

A Quotidian Quash: From Mental Hygiene to Mental Health 1969-2012

Dorian Redus

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The impassioned memoir A Quotidian Quash chronicles struggles within the psychiatric system.

Dorian Redus's memoir *A Quotidian Quash* charts his history of psychiatric treatment over more than four decades.

Redus spent time as a psychiatric patient in the California Department of State Hospitals after he was found not guilty by reason of insanity of the stabbing death of his longtime companion—a death that is described in an off-putting manner. His grievance-fueled book recounts psychiatric mistreatment that kept him sequestered from society. It also advances theories about a “relativistic color television universe” and a “space-time sphere,” in part as proof of Redus's sanity.

More of a compilation than a cohesive work, the book collects letters penned to psychiatrists, hospitals, social workers, government agencies, newspapers, television stations, judges, attorneys, and astrophysicists between 1969 and 2012, supplementing them with court filings, photocopied documents, and replies from the doctors. It's divided into three chronological sections, with notes of milestones like denied appeals and work toward Redus's goal of getting his manuscript published.

Though they're meant to appeal to “concerned humanitarians,” the missives are often too accusatory and aggrieved to be persuasive. They blame the system for Redus's “commonplace silencing” and a host of assorted ills, including delusions, paranoia, a “wrecked sex life,” and “making cosmic TV illegal.” In contrast, the occasional responses included are polite and professional, as with a note from a psychiatrist who promised to clear up a point of fact in court and with another from a person writing on someone else's behalf, asking that Redus desist communications.

Exaggerated and sometimes impenetrable, the book's sentences are constructed as elaborate curlicues featuring polysyllabic and Latin words. They jump between topics at random, and their logic is muddled, as with a plea not to be “treated like a delusional nutcase without an appropriate and consulting cosmologist's and astrophysicist's testimony on my brilliant RCTVU (relativistic color television universe) and STS (space-time sphere) theories.” Legalese, math equations, Stephen Hawking quotes, and psychiatric jargon further obscure the book's meanings. In addition, homophobic and insensitive accusations play in, limiting the audience further: psychiatrists are charged with trying to make Redus “get on their queer bandwagon of homosexuality instead of thinking for myself”; being given medicine is called “pharmacological raping.” And rather than coming to a clear end, the book concludes with an epilogue and a summary—and coverage of a dream about a stolen “Army-issue TV,” indicting society for “transferring all their guilt to me.”

Muddled and with the flavor of a screed, the memoir *A Quotidian Quash* chronicles struggles within the psychiatric system.

JOSEPH S. PETE (September 21, 2023)

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