

I

MODERN NARRATIVES OF PARANOIA

In the first great period of bourgeois hegemony, the reinvention of romance finds its strategies in the substitution of new positivities (theology, psychology, the dramatic metaphor) for the older magical content. When at the end of the nineteenth century the search for secular equivalents seems exhausted, the characteristic indirection of a nascent modernism, from Kafka to Cortazar, circumscribes the place of the fantastic as a determinate marked absence at the heart of the secular world.

—Frederic Jameson

The nineteenth century dislike of realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in the glass. The nineteenth century dislike of romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in the glass.

—Oscar Wilde

The spirit of an age is more essentially recorded in its fairy tales than in its most painstaking chronicles.

—Raymond Chandler

PARANOIA is such a pervasive trope for both madness and insight in modern thought because it marks a threshold at which the promise held out by intellectual effort—of insight into the deepest truths—blurs into the recognition that beyond consensus it becomes impossible to determine the extent to which thought is not a lens into the hidden real, but a mirror in which one sees only the obscured shape of one's own folly. After Kant, if consciousness is not guided by mimesis with either the world or the ideal, how does one distinguish between delusion and insight in the realm of "the productive imagination" that enables new thought? The paranoid stands as a parodic image of the autonomous rational individual to which modernity aspires, an uncanny reflection that foregrounds the potential for violence in that subject's capacity for intellectual self-deception and moral self-justification.

Paranoia denotes a psychological tendency in individuals, but because it is fundamentally hermeneutic, identifiable only in relation to “proper” ways of understanding, it retains an irreducibly cultural dimension tied up with the experience of power. Power, for the paranoid, is understood in terms of autonomy, and autonomy with the ability to know the forces of confinement or antagonism while minimizing one’s own exposure to knowledge. This affective saturation of the paranoid’s professedly rational hermeneutic activity—the anxiety that fuels his or her knowledge seeking, his or her “science,” to borrow Freud’s terms, above—results in a worldview that is, to others, visibly shaped and thus undermined by the narrative structures of romance. As an epistemological rather than nosological descriptor paranoia is a term that participates in the discursive management of the individual’s tendency to remythologize modernity’s disenchanting cosmos; it is a *wrong* way to find personal meaning in a seemingly indifferent universe. Paranoia is a modern grotesque: it reveals the modern ideal of objective knowledge as shot through with desire, and the modern ideal of effective, even-handed administration as shot through with presumptions of hierarchy, privilege and exclusion based in figures of gender.

PARANOIA

Because of its ability to mark the uncertain interface between psychopathology, “genius,” and legitimate intellectual suspicion, the compilers of the first edition of the *Psychiatric Dictionary* (1940) note that “perhaps no term in psychiatry has undergone wider variations of meaning than the term ‘paranoia’” (v.2, 395). In their etymology of the word Macalpine and Hunter explain that “paranoia” was recovered in the late eighteenth century (by R. A. Vogel, in 1764) in conformity with its ancient Greek sense to mean “wrong or faulty reasoning . . . the general equivalent of our popular current term insanity” (13). While it was gradually restricted in the nineteenth century to designate partial insanity or monomania, late in that century it was again used to designate all the “primary disorders of reasoning” (13). Lacan asserts that in this period “seventy percent of the ill in asylums bore the label of paranoia. Everything we call psychosis or madness was paranoia” (*Seminar III*, 4). But while a disorder of reason, paranoia came to be distinguished from other forms of madness in that its reasoning was, if *disordered*, not *without order*. It was seen to be characterized by a kind of reasoning that, while rigorous on its own terms, produces an idiosyncratic and illegitimate conception of the individual’s relation to his or her world. As one late-nineteenth-century psychiatrist put it, paranoid delusion “escap[es] from the law of universal consensus, like

a particular interpretation of the external world in its relations with the personality of the diseased, who relates everything to himself, whether it is evil or good" (quoted in Enriquez, 106).

The twentieth-century usage of paranoia was stabilized along these lines by Emil Kraepelin over the several editions of his late-nineteenth-century textbook of psychiatry: paranoia is characterized by "the gradual development of a stable progressive system of delusion, without marked mental deterioration, clouding of consciousness, or disorder of thought, will, or conduct" (423). By the book's sixth edition (1896), Kraepelin had settled on a distinction between conditions that involve paranoid ideation—"dementia paranoides" and "dementia praecox"—that would persevere right through 1987's *DSM III-R* distinction between a paranoid personality disorder, a mode of self understanding (a "paranoid slant") that results in some form of social dysfunction, and paranoid behaviors that are symptomatic of schizophrenia or another form of mental illness.¹ This distinction, and the difficulty clinicians have had in maintaining it is a key one, for while Freud notes that paranoia is the only communicable mental illness and thus implicitly linked to social dynamics and cultural environments, the paranoid ideations of some schizophrenic and schizophreniform delusions are clearly linked with neurochemical disorders. The problem, as forensic psychopharmacologist Ronald Siegel points out, is that while the paranoid's inexplicable perceptual change of the world into what the surrealists called "a vast museum of strangeness" can be triggered by the neurochemical changes of mental illness or by voluntary alternations in brain chemistry (via psychotropic drugs), it can also be triggered (often through suggestion) by traumatic experiences that can themselves then produce or intensify sensitivity to neurochemical alteration. And, even in the presence of discernible causal factors, the paranoid's mastery of certain forms of knowledge suggests that in his or her madness is a kind of genius, that it is built around a "kernel of truth" (Freud) and is in some ways an acute and insightful interpretation of the subject's situation. The problem and fascination of paranoia, then, lies in the way it complicates the relationship between sanity and truth implicit in the idea of normality. Though this nosological slipperiness caused paranoia to slide largely out of the psychiatric lexicon in the last half of the twentieth century, it also facilitated the central role the term assumed in both the pop psychology and the political theory of the period.

For David Swanson et al., the basic characteristics of paranoid ideations or "the paranoid cognitive style" (Magaro, 1981) include all of the following, to some extent: projective thinking, hostility, unwarranted suspiciousness, centrality, delusions of persecution and/or grandiosity, fear of loss of autonomy. "Potentially paranoid thinking," Swanson explains,

is initiated in the homeostatic individual when he perceives a pronounced change in his internal environment that is inexplicable or unacceptable. . . . Because of its vagueness there is less tendency to react motrically; rather, the individual utilizes his unique method of diminishing a sense of threat, namely, that of altering his conceptualization of the world. Prior to reaching the paranoid conclusion the patient often engages in a scanning maneuver (obsessive ruminations) before hitting upon the effective presumption of external fault. A new generalization incorporating an explanation for the perceived threat provides the patient with a sense of closure and therefore security. (275–76)

The delusional progression moves, in other words, from a recognition that makes the heretofore benign and self-apparent environment now seem obscurely threatening, through the cultivation of a protective isolation and an acute suspiciousness, to the conclusion that one is at the center of a hidden plot (the formation of a delusion of reference). However, if the “new generalization” does not provide a stable vision of reality in which the subject can neutralize the sense of threat he or she moves from spectator to “participant,” manifesting bizarre or hostile beliefs and behaviors that produce and reinforce the perceived exclusion. “The end result,” Swanson observes, “finds the paranoid patient operating in a social field as a solitary individual with unshared beliefs and taking action which others cannot sympathize with or understand” (272).

In the so-called “scanning” phase, the subject seeks to minimize personal vulnerability or potential exposure to threat by subjecting his or her environment to intense hermeneutic scrutiny. The rudimentary generalization that would account for his or her anxiety legitimates an even more extensive pattern of scanning and interpretation that produces more knowledge that can, in turn, be integrated into an ever more complex and inclusive delusional narrative. Observations incompatible with the developing delusion motivate its expansion instead of undermining its presumptions. The centrality of the subject’s interpretive function in the formation of the delusional narrative is projectively externalized in his sense that he really is central to his or her world. However, because that centrality is unrecognized by the world at large the paranoid can exploit its ignorance while he or she develops the ability to respond to his or her true centrality. The paranoid, in Siegel’s phrase, “keeps two sets of books.” He or she knows what the world looks like to other people—a benign place in which things are what they seem—and cultivates a persona felt to be capable of passing as normal (though often actually perceived as wooden or insincere), while trying to deal with the real world in which things and events are profoundly related to him or her.

But *everybody*, to some extent, keeps two sets of books. Everybody, at least occasionally, has the sense of putting on a face to meet the faces that we meet, and even “normal” behavior such as buying lottery tickets, reading horoscopes, and avoiding walking under ladders belies grandiose or persecutory intuitions of cosmic reference. Paranoid thought is distinguished from “normal” thought by its intrusive merger of self-centrality with hyperacuity and hermeneutic rigidity. Interpreting everything within a ruthlessly consistent and inclusive intellectual system can occasionally lead to powerful insights, but this kind of “spread of meaning” can also seriously impair subjective function by crippling that supremely enabling ability to ignore most of what goes on around us. To paraphrase Vincent Descombes, a situation in which reality becomes so pervasively meaningful that its smallest details are read as potential signs in some sinisterly coherent text is almost paralyzingly oppressive. Paranoia marks a point at which intellectual ideation retains its formal coherence while ceasing to contribute to and begins to impede subjective functionality: it shows that it is possible to make sense while being crazy, undermining, in its conflation of these ostensibly opposed terms, the stability of both.

PARANOIA AND MODERNITY

Psychoanalysis is the primary discourse through which paranoia enters the lexicon of twentieth-century thought, but once there, the term increasingly sheds its psychoanalytic overdeterminations and becomes a way of situating the epistemologico-materialist problematic of modernity in general.² We’ll look at Freud’s understanding of paranoia more closely in the next chapter, concentrating here on the psychoanalytic and materialist thinkers whose conceptions of paranoia placed it most squarely in the crosscurrents of mid- and late-twentieth-century thought. Though many post-Freudian psychoanalysts—notably Melanie Klein—developed influential theories of paranoia, it was Jacques Lacan’s usage that most informs its jump from psychoanalytic metapsychology to French structuralism and poststructuralism, and it was Frankfurt School Freud-Marxian cultural theory that most influentially articulated paranoia to the subjectivities elicited by or associated with twentieth-century economic and social formations.

Making explicit implications in Freud’s conception of the narcissistic ego, Lacan argues that knowledge is paranoid in its primary organization. According to Lacan, between six months and two years of age, via the recognizably discrete and integrated image of its body the child recognizes as itself in the mirror that counters its phenomenal experience of its body as something incoherent and fragmented, the child can imagine its body (fused with its self) as a

discrete, contained object constituted among objects of the world that are likewise discrete but connected. The child, therefore, develops a set of affectively charged images that captures the bipolar relation sensed between the child and the world, these images providing a way of understanding the world's fragmentarity and difference within a framework of coherence and continuity. The imagined/imagined integrity of the objects in that world—most significantly the integrity of the body (known through its reflected image)—supports the enabling illusion of integrity that gives the nascent ego its sense of selfhood.

However, the discrepancy between the child's *sense* of his or her body as something fragmented conflicts with the unified self-image it recognizes in the mirror, leading to an intimation that the stability and fixity of the images through which the world is known misrepresent its fluctuating, amorphous reality. As Lacan puts it, "This formal stagnation [of the image] is akin to the most general structure of human knowledge, that which constitutes the *moi* and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity and substantiality, in short, with entities or 'things' that are very different from the *Gestalten* that experience enables us to isolate in the shifting field, stretched in accordance with the lines of animal desire" (*Écrits*, 17). The rigidity and hostility of paranoid thought, then, can better be seen as an exaggeration of rather than a deviation from normal thought because, Lacan writes, "it is precisely that denial of the constant flux of our experience that characterizes the most general level of knowledge itself" (*Écrits*, 29). Lacan uses the term *connaissance* to describe this latently paranoid desire for knowledge of solid, stable things based on being and identity, and contrasts it to the knowing—*savoir*—possible through rigorous psychoanalytic exploration.³

When, however, the child is forced to repress its dyadic attachment with its mother, its primary image-object apart from its own body, the *moi* is absorbed into the symbolic structure of meaning that organizes the self as a subject. This for Lacan is the "castration" caused by the child's (gender modulated) acceptance of a relation to the Law of the Father and to paternal desire; its compensation the promise of complete knowledge and control, figured as access to what Lacan calls "the phallus." Knowledge is still fundamentally figural and based on the body's ability to guarantee the integrity of the self with relation to objects—that is, it is structured by the *moi*—but the figures of body-world are now supplied culturally rather than generated individually, and ground a seemingly objective body of knowledge. This knowledge, which Lacan calls *Symbolic*, is differential and the product of cultural history (rather than dualistic and the product of individual sensation) organized by and accessed through an identification with what Lacan calls the *nom/non du Père*, a figure of paternal authority that promises access to knowledge while remaining itself unknowable: the

Other. The ego (*moi*) is thus alienated within the subject of the Symbolic order Lacan calls the “I” (*je*), inasmuch as its own dualistic (individual ↔ world) form of knowledge is subordinated to the ineradicably collective, structural diffuseness of knowledge in linguistic form. To the ego the Other promises the ability to overcome that alienation via its complete identification, making the desire to know in the subject of the Symbolic a desire to know as the Other knows, a “desire for the object of the Other’s desire” (*Écrits*, 19).

If, however, the primary repression upon which the entry into the Symbolic was founded is incomplete, incompatible experiences or objects may not simply be repressed (to reappear later, perhaps, in neurotic symptoms), they may be *foreclosed*, excluded from the psyche’s knowledge structure altogether. They are not gone, of course, and when their pressure and presence become overwhelming their return forces the destruction of that Symbolic reality-structure and the reconstitution of meaning within a new, post-Symbolic, Imaginary dualism. This is the mechanism of psychosis, the operative condition in active, psychopathological paranoia. We now have what Lacan calls “the phenomenon of the *Unglauben* . . . the absence of one of the terms of belief, of the term in which is designated the division of the subject” (Lacan, *Fundamental*, 238): where the subject had been split between a kind of knowledge proper to the ego and a recognition of the authority of the Other that promises but never provides full knowledge, a figure of the *moi* itself is put in the place of the Other—the paranoid projectively imagines him or herself in the position of the Other, collapsing its radical alterity—so that the ego’s gut-level imagistic, projective knowledge seems to inhere in the world itself as it is known “objectively.” The subject is no longer split, but it is now solipsistically psychotic. When Symbolic relations are *subordinated*, via psychotic foreclosure, to a model of Imaginary specular dualism—when the Symbolic Other that haunts language in its constitutive absence is made into a manifest figure of worldly antagonism—the subject enters an actively paranoid configuration. Paranoid psychosis, then, is the superordination of the projective dimension of knowledge over the identificatory. Where the Symbolic Order, as Other, promises (but never provides) full meaning, truth, and authority, when the Symbolic is itself occupied by the paranoid Imaginary and the signs of the world are *still* not fully meaningful, the yet-elusive Other is reimagined not as a figure of desire with which sympathetic union is yearned, but as a figure of fear who retains the power to know, to contain, and to destroy (*Fundamental, Seminar III*).

Lacan suggests that paranoid subjectivity latent to the ego emerges to primacy in modernity (after about 1650): “the ego’s era.” Lacan’s writing veers from outright skepticism about the possibility of historicizing psychic

processes (*Écrits*, 51) to rather clear indications that the material and epistemological changes that characterize modernity are dialectically entwined with the strengthening of tendencies toward “paranoiac” kinds of knowledge and the dominance of scientificist discourse. It is to this latter tendency in Lacan’s thought that Jacques-Alain Miller refers when he claims that there is “a single ideology of which Lacan provides the theory, that of the ‘modern ego,’ that is to say the paranoiac subject of scientific civilization, of which a warped psychology theorizes the imaginary at the service of free enterprise” (*Écrits*, 137). Paranoia, in this reading of Lacan, is the uncanny of modern secular rationality, the alter-image of modern knowing that proffers itself in the former’s failure to meet the subject’s psychic needs. It is, for Lacan, “the especial delusion of the misanthropic *belle âme*, throwing back on to the world the disorder of which his being is composed” (*Écrits*, 17).

Since Althusser, Lacan’s observations have grounded a tradition of theorizing the subject in relation to the vicissitudes of Marx’s commodity and the differing signifying regimes of modernity and postmodernity. Teresa Brennan (1991, 1993) elaborates Lacan’s claim that modernity is “the ego’s era,” inasmuch, she points out, as it is through the material changes of modernity and their accompanying pressures toward rationalization, atomization, and commodification of the human environment that the ego achieves the de-centeredness that psychoanalysis reveals in the twentieth century. Specifically, Brennan (1993) points to the emerging separation in modernity of the specular, dualistic Imaginary—noting Lacan’s observation of the emerging predominance of perspectival optics in this period—and the structural, linguistic Symbolic orders (modernity is, of course, co-emergent with and operationally dependent upon the printed word and mass vernacular literacy). Others have extended Lacan’s own comments on the commodity form in Seminar XI to theorize it as a material manifestation of Lacan’s Symbolic. As Slavoj Žižek observes, the commodity is, for us subjects of modernity, the “chimeric apparition which, although it can nowhere be spotted as a positive, clearly delimited entity, nonetheless functions as the ultimate Thing governing our lives” (*Enjoy*, 123). Carl Freedman provides a less enigmatic exegesis. For Lacan, Freedman observes, the commodity is structurally isomorphic to language itself. Capitalism, in Marxist terms, can be defined as generalized commodity production, a condition that embraces its necessary correlative, generalized commodity fetishism. “Value,” in Marx’s famous formulation, “transforms every product of labor into a social hieroglyphic. Later on men try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of their own social product: for the characteristic which objects of utility have of being values is as much men’s social products as is their language” (*Capital v.1*, 167). The commodity, *qua* commodity, then,

is primarily manifest to the subject in terms of the value it accrues through its imbrication in the complex differential web of other valued objects for which it can be exchanged. Like language, the commodity “means” inasmuch it enables subjective engagement with the social world, but the source of its value is constitutively absent in its “use.” It works then, as Lacan understands language to work, with the illusion that meaning is tied to reference (the “truth” of language or “use value” of a commodity) obscuring the way it actually emerges within complex differential relations (the commodity as signifier in a chain or web of signifiers). The guarantor of the illusion of referential meaning or real value is a general subject—(*le nom du Père / le non-dupe-err*) obscure in its ubiquity except in its operative breakdown—that facilitates exchange between particular subjects. The tendency toward semantic stability within a community of language users is analogous to the generally paranoid structure of knowledge, with its need to articulate the individual’s experiential reality of flux and becoming in collectively intelligible terms of being and identity. Therefore, as Freedman writes, “if we are economically constituted as capitalists and workers who must buy and sell human labor that is commodified into labor-power, then we are psychically constituted as paranoid subjects who must seek to interpret the signification of the objects—commodities—which define us and which, in a quasi-living manner, mystify the way that they and we are defined” (18).

In Lacan’s terms, then, while a subject within an environment not structured by capitalism may be split, and may feel alienated with regard to the desire of the Other, at least that Other manifests its promise of presence in each encounter with language. In each conversation, act of reading, or even of thinking, that *belief* that is at the basis of the divided subject is called back to the fore, because every use of language yields meaning in spite of the fact that no individual makes that meaning themselves and every successful use of language reinforces this belief. The ability to find meaning in spite of the knowledge that it makes sense only because it participates in the linguistically suspended consensual reality of an entire social group—this impossible fact of meaning is the basis of the belief that keeps the Imaginary alienated within the Symbolic and the pre-social *moi* within the social *je*. Commodity exchange has the same *form* of meaning as language, but in each iteration undermines rather than reinforces faith in a stable reference external to the plane of exchange. Instead, in commodity exchange value is explicitly negotiable and contextual, always obscure in its relation to any material world or production or use (for Jameson [1977] Lacan’s Real is the material history of a mode of production) The commodity-exchange, then, reproduces the *form* of meaning which sustains the socialized split

subject, but it strips that form of its grounding in the phallus or the *nom du Père*. As the commodity form becomes the predominant extralinguistic structure of reference it enables, then, both the intensification of the kind of technocratic scientism to which Miller alludes (in which *method itself* acts as the guarantor of knowledge as the authority of the Other—reinforced in the linguistic sign, undermined in the commodity form—is eroded), and to the kind of psychotic foreclosure Lacan describes in his exploration of the Schreber case (in *Seminar III: The Psychoses*).

In its critique of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1973) placed "paranoia" squarely at the center of the tropics of cultural theory. Deleuze and Guattari use "paranoia" and "schizophrenia" to describe social organizations in terms of control and desire: "The paranoid and the schizoid investments," they write, "are like two opposite poles of unconscious libidinal investment, one of which subordinates desiring-production to the formation of sovereignty and to the gregarious aggregate that results from it, while the other brings about the inverse subordination, overthrows the established power, and subjects the gregarious aggregate to the molecular multiplicities of the productions of desire" (376).⁴

For Deleuze and Guattari, paranoia and schizophrenia describe the competing tendencies to both conformity and quasi-individuality that mark the capitalist subject, torn as it is between the paranoid investment in maintaining capitalist productive mechanisms and the social institutions that support them, craving order, meaning, and stability; and the schizoid pressure to apprehend one's self as a consumer and micro-capitalist entrepreneur, craving change, flux, and creative destruction. For Deleuze and Guattari, this fundamental ambivalence is inherent to the capitalist agent of social organization itself. Wealth—the medium of control of social resources in capitalist economies—tends to elicit "paranoid" tendencies of subjectivity and social organization, but the even more central expression of capitalist power—capital, or wealth oriented to the production of new wealth—tends, conversely, to require a more "schizophrenic" subject inasmuch as it needs, in part, to dissolve stable structures of wealth dissemination (and the subjectivities these generate) in order to open up new opportunities for exploitation and wealth creation. Especially in their work after *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari associate their conceptions of schizophrenia and paranoia (these terms complemented by a growing list of rough correlates taken from other discourses) with specific historico-cultural moments, "diagramming" the "complex assemblages" that constitute the "abstract machine" of given "haecceities" or "plateaus," articulating the historical moments and sites in which subjectivities and social power formations realize a relatively stable or particularly characteristic organization. Schreber's

dual role as both the paradigmatic paranoid and as a man centrally involved in the institutional and discursive apparatuses of post-unification Germany allows Deleuze and Guattari to discuss him as just such a site through which the contradictory flows of modernity pass. For Deleuze and Guattari, Schreber's madness oscillates between radically "paranoiac" intensifications of the nationalist-statist patterns of hierarchy and regimentation (intensifications of his Oedipal identifications) and his schizoid irruptions of psychotic "desiring-production" resonate with Bismarckian Germany's surge in industrial and colonial capitalist economic development.

Deleuze and Guattari's fellow traveler Michel Foucault historicizes the epistemology of paranoia and links it to the formation of modern subjectivities. Foucault argues that in the post-Kantian space of Romanticism there was a new valuation placed upon a self whose essence was in an epistemological subject or site of consciousness. This new understanding of selfhood, however, introduced some rather vexing epistemological problems: by giving priority to a self that could not be sure of what it knows or how it knows, it undermined the confidence with which the individual could subscribe to those culturally accepted and promulgated truths that allowed him or her to see him or herself as an integral part of a "natural" social and cosmic order.

Instead of simply looking through consciousness at objects, Kant's transcendental forms of reflection turned the inquiring gaze of this subject back upon its own constitutive forms and attributes, shifting critical emphasis from the object of knowledge to the conditions of knowing. Since lived experience was knowable only within this phenomenal realm of what could be *known*, the subject could be seen, in its freedom from objective resistance, its self-creating nature, and its insularity with regard to truth, as a kind of constitutor of the world. In a link to Freud that will be important for the discussion in the next chapter, Foucault labels this role of Kant's "productive imagination," in the subject "transcendental narcissism" (*Archaeology*, 203). This caused some problems, however, for the *study* of subjectivity: if consciousness was transcendental—the thing to which and for which all entities must appear—its understanding as an empirical object of study would be polluted by its own activity. Thus, the post-Kantian conception of consciousness was what Foucault calls "a strange empirico-transcendental doublet" (*Order*, 318); it is always an object of knowledge while always outside of and constituting knowledge. As well, if the phenomenal world is constituted by and within consciousness, this means that there must always remain an aspect of the world external to, but providing the material for, conscious representation. And, if the very recognition of the limitations of consciousness—Kant's categories—are so difficult to perceive (requiring, in Kant's case "transcendental analysis and deduction"), then

that means that *normal* consciousness is, in a sense, inherently deceived and self-deceiving, unaware of the conditions that constitute its own knowledge. As Louis Sass remarks, following Foucault, “in the modern era, consciousness, that seemingly self-aware foundation and transparent medium of representation, is also found to be surrounded by and imbued with a kind of obscurity” (*Modern*, 329). Supreme within its own sphere, but acutely conscious of the limitations of that sphere, modern thought, in this view, wavers between a narcissistic grandiosity and a paralyzing anxiety, a condition we find most prominently in the narratives of paranoid delusion.

Foucault is interested in modern epistemology inasmuch as thought is a manifestation of subjectivity and subjectivity helps organize social behavior. Foucault argues that power—with capital being a dominant though not exclusive modern medium of power—produces subjectivity (and with it the very capacity to think or act) through social institutions and the discourses (or ways of speaking / acting / understanding) that accompany them. Subjective “freedom,” Foucault asserts, is not the opposite of social oppression, nor is subjectification the process by which an incipiently free individual is manipulated in his or her absorption of deceptive cultural *doxae*, as a paranoid might presume. Rather, for Foucault, subjectivities—including the kind of subjectivity that apprehends itself as fallen from an originally “free” condition—are historically particular knowledge effects of power that *produce* the very ability to live within (and the secondary possibility to dissent from) society. For Foucault, the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries are characterized by an increase in the discursive rationalization of subjectivity, of the “biopower” that effectively works to produce more “docile” bodies.

In one of the more interesting studies drawing on both the later Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault, Jonathan Crary links a development in the nineteenth and early-twentieth-century social sciences—inquiry into the nature of attention, and its attendant pathological variations—to a concomitant development in capitalist industrial production that was placing historically novel and conflicting demands and pressures on the attention capacities of individual workers. As the logic of greater efficiency in mass production demanded that manufacturing processes be increasingly rationalized or “Taylorized”—changed, that is, from a kind of production in which a single craftsman might stay with the product from its raw to its finished state, to a kind where a de-skilled laborer was responsible only for the repetition of a tiny segment of the productive process—the necessity of each worker paying close attention (so that each repetition produces an identical result) increases, even as the stress of the harsh, repetitive work environment and the alienation from any sense of the product as a completed product makes the difficulty of that worker’s

paying attention, because of boredom and mental fatigue, increase proportionally. The ability to pay this kind of reified attention increasingly becomes what is *paid for* in a worker in the mass production process. As Crary explains, “At the moment when the dynamic logic of capital began to dramatically undermine any stable or enduring structure of perception, this logic simultaneously attempted to impose a disciplinary regime of attentiveness” (13). For Crary, “the realization that attention had limits beyond and below which productivity and social cohesion were threatened created a volatile indistinction between newly designated ‘pathologies’ of attention and creative, intensive states of deep absorption and daydreaming” (4). Attention emerges, then, as an object of “scientific” investigation as it emerges as a reified subjective capacity requiring optimization. This linking of optimization to “scientific” rationalization means that non-optimal forms of attention—the wandering of attention that characterizes daydreaming, on the one hand, and the pathological focus of attention that characterizes paranoia or obsessiveness—are articulated in the new social scientific discourses as forms of pathology and made subject to a normative and seemingly objective scientific description that, in turn, legitimates “therapeutic” intervention.

This new construction of attention, as Crary notes, has the paradoxical structure of paranoid autonomy at its core. In this nineteenth-century scientific/industrial context, attention, as it is thematized in the literature and public discourse of the period, emerges as “the means by which an individual observer can transcend those subjective limitations and make perception its own, and attention is at the same time a means by which a perceiver becomes open to control and annexation by external agencies” (4). Crary is making a thoroughly Foucauldian point: a seemingly personal human experience (attention) emerges *as* a mode of self-articulation as it becomes articulated in vocabularies tied to institutions and social formations that are themselves tied to the changing nature—and needs—of economic and social organization. Attention emerges as an axis of subjective agency as a way of partially representing individual subjectification. As something *both* inherent to *and* socially regulated in the individual, as any authority figure knows, when mobilized outside of its optimal range—in daydreaming or in particularly close critical scrutiny—modulating attention is an effective strategy of subaltern resistance. Attention, then—especially as it is imaged in combination with ideas of imagination—becomes a privileged trope in twentieth-century narratives that employ the romantic structure of heroic individual transcendence: modern heroism, in a central manifestation, begins with the hero paying close attention to anomalies in his environment, that attention allowing him (conventionally “him”), alone among his peers, to see through its deceptiveness and formulate some

kind of response. But when narrativized as the attribute of a non-focal character—from the outside, as it were—precisely the same kind of hypersuspicious critical attention and presumption of centrality is represented as the indicator of paranoia or megalomania.

Psychiatrist and historian Louis Sass also invokes Foucault as he turns directly to the Schreber case for insight into the historicity of paranoid psychopathology. He argues that though Schreber's illness effectively removed him from both the environment and the social category of "normal" modern man, "there are certain respects in which he may be considered an *exemplary* one" ("Panopticism," 102). Schreber's madness, for Sass, should not be interpreted as an escape from modernity—a regression or even romantic escape to a primal, animalistic, precivilized irrationality—but was on the contrary a kind of overproduced subjectivity resulting from Schreber's constitutionally fragile psyche being thrown into a professional situation that was then at the center of a particularly turbulent confluence of jurisprudence, psychiatry, religion, and science, while coming from a personal situation that amplified, for him, the pressure to incorporate (produce in the body) a masculinity adequate to the sexual, marital, familial, and political expectations of his *milieu*. As Sass summarizes,

Far from being what the early Foucault called a "sovereign enterprise of unreason" or the source of "total contestation" of modern Western civilization, madness, at least in Schreber's case, turns out to be one of the most extreme and exemplary products of this civilization—one which installs the public world in the most private recesses of the soul. ("Panopticism," 107)

Though Sass does not assert a causal relation between modernity and Schreber's madness, he observes that "as we approach modern times, we find more and more evidence of patients manifesting a symptomatic picture involving withdrawal, highly idiosyncratic and abstract patterns of thinking, and a preoccupation with hidden meanings" (*Modern*, 9). For Sass, Schreber's paranoid schizophrenic ideation, as recorded in the *Memoirs*, "helps illuminate, if not the modern condition in general, then at least some of its more disturbing potentialities" (*Modern*, 12).

Sass finds in the phenomenality of Schreber's madness the shaping pressure of subjectifying discursivity: for Sass, Schreber's inner experience "conforms in the most literal way imaginable to the institutions and social practices Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*" ("Panopticism," 104). Sass argues that Schreber's later tendency (central in modern subjectivity but pathologically intensified in Schreber) to seek positions of authority and high visibility that demand extraordinary self-scrutiny and vigilance can be traced back

to the anxieties generated by the rigid pedagogical regime to which Schreber was subject as a child. The regimes, designed by Schreber's father (an influential German pedagogue) "to oppress everything in the child," controlled and molded little Daniel's posture, speech, bathroom habits, sleep routines, physical education, and academic experience. Like the Schreber of the *Memoirs*, the subject of the panopticon, Sass observes, is constituted by the relation between watching and being watched (*Modern*, 127), perceiving even his own body as "a body-as-perceived, a body for the distant observer," resulting in a self "internally fragmented by a fundamental self-distance and self-difference" ("Panopticism," 128). Sass argues that having (as Foucault says of the inmate of the Panopticon prison) "internaliz[ed] within his own consciousness the asymmetrical social relations of [his father's] modern 'technology of the soul'" (Foucault, *Discipline*, 30), Schreber's consciousness is "both rent and joined by an inner panopticism" ("Panopticism," 128), and his madness is informed by the sensation of being a prisoner in the everyday world, of always being watched and judged by a potentially punitive agency.

POSTMODERN PARANOIA

Sass's discussion of Schreber is part of a long intellectual tradition of characterizing the latter's paranoid ideation as an acute, pathological manifestation of what Lacan calls the "social psychosis" of post-Enlightenment bourgeois modernity (and there is, of course, an equally long tradition of refuting such characterizations in favor of intra-psychic or familial-specific etiologies). However, if we accept, even partially, the historicity of the late-nineteenth-century Schreber's psychosis we have to expect that the cataclysms of the early to mid twentieth century and the material, economic, political, and technological reorganization of its second half would, at least tendentially, generate different kinds of psychopathology. But here too theorists turn to paranoia. If Schreber's madness can be seen as a pathological extension and psychotic dissolution of the decentered, latently paranoid modern subject, the mid and latter parts of the twentieth century arguably witness the emerging hegemony of a differently paranoid subject. The difference, most theorists argue in one way or another, has to do with an alteration in the dominant *milieu* informing and engaged by paranoid subjectivity. Modern paranoia was predominantly a radically individuated divergence from a functionally (if not officially) secular cultural consensus, the historical modulation in the increasingly disenchanting universe of modernity of what may earlier have manifest as religious mania. Postmodern paranoia, conversely, is often theorized as manifest in various forms of mutable, free-floating conspiracy, its narratives sharing the forms

of paranoid delusion, but with the erosion (often linked to the ascent of the image as the dominant communicative vehicle) of a viable, secular consensus these narratives now operate less to isolate radically individuated and patently psychotic individuals than they do to organize new, post-secular, forms of collective understanding and agency. If individual paranoia can be theorized as a subjective failure that literalizes and makes visible the paranoid tendencies of modernity itself, conspiratorialism can be seen as the product of the modern subject's failed encounter with a world that no longer provides a normative structure of knowledge, a world newly recognized, in Deleuze's terms, as "schizo."⁵ If for Freud, earlier forms of religion were collective neuroses that became individual problems as the religious frameworks eroded and the community they had organized atomized, these newer forms of conspiratorial community—both secular and religious (though the line is often impossible to draw) might be considered a kind of collectivization of modernity's signature individual psychosis, paranoia.

The question of how a modulation in "paranoia" helps us understand the difference between bourgeois modernity and whatever cultural dominant has succeeded it has been most thoroughly addressed in the Western Marxist scholarly tradition, in the work of the Frankfurt School and Frederic Jameson. The rise of fascism provoked inquiry into the relation between particular social formations and the generalization of paranoid personality characteristics, and, though there is no way to do any kind of justice here to the complexity and sophistication of the work associated with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, theirs is the central theoretical treatment of this problem and must be addressed, however incompletely.⁶ In their major collaborative work, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), scholars associated with the Institute argue that "a basically hierarchical, authoritarian, exploitative parent-child relationship is apt to carry over into a power-oriented, exploitatively dependent attitude toward one's sex-partner and one's God and may well culminate in a political philosophy and social outlook which has no room for anything that appears to be strong and a disdainful rejection of whatever is relegated to the bottom" (971). In such an "authoritarian" character "the relationship with his fellow man has lost its direct, human character and assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality" (416). Whatever it loses in the capacity for flexible social engagement, this character provides a high degree of subjective stability, and, the authors argue, the tendency for people to gravitate toward its patterns of thought "are apt to increase in a culture which has become too complex to be fully mastered by the individual" (418), especially under conditions of social turbulence in which traditional institutions and cultural dominants are being undermined. "This was probably the case with Nazism in Germany," scholar

Daniel Levinson suggests: “. . . under certain socio-economic conditions an entire nation may become inclined [in fellow traveler Erich Fromm’s aphorism] to ‘escape from freedom’” (486).

In first generation Frankfurt School writing (though not in *The Authoritarian Personality* itself), the authoritarian personality is frequently contrasted to what is called “totalitarian” subjectivity, and both are heirs to the putative bourgeois subject of modernity. The authoritarian personality, as described, craves the spectacle of power instilling order on a chaotic universe. The totalitarian personality, described most influentially in Horkheimer and Adorno’s *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* on the other hand, craves an illusion of autonomy within a universe that has its chaotic elements but seems to find a natural order in liberal, “democratic” government and its natural logic in the consumer market. For Adorno, modern life is irretrievably “damaged” because the Enlightenment project, which envisioned perpetual progress toward a human condition of rationality and autonomy, failed to recognize itself within its historical dialectic: merchant capitalism had generated the Oedipal family form as its privileged socialization structure, but the ensuing subjects—tendentially autonomous, having reified an “enlightened” way of thinking about the world and called it rationality—could not, in their increasingly disenchanting universe (without overarching mythologies to provide cosmological coherence) comprehend the massive contradictions engendered by industrial and colonial capitalism. By the late nineteenth century, its subject was in crisis, and those who recognized its crisis were forced either to retreat into nihilism or, like Schreber, into delusional individual projects of cosmic re-enchantment. In the wake of the massive crises of the first half of the twentieth century and the development of a new phase of capitalism (having largely perfected the means of production in the nineteenth century it then concentrated on perfecting the production of consumption), the now recognizably inadequate Oedipal subject was being eclipsed as a dominant subjective form.

The Oedipal subject of modernity, for Adorno, was organized around a structure of identification mediated by the figure of the Oedipal father of the nuclear family. This structure assimilates the infantile desire to achieve immediate gratification through the formation of affective connections with objects of the world, to a mechanism in which the achievement of gratification is understood to take place only through the development of a subjectivity *like* the father’s that is capable of *working* in and on the world. The subject *identifies* with the world: recognizes in it images of similarity and potential emulation or images of difference and disapprobation via the mediate image of a relatively stable self. Fascism, for Adorno, marked the collapse of bourgeois subjectivity as a social dominant, inasmuch as it demands the subject’s direct

affective *introjection* of a figure of total social authority that allows a sense of a direct, unmediated, undeferred relation to social authority and power.

In its elevation of the market as the privileged model of socialization, the subject of consumer capitalism is similarly encouraged to bypass the mediate structure of the Oedipal father that demands responsibility, frugality, industriousness, and strict self-governance (an ideal subjectivity for the demands of preindustrial capitalist production, but one that cannot easily be persuaded to consume the massive excesses of industrial productive capacity). A subject emerging into an environment saturated with a superabundance of affectively charged commodified images that promise to sate every need and provide every pleasure faces an extraordinary pressure to remain narcissistically infantile: because the social good in the form of consumer goods seems to surround and flow in upon him, his environment undermines any imperative to go through the painful process of Oedipalization in order to gain a sense of a share of social power. The contradiction, however, between the promise of the consumer market and the visible agonies engendered by capitalist production (with class conflict at home and colonial and post-colonialist conflict abroad) leaves this infantilized subject (without a fully-developed Oedipal rationality, more comfortable thinking in terms of affectively charged images articulated along the simple lines of melodrama) only able to imagine the operations of his or her world—when he or she thinks about it at all, his or her thinking largely reduced to the operation of considering the competing claims of consumer products—in terms of dark conspiracy and romantic resistance. Doomed to think, in other words, in virtually the same terms that inform the fascist subject.

For Adorno, then, though the bourgeois (Oedipal) subject of merchant capitalism wreaked inestimable damage via his particular notion of individualism and his tendency to reification and instrumental rationality, at least he had the potential (in that rationality and the distance granted by his mediate relation to authority) for the kind of critical thought that could at least begin to support resistant political action: as Jefferson's formulation makes clear, an Enlightenment idea of rationality is at the core of the potential autonomy of the modern democratic political agent. But with what Adorno sees as the supersession of even the ideal of this subjectivity with a kind of neo-premodern variant, the *fact* of capitalist hegemony remains, in both its state (militarist) and market forms, while the subjectivity that at least *promised* to govern it via rationality and individual autonomy has been replaced (in what Juliet MacCannell calls "the triumphal return of Narcissus" [78]) by a profoundly arational and non-autonomous, latently psychotic subjectivity (in the sense of not being organized around the resistance of a hegemonic consensual reality)

that craves the immediate gratification promised by commodity culture and the affective satisfaction provided by images of power and authority in infantile narratives of good and evil.

One source of the appeal of Foucault's work lies in the disarticulation of its genealogical model of historical inquiry from any overarching theory of historicity, though this has also been the ground of its most persistent critique: that in its lack of any utopian dimension his version of history undermines any attempt to theorize a progressive *response* to "power."⁷ It is on this point that the work of Frederic Jameson—presenting a clear alternative to the Foucauldian model and drawing heavily on Adorno and other Frankfurt School thinkers—emerges as the only other late-twentieth-century theorist of the modern "paranoid" environment and subjectivity (with the potential exception of Deleuze and Guattari) whose work approaches Foucault's influence. Using a version of the Western Marxist historical materialist narrative modified to accommodate poststructuralist critique of its universalist presumptions, Jameson's work maps social-subjective tendencies against historical moments and their dominant modes of production, often relying on radically historicized insights drawn from psychoanalysis to articulate this (always tenuous) link between competing formations of subjectification and social historicity.

For Jameson, shifts in subjective organization are linked, in modernity and contemporaneity, to the increasing structuration (penetration) of human environments by the commodity. Following Marxist historian Ernest Mandel, Jameson argues that early modern nascent capitalism is accompanied by the coming to hegemony of instrumental rationality and a tendency to reification: a tendency, that is, to see the world as a temporally undetermined system on a flat Cartesian plane (rather than a metaphysically integrated, multidimensional, and eschatologically determined one) full of discrete objects and individual agents that can be apprehended as separate units and brought into productive and profitable new engagements with one another. For Jameson, following Mandel, "classical" or market capitalism is organized

in terms of a logic of the grid, a reorganization of some older sacred and heterogeneous space into geometrical and Cartesian homogeneity, a space of infinite equivalence and extension . . . namely, the desacralization of the world, the decoding and secularization of older forms of the sacred or the transcendent, the slow colonization of use value by exchange value, [and] the "realistic" demystification of the older kinds of transcendent narratives . . .
(*Cognitive*, 349)

The form of capitalism that develops as it becomes economically and politically hegemonic is accompanied by a tendency toward the extension of

instrumental rationality into secular worldviews that presume the systemic comprehensibility of the human sphere. The contradiction between these linear and tendentially totalizing modes of comprehension and the increasingly overwhelming problems that are the material effects of industrialization and colonization dialectically engender an anxiety about the growing sense of fragmentarity and lack of final meaning that finds its privileged articulation in modernist thought and art. In addition to the perfection of its own productive and distributive mechanisms (i.e., the assembly line, Taylorism, rail and shipping networks), it increasingly organized broad sections of the domestic population into a “working class” and vast swaths of the non-Western world into dependent markets and sources of raw material.

This, Mandel’s “stage of imperialism,” is characterized by growing “problems of figuration” associated with “the growing contradiction between lived experience and structure” (“Cognitive,” 349). “While in older societies and perhaps even in the early stages of market capital,” Jameson writes,

the immediate and limited experience of individuals is still able to encompass and coincide with the true economic and social form that governs that experience, in the next moment these two levels drift ever further apart and really begin to constitute themselves into that opposition the classical dialectic describes as *Wesen* and *Erscheinung*, essence and appearance, structure and lived experience . . . The structural coordinates [of the “meaning” of the commodity] are no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people. (“Cognitive,” 349)

For people caught in the latter forms of this capitalist stage, working in massive productive structures—factories connected by railway to warehouses in huge impersonal cities—it was easy to perceive a disparity between the promises of democratic citizenship and their more immediate sense of their lives as controlled by distant, alien, diffuse machine-like systems that were indisputably real in their effects yet resistant to adequate comprehension.

This stage, for Jameson, finds its poles of articulation, on the one hand, in the Romantic attempt at individual transcendence of the modern machine world by tapping into an innate, superrational intuitive power and, on the other, in the High Modernist version of negative transcendence, in visions that start with the postulation of the inherent falsity of the known world and culminate in the suggestion of some ineffable connection between the radical experience of individual sensation and a kind of mystic, often mythic, truth. This world left discredited between modernist mythicism and Romantic radical individualism is governed, of course, by discourses of science, rationality, and civic reason; a disjunction that suggests to the modern subject that “if