

MARIE: This is a play version of Chapter 21, "Voluptuousness and Blessedness" of Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* as portrayed by an Asylum Doctor (Professor Webster), a psychoanalyst (Patricia Gherovici), a Testifying Schreber (Felix Bernstein) and Schreber as a young man and patient in the asylum (Gabe Rubin).

*they are seated horizontally facing audience: Gabe, Jamieson, Felix, Patricia; with music stands for reading*

JAMIESON: Judge Schreber has called upon his doctors of the asylum, not to present proof of the reality of the miracles which he says are affecting his body, nor even to assert the truth of his religious ideas, but to compel us to perform a medical examination to search for the characteristics of femininity, characteristics which he says are convincing to everybody... Pah! Ridiculous.

PATRICIA: What are these characteristics? Some universal femininity? It is not a matter of proof but of convincing... these are interesting ideas. Neither religious nor anatomical, but something else.

JAMIESON: Dr. Gherovici, please, check your enthusiasm, we shall see what our patient says. The good judge will tell us, so he says, about what femininity is. I'm not sure that this question has a place in science, no less psychiatry.

FELIX: Since the District Court of Dresden decreed on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 1900 that I was to be placed under tutelage, I sent a note on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the same month to the Directors of this Asylum to contest this decision... I stated as my reasons that in any future proceedings the Director of the Asylum would be asked for a further expert report about me, and that it was therefore important to acquaint him with my own opinion about the nature of my illness.

JAMIESON: Yes, you have told us. We are listening.

FELIX: From my note of 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1900 the following passage is relevant:

"It is of course far from my purpose to wish to convince other people by means of a reasoned argument of the truth of my so-called 'delusions' and 'hallucinations.' I am fully aware that at the present moment this would be possible only to a very limited extent. Whether in days to come a transformation of my body altogether beyond the sphere of human experience, will not in itself furnish proof, the future alone can decide."

PATRICIA: You are aware that you cannot prove a delusion. Very sound... What is it then that you would like to prove.

FELIX: I leave that for the future, proof is not up to me.

PATRICIA: More radical than some doctors, handing proof to time...  
Continue.

FELIX: There is only one point I wish to explain now: that I would at all times be prepared to submit my body to medical examination for ascertaining whether my assertion is correct, that my whole body is filled with nerves of voluptuousness from the

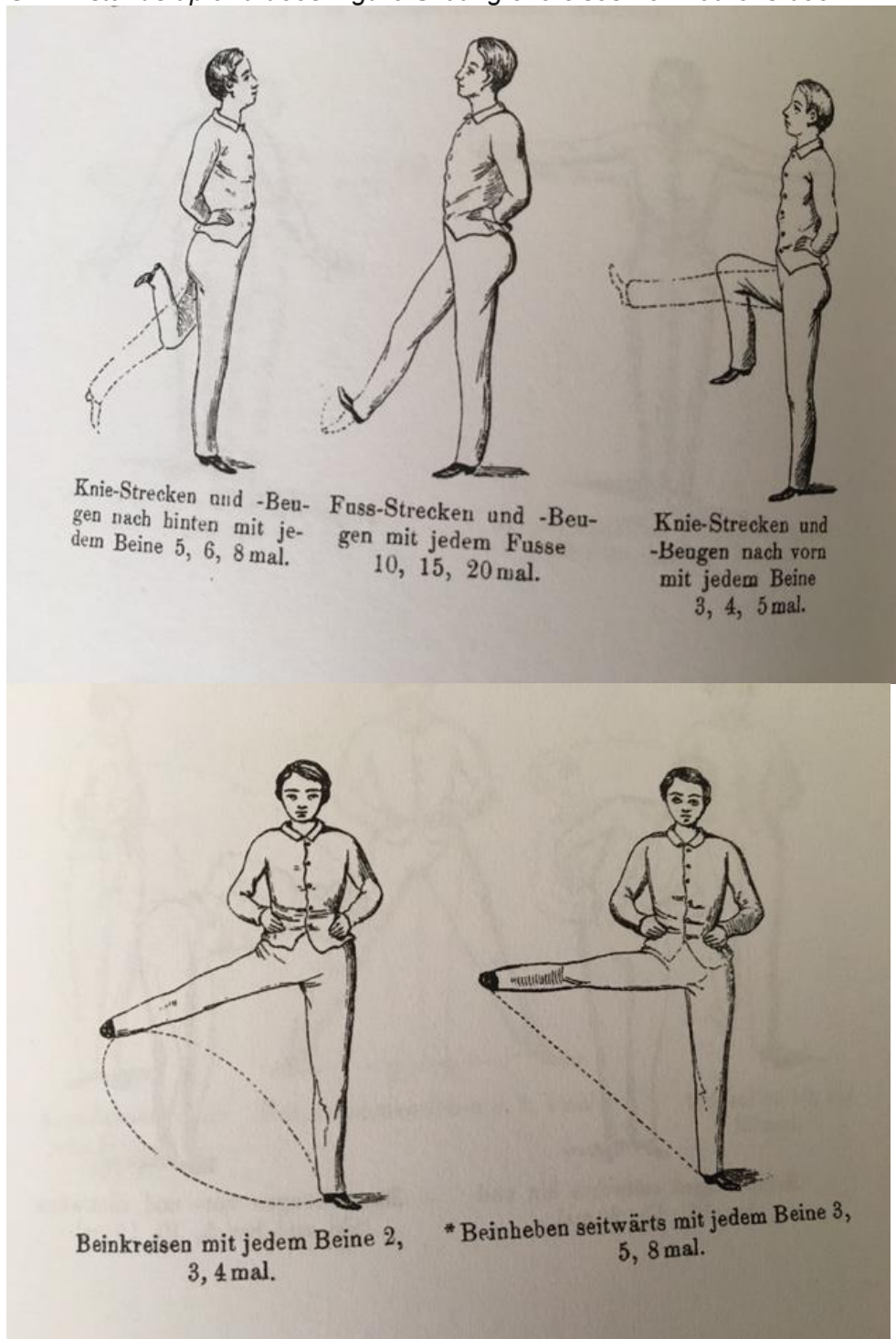
top of my head to the soles of my feet, such as is the case only in the adult female body, whereas in the case of a man, as far as I know, nerves of voluptuousness are only found in and immediately around the sexual organs.

JAMIESON: The judge would like to make a distinction between the nerves of what he calls voluptuousness in males and females. He believes that femininity means that these nerves cover the organism in total, while in males it is centered on their genitals. (*to FELIX*) Do I have this right? (*to PATRICIA*) Is this not the essence of madness?

PATRICIA: **Maybe not.**

JAMIESON: How so. I am willing to grant you that this is the madness of his father, is that not your theory, psychoanalysis and trauma?

GABE stands up and does Figure Skating exercises from father's book



GABE: The ice skating is of infinite value and is one of the most precious kinds of gymnastics for your feet. In order to hold your body on the slippery ice on a small blade it is to master an extraordinary play of the muscles. The muscles of the feet are strengthened and whole posture of the body becomes robust.

*GABE takes off suit jacket*

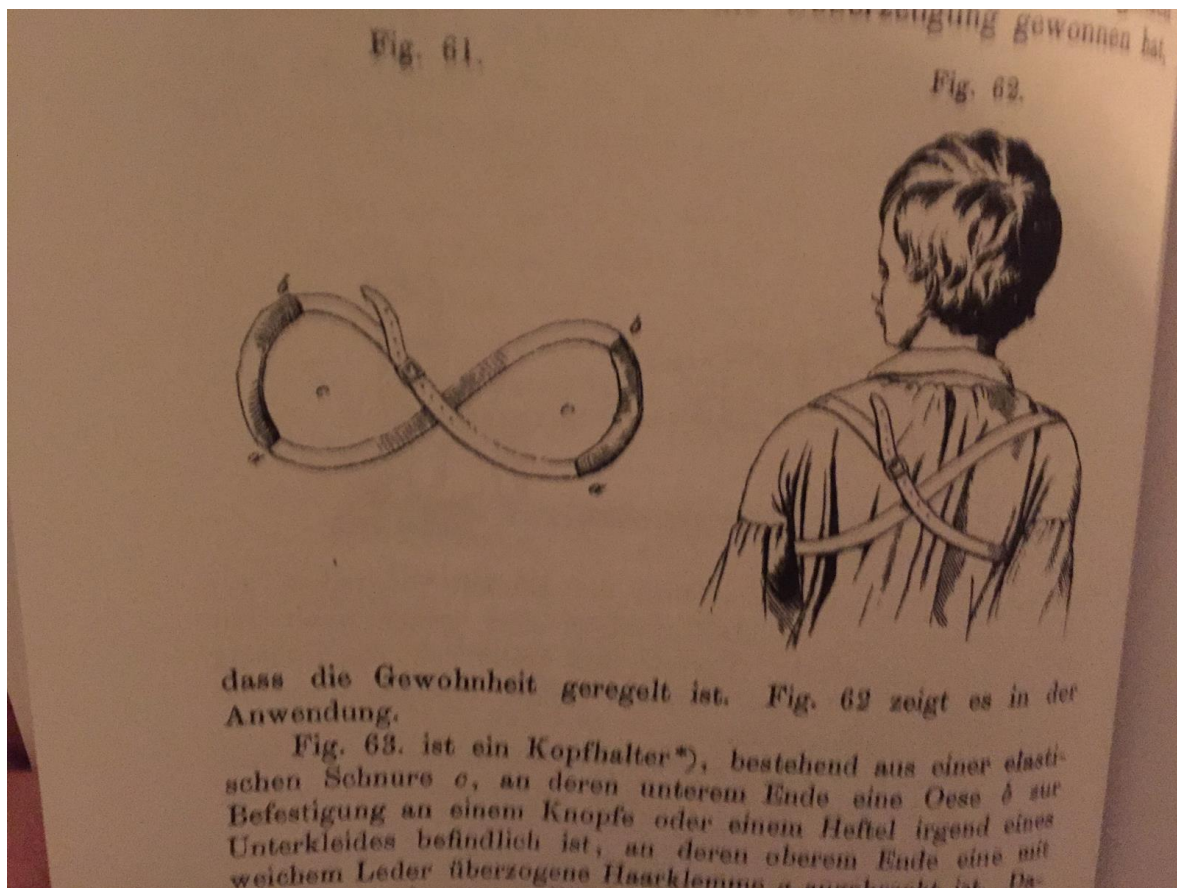
PATRICIA: (watching GABE) Not the madness of a father, nor even of Schreber's father... but of fathers perhaps. I think this is more radical.

JAMIESON: I think this is even more mad than Schreber. Fathers, Femininity, what does any of this even mean for a second.

FELIX: Following my note of 26th March to the Director of the Asylum concerning the nerves of voluptuousness, Professor Webster was kind enough last night to grant me an interview and to lend me two books from the medical library. I now return once again to the aforementioned questions, not for the sake of my personal interest alone, but also because I consider that the transformations observable on my body may possibly lead to new scientific insights in this field.

JAMIESON: He would like to give his body to science. For something to be made of all this! Then let science be science. I gave him the books. Maybe He (and she) will come to their reason.

*JAMIESON stands up and does the Figure 8 tie with belt on GABE*



FELIX: If I understood Professor Webster correctly, the science of neurology does not recognize the existence of special nerves as carriers of sensuous pleasure; he also

contradicted the view that such nerves are palpable from outside, as little as nerves in general.

On the other hand, she did not dispute the fact that the feeling of sensual pleasure occurs in the female to a higher degree than in the male, involves the whole body, and that the mammae particularly play a very large part in the perception of sensuous pleasure. This fact can in my opinion only be explained in that some organs (whether they be called tendons or nerves or anything else) cover the whole female body more extensively than the male body.

*GABE and JAMIESON sit*

JAMIESON: It is true that female nipples have more nerve endings than in males. Yes. And some have said that sensual pleasure is greater for a woman, but this is just conjecture. It is not science.

PATRICIA: Very interesting Paul, this remind me of the legend of Tiresias, the mythical man who has also been a woman for a few years, and considered by many a role model for all psychoanalysts, indeed the very patron saint of psychoanalysis. The experience of life as both sexes may have inadvertently caused his blindness. Tiresias was asked who derives more pleasure from sex, women or men. He said that women enjoy sex nine times more than men. **NINE TIMES!** He was punished for the indiscretion with blindness. As a compensation, he got the gift of prophecy.

JAMIESON: Don't encourage him. This is finished.

PATRICIA: This is never finished.

FELIX: I am subjectively certain that my body-as I have repeatedly stated in consequence of divine miracles-shows these organs to such an extent that only occurs in the female body.

*GABE draws with sharpie on his chest as he reads*

GABE: When I exert light pressure like this, with my hand, on any part of my body I can feel certain cord-like structures under the skin; these are particularly marked on my chest where the woman's bosom is, here they have the peculiarity that one can feel them ending in nodular thickenings. Through pressure on one such structure I can produce a feeling of female sensuous pleasure, particularly if I think of something feminine. I do this, by the way, **not for sensual lust**, but I am absolutely compelled to do so if I want to achieve sleep or protect myself against otherwise almost unbearable pain. I have to add that the female characteristics which are developing on my body show a certain periodicity at increasingly shorter intervals.

JAMIESON: There is a sensation of immediacy, and then one of withdrawal, this creates a rhythm... you have such an intense experience of time and yet... you say you can wait for the future. How do you make room for both?

GABE: This is what a woman does.... This is the experience of being a woman. It is not once and for all. It is not permanent. The reason is that everything feminine attracts God's nerves. Hence as often as one wishes to withdraw from me, one attempts to make the female characteristics which are evident on my body recede by miracle; the effect is that the structures which I call "nerves of voluptuousness" are pushed a little under the surface, that is to say are not so distinctly palpable on the skin, my bosom becomes a little flatter, etc. But when after a short time the rays have to approach again, the "nerves of voluptuousness" become more marked, my bosom bulges again. Such changes occur at present in as short a period as a few minutes.

PATRICIA: What he says about identity, or femininity, is true. Totally true. Didn't someone say that we weren't born women but become women? That was a voice from the future!

JAMIESON: I think you are catching this madness.

FELIX [to JAMIESON]: The Director of the Asylum can hardly doubt that with these expositions I am pursuing not only my personal interests but also those of science; in uncovering these things which are in my opinion connected with supernatural matters, I trust I have not laid myself open to the reproach of having touched upon issues of which as a man I have to be ashamed.

PATRICIA: touched upon issues of which as a man I have to be ashamed

FELIX: I want to add a few further remarks to the above. When the rays approach, my breast gives the impression of a pretty well-developed female bosom... a brief glance however would not suffice, the observer would have to go to the trouble of spending 10 or 15 minutes near me.

GABE: Anybody would notice the periodic swelling and diminution of my bosom. Naturally hairs remain under my arms and on my chest; these are by the way sparse in my case; my nipples also remain small as in the male sex. Notwithstanding, I venture to assert flatly that anybody who sees me standing in front of a mirror with the upper part of my body naked would get the undoubted impression of a female trunk-especially when the illusion is strengthened by some feminine adornments.

*GABE puts on trinkets and necklaces that catch light*

JAMIESON: Something needs to be added to this body to see what is making it a woman's? Why do we need a mirror?

PATRICIA: Well, something does need to be added to a woman's body to make it a woman's and how important the mirror is!

JAMIESON: You just repeated what I said

PATRICIA: Yes, you just repeated what I said

FELIX: I will not hesitate to add, that once I am outside this Asylum, I would grant an opportunity for observing my body to any serious specialist whose motive is scientific interest and not mere curiosity. If similar phenomena have never previously been observed on a male body, as I maintain, I believe I have thus furnished proof which must arouse serious doubt among serious men as to whether what has so far been attributed to hallucinations and delusions is not after all reality.

JAMIESON: And WHY is this so important, that a man's body can become a woman's? What is so great about being a woman? (Everyone turn and look at Jamieson) Have we all become mad.

PATRICIA: Or transgender?

GABE: The experience of years has confirmed me in this view; indeed I believe that God would never attempt to withdraw (which always impairs my bodily well-being considerably) but would follow my attraction without resistance permanently and uninterruptedly, if only I could always be playing the woman's part in sexual embrace with myself, always rest my gaze on female beings, always look at female pictures. I could take this all the way if only I could devote myself entirely to femininity. God would not withdraw if he knew that I was capable of just this kind of attention.

*GABE embraces himself mirroring the figure 8 belt*

FELIX: I also wish to mention that the lower God (Ariman) in fact confirmed this, when some time ago he recommended a certain mode of behavior in a number of phrases incorporated in the writing-down-system and spoken by the rays. Particularly such sentences as,

*MARIE enters shouting*

MARIE/FELIX/GABE: "voluptuousness has become God-fearing" and "excite yourself sexually"

FELIX: were often heard from the voices emanating from the lower God. Clearly the usual ideas of morality have been reversed in my relation to God. Voluptuousness is permissible for human beings if sanctified in the bond of marriage it serves the purpose of reproduction; but in itself it never counted for much. In my relation to God, however, voluptuousness has become "God-fearing," that is to say it is the likeliest satisfactory solution for the clash of interests arising out of circumstances contrary to the Order of the World.

JAMIESON: STOP, voluptuous feelings are just an addendum there to aid in procreation in the bond of marriage. This is what you are saying, that we've confined these feelings to this moral code, as demanded by church and state? What you call- the order of the world. And now, a new reversed order, these nerves become god-fearing, in order to then reverse the morality, you must excite yourself, devote yourself to women, to cultivating bodily sensation?

PATRICIA: not bad at all...

GABE: Let me demonstrate. As soon as I allow a pause in my thinking without devoting myself to the cultivation of voluptuousness-which is of course unavoidable as...

GABE/FELIX: ... nobody can either think all the time or always cultivate voluptuousness-the following unpleasant consequences mentioned earlier occur: attacks of bellowing and bodily pain; vulgar noises from the madmen around me, and cries of "help" from God. Mere common sense therefore commands that as far as humanly possible I fill every pause in my thinking-in other words the periods of rest from intellectual activity-with the cultivation of voluptuousness.

*All stand: PATRICIA: leads the final exercise which has been printed on hand-outs:*

PATRICIA: It's time to cultivate voluptuosness. Incline your torso, 5, 10, 15 times...

**GABE/FELIX/PATRICIA/JAMIESON: hin und hur**

GABE: Now you have to imagine yourself as a man or a woman having sex with yourself in a way that is not masturbation.





Rumpfbeugen vor- und rückwärts  
hin und her 5, 10, 15 mal.