

*Shock Head Soul*

by Simon Pummell

Based on *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken*  
by Daniel Paul Schreber.

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Hot Property Films



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CAPTIONS

White out of Black.

*What follows is a true story,*

*...though like all true stories,*

*..it is largely fabricated from half-truths, speculations  
and lies.*

1.0 CAPTION

THREE PROLOGUE SCENES

1.1 PROLOGUE - SCENE 1

Schreber watches 1903 NEWSREEL footage of Edison's famous experiment when electricity was used to publicly execute an elephant.

Close-ups of Schreber's face watching intently -

- with the flickering light of the projected footage playing across his face.

Possibly drifting smoke as if in early cinema.

Onscreen the shackled elephant is led into place -

- and then electrocuted.

It falls in a cloud of smoke.

The footage is slowed so we watch every detail of the action.

SCHREBER V.O.

A fleeting moment of reality.  
Captured through trapping light  
rays: the black burnt into  
silver.

It tells us. This happened. In  
reality.

But what are the motives behind  
such planning and staging of  
events around us? What hidden  
forces are trying to speak to us,  
of what, through that spectacle  
we call reality?

(MORE)

SCHREBER V.O. (CONT'D)  
Do they struggle to tell us that  
these new rays can bring light,  
can bring life, but also can  
bring death?

1.2 PROLOGUE - SCENE 2

We track through an EMPTY COURTROOM.

It is heavily panelled -

- with machine-like brass fittings -
- A 'machine for Justice'.

SCHREBER V.O.  
Doctor of Law at 27; State Bar  
Exam at 28; Appeals Judge at 35;  
District Court Director at 37;  
Presiding Judge of the District  
Court in Freiberg at 47;  
Presiding Judge of the Supreme  
Court of Appeals of the Kingdom  
of Saxony at 51... ...And now?

1.3 PROLOGUE - SCENE 3

Schreber sits at a table laid out for dining.

On the table before him, in the centre of a large white  
plate, is a SAFETY RAZOR and several SAFETY RAZOR BLADES.

He selects a blade.

And unwraps it with deliberate care.

He then calmly, carefully places the blade on his tongue -

- and takes the RAZOR BLADE into his mouth.

As he EATS the RAZOR BLADE -

- we see Schreber chew as both as dramatic action -
- and as archival X-RAY MOVIE FOOTAGE of chewing and  
swallowing razor blades.

After he has swallowed the final blade -

- Schreber tips his head forward, opens his mouth -
- and spews blood all over the table. (In Slow Motion.)

SCHREBER V.O.

Miracles I have endured since the penetration of rays include broken teeth and cuts on the tongue.

It is my exceptional ability to swallow pain and suffering that has singled me out for God's special attention.

And is the reason I have suffered a martyrdom only comparable with the crucifixion of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

CUT TO:

TITLE SEQUENCE

The title sequence uses the distinctive rhythm of MORSE CODE and creates a pattern of flashing letters emphasising the S and O in the title SHOCK HEAD SOUL to create the familiar rhythm of SOS

... --- ... S O S

S-O-- HEAD SO--

-H-CK HEAD --UL

SHOCK HEAD SOUL

This animation of the title and the front title cards are all burnt into the BCU shots of the Writing Down Orbs, frames closely that they are never entirely revealed.



2.0 CAPTION

THREE BEDROOM SCENES

2.1 INT. SCHREBER'S BEDROOM - DAY

BLACKNESS

Sabine crying out, moaning, as she miscarries.

BLACKNESS

Sabine cries out again.

Blood soaks through the nightdress and light sheet covering her, and the sheeting wadded between her legs.

BLACKNESS

A general shot of the room as Sabine lies exhausted.

Nurses and maids cross to and fro bringing bowls of hot water and towels, as the midwife wipes her face.

Schreber holds Sabine's hand, kisses her.

The Doctor calls Schreber to one side.

Schreber kisses his wife again and moves to the Doctor.

DOCTOR

I am so sorry.

SCHREBER

Yes. Yes this is the fourth time. We seem to be cursed.

DOCTOR

Your wife has lost a great deal of blood.

Schreber nods. Says nothing.

SCHREBER

She must be cared for with greatest possible attention the next few weeks.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

Yes. Of course. Anything. Whatever is needed.

Schreber returns to his wife.

Kisses her.

Takes the cloth from the Midwife, and wipes his wife's face.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
My poor darling. I'll keep you safe.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Schreber and his wife walk in the park together.

As the couple walk they play a game:

At intervals they stop and look into each other's eyes - and compliment the other: E.G. "You have...beautiful eyes."

Only, when they speak the phrase they leave out the adjective.

SCHREBER  
You have -- eyes.

SABINE  
I have -- eyes. I have -- eyes.

She repeats this until moved to say:

SABINE (CONT'D)  
You have -- heart.

We see the couple drift through the garden as if in an idyll.

They repeat this game.

Schreber always chooses aspects of Sabine that are surface: face, eyes, lips, hair.

Sabine always chooses aspects of Schreber that are internal, hidden: heart, soul, mind, kindness.

They move past glass-houses and into a Maze and a Rose Garden

Finally, they move ahead of us,

-- getting farther and farther away from us.

Until they are small in the formal landscape.

*Even when they are far away they are close miked: their voices still intimate, though quieter.*

2.3 INT. SCHREBER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Schreber sits in bed surrounded by legal papers and folders.

He is reading through a pile of legal documents.

His wife is mid-way undressing, examining herself in a pair of mirrors, and a maid brushes her hair.

Near her is a an iron bath tub, half full of steaming water.

A second maid walks to and fro, ignored by both Schreber and Sabine. Occasionally Sabine issues an instruction as an aside to the maids - not to brush too hard, to check the bath is not too hot etc.

We hear scratching, scraping and rattling as if a pen on paper or typewriter keys.

Schreber looks up.

An uncanny CRACKLING.

Schreber's eyes.

SCHREBER  
Sabchen. Do you hear that?

SABINE  
You're tired. Stop reading. It's late. You work too hard.

SCRATCHING and SCRAPING continues.

Gets LOUDER and LOUDER.

Only Schreber seems to notice this.

Sabine is oblivious.

SABINE (CONT'D)  
Look. You can take up to 5 drops of Chloral Hydrate tonight. That's what Doctor Otto said. Perhaps it's time.

SCHREBER  
Sabine? Listen.

She listens. Nothing.

SABINE  
Perhaps a mouse has entered. I heard nothing.



SCHREBER  
These walls are solid Sabchen.

Schreber gets out of bed and sits on the edge -- ready.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
Who's there?

He repeats.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
Who's there?

We see nothing.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
Sabine! Look! What's happening!

Sabine does not seem to notice.

She calmly measures out the drugs, dropping with a pipette into a glass of water..

SABINE  
One. Two. Three. Four. Five.  
Try and remain calm, remember  
this melancholic period will draw  
to a natural close, God willing:  
that's what he said.

She passes the glass to Schreber.

SABINE (CONT'D)  
Patience. Patience is required.  
I am sure putting ourselves  
completely back in the hands of  
Dr. Flechsig will be the first  
step to restoration.

Schreber drains the draught of medicine.

FADE TO BLACK.

In the night silence it's as if the house is underwater:  
rippling rays drift and twist, throwing dramatic shadows on  
the walls: cut away to other corridors and stairways in  
house.

FADE TO BLACK.

Schreber still does not sleep. He lies awake next to the  
sleeping Sabine.

Across the ceiling crackles LINES of BRIGHT BLUE and WHITE  
STATIC ELECTRICITY.

The FLASHES light up the room.

And then, as if lightening fills the room, ELECTRICITY crackles across the ceiling, momentarily illuminating the room.

Every time the electricity arcs, Schreber's body contracts -  
- as if it is directly shocked by it.

He very gingerly gets out of bed without waking Sabine.

As he pulls back the covers, she wakes.

SABINE (CONT'D)

Paul?

SCHREBER

Did you see it?

She lights a candle.

SABINE

See what? I was sleeping.

SCHREBER

The lights.

SABINE

It's the middle of the night  
Paul.

SCHREBER

The room was full. Blue flashes.  
Ringed in white. Violent threads  
of light. Thread across the  
room. A kind of moonshine -- but  
in the room. Gossamer threads.  
It is beautiful. But what is it?

Across the room shoot lines of BRIGHT BLUE and WHITE STATIC  
ELECTRICITY.

Schreber looks up sharply.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

Do you not hear them? See them?

Sabine looks up.

There's nothing -

- just the play of candlelight on the ornate ceiling.

SABINE

(whisper)

Please my love. Try to sleep.  
Come back to bed.

(MORE)

SABINE (CONT'D)  
Come back to yourself. You are  
exhausted my dear. Please Paul.

She now takes the time to light an oil lamp with an  
elaborate glass shade next to the bed.

As she murmurs to Schreber, Sabine measures out and give  
her husband more sleeping draught -

- counting drops of chloral hydrate into a wine glass of  
water -

SABINE (CONT'D)  
One. Two. Three. Four. Five.

- and passing the glass to Schreber, who drains it.

SCHREBER  
I want it to stop now.

SABINE  
What Paul? What? What to stop?  
There is nothing! You are the  
author of your own miseries.  
There is nothing! It's in your  
head. What did Dr. Flechsig  
say? Rest. Rest. More rest.

She physically settles him back into bed. Plumps his  
pillows.

SABINE (CONT'D)  
Please be well again Paul.  
Please. Think of everything we  
have. Think of the future.

Schreber settles back in the bed.

Sabine sits on the bed in silence, holds his hand.  
Finally...

SABINE (CONT'D)  
Your sister was very unkind at  
dinner tonight.

SCHREBER  
I would say my sister is the most  
marvelous and deserving mother on  
the face of the earth.

SABINE  
Yes. I am sorry Paul. You feel  
I have let you down.

Schreber shakes his head.

She leaves and returns with a book.

SABINE (CONT'D)

Look. One of your old nursery  
books.

As he falls asleep, she reads to him to soothe him:  
Hoffman's *Struwwelpeter: Merry Stories and Funny Pictures*.

SABINE (CONT'D)

When the children have been good,  
That is, be it understood,  
Good at mealtimes, good at play,  
Good all night and good all day,  
They shall have pretty things...

She turns the page.

SABINE (CONT'D)

Just Look at him! There he  
stands,  
With his nasty hair and hands.  
See! His nails are never cut;  
They are grimed black as soot;  
And the sloven, I declare,  
Never once has combed his hair.

CUT TO:

### 3.0 CAPTIONS

#### THREE CONSULTING ROOM SCENES

#### 3.1 INT. FLECHSIG CONSULTING ROOM - DAY

CAPTION: The First Visit

The office is ornate and well appointed: a beautiful desk, mahogany fittings, and glass cabinets full of medical equipment and specimens.

On the wall above Flechsig's desk is a massive painting/diagram of a partly dissected brain.

And most prominent, on every flat surface, are jars full of preserved brains.

The green glass shade over the desk casts a gentle light in the room.

An assistant brings papers and whispers to Flechsig.

Flechsig is paternal to Schreber -

- looks him in the eye.

He takes Schreber's hands in both his hands.

This is a performance for the patient, an invitation to trust.

FLECHSIG  
Overexcitement is highly  
damaging.

As he examines Schreber, peering into his eyes with an ophthalmoscope, he continues.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
Rest. Rest. More rest.

He addresses the patient, with almost a set piece:

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
What I see is every fibre of your  
being over-stretched to the point  
of breaking.

Flechsig comes close to Schreber: very intimate.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
It might assist you to think of  
your mind as prodigiously complex  
calculating mechanism, a  
Difference Engine created by the  
great watchmaker of the universe...

Flechs sig raps Schreiber on the patella. His leg jumps by reflex.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)

A delicate structure regulated by  
invisible ratchets and pendulums  
of God's devising.

Flechs sig picks up a glass jar.

In it is a FROG that has been dyed and embalmed.

Flechs sig holds the jar containing the frog up to the light.

The animal is transparent: through the skin you can see a fine web of nerves and capillaries, dyed a luminous blue.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)

Look. Even the humblest animals  
are woven from an exquisitely  
fine net of nerves.

As Flechs sig speaks he holds the glass jar, with the transparent Frog floating within, towards the light.

He moves Sabine to look more closely.

His touch on her arm is a little more intimate than is perhaps appropriate.

SABINE

It is a work of art.

She looks at the translucent animal with amazement.

He looks at her in a frankly appraising way.

FLECHSIG

Oh no. It's much, much, more.  
To and fro: a cacophony of  
telegraphed messages from brain  
to limbs. Think of it as the  
very root of the idea, word made  
flesh: to and fro, to and fro.  
(to Sabine)

It is this flood of messages that  
is out of rhythm in your husband.

SABINE

He is so very unhappy doctor,  
exhausted -- overcome by the  
weight, the responsibilities of  
his position.

FLECHSIG

There have been marvellous  
advances since we last saw you.  
New approaches. New drugs.

(MORE)

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)

A new understanding of the  
somatic basis of the problems.  
Heavy sedation, heavy sedation, a  
stilling of unruly cross-rhythms:  
will bring peace, restore  
regulation and internal order.

Sabine turns and lays her hand on her husband's arm  
tenderly.

SABINE

Oh Paul. I know, I pray you will  
be rested.

Schreber's deadpan face: it is as if he gazes at his wife  
across a chasm.

Almost as if he does not know her.

Sabine turns to the Doctor.

SABINE (CONT'D)

I pray you can return my husband  
to me, as you did before.

FLECHSIG

(To Schreber)

All I ask is that you place  
yourself totally in my hands.

### 3.2 INT. FLECHSIG CONSULTING ROOM

Sabine sits silent opposite Dr. Flechsig. She is very  
subdued.

FLECHSIG

You made the correct decision in  
sharing these confidences.

The assistant, Dr. TAUSCHER (25), enters, with arms of  
papers and medical equipment.

He smiles says hello.

He moves around the room, placing the items on shelves.

Sabine does not speak - it's as if she's waiting

Finally -

SABINE

I would prefer to continue our  
conversation in private.

Flechsig nods for Tauscher to leave.

FLECHSIG  
Please leave us.

Tauscher exits.

Flechsigt turns to Sabine.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
Go on.

SABINE  
I received all these...  
revelations... in utmost  
confidence: in the most private  
conversation between man and  
wife. I pray to God it is not a  
breach of trust.

(Breaking out in anger.)  
What am I to make of these  
disgusting effusions? Fantasies  
of being a woman. Day dreaming  
of being violated -- like some  
ten pfennig whore.

FLECHSIG  
My dear Frau Schreber. Please.  
Restrain yourself. Do not allow  
your husband's afflictions to  
unduly excite you. Please.

Flechsigt makes Sabine take off her gloves -- of the  
thinnest violet leather -- and he takes her pulse.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
I believe we are here to discuss  
you. Your pulse is irregular,  
fast and weak. You neglect  
yourself, and overtax yourself.

He does this as he continues to speak.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
These blooms from your husband's  
overheated brain are like a fever  
- when an overheated body  
attempts to regulate its  
temperature.

SABINE  
It's... ..degrading to see him  
so abject. So pathetic. His  
dignity is everything to him.  
Now he grovels on the floor like  
a whipped dog.

FLECHSIG  
Now let us return to your own  
afflictions.  
(MORE)



FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
The crying, the laughing, I  
believe is at root organically  
linked to the misfortune of your  
miscarriages. Let me explain.

Flechs sig has a plaster model of a woman's belly.

Flechs sig removes a small panel on the belly, revealing  
reproductive organs: models of the uterus and fallopian  
tubes within.

He fumbles around inside.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
Here.  
(pointing)  
Here lies the seat of a great  
deal of unhappiness for so many  
patients. We have now developed  
a simple procedure to remove this  
source of emotional instability  
and torment.

Finally he gives up, and selects a large scale wax model of  
the uterus and fallopian tubes from his desk.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
When the reproductive organs are  
in some way diseased it sometimes  
ALSO produces remarkable  
improvements in mood and  
stability to remove both the  
disease and the organs  
themselves...  
... removing as it were the  
poisoned emotion and the toxic  
tissue in one cut.

Sabine looks at him.

Sabine shakes her head.

SABINE  
No. Not me.

Long pause.

SABINE (CONT'D)  
My womb is fruitful. Our  
problems -- the problems we have -  
- they come from him.

To go on speaking takes an effort.

SABINE (CONT'D)  
I hope I can rely on your  
absolute discretion as a...  
(MORE)

SABINE (CONT'D)  
well... as my physician... and  
my husband's physician.

FLECHSIG  
I am under oath so to speak. You  
know this.

SABINE  
I have a child. She's nearly  
nine now. This is a secret my  
husband shares with me.

FADE TO BLACK.

LATER:

Now alone, Flechsig lights a cigar.

He peers into a stereo viewer: viewing cards he takes from  
a cigar box in his desk.

As Flechsig looks through the viewer he's utterly  
concentrated, nervously licking his lips.

He brings the stereo viewer away from his face.

He sees Sabine Schreiber's gloves still sit on his desk.

Flechsig picks one up -

- spreads the limp fingers of finest calfskin, dyed violet -

- and inhales its scent as if the thin leather was flower  
petals.

He brings the stereo viewer back to his face.

3.3 INT. FLECHSIG CONSULTING ROOM

Flechsig sits in his office with Tauscher.

TAUSCHER  
According to the reports he is  
demanding, exhausting, and quite  
possibly incurable. He brings us  
much trouble and very little  
credit.

Flechsig takes the papers, casts an eye over them.

FLECHSIG  
Yes. Well. He has been most  
difficult with his wife about his  
income, and after all we rely on  
her to pay us.  
(MORE)

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)

But be clear young man, I pass no judgement other than the professional judgement that we are in the business of cure here: returning sufferers to the grateful bosom of their family. The segregation, and isolation, and frankly, storage, of incurables has never been our priority. Simply put, others do it better than us.

Flechs sigs, this gives him no pleasure.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)

Well. Why don't you bring her in.

Tauscher exits.

Flechs sig moves to his desks and picks up the VIOLET GLOVES.

Flechs sig is still standing behind his desk as Sabine enters.

He makes a small bow to her.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)

You left these my dear.

He hands her the violet gloves.

Dr. TAUSCHER hovers behind Sabine.

TAUSCHER

Should we start, sir?

Flechs sig nods they should start.

The three sit down, settle.

Beat.

FLECHSIG

We have a delicate matter we must discuss.

TAUSCHER

I believe Dr. Flechs sig has informed you that your husband is upsetting not just other patients, but staff. He abuses them verbally, shares the most revolting confidences with them, has even boxed their ears.

Sabine nods.

SABINE

He is a man of the highest standing.

FLECHSIG

Of course.

(He pats her hand)

We make no judgement of him. Any distressing or compromising outpourings of his diseased mind must be regarded as chemistry, not morality.

SABINE

(To Flechsig)

Your photograph still stands on my desk. I tell everybody, "It's the saint who previously restored my dear husband to me when he was utterly lost."

FLECHSIG

I know. I know. But this time...well.

TAUSCHER

Yes, indeed. I am very sorry to say, that on this occasion, according to the reports before us he is... .. quite possibly incurable.

FLECHSIG

I want to stress we pass no judgement on your husband, my dear -- other than the professional judgement that we are in the business of cure here: returning sufferers to the grateful bosom of their family. Now that seems a less possible outcome, well... ..simply put, others are much better equipped to help him now than us.

SABINE

I see.

FLECHSIG

You cannot afford to keep him here indefinitely my dear. Our fee structure is not designed for long term patients -- or the families that must bear the cost. Sonnenstein is of course a state institution.

SABINE

I see.

FLECHSIG

I knew you would. Now there will  
be papers; I will ask Dr.  
Tauscher to prepare them for you  
signature.

CUT TO:

#### 4.0 CAPTION

#### THREE ASYLUM SCENES

#### 4.1 INT. FLECHSIG'S HOSPITAL - DINING AREA - DAY

Bare room with a scrubbed wooden table in the centre.

Several patients eat from crude heavy white crockery. A nurse brings plates of food, and supervises the diners.

Some of the patients, move in intense repetitive loops: obsessive patterns of gestures with hidden meanings.

Schreber hangs over a his plate retching, and spitting out all the food that is spooned into his mouth by a nurse who sits by his side.

The spooning and spitting form a monotonous rhythmic pattern.

Flechsigt sits beside Schreber.

Schreber start a TERRIBLE CONTINUAL BELLOWING: it is the sound of an animal in pain.

FLECHSIG

This is a bad business. For everybody. You must eat you know, old fellow.

SCHREBER

(whispering now)  
'decomposing', 'rotting.'  
'poisoned by the Lust Plague', 'a leper led by lepers'.

Schreber demands strychnine repeatedly, claiming he wants to die, that he is rotting.

FLECHSIG

What? What?

CUT TO:

#### 4.2 INT. FLECHSIG'S HOSPITAL - ISOLATION CELL - DAY

Attendants carry Schreber and man-handle him into a restraint jacket.

They work in a practised way.

Schreber is absolutely passive and floppy - like a rag doll.

The attendants prop Schreber on the bed - Flechsig stands to one side, with Tauscher, observing.

An attendant holds Schreber's face while another kneels on Schreber's chest.

They struggle to insert a pipe attached to rubber tubing and a funnel between Schreber's clenched teeth.

Schreber suddenly starts to struggle and emits a terrible MOANING cry.

CUT TO:

4.3 INT. FLECHSIG'S HOSPITAL: CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Flechsig walks with his junior doctor, Dr. Tauscher.

FLECHSIG

What does all this remind you of?  
His obsession with rotting, the  
softening of the brain?

TAUSCHER

He talks of the 'lust plague'  
Sir.

FLECHSIG

The Lust Plague. Indeed he does.  
With good reason. His brother  
was parietic you know, tertiary  
syphilis, living in Bautzen. Put  
a bullet through his brains, what  
was left of them. Poor fellow.

TAUSCHER

You read the brother's autopsy?

FLECHSIG

Phh. The autopsy fiddlesticks.  
The wife. The wife told me  
privately. Started worrying she'd  
got the syph herself. Utter  
nonsense. Examined her myself.  
Poor woman she has a lot to put  
up with. Look she's visiting.

We see Sabine walking towards them down the corridor.

The doctors and the wife move towards each other and exchange greetings.

Sabine leaves them and walks away down the corridor.

When she's out of earshot.

FLECHSIG (CONT'D)  
Charming. Charming.

TAUSCHER  
Indeed. Very.

FLECHSIG  
And a pretty little piece.  
(laughs)  
Lets give him the Potassium  
Iodide course. Can't do any  
harm.

4.4 INT. FLECHSIG'S HOSPITAL: SCHREBER'S CELL - DAY

BCU piano mechanism playing wildly fast and mechanically.

Not a tune -- just random slamming of notes.

Pull out to see Schreber playing the piano.

We see Sabine enter the room behind him.

He ignores his wife.

SABINE  
Hello Paul. I hope you are  
feeling more yourself. My father  
sends fond greetings, and hopes  
for your return to health.

Schreber does not reply, only continues to pound the piano,  
until he breaks a piano string.

Sabine comes and sits nearby him.

SABINE (CONT'D)  
Please Paul. This senseless  
pounding is destroying the  
instrument. It was not cheap you  
know.

Schreber surprisingly shifts from senseless pounding to  
playing - fortissimo - An aria: from Handel's Messiah: I  
Know my Redeemed Liveth.

His precision, volume, and the mechanical quality of his  
playing make him sound like a player-piano.

Schreber, despite her pleas and goading, will not talk to  
her.

Finally...



SCHREBER

You must understand I cannot take  
responsibility for the constant  
hostile miracles directed against  
me: the 'breaking of the piano  
string miracles',

(he slams randomly on  
the piano)

... the 'choking miracles', 'the  
food falling out of mouth  
miracles', the teeth breaking,  
the tongue cutting, the skull  
compression, the chest  
compression. It never stops.

He gets up from the piano, and approaches her.

Then...

...he kneels, and pulling his wife down next to him; she  
resists then finally kneels.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

Lets us pray:  
Our Father, which art in  
heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven -

As Schreber prays:

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

- Give us this day our daily  
bread.

Sabine stands up.

SABINE

Paul. I cannot do this any more.

Husband and wife contemplate each other in silence.

He on his knees, continues to pray, watched by her.

SCHREBER

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.

Finally sits back on his heels, looking at her.

Sabine fumbles in a clutch bag and produces a printed form.

SABINE

You must sign this before I go.  
They said you must at the office.

But Schreber will not sign the chit she needs for her to receive his salary.

Finally Schreber bursts out.

SCHREBER

(repeats, mumbled and  
jumbled)

No, this is theft, this is pure fraud.

Long silence.

SABINE

I have told you: my father wants me to go and live in Berlin. What reason do you give me to ignore his requests? First your companionship, and now even your modest income, is denied to me as your wife?

Schreber finally rises.

Tentatively touches his wife.

As he pleads with her, his voice becomes as if 'possessed' - half male, half female.

SCHREBER

Sabine. You must help me. God's will is directed towards me with extreme viciousness and cruelty..

... .. God is quite unable to negotiate with the living..

... .. only with corpses, at the very most with men in the realm of sleep and dream... ..

SABINE

Paul. Please stop this nonsense. Please sign as I have repeatedly asked you.

SCHREBER

(Whispering to his wife)

Help me Sabine. My soul is to be given to the un-named person..

...my body is to be made female for sexual abuse by him..

(MORE)

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

...God himself has plotted with  
THIS PERSON to achieve the murder  
of my soul, and the prostitution  
and complete submission of my  
body.

SABINE

Please stop - you are upsetting  
yourself, and distressing me.

Schreber whispers more urgently now.

He is in a desperate situation.

SCHREBER

You must tell the world. By a  
Holy Miracle God Almighty's rays,  
which are in essence male semen,  
are penetrating me continuously  
... ... Even as I speak to you I  
can feel I have female  
genitals...though rather unfinished  
and sketchy... ...

SABINE

Paul. Paul. Play the piano  
again. Please. For me. Play  
the piano again for me. I do so  
love your playing.

4.5 INT. SONNENSTEIN ASYLUM - DAY

In the isolation cell -

- dressed only in a night-gown -

Schreber sits on his bed knotting and un-knotting a  
handkerchief.

He walks round and round the darkened cell -

- banging against walls and the ceiling.

He chants (like an automaton) one of the nursery rhymes  
from *Pietje Smeerpots*:

SCHREBER

Snip! Snap! Snip! The scissors  
go,  
Snip! Snap! Snip! They go so  
fast,  
That both his thumbs are off at  
last.  
Mamma comes home: there Conrad  
Stands, and looks quite sad, and  
shows his hands

Schreber starts to slam his fists against the wooden shutters of his cell -

- in time to his recitation, as he shouts the words more and more emphatically.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
(Over and over)  
Ah!' said Mamma, 'I knew he'd  
come,  
To naughty little Suck-a Thumb.

Finally attendants enter.

ATTENDANT A  
Shut your row can't you? Lets  
go.

The second attendant is gentler as they throw a rough blanket over Schreber's shoulders.

ATTENDANT B  
Ready?

Schreber nods.

CUT TO:

4.6 INT. SONNENSTEIN WATER THERAPY ROOM - LATER

In a bare room, there is a wooden stocks, seating with straps. A drain beneath it.

We see ATTENDANTS pouring water into bucket after bucket, from a crude wall tap.

The unbroken line of the falling water, the splashes and flying drips, as the water fills the buckets.

A line of ZINC BUCKETS brimming with water.

Schreber is brought in by ATTENDANT A and ATTENDANT B - who are wearing large white rubber aprons and scrubbed wooden shoes - and carefully strapped into the chair.

Schreber is passive, and obedient.

ATTENDANT A and ATTENDANT B stand on either side of Schreber.

In front of each are now a line of filled buckets, behind empty buckets.

They look at each other, nod and pick up buckets, and in a measured and choreographed rhythm, they throw the contents over Schreber.

Each has a SUB-ASSISTANT who brings more filled buckets and adds to their line of FILLED buckets.

The scene has the impersonal rhythm of a machine.

BCU of Schreber dowsed with buckets of freezing water.

As the water is thrown again and again, the water in the air forms a continuous sheet of light around his head.

This resolves into a repeated rhythm of light spinning around Schreber --

his face is ecstatic.

We move into Schreber's eyes and are sucked into darkness of his PUPIL.

### 5.1 VISION OF THE WRITING DOWN COSMOS

5.1 A massive universe filled with constellations of spherical typewriter machines/animals -

- WRITING DOWN ORBS -

- that can mass and flock like birds -

- clustering in to persecute any figure they identify as a victim.

### 5.2 VISION OF THE WRITING DOWN COSMOS

We see the shifting cosmos of Writing Down Orbs -

- and watch as they re-group and split -

revealing their jelly-like inner organism.

Finally they cluster and move down in a flock to persecute Schreber who remains pinned in the water therapy chair.

### 5.3 INT WATER THERAPY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Water flung through the air forms a continuous sheet of light around Schreber's ecstatic face.

Finally the soaking finishes and as water drips in ultra-slow motion from Schreber's face -

- WRITING DOWN ORBS enter the room and hover in orbit around SCHREBER'S head.

We can now see each brass globe is itself about the size of a small human head, perhaps that of a child.

The CRASHING of the pistons grows as - more and more WRITING DOWN MACHINES enter, flocking and hovering around him.

CUT TO:

6.1 INT. ASYLUM DINING AREA - DAY

Schreber sits writing in a notebook.

For the first time Schreber has a SMALL NOTEBOOK with him at all times - and he writes and draws frantically in the book in tiny obsessional script.

Before he writes, he obsessively sweeps the page clean, and sweeps across the table with his hands -

- sweeping away flocks of tiny writing down orbs that flock to him.

He looks around at other patients playing chess, reading, drawing.

The scene is peaceful - though it feels precarious -- several of the patients are stuck in loops of repetitive, pointless actions.

Only from Schreber's POV can we see that WRITING DOWN ORBS spin between the figures. Darting towards and away from them.

The Writing Down Orbs are in different scales - some massive some tiny as insects.

From the POV of others, Schreber's agitated glances seem as eccentric as the other patients.

BUT from Schreber's POV he DOES see the Writing Down balls and therefore he ducks/pushes others out the way if it seems they are attacked.

First they mob Schreber - provoking ducking, covering face with his arms and bellowing.

But only from Schreber's POV do balls exist.

The ATTENDANTS reprimand his apparently upprovoked gesturing and bellowing.

ATTENDANT A

Quiet you. Give the others some peace and quiet will you.

ATTENDANT B

God help us. Quieten down.

He cuffs Schreber on the back of the head.

Schreber YELLS as he sees a flock of Writing Down Orbs hovering over the YOUNG MAN playing chess, some split open and revealing glowing underbellies.

He lunges across the table, slapping at the young man, and knocking the chess board off the table.

One of the nurses grabs Schreber in a restraint hold.

6.2 INT. SCHREBER'S CELL - DAY

Schreber stands in front of a mirror.

He has a small bowl and jug, and shaving brush and razor.

He carefully shaves off his moustache.

He then picks up a small pot of rouge and rouges his lips a little.

He gathers together scraps and ribbons and writing materials.

Then Schreber sits, rouged and shaved, opens a notebook and writes -

- the WRITING DOWN MACHINES drift into the scene and hover round his head like a HALO -

- as Schreber's hand weaves across the paper, his writing ragged and uneven.

Big close-ups: his hands cover many pages of his notebooks with a dense text, with no paragraphs or breaks in the text. Small scratchy diagrams and almost illegible writing using a scratchy dip pen and ink.

SCHREBER (V.O.)

It had finally become clear that everything that happened was in reference only to ME.

We see his hand obsessively sweeping away tiny orbs and scratching away frantically writing down revelations with a pencil.

Schreber looks up.

A Writing Down Orb hovers near his face.

SCHREBER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In writing this sentence, I was fully aware that other people may be tempted to think I was pathologically conceited, but in my case the very reverse obtained. Since God entered into nerve-contact with ME exclusively, I had become - for God - the only human being around whom everything turns.

The Writing Down Orbs continue to hover in a golden halo:



### 6.3 SCHREBER'S NOTEBOOKS

BCU of his hands drawing and writing -

- and 2.5 D graphics footage of sketches, hand scribbles and documentary autograph material, including a copy of Schreber's fathers most famous educational text, and tracings of the few handwritten notes from Schreber that survive..

#### 2.5 D MONTAGE

1. BCU of actions of writing and drawing pictures and diagrams.

2. Tracking through diagrams, drawings and notes.

(See Design Document for this sequence.)

CUT TO:

7.1 INT. EXERCISE ROOM HOSPITAL - DAY

We finally see Schreber, more at peace -

- exercising on complex calisthenic machines.

The machines themselves are like strange Gothic sculptures.

Schreber is dressed eccentrically -

- in a mix of male underclothes -

- and adorned with ribbons and lace under-garments of a woman.

Schreber moves methodically from machine to machine --

-- exercising and noting in a card covered notebook his performance.

He looks across to see several Writing Down Orbs, floating -

- hovering -

- in the room.

They drift nearer, and hover.

Schreber looks at them impassively.

They do not mob him.

They just hover, shifting formation, as if they are observing him...

We hear their whispers, quieter now.

7.2 INT. SCHREBER'S CELL - DAY

Finally Schreber strips off his female trappings in his room.

He packs them with care, wrapped into a linen roll.

A servant helps him dress, in his masculine formal clothes.

Another servant enters and they help him pack the final elements in his room.

CUT TO:

7.3 INT. SCHREBER'S CELL - LATER

Schreber's room has been stripped and packed up. Several suitcases and trunks lie neatly stacked at the side of the room.

The bed is stripped and sheets neatly folded.

Schreber approaches his desk.

On it are, neatly stacked, 23 notebooks - each bound in simple brown card.

Each with a label and number 1-23 on the cover.

Schreber, handles them, occasionally glancing briefly inside.

He stacks them neatly, in numerical order, counting them out as he stacks them.

He ties them carefully with a black ribbon.

We see him finally open a cardboard archive box and place the notebooks in.

He opens a second box, inside we see several Writing Down Orbs - now each is the size of a small grapefruit.

They a few pistons still pump in and out, as he surveys them.

They wriggle and shift in the box like lazy starfish.

Schreber closes the lid.

## 8.0 CAPTION

### THREE COURTROOM SCENES

#### 8.1 INT. ROYAL SUPERIOR COUNTRY COURT DRESDEN - DAY

*This court scene is shot in such a way that all the witnesses - when replying to questions from the court - appear to speak directly to the camera.*

A judge (JUDGE HARDRAHT) President of the Senate of the Court, and TWO COUNSELORS - A & B - preside over two opposing parties:

THE PLAINTIFF is DANIEL PAUL SCHREBER.

He is represented by WINDISCH (45), his solicitor.

The PUBLIC PROSECUTOR and his ASSISTANT opposes them.

Also in the court is a STENOGRAPHER and the COURT CLERK.

The court is a maze of panelling and brass railings -

- forming a mechanism of corridors and platforms that structures the court proceedings.

Everybody is dressed in the stiff and formal clothes of the late 19th century.

Windisch has the 23 notebooks before him.

He rises holding one example in his hand.

WINDISCH (SOLICITOR)

The court has had the opportunity to examine Dr Schreber's manuscript after its deposition as evidence. We firmly believe that none of you will think the less of my client having read this memoir. As the court knows preliminary agreement has been drawn up regarding the publication of these memoirs.

Windisch holds up an edition of *Indoor Medical Gymnastics*.

WINDISCH (SOLICITOR) (CONT'D)

It is a contract on the basis of a commission, a similar contract as that employed by the plaintiff's illustrious father in the publication of his well known *Indoor Medical Gymnastics*.

PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

At what cost? I would at this point like to ask: the point is surely that this manuscript is grossly unfit for publication containing highly compromising and indecent material that will compromise his family's reputation, reveal highly sensitive family secrets and irreparably damage his wife's honour and render him liable to possible criminal proceedings?

WINDISCH (SOLICITOR)

While it is not unlikely that the publication might cost the plaintiff rather than profit him, it is a small matter in the scale of his fortune as a whole. The plaintiff's skill in negotiating both this and the far more complicated issue of his father's literary estate in relation to the recent bankruptcy of his father's publisher only further underlines that in many areas of life the plaintiff's claim that his acuity and judgment is undiminished is fully justified.

PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

Is the issue not: that he seeks to publish it at all is only further proof that in the plaintiff's mind, any distinction between the permissible and appropriate and the impermissible and inappropriate has been permanently misplaced. The memoirs themselves reveal the gross delusions that the plaintiff continues to suffer under. This was underlined in Dr. Weber's report of the 5th April 1902 and this exemplifies why the County Court in its 13th April 1901 judgment dismissed the plaintiff's case.

WINDISCH

Perhaps I might suggest now is an appropriate moment to call Dr. Weber, who delivered these reports and remains the Psychiatrist in Chief at Sonnenstein Public Asylum.

COURT CLERK

We would ask Dr. Weber to take the witness stand please.

WINDISCH

I would like to point out that Dr. Weber is not only Dr. Schreber's physician, but he has invited Dr. Schreber in his capacity as recovering patient to regularly dine with his own family. Can you please summarise your impressions of Dr. Schreber's manuscript for us Dr. Weber.

WEBER

I have carefully read the entire manuscript that Dr. Schreber has submitted to the court as evidence in support of his petition. In these notebooks, his ideas are developed in a complex and subtle manner. I judge that the *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* as the author calls his treatise is valuable from the scientific medical point of view: both for assessing the total character of such illnesses, and also affording a real help in the diagnosis and finally the understanding of the patient's individual behavior. An insight, so to speak, as to how out of the storms and tempests of his hallucinatory insanity there accumulated, so to speak, a deposit, a sediment of fixed ideas that the patient has learned to accept. The ideas he entertains have now become the landscape he moves through, and within which he lives: acceptable to him, even possibly comforting. In the same way that he now describes the cacophony of voices that assailed him for many years have reduced to gentle whispers

WINDISCH (SOLICITOR)

Thank you Dr. Weber. Can I ask you to read to the court the letter you wrote to my client on 30th May 1902?

Weber puts on glasses, refers to notes.

WEBER

The asylum authorities would at present NOT place an obstacle in the way of your discharge with the provisos mentioned in your letter and as long as there is no deterioration in your condition...

FADE TO BLACK.

## 8.2 MONTAGE SEQUENCE - COURTROOM QUESTIONING

*This court scene is shot in such a way that all the witnesses - when replying to questions from the court - appear to speak directly to the camera.*

Now several witnesses takes the stand and are questioned by both WINDISCH and the PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

MONTAGE as several EXPERT WITNESSES are questioned.

On occasion JUDGE HARDRAHT breaks in with requests, to clarify or to expand upon points.

WINDISCH and the PUBLIC PROSECUTOR ask the following questions. (Each ask slightly different versions of the questions: more or less aggressive to Schreber's case.)

1. Why did Schreber become ill at 51? And how did he hold off this illness until such a late stage?
2. Can you please help the court understand the machinery and creatures that populates Dr. Schreber's mental world? Do they have any meaning we can understand?
3. The publication of Schreber's book underwrites his claim that we take him seriously as a prophet in his own terms -- or -- at least, as an author - an artist. But whom is he addressing in this book? Is it possible to view Schreber as the religious visionary he sees himself as? Should we allow him to make such claims? What does it mean if we take him seriously?
4. To what extent might we be able to understand Schreber as a genuine 'author' of his content: not just his writing but also his fantastic visions as a whole? Is it useful to understand insanity as an effort to communicate, latent, hidden or silenced stories and feelings? Can a patient really tell his or her own story? How truthful can it be? And should the doctor believe the patient?
5. The court has discussed whether the text he wishes to publish -- which comprises of variously obscene, disturbing and indiscrete material -- will compromise his family?

Schreber's family do play a large part in his manuscript -- should we therefore understand they form a similarly large part of the formation of his illness?

6. How can you assist people who are compelled to harm others or themselves? Do you judge this a problem with Dr. Schreber?

7. Do you feel that Dr. Schreber's childhood experiences of 'total discipline' either caused or significantly affected the content of his psychotic episodes?

8. God, his father and Flechsig his doctor, seem to all become one. How does Schreber see this figure?

9. Have there been any photographs made of Schreber during his illness? What do/did (19th Century) doctors hope to derive from such photographs? Are they useful evidence of anything?

10. What are the implications for Daniel Paul Schreber -- as a patient -- of the personality and theories of his psychiatrist, Dr. Flechsig?

11. Would another doctor at the time have chosen another treatment? And would another 21st century doctor choose another treatment?

12. Schreber's autobiography, and indeed this film, are part of a long tradition of portraying madness within literature, art and film - a tradition of attempts that have met with varying degrees of success. What's the point of such an attempt? What can we learn? Do we always ruthlessly impose our own interests on the mad, or can we let them speak and learn from them?

FADE TO BLACK.

8.3 INT. ROYAL SUPERIOR COUNTRY COURT DRESDEN - LATER

The court is now all sitting.

JUDGE HARDRAHT

Dr. Schreber, you requested the opportunity to make your case personally, before the judgement is given.

Schreber moves to the witness stand.

Once in the stand, Schreber prepares himself -- but he does not start to speak immediately -- he is silent.

The court waits.

Schreber is silent.



He looks up.

Several Writing Down Orbs float into his vision.

They hover nearby, circling him once.

He brings out notes he's prepared.

SCHREBER

Indeed, Have several points I wish to submit. We are here principally to discuss under what circumstances may a person be designated insane and additionally, detained -- against their stated will. In earlier centuries, as we know, unfortunates were categorised as possessed by Demons and imprisoned with no recourse to justice, and no help or treatment. The question is do we live in enlightened times? I would suggest for us as a Society, rational men, as we approach the C20th, the issue of the *Dangerously insane* and the *Harmlessly Insane* is the key to the problem. I am judged to suffer from delusion, and I am deprived of my liberty. I wish to contest both. Firstly, I wish to publish my memoirs to give others the chance to judge whether my so-called delusions are in fact a privileged look into the workings of Holy universe and in particular the relations between man and God. But secondly, and of the greatest importance, I would submit my beliefs on this matter, while possibly of great import to the world -

JUDGE HARDRAHT

Or possibly not...

SCHREBER

... are at the very least mine to hold as my inalienable right -- without suffering punitive legal consequence. After all are the adherents of spiritualism consigned to compulsory tutelage and confined in asylums?

Schreber pauses. Looks through his notes.

As he speaks Writing Down Orbs chatter and spin.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

As for indecency, a person who wishes to pave the way for a new religion must be able to use flaming speech such as Jesus Christ used towards the Pharisees or Luther towards the Pope... As for the publication of my book, perhaps the worst risk I expose myself to is that people will consider me mad. And this they do already.

FADE TO BLACK.

After Schreber's summing up... ..

It is announced by the COURT CLERK that the presiding JUDGE HARDRAHT -- President of the Senate of the Court -- and the Counsellors will bring the judgment of the court.

JUDGE HARDRAHT

The court is in no doubt that the appellant is insane. He lacks insight into the pathological ideas that move him. Even now he holds to the fact that God manifests himself directly to him and continuously performs miracles on him. This conviction, as he admits himself, overrides all rational or scientific considerations. But is this sufficient ground for placing the plaintiff under tutelage? This is what we must consider. The religious conviction that fills the believer and often enough is the centre of life for the mentally healthy, does not necessarily enter in all aspects of life... In this case...

FADE TO BLACK.

9.0 CAPTION

THREE FAMILY SCENES

9.1 INT. SCHREBER HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - DAY

A family group are all clustered in the sitting room: MOTHER (75), sisters, brother-in-law, nieces and nephews, to welcome Daniel Paul home.

Sabine is checking herself in a mirrored alcove.

With Sabine is an exquisite young girl (12), dressed beautifully, with not a hair out of place, this is FRIDOLINE SCHREBER.

SABINE

I have the most horrible headache. Look at me, I look at death's door. Come on now. Do you have the book?

FRIDOLINE

Yes Frau Schreber

SABINE

You know you should call me Mother.

The little girl nods and curtseys.

Sabine picks up the worn copy of Hoffman's *Struwwelpeter: Merry Stories and Funny Pictures*, that we saw in an earlier scene, and gives it to the little girl.

SABINE (CONT'D)

And don't forget, we would like you to Address Herr Schreber as Father.

FRIDOLINE

He is not my father

SABINE

Please try. And you must not be frightened if sometimes... .. he is strange. He has been away a long time, resting. He has been most unwell.

FRIDOLINE

Ill with what.

SABINE

He suffered from a long nervous illness, and now he needs peace and quiet and the love of his family. So promise you will be a good girl, and please stop asking questions, it's making my head worse.

FRIDOLINE

Why does he need it so quiet?

SABINE

For the sake of his nerves... ..  
and his writing.

Her mother ushers her towards the family group.

She leaves Fridoline with one of the women in the group and leaves to collect Paul.

There's a short wait.

Everybody is expectant.

Sisters check each other and themselves in the mirrors, the brother-in-law is opening the champagne and a maid is filling glasses.

A second maid appears, bringing a large vase of cut flowers, to add to those already decorating the room.

The brother-in-law also prepares a camera and leaves it on a table.

Sabine enters with Schreber.

SABINE (CONT'D)

Paul is home, everyone.

Schreber's mother steps forward to greet him with a kiss.

MOTHER

Welcome home Paul.

Schreber kisses his mother. The maids are handing round champagne glasses, and the brother-in-law proposes a toast..

BROTHER-IN-LAW

Toast! Toast!

MOTHER

You have suffered greatly Paul,  
but you have triumphed. Father  
would have said...

ANNA (SISTER)

Father?

MOTHER

Father would have been proud of  
you. You suffered, you struggled  
against weakness. You endured.  
You have overcome. Welcome home.

Everyone raggedly toasts Schreber.

The Brother-in Law arranges everybody for a photograph and  
hands the camera to the maid to take the photograph.

Flash!

Sabine now comes forward with Fridoline.

SABINE

Fridoline. Step forward and  
greet your new Papa.

She motions her forward.

Fridoline curtsseys and dutifully receives a kiss from this  
stranger.

SCHREBER

Fridoline?  
(they kiss)  
It is lovely to meet you  
Fridoline. What a beautiful  
name. I hope these last few  
weeks you have been settling in.

Fridoline is carrying a worn copy of Shock Headed Peter.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

Ah...I see you have found my old  
childhood library. Take any you  
want, any you want.

SABINE

I gave it to her. I hope you  
don't mind.

Schreber smiles, shakes his head.

SCHREBER

They were always for the child.  
Do you know any of the poems?

Fridoline stands as if to perform, but waits for a cue.

SABINE

Go on my dear.

FRIDOLINE

See Slovenly Peter! Here he  
stands,  
With his dirty hair and hands.  
(MORE)

FRIDOLINE (CONT'D)

See! His nails are never cut;  
They are grim'd as black as soot;  
No water for many weeks,  
Has been near his cheeks;

Schreber moves towards her and joins in.

SCHREBER

And the sloven, I declare,  
Not once this year has combed his  
hair!  
Anything to me is sweeter  
than to see shock-headed Peter.

She closes the book. Schreber turns to Fridoline.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

You read very prettily my dear.  
This book was a childhood  
favourite - I know these pages by  
heart, you know.

After moving through the group -

- greeting everybody -

- shaking hands with the men, and kissing the women and  
children -

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

You must excuse me. I must take  
a little air. All this  
excitement is a little  
overwhelming.

(Turning to his wife)  
Sabchen?

9.2 EXT: GARDEN - AFTERNOON

The garden is massive and ornate.

It might be a public garden, although this time we see no-  
one but Schreber and his wife.

Schreber holding his wife's arm as they walk.

SCHREBER

This was too may people Sabchen.  
I don't want it. You must send  
them away.

SABINE

Welcome home Paul.

They walk among trees.

Schreber brings out a cigar case, lights up a cigar with pleasure.

Sabine brings out a card, and gives it to him.

Schreber unwraps it -

- It is an x-ray of her hand with her wedding ring in place and rhyme:

Schreber examines the card.

Sabine takes it back out of his hand and starts to read:

SABINE (CONT'D)

(reading the card)

"A golden band about the bone / A  
pledge for you my love / That our  
troth is not of flesh alone / but  
endures 'til we twain meet in  
hea'en above." These cards are  
all the craze.

(turns to Schreber)

X-ray mania the papers call it.  
I think it's beautiful.

SCHREBER

It is my dear, quite beautiful.  
An invisible world revealed to  
us.

SABINE

It really didn't hurt at all. It  
is like magic. It didn't hurt.

The couple tentatively embraces.

SCHREBER

The child is very pretty.

SABINE

Yes. She is isn't she.

SCHREBER

As pretty as her mother.

Schreber and Sabine drift around the garden, into a maze-like formal area.

SABINE

I'm...I'm very happy you're home  
now Paul.

SCHREBER

I was... .. very lonely, Sabchen.  
You cannot imagine.

9.3 INT. SCHREBER HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - WEEKS LATER

At afternoon tea at his family home, with his elderly mother and Sabine, Fridoline and a sister, Schreber reads the paper, while Sabine sits holding a STEREO VIEWER.

CAPTION: SOME WEEKS LATER

The conversation is stilted, measured by the ritual of taking tea. During the action and conversation, servants bring in pots of tea and place them on the table with trays of cups and saucers, and stands of cakes.

The Mother pours as each cup is handed to her by a servant and then taken to each person in the room and handed to them.

This ritual goes on in silence, around and between the conversation.

The servants are completely ignored, each person takes their tea etc without saying thank you or engaging with the servant, who is treated as if invisible.

The overall atmosphere rather stifling and oppressive.

Schreber leans over, takes the viewer, peers in, peers at the caption on the card.

SCHREBER

The World Fair Electric Palace  
against the night sky. Yes.  
Yes. Quite a spectacle eh? This  
force will light up all our  
futures. Mark my words. Blazing  
in the night sky, remarkable,  
Sabchen.

He passes the viewer back to Sabine.

Fridoline interrupts, grabbing the viewer, and playfully holds the viewer out of her mother's reach.

FRIDOLINE

Mama. Mama. Please. Let me.  
Let me.

Schreber moves to the small table centre room and starts up the PHONOGRAPH.

SCHREBER

Fridoline, shh. Now mother.  
Here it is.

The music starts playing: *Ave Maria* sung by Alessandro Moreschi. The sound is scratchy and fragile.

All sit and listen to the sound.



FRIDOLINE

The way he sings, he sounds very sad.

MOTHER

This apparatus is quite remarkable Paul. Almost unnatural.

SCHREBER

(To Fridoline)

And now people can always hear him. These traps for invisible rays - messages, energies, all around us - will transform the world in your lifetime my sweet. The old, slow, good world of your mother and father is coming to an end my dear.

Fridoline leans on Schreber's knee.

FRIDOLINE

Oh Papa, it is beautiful!

SABINE

Now, now, my dear. Don't over-tax your father. We must look after him now he is restored to us...

Fridoline turns away, returns to building a house of cards.

Paul's mother ignores Sabine, addresses Paul.

MOTHER

Father would have agreed, I am sure. Would have said the organism was poisoned, toxic, and is still in need of cleansing and above all, rest. Your excesses have left you weak Paul.

SCHREBER

No-one has ever lived a more moderate life than I.

SABINE

Not in your work, not in your work, Paul.

MOTHER

Your good father's ONLY weakness was a desire to leave an indelible mark on history. Your poor father. His books, his plans for reform: they poisoned him and wore him out.

Schreber's face as he listens.

Sabine cuts into the long and awkward silence following her mother-in-law's remarks.

SABINE

Paul always talks of his father  
as a godlike man in his  
ambitions.

This is greeted with only by the sound of teaspoons in china cups, and tea being poured: no-one says a thing.

SISTER

Father certainly left his mark on  
the world. A life devoted to  
others...

Paul's listening face.

Fridoline's house of cards collapses.

FRIDOLINE

OOH! OOH!

SABINE

Shh. You aunt is speaking.

SISTER

His was a life devoted to  
service.

The mother's face.

MOTHER

When he passed away, he was the  
age you were when afflicted by  
your illness. He still had so  
much more to offer the world.

Fridoline is trying to rebuild her cards, but they collapse.

She groans.

SISTER

Quiet child!

MOTHER

But now Paul... ..you are back  
with us... Be grateful Paul, you  
have your father's brilliance.  
It is poor Gustav who was  
bequeathed his terrible corrosive  
angers. God rest his soul.

SCHREBER  
Yes. God bless his sweet soul.

We see Fridoline get up to slip away from the group at this point.

SABINE  
Fridoline, you must sing for your aunt.

FRIDOLINE  
(as she leaves)  
Yes mother.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHREBER'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Fridoline is looking around.

It's in disarray,

A typewriter with paper half in, and the desk with drawers half-open.

And pulling one desk drawer further open -

- she finds a neat array of brass spheres each stamped with a number and sitting in its own compartment.

Each ball is studded with circular caps, each cap with a letter engraved on it.

She stares down as the Orbs shift and twitch, each in its compartment in the drawer.

Schreber enters -

Fridoline slams the drawer shut -

- but too late -

- he has followed her, and discovers her prying.

SCHREBER  
What are you doing?

FRIDOLINE  
Nothing. Looking.

SCHREBER  
This room is forbidden to you my dear unless you knock and I bid you to enter. Today I cannot be cross with you, and I want us to be friends. But some things are private, even secret.

(MORE)

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
And it is not nice to pry into  
the secrets of others unless you  
receive an invitation.

FRIDOLINE  
I'm sorry... ..Papa.

SCHREBER  
You seem a very sweet girl to me  
and grown up enough to understand  
these things.

He opens the desk drawer, and they look down together at  
the orbs.

FRIDOLINE  
What are they?

SCHREBER  
Soul traps. In a manner of  
speaking. They trap messages,  
energy from the past and future.  
Rays. Would God allow you or me  
to trap souls do you think?

Fridoline shrugs.

Says nothing.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
Angry ghosts from the past and  
the ghosts of futures yet  
unlived? Pour them like liquid  
into bottles? Trap them like  
genies? Perhaps these souls are  
drawn to me like wasps to  
honey...

CUT TO:

Schreber holds a ball in the palm of his hand.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
Perhaps only I can trap them,  
absorb images of their memories  
into me. Perhaps these are  
bottles in which I store memories  
of my own... what do you think?

CUT TO:

A ball is mounted on viewing stand.

It comes to life, pistons pumping and light streaming from  
a small porthole.

Fridoline and Schreber stare.

FRIDOLINE  
Are you an inventor?

SCHREBER  
Perhaps one day everyone will carry such miraculous machines with them. They will think nothing of it. Human memory will wither, machines will live our lives for us, tell us what to think.

Fridoline applies her eyes to the porthole.

FRIDOLINE  
There's nothing. I can't see anything. Mother said you were writing a book. I heard uncle say it should be burnt.

Schreber laughs.

FRIDOLINE (CONT'D)  
Mama said we shouldn't talk about your book outside the family.

There's a knock.

Schreber puts a velvet cloth over the Writing Down machine.

Sabine enters.

What are you two doing?

SCHREBER  
I'm... I'm telling her a story...

Sabine obsessively neatens Fridoline's clothes, like she's a doll.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)  
(To Fridoline)  
You are not too old for stories I hope?

Sabine hustles Fridoline back to the party.

SABINE  
Fridoline. Come and sing for your aunts.

FRIDOLINE  
(To Schreber)  
I know you'll be famous one day.

As she is about to leave, she turns and runs back and kisses Schreber on the cheek.

Sabine and Fridoline leave.

Schreber composes himself -

- returns to work.

He types slowly and steadily.

He removes the cloth from the Writing Down Machine, and looks directly into the Writing Down Ball mounted on the stand.

As he peers into the ball, it starts to work, and Schreber starts to speak as if he is reading.

At this point his voice seems to take on the quality of others: his wife, his mother, Flechsig.

It shifts between male and female giving an uncanny effect.

SCHREBER

I must heed the voice of the  
rays: "Why doesn't he say it  
aloud?" "Because he is stupid  
perhaps?" "Because he is  
frightened?"

Schreber repeats several times.

SCHREBER (CONT'D)

Why doesn't he say it aloud?  
Because he is stupid perhaps?"  
"Because he is frightened?"

Each time he repeats it the writing down orb clatters spasmodically...

CHAPTER THREE OF HIS

MEMOIRS

PREVIOUSLY SHOT MATERIAL -  
THE MISSING 3RD CHAPTER  
In which we see shocking  
episodes from Schreber's  
childhood - which probably  
constitute the 'scandalous'  
material that was removed -  
- due to pressure from  
Schreber's family -- before  
publication. (This footage  
is all sourced from an  
earlier film about  
Schreber.) In a series of  
of six short scene we see  
how Schreber was raised  
within punitive systems of  
training and discipline  
developed by his father

ONE

The CRASHING of Ice Blocks  
into WATER... ..

THE FATHER: A remarkable  
hardening of the  
constitution can be  
developed by ice cold  
baths...

...nor should bedrooms be  
heated from the sixth or  
seventh year of age.



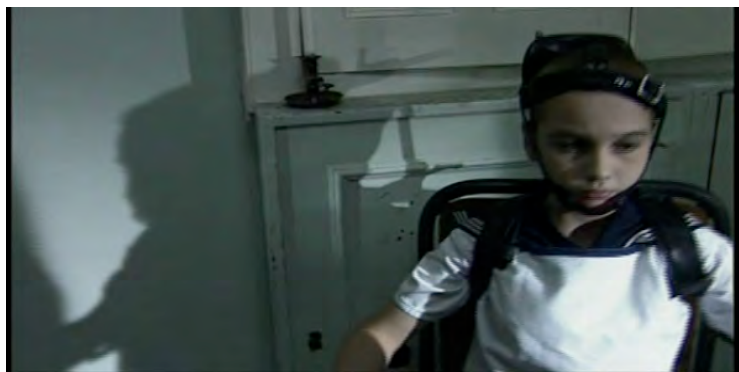
Stills from *Temptation of Sainthood*

TWO

THE FATHER: Step tonight before our Father in Heaven, at the end of this day, to be penetrated by the pure rays of God, and be rewarded with strengthened will power and manliness.

THE FATHER (VO): It is essential that disobedience be crushed, broken to the point of utter humiliation and obedience...

The Father beats the child with a cane.



Stills from *Temptation of Sainthood*



**THREE**

MOTHER stares in the mirror, and her reflection is transformed into Schreber (adult.)

SCHREBER: If I apply pressure delicately with my fingertips...

... upon certain areas of my body, can touch these strands, these nerves, a spider-web of textures beneath the skin... ..they are particularly densely woven in the area of my breasts... .. and by applying pressure to these areas I am able to evoke a spiral of erotic sensation.

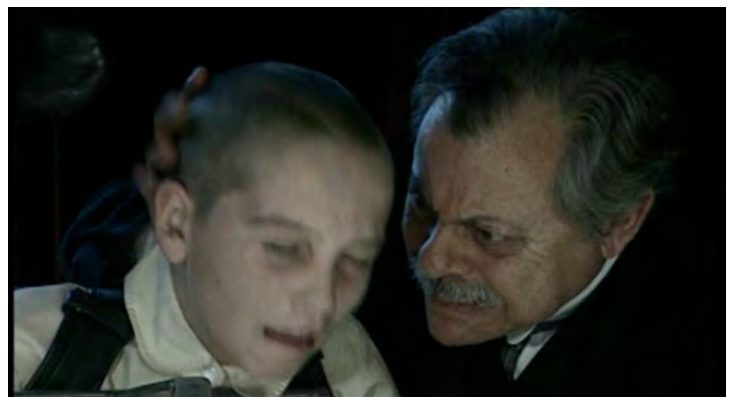


FOUR

Child Schreber feasts on birthday cake, sitting very upright in his posture rig.

When he chokes...

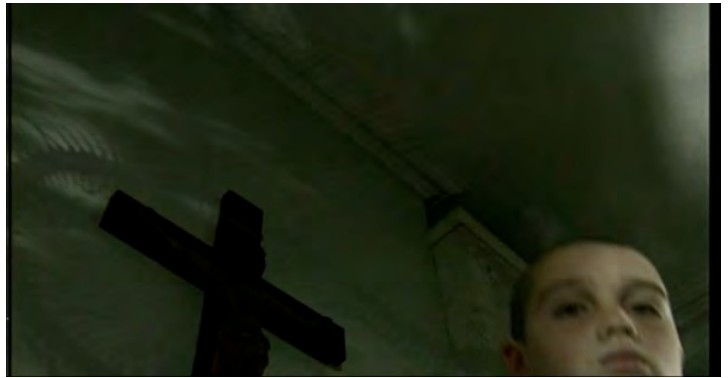
... .. Father helps him dislodge the cake stuck in his throat.



*Stills from Temptation of Sainthood*

FIVE

He hears a frightening noise – a slithering...



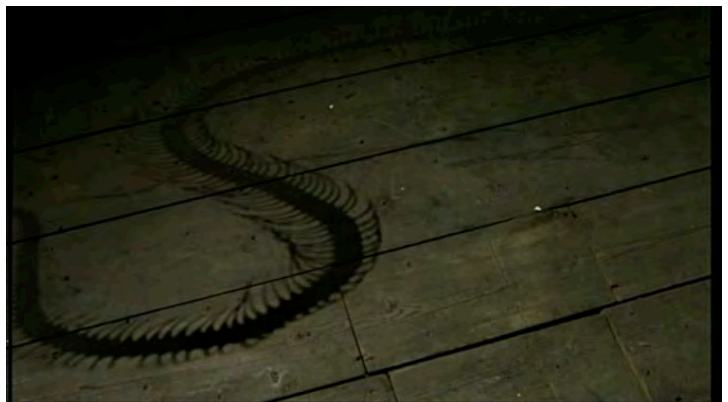
And the strapping and contraptions of his father's educational schemes slide towards him...

...



... .. taking the form of terrifying shadowy... .. fleeting improvised forms...

...





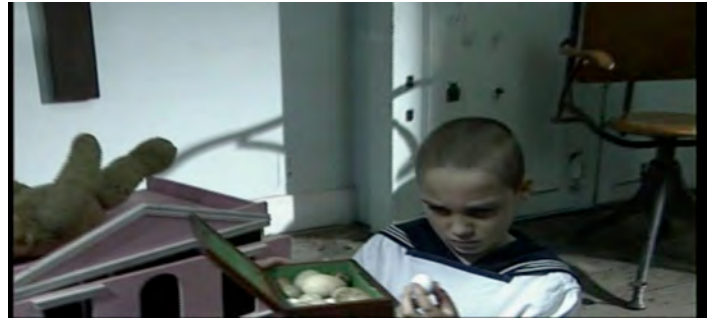
Stills from *Temptation of Sainthood*

SIX

GOTTLIEB SCHREBER (The Father): Daniel Paul! Daniel Paul!



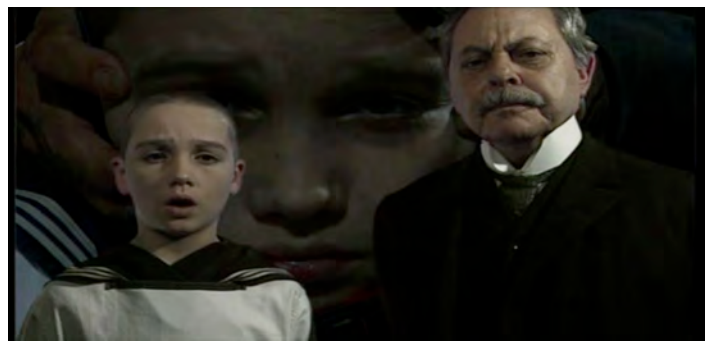
THE FATHER (V.O.) At a tender age the ground must be ploughed and prepared to receive the seed of Godliness...



THE FATHER: Say it!

SCHREBER (CHILD ): Our father...

...will be done on earth as it is in heaven...



*Stills from Temptation of Sainthood*

TRANSITION TO NEXT SCENE

MORPHS INTO ADULTS FACE SITTING AT WRITING DESK

## 11.1 INT. SCHREBER'S STUDY

We MORPH from the child praying to SCHREBER's adult face speaking the Lord's Prayer as he sits at his desk writing.

We see him typing frantically.

We see him pull out a completed sheet and thread a new, clean sheet into the typewriter.

He pauses before typing again...

...sitting in silence in his study as dusk falls.

He starts to type...

SCHREBER (V.O.)

As to this small book it was never the original intention to publish these words. The original motive was to acquaint my beloved wife with my personal experiences and religious ideas. It was only during the course of writing the book it occurred to me that it could perhaps be of interest to a wider circle, how...

We crash into Schreber's pupils --

## 11.2 WRITING DOWN COSMOS

We return to the blackness of the Writing Down Cosmos, where the orbs silently orbit.

SCHREBER (V.O.)

How I entered into a unique relationship with God - contrary to the established Order of the world...  
... How by divine fertilization offspring might issue from my lap... or how perhaps alternatively great fame will be attached to my name surpassing that of thousands of other people much better endowed... ..

The orbs spin - locked in a cycle of mechanical/organic reproduction.



SCHREBER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
How I finally came to understand  
that the purpose of my life is to  
put forward the truth of my so-  
called delusions... so that you  
may know and understand God's  
will as it is. ...

The orbs spin endlessly in the darkness.

CUT TO:

11.3 END CAPTIONS & CODA:

CAPTION ONE:

Dr. Daniel Gottlieb Schreber, The Father, was successful and widely respected. His methods for child rearing were widely adopted and used in Germany for the first half of the Twentieth Century. His best-selling books include the following instructional diagrams for educational devices.

CAPTION TWO:

Daniel - Paul Schreber, The Son, was a judge, his life fragmented by years of madness and delusions. Diagnosed paranoid-schizophrenic, it was through the writing of *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* that he prepared a successful legal plea to gain his freedom, even though the court judged him insane. Chapter three of Schreber's manuscript was censored, destroyed before publication by his family: the rest of the book was published by a small private press. Most copies were bought and burnt by his brother-in-law.

1.3 PROLOGUE - SCENE 3 - RE-RUN IN REVERSE

We Schreber eat Razor blades -- but run in reverse.

It's as if Schreber sucks the blood up into his mouth,  
chews -

- and as we watch the razor blade reconstitute back into a whole blade, Schreber spits it out and lines it up neatly inside his notebook.

He finally carefully closes the notebook and adds it to the pile.

CUT TO:

END CAPTION:

CAPTION THREE

Sigmund Freud, brought Schreber's privately published book to wider attention when he wrote *Psychoanalytical Remarks on an autobiographically Described case of Paranoia* in 1911. His annotated copy of the text resides in London, where he settled in 1938 after being driven from Vienna by the invasion of Austria by the German Nazi Party.

1.1 PROLOGUE - SCENE 1 - RE-RUN IN REVERSE

We see the shackled ELEPHANT rise up --

-- as if brought to life like a Frankenstein by the massive sparking electric current coursing through its body.

END CAPTION:

CAPTION FOUR

*If Society we live in is machine constructed to dictate behaviours, then language is an organism replicating that machine, cog by cog within us. The question is - can we use this machine to also build our freedom?*

Anononymous Anarchist Tract C19th