

Hysteria and Enlightenment

Chapter 7

The Dream Sonata

On February 20, 1777, Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer took his most famous patient, the young and gifted, stricken pianist Marie Therese von Paradis out of the darkened room in which she had been confined for three weeks. Holding her by the right hand he guided her down a dusty road, then through the avenue of hedges separating the building in which she had been staying from the main mansion of his estate.

She wore a pale blue dress secured by a bright red sash across the middle. Her face was pallid and worn, evidence of the ordeal she'd willingly accepted. Her black hair, blown across her haggard features by a stiff winter breeze, fell across her shoulders in ringlets. At that moment she looked more apparition than human. Although the coiffure was simple, totally unlike the get-up she'd put on public display at the Kartnertor opera, her mother, Frau von Colnhach-Paradis, had spent two hours with her that morning dressing her up for the occasion. Mother and father were waiting for them at the mansion.

This was a special day. Her progress in less than a month had been spectacular, and Mesmer had concluded that the opportune moment had arrived to introduce her to the room of mirrors, a salon and reception room on the ground floor of the mansion. It was here that literary gatherings were organized, as well as the frequent

musical soirees that had earned the Mesmers a major role in Vienna's cultural life.

As they approached the building, a horse-drawn cart pulled up in the driveway with a load of cut firewood. The doctor left her standing alone at the base of the spiralling stone and went away to converse with the driver. She was sufficiently protected from the winter cold by a coat passed along to her by Frau Posch, though it left her legs exposed. Standing alone in the chilly air she shivered with impatience. She listened to the sounds of music and revelry coming over from the Prater; these never diminished from the early morning until late at night.

The sunlight was brilliant; and although the bandage had once more been wrapped around her eyes, her condition had improved to the point where only two turns were adequate to protect her. Once they went inside it would be removed entirely.

To the right of the staircase stood a large rosebush. The time of year was February, the very depths of winter. The climate of Central Europe is known to the author only by reputation, but he presumes that it must match, if not exceed, in severity the identical season on the East Coast. How could it be otherwise: do we not have Schubert's *Winterreise* as testimonial? Yet, by some extraordinary violation of the sempiternal laws of generation - midwinter summer being its own season - the roses on this bush were in full bloom and throwing off a ravishing aroma which spread throughout the courtyard, attracting birds, small animals and insects, awakening the keenest delight in the mind of Marie-Therese. Sparrows and pigeons gathered at her feet; she could even sense, though not see, the flitting yellow bodies of butterflies.

The scent of these contra-factual flowers temporarily lifted the mantle of gloom from her shoulders; they awakened the realization in her, that even though she was still engaged in the depressing labor of restoring a lost sensory capacity, she had not been abandoned by her other faculties. She could still find comfort in the sounds of the music she loved above all else, and the radiant joy she felt, and which she could transmit to others with her

unique gifts and craft. It gave her ample reasons for living, even for happiness, in this anguished period of her life.

Guided by their strong scent, she leaned against the wrought-iron railing of the staircase and grasped at the hazy patches of dazzling red roses. As she clutched at them, three thick thorns were introduced into the soft flesh of her left palm. The hot needles of pain shot through her hand as she cried out; a reflex motion returned her hand to her mouth and she sucked at the wound. Invisible to her were the newly shed bloodstains on the rose bushes.

It is not surprising that she interprets this as an accident, but the truth of the matter is that the three massy thorns were the carriers of a new dimension, transcendental and totally independent, like the dozens of dimensions that the physicists throw around so freely, onto the humdrum commonplace of ordinary living. Had she not reached out, on this cold, gusty winter day, to touch this fabulous rose-bush - itself woven from the fabric of fantasy and imagination – Marie-Therese would have done nothing more than proceed onwards into the room of mirrors, to that interesting yet unremarkable gathering that anyone can read in the scientific or fictionalized accounts by Walmsley¹, Wycoff², Buranelli,³ Goldsmith⁴, Ellenberger,⁵ Zweig⁶, O’Doherty⁷ and others.

Yet the brief, blistering injury inflicted on her by the 3 thorns - tenderly extracted by the good doctor when he returned from haggling with the woodcutter - have had the effect of

¹ D.M. Walmsley: *Anton Mesmer* Robert Hale 1967

² Wycoff, James: *Franz Anton Mesmer*, Prentice Hall 1975

³ Buranelli, Vincent: *The wizard from Vienna*, London: Owen, 1976

⁴ Goldsmith, Margaret: *A History of Mesmerism*, Doubleday 1934.

⁵ Henri Ellenberger: *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, Basic Books, 1970

⁶ Stefan Zweig: *Mental Healers* Viking Press, 1932

⁷ Brian O’Doherty: *The Strange Case of Mademoiselle P*, Pantheon 1992

transforming the next four episodes of this story - all with their factual basis - into legend:

- (1) The legend of the room of mirrors;
- (2) The legend of the music lesson;
- (3) The legend of the starry night;
- (4) The legend of the gardens.

As even the power of magical thorns is limited by certain cosmic laws - (including, yet extending far beyond Bangs, Inflations and Crunches) the inevitable recourse to historical fidelity will then reassert its natural prerogatives.

J. The Hall of Mirrors

Franz Anton Mesmer returned to the balustrade. The winter snows had covered the grounds with a treacherous mix of snow, ice and mud when he reached the staircase he had to spend a bit of time stamping his boots. After binding up Marie-Therese's hand, he opened the handsome double doors of the building then stepped in to alert his wife and Marie-Therese's father and mother that they'd arrived. They all met in the lobby. He told them that one ought to think of this as a kind of coming-out party for their daughter. He intended to show them that she could now recognize objects, even when seen as a reflection in a mirror. Mesmer walked them through the corridors of the ground floor, taking them to a large, elegant room with an elaborately decorated high ceiling.

Its floor had been inlaid with polished hexagonal flagstones about a metre in diameter, the whole partly covered by a large Persian rug. A welcoming fire wuthered in the hearth; before it slumbered a shaggy species of dog⁸.

Upon their entrance the dog staggered to its feet, barking a gruff mixture of curiosity, hostility and friendliness. Marie-Therese ran over to pet it. With all of its features grossly distorted, It looked very strange to her, and she had to stroke its fur several times to

⁸ *Canus Shagginensis* perhaps?

recognize it: "Why, it's a dog!", she exclaimed: Then staring at it intently, she added: " They're far more attractive than humans! " This caused merriment all around.

Portraits of contemporary Viennese writers, scientists and musicians, friends or associates of Mesmer, hung on the walls: Gluck, the Mozarts, Joseph Richter, Maximillian Hell, Sonnenfels, Pfeffle, Gerard and Gottfried van Swieten, and the mathematician Hermann Bauer. Interspersed among these were also engravings of persons he could not have known but clearly admired: Paracelsus, von Helmont, Newton, Boorhaeve, Descartes.⁹

The most remarkable feature of the furnishings of this room were the 2 dozen mirrors hanging from the walls, on tables or set in frames on the floor. Possession of such a collection at that time amounted to a proclamation of great wealth. A single looking-glass designed to be hung from the wall in a sitting-room, with an ornate, well crafted frame, might normally cost the equivalent of \$1,000 today. The value of the entire collection must have been in the range of \$100,000.

Marie-Therese's mother and father stood together with Frau Mesmer in a corner near the entranceway, a solid structure decorated with the sculpted baby angels known as *putti*. Mesmer greeted them upon entering, then walked with Marie-Therese over to a body length oval mirror in a mahogany frame. Scrolls, fretwork and floral pendants dangled from the top and sides, and the frame decoratively gilded. Looking in the mirror one might imagine oneself reflected in a pool hidden beneath the canopy of a dense grove or arbor.

" Is that what I look like?" she exclaimed, seeing her body at full length for the first time in her life, "It doesn't look anything at all like my picture of myself. How can I be so ugly?" As she stepped back the heel of her shoe made contact with a tall candle-stand. It was a superb example of crafted wrought-iron work, and when it

⁹ Beethoven would have been around 6 at this time. Were this still the film script and not the novel, the director might put him in anyway- or at least his music, as Stanley Kubrik does with Schubert in Barry Landon, whose narrative is situated in the period just after the 7 Years War. Schubert would not be born for another 3 decades or more.

toppled over and clattered to the ground, her parents became anxious and upset. Marie-Therese herself jumped back, frightened, but Mesmer assured them that everything was all right. He picked it up and moved it safely to one side of the room.

"Don't worry about that... *Ugly* did you say? Nonsense, my dear!", he pulled out the small pocket journal he always carried about with him and wrote something down, "I dare say there's something horrible in the appearance of everyone of us! By the way, I can tell you that your reaction is entirely at variance with the ideas of Descartes. That hardly matters, if you ask me: Philosophers don't bother their precious heads with empirical data, so they're forever making mistakes. Even Aristotle asserted that the sun turns around the planet earth, a simple error that set astronomy back for 2000 years!

"So you see, one must refrain from accepting anything a philosopher says at face value. Descartes maintained that our concepts of space and time are ideas of space are formed within our minds. Since the blind have minds, just like anyone else, their conceptions of the shapes of their own bodies must be identical to those of seeing persons. He even writes as much somewhere or other; I forget where. I was a student far longer than I care to remember, and read everything by him and anyone else I could get my hands on. Now I'm a medical doctor, and haven't got much time for reading.

'What I'm learning from you indicates that the blind don't know what space is, or shapes, even the shape of own bodies as they're seen by other people."

"It's as if", she turned to him and replied, "It feels to me exactly as it does when I'm learning a new piece of music, or rather a new kind of music. When I first began to study the harpsichord I memorized pieces by the Bachs, the Scarlattis and Handel. Then, when I began to study the fortepiano I learned a different kind of music altogether, that of Giustini, Haydn, Clementi or Kozeluch ... or the brilliant young Mozart!"

"Indeed!" Franz Mesmer turned to address Herr and Frau von Paradis, "The Mozarts are very dear to both of us. I regret that my

daughter-in-law, Fraulein Oesterline-Fisher is not with us today so she can tell you how delighted she was to meet him. They stayed here only a few years ago. But you shouldn't reserve your praise for little Wolfgang alone. His father and sister are also virtuoso musicians!" He returned to address his patient, "But go on with what you were saying, little Marie-Therese."

. "Yes, doctor: *Seeing* is another kind of musical experience, yet even more unusual and original than all the ones I already know. Very grand ... and bewildering ...and frightening!

"When I pick up and examine some unfamiliar new object ... like the glass goblet from Prague you put in my hands the other day ... I study it using the same methods I bring to learning a new piece for the harpsichord: *very* slowly at first .. why , if you were to hear me then you would think I was nothing more than a beginner! Or even tone-deaf! ... When I held the goblet in my hands, I stroked it repeatedly, turning it over many times and gazing at each little detail, muttering under my breath ..you might have said I was singing! ...many times until I thought I understood what I was looking at.

"That's how I commit things to memory. Yet even that isn't enough ...I'm talking about the harpsichord again ... I then have to play it back over and over again in my mind until I get it right, comparing what I think I hear (or see) with the actual object until the recognition becomes automatic....."

Marie-Therese walked gravely back and forth before the oval glass, bowed and curtsied, did a swift gavotte, then an allemande, then a minuet.

" How thrilling, how pleasant it is to watch the way my body moves..!" She twirled around, and was astonished to see her reflection returning, as if it had forgotten something and was coming back to retrieve it ... " Look! You see - first I move my arm, say - like this." She twisted her arm about in a graceful gesture - "This causes something to happen to the light over there - ", she pointed in the direction of the mirror, "It takes a real effort to identify the details.. What's that?" She peered intently at the silvered surface of the glass, "Those must be my fingers!" she

moved them about as if performing some keyboard piece, just to convince herself "...there's my wrist? that's the elbow?"

She broke down in exasperation and something akin to rage, "Never, never will I learn it all! It's impossible! Impossible!" I'll never learn it all." Marie-Therese sank to the floor, covered her face in her hands, and began to weep with the thought of the heavy burden of work that seemed to stretch out before her endlessly. Mesmer picked her up off the ground:

"Don't cry, child. It will not be as hard as that. My magnetic therapies never fail; you must only be patient." Having reassured her and gratified his own megalomania at the same time, Mesmer took her by the hand and walked with her across the floor and to the left. Passing the imposing lithograph of Sir Isaac Newton, he commented, as if he were, all the same, aware of his own limitations, "I'm a just a dabbler, my dear, compared to that man."

They paused before a 'courting' mirror, then a popular item in Northern Europe. Its outer trimmings were rounded and richly decorative. Between the frame and the glass inset rows of marbellized glass tiles had been inlaid. Poised at a generic eye level, it was designed to transmit reflections of the head and shoulders. On the glass crest rising above the silvered surface an elaborate carving of acanthus blossoms stood aloft.

Cautiously Marie-Therese felt the contours of this carving with her fingers. "What does it remind you of?" Mesmer asked her

"I can't explain it to you except by using some examples from music", she turned to face her family and smiled, "That's the world I live in, it's all that I really know. These shapes seem to rise and swell and move upwards to a crest or climax, very much like the sequences that repeat themselves in the modulating phrases of a fugue, like the ones written around half a century ago; nobody knows how to write them anymore, I wouldn't even try. If the rest of the visible world is all music and musical form, like this, I may grow fond of it after all!" Dancing comically to its rhythm and moving her fingers as if she were at the keyboard, she hummed the Eb major fugue from the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I. Everyone laughed, relieved that she was feeling so much better.

" Just wait her a moment, child. I'm going out to see what I can find in the garden." Mesmer left the room. A few minutes later he returned, cradling several lilac branches in his arms.

" I hardly understand it myself." he said " It's the middle of February, but the lilacs are in full bloom! " He shook his head with perplexity; indeed, the good doctor who always seemed to have all the answers was at a loss for words! The strong odor filled the interior. She reached over and took the lilac branches from his arms.

"What are they, doctor? Where do they come from? "

"These are *Syringa Chinensis*, sent to me from Rouen in France just a year ago. I've never been to France but intend to go there some day. I'm bound to do well there. There's no art in magnetizing a Frenchman!"

Grasping them tightly to her bosom she danced about the room. She approached the hearth and paused to absorb the heat. Suddenly she was once more weeping bitterly.

" These flowers only depress me further, doctor. They belong to summer, but my life is a long, long winter. And their aroma reminds me of a funeral - my own, perhaps. Doctor, when I die I want to be buried on a mound of these lilacs." She gazed at him from a tear-stricken face.

"Will that come soon, doctor? I hope that I do not have to live too much longer!"

" Daughter!", Joseph von Paradis walked brusquely over to her and clasped her hands in his, "Don't talk like that. All of us are very well pleased with your progress. You'll be able to see very soon, I know it. Then life will once again be happy and beautiful, full of hope as it was before."

" There must always be pain in giving birth, child", Mesmer added, " A new world is being born within your brain. To tell you the truth, we scientists know remarkably little about how it works. The brain has an extraordinary ability to make adjustments, but one never knows if it will be slow or sudden.

" Someone with a broken arm or leg in a cast may be unable to use their limbs for days. Then, suddenly they wake up one day

and find that they're just as good as new! Your feelings of despair are quite normal at this stage. But you must not give up! Come with me: I want to take you over to the next mirror."

The next mirror was on the other side of the fireplace: a *girandole*, or French convex mirror. As they walked past the hearth, Marie Therese leaned over to pet the dog, letting it lick her face and pulling its ears with affection:

"What a happy creature!" she laughed, then turned away again in sadness. " They can never know what we suffer."

The *girandole*, so named because of the pairs of candleholders on either side, was a shining round hemisphere, the size and shape of a half-pumpkin, set into an elaborately decorated brass plate. Four burning candles brightly illuminated its reflections, so that the entire room appeared to be contained in inverse perspective on its surface.

Dispersed throughout the image on the mirror were the many flickering reflections of the candles about the room and the flames in the hearth, as well as the multifold iterated reflections of these reflections from all the other mirrors in the room. These patterns of brightly dancing specularities created the illusion of a long torchlight procession, or of several orders of pilasters, real or ornamental such as one finds in the colonnades of baroque palaces. Marie Therese, having no firm ideas as of yet about the size or shape of objects, imagined she was standing at the threshold of another room, a much larger one than the one she was in, perhaps a church interior or the corridors of a palace.

Without being able to see them, she realized that her feet had mysteriously become encased by a pair of exotic sparkling crystal shoes that lifted her up off the floor and carried her inside the vast interior of this edifice. She glided along the long row of tall gilded doors, feeling her way along until she came to the end of the hall. Exhausted and out of breath she leaned up against an elaborately decorated door and crumpled to the floor. Collecting herself turned around to look.

Rows of portraits of vague, unidentifiable figures lined the two sides of a corridor surmounted by a high vault from which descended a stately procession of chandeliers. Together they shed enough light for her to discern at least the basic features of her surroundings. Neither Herr or Frau Mesmer, nor her father or mother, were anywhere to be seen; there were at most some vague textures of patches of pale flesh tones that swirled around at the other end of the hall. Yet their voices could be heard, quite distinctly, as reverberations through the wood paneling of the walls and doors of the narrow hallway.

"Where am I?" she cried out in fear.

"It's self evident, my dear", replied Mesmer's booming, self-consciously over-confident bass voice: "You've been inducted inside to the world of the girandole! It's a rare occurrence, but it does happen. I myself have never seen an example of it before, but it appears to occur whenever a girandole intersects with a *monad*."

The voice of Herr Joseph von Paradis came to her through the paneling as a softer, accompanying vibration:

"You are quite a learned man, Dr. Mesmer. Pray tell me then: what in blazes *are* these 'monads' that the philosophers are forever telling us about?"

Mesmer's face lit up. Pontificating was as natural to him as croaking to a frog:

"It's only a hypothesis, Joseph, or, rather one could call it a philosophical device. Monads were invented by the famous Hanoverian universalist Leibniz to explain the apparent coherence of the visible world. No one thought much of them until I verified their reality through a series of experiments, performed in my laboratories by myself and a team of research assistants over the past 6 years." Even Marie-Therese, trapped as she was inside the girandole, could not stifle a laugh. Mesmer went on:

"A monad, sir, is a macrocosm reflected inside a microcosm. Since the macrocosm is obviously teeming with life, as well as the mighty oceans of the magnetic fluid, so the microcosm must also be a living creature, the matrix of the magnetic flux. Flux and fluid,

flux and fluid, back and forth! It's all explained in a learned treatise I'm sending off to the Bavarian Academy of Sciences.

"Each monad thus contains everything while at the same time it is also the building block of everything. I know that this is difficult to understand: think of 3 mirrors, opened like the sides and top of a trapezoid. At certain angles this creates a series of images inside images, like an endless procession of mirrors, each containing all the others and all the reflections of the others. One can see these effects right in this room, by walking around my hall of mirrors and standing in certain places. In some of the mirrors, the whole room appears reconfigured all of its contents *ad infinitum*."

Frau von Colnbach-Paradis stood up and began walking about the room, stopping in certain places to look through the mirrors and confirm what Mesmer was saying.

"Whatever we experience", he continued, "is therefore compounded from trillions upon trillions of monads, each containing a complete image of everything else, and of all other monads, so that there are trillions upon trillions upon trillions upon..." (The way he spoke made it sound like *TRILLions upon TRILLions...*).

"But that cannot be correct, Doctor." interrupted Marie Therese. "I had no conception whatsoever of colors, visual space, lines, forms or shapes before I could see. "Distance" I did understand, because it takes a long time to walk a long distance, but I can walk a short distance in a much shorter time. I also have some vague idea of what is meant by a 'straight' line because I can walk along it without swaying from side to side. But I understood nothing else.

"If I am composed of so many monads, then the ideas of all these things must have been lying within me, in every pore and atom of my body. I should have been able to discover them by introspection, observing my mental images, or through my dreams, perhaps. But that hasn't happened. Unless", she sighed, "Doctor: are there blind monads as well as sighted ones?"

"Why, my dear little Marie-Therese ... don't you understand? You have *always* possessed the capacity for seeing color,

recognizing lines and shapes, even for imagining space! " He thought a moment,

"All of these things, I think, can be conveyed through music. The remarkable Wolfgang Mozart seems to have the ability to transform everything that happens to him, including all the impressions from the sense organs, into a musical phrase or gesture, so that one imagines it is actually taking place as it first occurred to him.

"Think of all that you've discovered and learned these past weeks in musical terms. Tell me: what does the color red remind you of?"

" I don't know ... I see what you mean..." she paused a moment, concentrating on the task required of her before replying:

" A Soler sonata, on the clavichord. Or a tonic-six-four, dominant seventh, tonic root position cadence. Or perhaps a Paisello melody. In fact, the key of C minor makes me think of the color red." Then, as an afterthought "and Eb major is bright yellow!"

"And C major?"

"Something bright and brilliant, like Handel's Water Music!"

" And blue?"

" Gluck, of course... Or anything that resembles the sound of running water. I can't listen to anything from one of Gluck's operas without imagining myself on a raft, gliding forever down the Danube."

"My dear!" Frau Mesmer laughed, "Are you say that Gluck is soporific? Soggy, like a wet blanket?"

"Maybe!" she laughed, "in any case his reputation is greatly exaggerated. Though I consider him a good composer."

"But", her father, who knew little about music, asked in some surprise, "They say he reformed the opera!"

"Opera doesn't need reforms", she answered, taking a mocking tone, "it needs to stop being so juvenile!"

"Quiet, little Marie-Therese", Herr Paradis smirked, wagging a finger at her in mock imitation of a scolding: "You musn't talk that way about the court!" She went on:

"The sky is blue; even I can see that much.... Perhaps the ornaments of a Couperin suite.." She thought some more: "Blue.. whenever there's a modulation, there's something blue coming into the process. Do you know ...I've never thought of it in that way."

" And green, my young, bright, receptive patient?"

" Handel, of course. Anything wild and brilliant! Oceans are green, aren't they? So I've been told. Then there's that wonderful A-major toccata by my cousin, Domenico Paradis, in Italy"

Her father corrected her: "Darling, we think he may be my cousin, we're not sure. What matters more is that the public confuses your music with his, a great injustice!"

" That's all right, father. The public will never accept that a woman can compose music. If it insists on believing that my works are being written by a man somewhere in Italy, what can I do about it? Judging from his music he must be a nice man ... Acciaciaturas, you know, spicy ornaments, have a way of being green, but not always. Go on, doctor. This is actually fun! ", and her face, perhaps for the first time in weeks, brightened up.

" And space, my dear? Does the idea of space sound like the music of anyone you play?"

She thought for some time about this, then replied, slowly

"Yes, doctor. You are always talking to me about space, as it is some marvelous thing I will come to understand once my sight is restored, "Space" means... when I am unafraid to walk forward, or.. when I raise my arms up into the air" ... like this", her remarks were accompanied with the corresponding gestures, "That is space. I can go no further. But I wonder...what is the color of space?"

"The best answer I can find is in the magnificent Clavierbung, the Choral Preludes of the old master from Leipzig, J.S. Bach, you know, the father of the great Carl Phillip Emmanuel....Then there is the Cat's Fugue of Scarlatti. Otherwise one must go way back in the past, to Gabrieli, or Monteverdi, or the really old masters like

Lassus, or Palestrina..... The color of space? ... Well, a cross-relation combined with an inverted sub-mediand cadence ... wind instruments.. I don't know." She was fatiguing quickly.

" Well, my dear: there you have it. You *are* a monad! You have always had the capacity to see, and to understand what you see, within you. Your mind is a mirror of the cosmos, just as Leibniz says it is! Try to do one more thing for me, will you? And that will be enough for today: Can you remember the colors of the petals on the lilac branches you were holding? It's called lavender. What does that make you hear? "

Even as he spoke, the melody of the flute solo accompanied with soft strings, *In the Elysian Fields* , from the opera Orpheus by Gluck , reverberated through the corridors of the palace, shedding like the arc of a rainbow its aura of immense sadness. To Marie-Therese's sharp hearing it appeared to come from behind the door at the end of the corridor where she'd been leaning for support. At the same time a shower of rose and lilac petals fell around her feet, and gusts of wind, saturated with the February fog, entered from the courtyard through the windows, strewing oak leaves about the polished marble floor. She quite forgot that she had ever been afraid.

" At last I understand! ", she cried, "I *am* inside the monad, and the monad has forever been inside of me. My 'self', which is only my experience of being 'me', in addition to being contained inside a monad, is also made up of an unbelievable number of them; 'TRILLions and TRillions of them', just as you've been telling us!" After a moment's pause, she added, wearily:

" Philosophy has its uses, doctor, but I still would like to know how I am to get back inside the hall of mirrors! "

" Ah, Marie-Therese! I'm not at all certain of how you're supposed to do that! Our researches have demonstrated to our satisfaction, that you must eventually find your way out: but there's nothing in them that indicates a method or a time table you can use. Why don't you try stepping through another mirror?"

Marie-Therese turned to the right and examined the walls of the corridor. They were covered with a garish, spinach-like painted

wallpaper depicting scenes from the siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683.¹⁰ As she Navigated towards the entrance she supported herself, step-by-step, by gripping the frames of tall paintings of stuffy jowled aristocrats and humorless officials, passing rows of ornate, gold-plated candleholders held erect on the wild Medusa-like hairdos of painted wooden naiads. Her magically transformed shoes probed each step forward with the instinctive caution of the blind when walking through uncharted territory. In this way she came to a pair of vertical mirrors in simple metal frames. No sooner had she made the decision to go through the one on the left, and then her crystal slippers picked her up and carried her into another room.

This was a barren and dreary place, rather damp and tightly constraining, a kind of dungeon. Perhaps it was situated in the basement or the attic of the palace; orientation in a dream sonata is tenuous at best. Dirt and dust were everywhere. Cobwebs adhered to her arms and face; she tore at them with strong, frenzied gestures. It had to be a storage center of some kind, because there were trunks, carpets, chairs, cushions, tables and sofas piled up everywhere in dense clusters.

She reached out to a post for support; bits of wood broke off and left bruises on her hands. She coughed and sneezed both from the quantity of dust and the strange moldy odors, as from unburied corpses and lichenous sewage. Four reflections of herself, coming from the pair of mirrors through which she had entered, followed her as she staggered hysterically about the room. Finally she came to rest at a far window looking out into a courtyard; looking about to the left she discovered two more mirrors. Before she could decide which of them she wanted to go through, her shoes picked her up and carried her out of this room and into the next one.

The room she entered was, once more, in the elegant style of the palace corridors, and very similar to prototypes in the palace at Versailles. Its interior was riotously decorated with innumerable

¹⁰ We know this because the author has invented it. The still pitiful state of her eyes made it impossible for Marie-Therese see anything other than masses of colored blobs against a diffuse and shaking background.

devices, statuettes, garlands, paintings, busts, bas-reliefs , pedimenta, architraves, cornices all covered with the nervously tangled foliage of the late rococco . Each of the walls was itself a mirror, holding enormous, highly distorted reflections of herself surrounded by an endless sea of pinpoints of light.

She stared wildly around the room, unable to assimilate the chaos of images swirling about her on all sides. As her eyeballs swelled to their former size and shape, her hair flew above in a mad dance, sucked into the ferocious turbulence of the vortex that now infected all objects in the room. Even her body, her heartbeat and her quickening breath had become terrorized victims to the eternal tidal flux of the universal cosmic magnetic fluid!

Each wall grew larger and brighter, while at the same time bizarre and repulsive shapes and substances were being poured out from them and onto the floor: spiders, long fat snakes, toads, and an array of hideous monsters from the depths of the world's oceans. An overpowering, festering stench filled the room, along with a bewildering musical cacophony, medleys of all styles, ancient and modern, being performed simultaneously from scores of orchestras, organs, keyboards, batteries of percussion and live soloists. Noises of anger, of yelling, fighting and violence rained down from the high ceiling.

The mirrors, cracking and splintering, disgorging yet greater quantities of insects and reptiles into the room, began a relentless movement in her direction. In another minute she would have been crushed to death. Screaming with sheer terror, Marie-Therese collapsed to the ground in a dead faint.

When she recovered consciousness she found herself once more lying on a sofa in the hall of mirrors. Seated on each side of her were her father and mother, gazing at her with anxious concern. Her father had thrown a cover over her. In his right hand he held a fan with which he cooled her flushed and overheated face. Her mother was wringing out and applying vinegar soaked cloths to her temples. At the far end of the couch, by her feet, stood Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer, rocking back and forth on his heels, staring at his pocket watch and feeling her pulse.

"Where am I?" she whispered.

"You've always been here, little Marie - Therese. I've just used a bit of my notorious wizardry to carry you through dreams to the "salutary crisis". It's absolutely necessary for any effective cure by Animal Magnetism. You should feel much better now."

She did in fact feel better. It may have only been an effect of her imagination, but she had the impression that her vision had also undergone some real if moderate improvement.

Franz Anton Mesmer and Marie-Therese saw her family off from the balustrade, watching them as they walked to the coach that awaited them beyond the hedges. Then Mesmer walked her back to the clinic. As they crossed the gardens, Marie-Therese couldn't help noticing that, although it was still the world of February inside the room, the climate, odors and appearance of the gardens were well advanced into the final weeks of April.

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