

guaranteeing its chemical synthesis on a massive scale, but nothing is more difficult or more costly than inventing it."⁴⁴ In the same way, nothing costs less, materially speaking, than filming a blowjob or vaginal or anal penetration with a video camera. Drugs, like orgasms and books, are relatively easy and inexpensive to fabricate. The difficulty resides in their conception and political dissemination.⁴⁵ Pharmacopornographic biocapitalism does not produce things. It produces movable ideas, living organs, symbols, desires, chemical reactions, and affects. In the fields of biotechnology and pornocommunication, there are no objects to produce; it's a matter of *inventing* a subject and producing it on a global scale.

44. Philippe Pignarre, *Le grand secret de l'industrie pharmaceutique* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), 18.

45. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Puissance de l'invention: La Psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l'économie politique* (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond, 2002).

3. TESTOGEL

As always I'm inside writing, simultaneously the scientist and the rat he's ripping open to study.

—HERVÉ GUIBERT

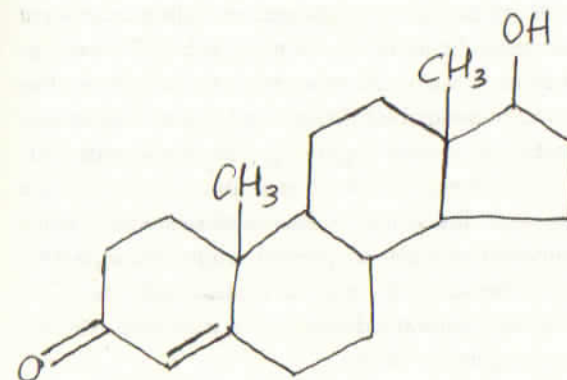
A few months before your death, Del, my master gender hacker, gives me a box of thirty packets of fifty-milligram testosterone in gel form. I keep them in a glass box for a long time, as if they were dissected scarabs, poison bullets extracted from a corpse, fetuses of an unknown species, vampire teeth capable of flying at your throat just for your having looked at them. During this period, I spend my time with my trans friends. Some are taking hormones as part of a protocol to change sex, and others are fooling with it, self-medicating without trying to change their gender legally or going through any psychiatric follow-up. They don't identify with the term *gender dysphorics* and declare themselves "gender pirates," or "gender hackers." I belong to this latter group of testosterone users. We're *copyleft*¹ users who consider sex hormones free and open biocodes, whose use shouldn't be regulated by the state or commandeered by pharmaceutical companies. When I decide to

1. A play on the word "copyright."—Trans.

take my first dose of testosterone, I don't talk about it to anyone. As if it were a hard drug, I wait until I'm alone in my home to try it. I wait for nightfall. I take a packet out of the glass box, which I close immediately, to be sure that today, for my first time, I'll take one, and only one, dose. I've barely started, yet I'm already behaving as if I were an addict of an illegal substance. I hide, keep an eye on myself, censure myself, exercise restraint. The following evening, almost at the same time, I take a second fifty-milligram dose. On the third day, the third dose. During these days and nights, I'm writing the text that will go with Del's last book of photos. I don't speak to anyone, just write. As if writing were the only accurate witness of this process. All the others are going to betray me. I know they're going to judge me for having taken testosterone. Some, because I'm going to become a man among men, because I was doing well as a girl. Others, because I took testosterone outside the aegis of a medical protocol, without wanting to become a man, because I used testosterone like a hard drug, like any other, and gave bad press to testosterone at the very moment when the law is beginning to integrate transsexuals into society, to guarantee reimbursement from the state health service for the drugs and operations.

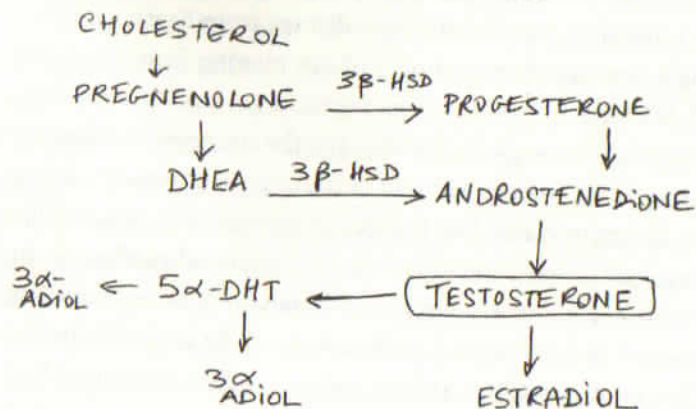
Writing is the place where my secret addiction resides, at the same time as the stage on which my addiction seals a pact with the multitude. On the fourth night, no sleep. I'm lucid, energetic, wide awake, like I was the first night I had sex with a girl, when I was a kid. At four in the morning, I'm still writing, without the slightest sign of fatigue. Sitting in front of the computer, I feel the muscles of my back

innervated by a cybernetic cable that starts at the surface of the city and grows in length, passing through my skull to connect with the planets most distant from Earth. At six in the morning, after ten hours of not moving from my chair, of drinking only water, I get up and go out with my dog, Justine, for a walk in the city. It's the first time I leave my home at six in the morning without a precise destination, on an autumn day. The bulldog is puzzled; she doesn't like to go out so early, but she follows. I need to breathe the air of the city, to leave the space of domesticity, to walk outside where I feel at home. I walk down rue de Belleville to the Chinese market; the African garbage collectors are building dikes with old rugs to change the course of the sewage. I wait for the Les Folies bar to open, have a coffee, wolf down two croissants, and return up the street. When I get home, I'm sweating. I notice my sweat has changed. I collapse onto the couch and watch i-Télé, the news only, and for the first time in three days I fall into a deep sleep drenched in that testosterone sweat, next to Justine.



CHEMICAL STRUCTURE
OF TESTOSTERONE

TESTOSTERONE METABOLISM



SHOOT

The testosterone I'm taking has the brand name Testogel. It was produced by Besins Laboratories in Montrouge, France. Here is the description of this drug from the package insert:

TESTOGEL 50 mg is a transparent or slightly opalescent and colorless gel packaged in 5-gram sachets. It contains testosterone, a naturally secreted male hormone. This drug is recommended for illnesses related to a deficiency of testosterone. Before beginning a treatment with **TESTOGEL**, a deficiency in testosterone must be established by a series of clinical signs (decline of secondary sexual characteristics, changes in physical constitution, asthenia, a decrease in libido, erectile dysfunction, etc.). This drug has been prescribed to you for your own use and must not be given to others.

Attention: **TESTOGEL** should not be used by women.

Safety Instructions for Users of **TESTOGEL 50 mg**, gel in sachets:

Possible transference of testosterone.

Failing to follow recommended safety instructions may cause the transfer of testosterone onto another individual during intimate and prolonged cutaneous contact with the area to which the gel has been applied. This transfer can be avoided by covering the area of application with clothing or by showering before all contact.

The following safety instructions are advised:

Wash hands with water and soap after applying the gel.

Cover the area of application with clothing once the gel has dried.

Shower before all intimate contact.

For those individuals not being treated with **TESTOGEL 50**:

In case of contact with an unwashed or uncovered area of application, immediately wash with soap and water skin that may have been subjected to a transfer of testosterone.

Consult a physician if the following symptoms appear: acne, changes in pilosity.

It is preferable to wait approximately six hours between application of the gel and showering or bathing. However, washing occasionally one to six hours after application of the gel should not significantly change the course of treatment.

To guarantee the safety of one's female partner, the patient is advised to observe a prolonged interval of time between application of the gel and the period of contact, to wear a T-shirt over the site of application during the period of contact, or to shower before any sexual activity.

I am reading the Testogel package insert, realizing that I'm holding a manual for microfascism, at the same time as I'm worrying about the possible immediate or side effects of the molecule on my body. The laboratory assumes that the testosterone user is a "man" who isn't producing enough androgen naturally and who, obviously, is heterosexual (the safety instructions concerning the cutaneous transfer of testosterone allude to a female partner). Does this notion of a man refer to the chromosomal (XY), genital (possessing a penis and well-differentiated testicles), or legal (the specification "Sex: M" appearing on one's ID card) definition? If the administration of synthetic testosterone is prescribed for cases of testosterone deficiency, when and according to what criteria is it possible to affirm that a body is deficient? Does an examination of my clinical symptoms indicate a lack of testosterone? Isn't it the case that my beard has never grown and that my clitoris does not exceed a centimeter and a half? What would the ideal size and degree of erectility of a clitoris be? And what about the political signs? How can we measure them? Be that as it may, in order to legally obtain a dose of synthetic testosterone, it is necessary to stop defining yourself as a woman. Even before the effects of the testosterone are apparent in my body, the condition for the possibility of administering the molecule to me is having renounced my female identity. An excellent political tautology. Like depressions or schizophrenia, masculinity and femininity are pharmacopornographic fictions retroactively defined in relationship to the molecule with which they are treated. The category *depression* does not exist without the synthetic molecule of

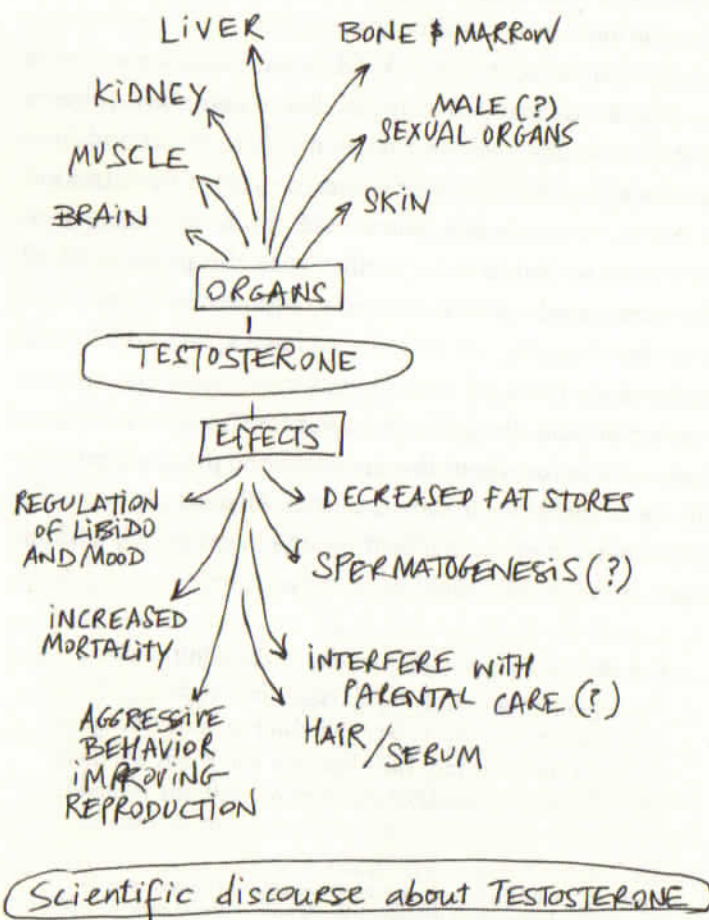
serotonin, the same way that clinical masculinity does not exist without synthetic testosterone.

I decide to keep my legal identity as a woman and to take testosterone without subscribing to a sex change protocol. It's a bit like biting the dick that's raping you, the pharmacopornographic system's dick. Obviously, such a position is one of political arrogance. If I'm able to take such a liberty at this time, it's because I don't need to go out and look for work, because I'm white, because I have no intention of having a bureaucratic relationship to the state. My decision does not enter into conflict with the position of all the transsexuals who've decided to sign a contract with the state for changing sex in order to have access both to the molecule and to legal identity as a male.² Actually, my gesture would lack strength were it not for the legions of silent transsexuals for whom the molecule, the protocol, and the change of legal identity are essential. All of us are united by the same carbon chains, by the same invisible gel; without them, none of this would have any meaning.

This drug is reserved for the use of the adult male.

Suggested dosage is 5 g of gel (equivalent to 50 mg of testosterone) once a day, to be applied at the same time, preferably in the morning. The physician will adapt the doses according to the needs of the patient, without exceeding

2. On March 1, 2007, the Spanish government acknowledged the request of the transsexual lobbies to have access to a legal change of sex (a change of name on identification cards) without being obliged to undergo surgery. However, this law requires the hormonal and social transformation of the individual during a period of at least two years as a condition for legally changing sex (in reality, the terms changing name or changing gender would be more precise). The measure is currently being criticized by various transsexual and transgender movements in Spain.



10 g of gel per day. Use the product on clean, dry and healthy skin and apply a thin coating on the shoulders, arms or abdomen without rubbing. Once a sachet has been opened, all its contents should be applied immediately to the skin. Allow to dry 3 to 5 minutes before dressing. Wash hands with soap and water after application. Do not apply in the area of the genitals (penis and testicles); due to its high alcohol content, the gel can cause irritations at the site of application.

Respect the directions for use indicated by your physician.

If you have accidentally exceeded the proper dose of TESTOGEL mg, consult your physician.

The leaflet doesn't supply instructions for hormonal therapy for the changing of sex. Undoubtedly, in such a case, the doses must be different. The only mention of potential addiction to testosterone is this discreet reference: "Consult your physician if you've exceeded the prescribed dose of Testogel." I take a mental inventory of all my friends who are taking more than fifty milligrams a day: HJ, PP, RZ, FU, KB, BS... I won't be able to claim that I didn't know.

If you've forgotten to take your TESTOGEL 50 mg, gel in sachets:

Do not take a double dose to compensate for this oversight.

Possible side effects of TESTOGEL 50 mg, gel in sachets:

Like all active substances, TESTOGEL 50 mg, gel in sachets, can produce side effects. Cutaneous reactions at the site of application, such as irritation, acne, dry skin, have been

observed. TESTOGEL can cause headaches, alopecia (hair loss), a feeling of pressure in mammary areas accompanied or not by pain, changes in the prostate, alteration of blood composition (increase of red blood cells and lipids in the blood), cutaneous hypersensitivity, and itching. Other side effects that have been observed during oral or injectable testosterone treatment include hypertrophy of the prostate (a benign increase in size of prostate), progression of undetected cancer of the prostate, pruritus (itching) anywhere on the body, reddening of the face or neck, nausea, icterus (yellow coloration of the skin and mucous membranes), increase of libido (sexual desire), depression, nervousness, muscle pains, changes in electrolyte balance (content of salt in the blood), oligospermia (decrease in number of spermatozoa), frequent or prolonged erections.

Certain clinical signs, such as irritability, nervousness, weight gain, or too frequent or persistent erections, may indicate that the effects of this substance are too powerful. Speak about this with your physician, who will adjust your daily dose of TESTOGEL.

Use by athletes and women:

Athletes and women should be warned that this product contains an active ingredient that is likely to produce a positive result in antidoping screenings.

Athletes *and* women? Must one detect a hidden syllogism here according to which all athletes are men, or must one understand that women, even if they are athletic, always remain women more than athletes? This is one way of tracing a political boundary when it comes to testosterone use. Actually, it's a warning to athletes *and* to women

that testosterone can be considered to be an illegal stimulant. Outside the law. For women, whether they're athletic or not, taking testosterone is a form of doping.

Keep this leaflet. You may need to reread it.

The list of undesirable side effect may be long, but I'm placing a limit on cultural paranoia, and I put the leaflet in a file intended for the following: "T. Research." I certainly will need to reread it.

Testogel, says the medical leaflet, is not in any case to be given to an individual for whom it has not been prescribed (for example, the way Del has given it to me, as I've given it to King E., as King E. has given it to V. King, etc.), a condition that is common to the majority of drugs: antibiotics, antivirals, corticoids, and so on. In the case of testosterone, controls over "passage of the substance" seem more complicated, not only because it is liable to be sold on the black market and consumed without a prescription, but especially because Testogel applied to one body can "pass" imperceptibly onto another body through skin contact. Testosterone is one of the rare drugs that is spread by sweat, from skin to skin, body to body.

How can such trafficking—the microdiffusion of minute drops of sweat, the importing and exporting of vapors, such contraband exhalations—be controlled, surveyed; how to prevent the contact of crystalline mists, how to control the transparent demon's sliding from another's skin toward mine?

RENDEZVOUS WITH T

Paris, November 25, 2005. I'm waiting until ten in the evening to take a new dose of Testogel. I've taken a shower so that I don't have to wash myself after applying it. I've set out a blue work shirt, a tie, and black trousers to take Justine out for a walk afterward. I haven't felt any change since yesterday. I'm waiting for the effects of T., without knowing exactly what they'll be or how or when they'll become apparent. I've spent the last two hours on Skype talking with Del; we've been choosing the photos that will be published in his new book, *Sex Works*. I prefer the ones taken in public places, like that series from the S&M scene at Scott's Bar in the early 1980s. Three bodies are getting it on in the bathrooms, which have paneled walls: two lesbians with their clothes on are busy with a third, half-naked body. They're using a black leather switch to whip an ass that's been offered to them, someone leaning against a door with a plaid shirt rolled up around the neck and Levis 501 at the knees. In this series, the lens varies its point of view, getting nearer and farther from skin, objects, seeking out or evading glances, showing or hiding the affects that are produced. One of the photos disregards the main scene to focus on the geometric patterns of the tiles. Scott's Bar was a lesbian cathedral; the arrangement of its secret signs outlines the labyrinth of a Sapphic Chartres, shows the path of a pleasure that has never yet been experienced. Then the lens returns to the bodies. In the middle ground of the shot, a butch and a femme, who are nude, are rummaging through the shirts hanging in a makeshift wardrobe. Bill, the perfect embodiment of butch, is in the

foreground: short hair, a fifties rocker look, smooth face, a cigarette dangling slightly downward from the left side of the mouth, a small name tag around the neck (the graininess of the black-and-white photo makes it impossible to make out the details); a black leather jacket over a naked torso, nothing underneath except the hump of a stuffed white jockstrap and a studded black belt from which hangs a bunch of sparkling keys. To the left, a slender butch is leaning a shaved head against a fire extinguisher. We talk only about the photos, even though it was Del who gave me the packets of Testogel. I don't tell him that I'm hanging up in order to take my dose. I just tell him I have to hang up. He manages to keep me on a few minutes more by paying me compliments, and I'm late for my ten o'clock rendezvous with T. A minute later, there I am: I've opened the silver packet, and the cool, transparent gel has disappeared under the skin of my arms. All that's left is a cool whiff of mint that draws my shoulders up toward the sky.

No drug is as pure as testosterone in gel form. It's odorless. However, the day after I take it, my sweat becomes sickly sweet, more acidic. The smell of a plastic doll heated by the sun comes from me, apple liqueur abandoned at the bottom of a glass. It's my body that is reacting to the molecule. Testosterone has no taste or color, leaves no traces. The testosterone molecule dissolves into the skin as a ghost walks through a wall. It enters without warning, penetrates without leaving a mark. You don't need to smoke, sniff, or inject it or even swallow it. It's enough to bring it near my skin, and its mere proximity to the body causes it to disappear into and become diluted in my blood.