacanian terms, the sexual *jouissance* that Kirk receives from Miss Lilian as a trauma in the Real disrupts, overwhelms, and unhinges the cultural proscriptions of the *Nom du père* otherwise anchoring his already precarious place within the social Other of the Polynesian island community.

Coincidentally, at the very moment when Kirk’s alienation, isolation, and guilt are most acute, “a large crate of books was delivered to the mission house” and its treasure trove of adventure fiction affords an uncanny symbolic medium that not only fuels Kirk’s “mental detachment” (p. 237) but triggers his psychotic fantasy: “He had hardly begun reading, however, when he suddenly became aware of the fact that the name of the hero of his novel was the same as his own. Momentarily, this gave him pause. As he describes it, ‘a kind of shock ran through me: for a minute I felt completely disoriented’” (p. 243). Coming upon his own name as a chance event, for Kirk, punctures the symbolic world of fiction with the force of the Real. Thus for Kirk, psychosis manifests symptomatically as a “disturbance in language.” Specifically, he becomes, as Lacan would have it, “possessed by language” insofar as the encounter with his own name in a scriven text of fiction takes on the status of the Real and thus opens up an entire delusional system: one that would defend against Kirk’s overwhelming losses of sexual trauma, societal alienation, and what Lindner characterizes as the “self-punishment” of his “awful, ever-present sense of guilt” (p. 242). “As I read,” he says, “about the adventures of Kirk Allen in these books the conviction began to grow on me that these stories were not only true to the very last detail but that they were about *me*. In some weird and inexplicable way I knew that what I was reading was my biography . . . Real life—my real life—was in the books. There I lived: there I had my being” (pp. 244, 245).

Eventually, Kirk supplements these fictional accounts by becoming the author of his own alternative biography: a delusory narrative whose intertextual expanse comes to comprise "maps, charts, diagrams, architectural layouts, genealogical schemes and timetables, painstakingly worked out while using the books for his guide" (p. 245). As a kind of extraterrestrial ethnographer, Kirk Allen keeps a scrupulously detailed manuscript that records his exploits and discoveries as a space and time traveler. Indeed, Kirk's intellectual capabilities as a gifted theoretical physicist are barely equal to the even more wide-ranging research that makes up his fantasy life. The extremity of Kirk's possession by the textual dimension of his delusion becomes clear when he turns over his records to Lindner. "It is impossible," Lindner writes, "to convey more than a bare impression of Kirk's 'records'" (p. 255). Nevertheless, Lindner's summary underscores the all-consuming nature of Kirk's textual productivity recorded in some 200 chapters of his biography, accompanied by 2,000 pages of mathematical formulae, sketches and assorted notes, a 100 page glossary of names, plus "82 full-color maps carefully drawn to scale, 23 of planetary bodies in four projections, 31 of land masses on these planets, 14 labeled 'Kirk Allen's Expedition to—,' the remainder of the cities on the various planets: 161 architectural sketches and elevations, some colored, some drawn only in ink but all carefully scaled and annotated: 12 genealogical tables: an 18-page description of the galactic system in which Kirk Allen's home planet was contained, with 4 astronomical charts, one for each of the seasons, and 9 star maps of the skies from observatories on other planets in the system: a 200-page history of the empire Kirk Allen ruled, with a 3-page table of dates and names of battles or outstanding historical events: a series of 44 folders containing from 2 to 20 pages apiece," a library of fantasized scientific papers, and the list goes on (pp. 255–256).

Kirk's obsessive record keeping is a telling sign of how—as a psychotic—he is, in Lacan's definition, "inhabited or possessed by language." Not insignificantly, a further symptom of his psychosis is his compulsion to place absolute, unquestioned faith in his delusory system. "Certainty," writes Bruce Fink (1999), "is characteristic of psychosis, whereas doubt is not" (p. 84). In Lindner's account, Kirk at first appears "untroubled by the

question of the validity of his para-psychic experiences" (1954, p. 258), but his insistence on certainty grows apace in proportion to the increasingly speculative demands of "predictive recall" (p. 249): Kirk's fantastic effort to "remember the future" (p. 247). Not content with the tricky future-anterior task of remembering what would have been the future biography for his heroic alter-ego, Kirk sets himself "the task," as he says, "of remembering what was going to happen to me beyond the point reached by my 'biographer' . . . One of the great difficulties, by the way, was to distinguish between imagination and recall. I knew how easy it would be merely to imagine a future for Kirk Allen and fool myself into believing it. But I wanted truth—curious as this may seem to you—and I determined doggedly only to remember" (p. 248). As a modern research physicist, Kirk relies on the objective assurances of science—its facts, formulas, and mathematical calculations—to "distinguish between imagination and recall" and above all to foreclose doubt.

IV

During the course of the analysis, Lindner intervenes in his patient's fantasy life so as to reintroduce doubt into the systematic rigor of Kirk's fantasy, thereby exposing him to the alternative "truth" of the unconscious beyond the totalizing certainties of modern scientific knowledge: "In a sudden flash of inspiration," Lindner writes, "it came to me that in order to separate Kirk from his madness it was necessary for me to enter his fantasy and, from that position, to pry him loose from the psychosis" (p. 269). Consequently, Lindner immerses himself for days on end in the minutiae of Kirk's "future biography" so as to ferret out any inconsistencies, contradictions, or logical errors that would challenge the scientific certainty of his patient's delusions. By identifying small mistakes in Kirk's calculations—say, in drawing the star maps of his imaginary home galaxy—Lindner nurtures a collaborative relationship with Kirk, showing him "total acceptance—even of conspiracy to the extent of helping him sustain his defense when it was threatened" by error and doubt (p. 274). In this way, Lindner not only enters into Kirk's psychosis but, more radically, comes

to take his analysand's place in the topology of his delusions: "It is as if a delusion such as Kirk's," he writes, "has room in it only for one person at one time, as if a psychotic structure, too, is rigidly circumscribed as to 'living space.' When, as in this case, another person invades the delusion, the original occupant finds himself literally forced to give way" (pp. 274–275). Yet by entering into "the psychotic structure" of Kirk's fantasy—a structure not unlike the topology of the *Möbius* strip described by Lacan—Lindner suffers a certain psychic toll.

"As a consequence" of Kirk's treatment, Lindner writes, "slowly but surely he was being edged out of his psychosis. But, meanwhile, strange things were happening to me, his psychoanalyst" (p. 276). Commenting on Lacan's essay "On Freud's '*Trieb*' and the psychoanalyst's desire," Jacques-Alain Miller (1996) writes that the analyst's "desire is to lay bare the subject's *jouissance*, whereas the subject's desire is sustained only by the misrecognition of the drive known as fantasy" (p. 426). Similarly, in traversing the topological cut or fold of Kirk's delusion, Lindner as a placeholder in the *Möbius* strip of Kirk's psychosis encounters the force of *jouissance* driving Kirk's delusions but, symptomatically, becomes a full participant in the fantasy world of his patient's psychosis. Beyond any disciplinary "knowledge" guiding the protocols of the treatment, Lindner begins to engage the power of the Real underlying Kirk's fantasy. That encounter begins with a defensive "boredom" with the work of analysis and his professional identity. Like Kirk, Lindner (1954) finds himself longing for an escape to another, more adventurous life, "for the distant use of eyes against horizons rather than walls" (p. 278). He "tires of words, words, words" (p. 278) making up the linguistic frame of analysis; the symbolic register of free association fades before the force of the Real. Likewise, Lindner's imaginary relation to the analyst's body begins to fragment and lapse into self-loathing: "I contemplated the slow but progressive degeneration of flesh and muscle with angry disgust. The long hours of sitting, the stale air; the flabbiness of arms and legs, the pallid skin tones, the first suggestion of potty bulge beneath the waistline—against these and many other minor but telling symptoms of oncoming physical decrepitude I felt helpless and self-rejecting, blaming

them, for want of more insight, on the implausible profession I had chosen to follow” (pp. 278–279).

Traversing the fantasy of the drive, Lindner’s descriptive account bears a striking semantic resonance to Lacan’s topological account of the *Möbius* strip. Thus, the “affair of Kirk,” he writes, “took its unforeseen twist” as Lindner realizes that, like his patient, he had “always been given to an active fantasy life . . . and had tried to bend it to my uses. Until the episode with Kirk, however, I had no idea what a double-edged tool it could be” (p. 279). The “bend” and “unforeseen twist” in the “double-edged” surface of the drive leads Lindner to the recognition that “it chanced,” he says, “that Kirk and I reversed roles” (p. 287). Suddenly Lindner, more than Kirk, gives in to the “potent allure” that, as he confesses, “I could escape from the prison of time: I could be geologist, explorer, astronomer, historian, physicist, adventurer and all those other enviable beings whose roles I had, at one time or another, played in my own pallid fantasies” (pp. 281–282). The other side of the ecstatic “fascination” and “enchantment” that empowers Lindner’s grandiosity is, of course, the anxious obsession of doubt: doubt over technical errors that he had pointed out to Kirk, paradoxically enough, in his earlier intervention as analyst:

When I discovered mistakes, where before I would employ them solely for purposes of treatment, in this phase I gave first consideration to their correction. Nor did I, on finding them, experience the thrill of satisfaction I had felt formerly when the unearthing of error meant more ammunition in the fight against my patient’s psychosis. Instead, such faults aroused anxiety in *me*, made *me* uncomfortable, and created moderately distressful symptoms which could be relieved only when the correction was made. (p. 283, italics in original)

Thus, Lindner’s analytic role as witness to Kirk’s unconscious delusions fades insofar as his need for scientific certainty—his insistence on assuming the position of the “subject presumed to know”—emerges as a defensive response to psychosis and its anxieties otherwise driven by the “jet-propelled couch.” So

pressing is his "obsession" (p. 284) that he turns his patient into a proxy for his own participatory role in the fantasy. "I found it 'necessary,'" Lindner relates, "for him to obtain the required information by 'journeying' to the place where it could be discovered. On occasions of this kind, assigning him the role of cosmic errand boy, I actually ordered Kirk to make these excursions into fantasy, then discovered myself awaiting his 'return' with extraordinary eagerness" (p. 283).

As a further symptomatic fading in his position as a rational subject, Lindner as memoirist lapses into the classic role of the "unreliable narrator." He betrays a certain authorial compulsion, as he says, "to assure the reader that, despite the foregoing, I was not myself psychotic either during the phase I have been describing or later when the strange manifestations increased in quantity and quality" (p. 283). Such denials of florid psychosis, however, do not mean that Lindner had not entered deeply into what Miller would describe as an "ordinary psychosis." Indeed, Lindner otherwise admits to invasive disturbances of an "obsessional nature" (p. 284); moreover, he becomes, as Lacan would have it, "possessed by language" insofar as he pours over translations of the extraterrestrial "Olmayan" language of Kirk's fantasy. More symptomatically, he relates: "Phrases in this weird tongue, unannounced and unbidden often came into my thoughts and remained there to plague consciousness annoyingly like a haunting melody until I set them down on paper and transposed them to English" (p. 284).

During the course of the analysis, Lindner's account of having "skirted the edges of the abyss" (p. 285) in pursuit of Kirk's psychosis bears uncanny semantic resonance to the circuit of the drive, in Lacan's account, as it likewise orbits the *objet a* cause of desire in the Real. Gradually, in traversing Kirk's fantasy, Lindner undergoes a "transformation of fascination into psychic distress" (p. 287) and, like Lacan, relies on a topological model to describe the uncanny reversal in the analyst/analysand dyad framing the treatment of his patient: "For it chanced," Lindner realizes, "that Kirk and I reversed roles . . . As he saw and felt it, there had been a complete turnabout in our positions . . ." (pp. 287, 292). Yet, the precondition for Kirk's cure, paradoxically enough, is this structural shift where,

as Lindner describes it, “His position, incredibly, was similar to mine when I made the decision to participate in the grandiose obsession . . . As the reader now knows, it was not because I was such an excellent actor that Kirk believed so thoroughly in the apparent reversal of roles: it was, rather, that he sensed how I had been attracted by the stupendous fantasy and felt, in myself, its magnetic pull” (p. 292). Insofar as Kirk feels compelled to save his analyst from the “magnetic pull” of psychosis, this topological reversal proves salutary in curing him of his psychotic disorder.

Yet, an unexpected consequence persists in Lindner’s psychic life owing to the recognition, as he has it, “that my chair and the couch are separated only by a thin line . . . that it is, after all, but a happier combination of accidents that determines, finally, who shall lie on that couch, and who shall sit behind it” (pp. 292–293). Having traversed the fantasy of Kirk’s delusion, Lindner realizes both intellectually and at a more profoundly emotive depth that the distinction he would normally draw between, on the one hand, the domain of common sense—with its everyday assurances of fixed scientific knowledge, rationality, and stable social and professional identifications—and, on the other hand, the “magnetic pull” of psychosis is a weak boundary: a difference of position whose “thin line” is, like the topology of the *Möbius* strip, entirely reversible. Thus, having successfully “cured” his patient, Lindner nevertheless is held by the “magnetic pull” of Kirk’s fantasy: enthralled by what Jacques-Alain Miller would characterize as an “ordinary psychosis.” Moreover, Lindner’s rite of passage does not remain, I would suggest, a wholly idiosyncratic narrative. Far from reflecting the uniquely peculiar side-effects of psychoanalytic practice, the twists and turns that Lindner’s “jet-propelled couch” negotiates between scientific knowledge and analytic “truth” persist in the post-modern registers of popular fiction and film precisely because they bear on a properly universal condition of ontological contingency: a loss of psychic guarantees that Lacan captures in his 1959 formula that “there is no Other of the Other.”¹¹

Lacan’s somewhat tautological maxim stands as the counterpoint to his initial formula for psychosis in *Seminar III* and “On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis.” In these early works, madness arises due to a breakdown in one’s

relation to the symbolic register with a resulting loss of rational guarantees grounded in the Other—what Lacan describes in terms of “the locus of the operation of language” (1968, p. 4). The conventional range of neurotic, obsessive, and perverse orientations that make up the cultural norms of everyday social life is framed and sustained, for Freud, by the proscriptions on desire sustained by the rule of Oedipus, that in Lacan’s linguistic revision translates as the Name-of-the-Father or *Nom du père*, whose *Nom* as name and “no” both instantiates a limit on the Real of maternal jouissance and grounds the symbolic order in the authoritative “signifier of the Other qua locus of the law” (1955b, p. 485). In the early Lacan, psychosis happens as a foreclosure of the *Nom du père*, a consequent break with reality, and the subject’s compensatory substitution of a delusional system for conventional reality upheld by the normative functioning of the *Nom du père*. In the 1960s, Lacan revises this original appeal to the Law as guarantor of the Other’s social reality. No longer grounded in the authority of the Law, “*l’Autre*”—as Lacan has it in “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious” (1960)—“*n’existe pas*” (“the Other does not exist”), the latter’s social reality now viewed increasingly as provisional, plural, and phantasmal (p. 700). To some extent, this pronouncement looks forward to the postmodern condition with its proliferating swarm of media simulations culminating in what Jean Baudrillard would later describe as the “satellization of the Real” (1983, p. 128). Thus in “ordinary psychosis,” the accelerating confusion of historical reference with the postmodern regime of phantasmal simulacra results in a certain loosening of the social link otherwise binding subjects to traditional conventions, ethical standards, and civic identifications.

Anticipating what has been described variously by Marie-Hélène Brousse as the “symbolic world changes” of the new millennium, by Zygmunt Bauman as the “liquid life” of advanced consumer society, and by Jean-Luc Monnier as the “aimless speech” of digital social networking, Jacques Alain Miller and Eric Laurent in the mid-1990s addressed the fading of the social Other in seminars such as “The Other Who Does Not Exist and His Ethical Committees” (1996–1997), making a key intervention in clinical practice the following year with Miller’s

new formulation of “Ordinary Psychosis.” A heuristic rather than prescriptive diagnosis, “ordinary psychosis” addresses what in Lacan is the increasingly blurred distinction between the extraordinary delusions governing the florid psychic life, say, of Judge Daniel Paul Schreber and the contemporary proliferation of social delusions in the public sphere that nevertheless “are able to order a world” (Miller, 2008, p. 152).¹² Admitting the continuity of extraordinary and ordinary psychoses, Miller concludes, “you are led to a generalization of psychosis. And Lacan followed that lead. The generalization of psychosis means that you don’t have the true Name-of-the-Father. It doesn’t exist. The Name-of-the-Father is a predicate, is always a predicate, it is always one special element amongst others which for a special subject functions as a Name-of-the-Father. So if you say that, you bury the difference between neurosis and psychosis. It’s a perspective in accordance with ‘everyone is mad’, with ‘everyone is delusional in his own way’, and Lacan wrote this in 1978” (p. 159). For his part, Lindner likewise resists letting go of, or foreclosing, his “delusion,” and ends his case study by refusing to suture himself as a subject within the totalizing frame of modern scientific knowledge. Over the course of treating Kirk, the military research scientist, it is Lindner who has faded as a scientific subject—lapsing from his rational, professional identity as an American analyst into the murky realms and adventurous domains of “ordinary psychosis.” He remains open both to the nostalgia for Kirk’s delusion and, more radically, to a certain anticipation of further traversals of the fantasy afforded by the jet-propelled couch: “It has been years since I saw Kirk Allen,” Lindner concludes, but nevertheless, “I think of him often, and of the days when we roved the galaxies together. Especially do I recall Kirk on summer nights on Long Island, when the sky over Peconic Bay is bright with quivering stars. And sometimes, as I gaze above, I smile to myself and whisper:

‘How goes it with the Crystopeds?’

‘How are things in Seraneb?’”

Notes

1. For an account of Lacan's early collaborations on topology see Roudinesco (1990), p. 560.
2. See Bauman (2007), Brouse (2008), Laurent and Miller (2008), Miller (2008), and Monnier (2008).
3. For excellent accounts of the torus, the *Möbius* strip, the Klein bottle, and the cross-cap as models for, respectively, the relation between demand and desire, the subject and speech, the signifier and the Other, and the subject's relation to the object of fantasy, see Nasio (1987). Granon-Lafont (1985) offers a definitive reading of the temporal dimension of topological figures in Lacan. Also see Glynos and Stavrakakis (2002) for a spirited rebuttal of the charge, according to Sokal & Bricmont (1998), that Lacan's topological project abuses scientific and mathematical logic.
4. See Ragland and Milovanovic (2004) and Granon-Lafont (1985).
5. See also Brennan (1993).
6. See Copjec (2006), p. 96, and Voruz (2008).
7. In a symptomatic moment of "masculine protest," Freud must assert "that I developed my theory of paranoia before I became acquainted with the contents of Schreber's book" (1911, p. 79). Noting Freud's own paranoia in claiming precedence over Schreber, Peter Gay reads this obsession with Schreber as a displacement of Freud's contemporaneous attraction to Wilhelm Fliess: "Freud's rather manic preoccupation with Schreber hints at some hidden interest driving him on: Fliess" (1998, p. 279). Not insignificantly, Freud called on Carl Ferenczi as witness to his having theorized psychosis in advance of reading Schreber and even asked him to collaborate as secretary in analyzing the *Memoirs*. The appeal to Ferenczi adds another layer of ironic vicissitude to Freud's dilemma insofar as, for Pamela Thurschwell, Freud was deeply ambivalent about Ferenczi's tendencies not just toward homosexual identification but the link between psychoanalysis and the occult. But beyond Freud's anxieties concerning the occult and homoeroticism, what is as powerfully at stake in this exchange between psychoanalysis's claim to scientific rigor and psychosis, for Eric Santner, turns on "not only matters of same-sex passion but also questions of originality and influence, questions pertaining to the transfer of knowledge and authority in the very domain that Freud was staking out as his own" (1997, p. 21).
8. Thus, the "'localization of nervous diseases' entered a 'new epoch' (as Freud says) with Flechsig, who posed for his festschrift photograph in front of a massive, cut-open brain . . . The soul consists of nervous tissue, which makes in vivo investigation impossible, but the nerves are perfect data recorders and for that reason will yield all their secrets to the clinical eye at the moment of dissection" (Kittler, 1990, pp. 295–296).
9. To begin with, Santner notes that the period of Schreber's investiture coincides with national debate surrounding the recodification of the German Civil Code from 1874–1896, a period consequently marked by "strong differences and conflicts between heterogeneous legal codes and interests of the various German states and regions" and their diverse constituencies (1997, p. 15). In reading the "law-making violence" of this political moment, Santner brings Walter Benjamin's 1921 essay "Zur Kritik der Gewalt" ("Critique of Violence") to bear on Schreber's breakdown insofar as both involve a certain disillusionment with the law. Benjamin points to the legitimation crisis of the Law as such insofar as its judgments rest—as Derrida has argued in "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'"—not so much on universal foundations of judicial reason but on precedents driven by the violence and power of performative speech acts. Furthermore, the reiterative power of such legal, institutionally sanctioned performatives exerts a certain violence paradoxically enough through the rites, rituals, offices, and titles of "symbolic investiture" by means of which agents, like Schreber, are interpellated as placeholders in service to power.

10. Schreber's paranoid response to the "Jewish question" is inscribed at the level of the signifier in the judge's complex associations of proper names punctuating the *Memoirs* as well as in his paranoid identification with the figure of the Wandering or "Eternal Jew" who, like Schreber, is "unmanned" as a transsexual female progenitor of the *Memoirs*' "fleeting-improvised men." Based on Sander Gilman's reading of Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1903) among other texts, Santner attends to Weininger's ideological splitting of, on the one hand, masculinity, intellect, and Enlightenment rationality from femininity, "abject sensuality," and ethnic degeneration, associated with the figure of the Jew. Thus, writing in *Freud, Race, and Gender* (1993), "Schreber's paranoid system," as Sander Gilman summarizes it, "uses the vocabulary of *fin-de-siècle* scientific anti-Semitism as a rhetorical structure to represent his anxiety about his own body. Schreber senses himself being transmuted from a 'beautiful,' masculine Aryan to an 'ugly,' feminized Jew" (Gilman, 1993, p. 147, quoted in Santner, 1997, p. 109).
11. In a reading of *Hamlet* during his Seminar of 8 April 1959, Lacan declares that "there is no Other of the Other," calling into crisis the normative boundaries dividing reality from delusion (1958–59, p. 8).
12. Neurosis in the classical norms of Lacanian clinical practice was initially distinguished from psychosis based on the latter's foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father—the latter's lack of a paternal signifier anchoring the symbolic order in the governing social order of the Other. With Lacan's later pronouncement that "the Other does not exist," psychosis ceases to be an extraordinary psychic disorder, emerging now as a universal, albeit "ordinary," condition of postmodernity. The subject's social link that once was underwritten by the governing authority and Law of the *Nom du père* fades to a provisional, phantasmal psychic stabilization that Lacan describes in Seminar XXIII in terms of the *sinthome*. The latter's social bond is particular insofar as it describes the specific way in which each individual knots together the three orders of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real.

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